

STATEMENT OF
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CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

BEFORE THE
NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
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Washington D.C.

Personal Statement of Speaker

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Hector P. Garcia of Corpus Christi, Texas. I am a Doctor of Medicine; Graduate of the University of Texas Medical School and also Medical Surgeon of WWII. I am a member of the National Advisory Council of Economic Opportunity.

I wish to thank you for permitting me to present my testimony to this distinguished and honorable Committee of the U. S. House of Representatives.

I am here to speak for the approximately 6 million Mexican Americans in the United States. I was asked by many mothers who have lost sons in Vietnam to come and speak for them in behalf of their dignity and honor which was trampled by the statement made by the Commissioner of Public Welfare of the State of Texas, Burton Hackney. Who, among other things, as stated in the article that appeared in many of the Texas newspapers, said and I quote the article:

"I went to Corpus Christi Wednesday and visited the homes of the worst cases. I also went to the Driscoll Foundation Children's Hospital in Corpus Christi and talked to the chief pediatrician. He said there is malnutrition but not because of poverty but because of ignorance, ' Hackney said. "

"He quoted the Corpus Christi pediatrician as saying there was widespread ignorance among Mexican-American women in the area about proper nutrition.

"If a Mexican woman had a bushel of money she would still feed those kids tortillas and beans,' he said he was told.

"That's what I'm finding all over the state.'

"Hackney said he also had learned some Mexican-American mothers were giving up the traditional practice of breast-feeding their babies 'but they don't know how to fix a bottle or what to put in it.'"

These remarks have hurt the feelings and the dignity of the Mexican American mothers who have sent the Armed Forces of the United States thousands upon thousands of their sons of whom at least 350 from Texas died in Vietnam. Mr. Hackney has insulted the Mexican American women and because of his statements I feel that I am honor bound as an American of Mexican origin to challenge Burton Hackney's untruthful statements and to challenge him for his prejudice, narrow-minded, and calloused statements.

"Poverty and malnutrition" in Texas exists today and has existed ever since there was a Texas.

The truth of the matter is simply that Hackney wishes to cover up the truth of the horrible suffering of the Mexican Americans in the State of Texas -- principally the children of our State.

I have here a map that shows the counties in south Texas which have the great majority of population being Mexican Americans.

You will find that in this map there are only 3 counties in south Texas in which the Mexican American enjoys an income of over \$3,000 per year per family. These counties are: El Paso County;

Bexar County and Comal County. In all of the other counties, the Mexican American has an income of less than \$3,000 per year per family, which is in the poverty range. There are over 14 percent

of the Mexican American families who have an income less than \$1,000 per year. Some of the Mexican American in south Texas

have an income (for that county) of less than \$2,000 per year per family. These counties include Zavala, with an income of \$1,732;

Zapata, with an income of \$1,395; Starr County, with an income of \$1,568; San Patricio, with an income of \$1,996; Live Oak, with

an income of \$1,956; La Salle, with an income of \$1,585; Karnes, with an income of \$1,620; Jim Hogg, with an income of \$1,885;

Hidalgo, with an income of \$2,027; Frio, with an income of \$1,666;

Dimmit, with an income of \$1,721; DeWitt, with an income of \$1,758;

Caldwell, with an income of \$1,833 and others.

Please notice that not all of these counties are in the Border area of south Texas - but are also many miles away from the Border area.

I would like to submit this map and a Statistical Profile of the Spanish-surname Population of Texas which was prepared by the Bureau of Business Research, the University of Texas, my alma mater. There is no one who can argue statistically that Mexican Americans are victims of poverty and "poverty and hunger" go together as does "disease and death."

It is understandable that a state official that resides in Austin and who is paid over \$20,000 per year and who heads a Department of Welfare with few, if any, Mexican Americans would never believe or understand suffering and even recognize malnutrition unless he has lived and traveled and been one of the Mexican Americans, like I am.

Please notice this chart.

A similar situation of the Mexican American exists throughout the United States and especially in the Southwestern states. New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado are perhaps slightly better but

not very much better. We know definitely that in Texas 52 percent of the Mexican American families live in poverty. Therefore, present programs are inadequate and more are needed.

Table 33 of the Statistical Profile gives the comparative rates of the median income of employed males 14 years of age and over, by ethnic groups, in the five Southwestern states, 1959. The income for Texas being \$2, 029; for New Mexico \$2, 630; Arizona, \$2, 713; Colorado, \$2, 814; and California, \$3, 849. All except California are within poverty range.

I would like to quote from Chapter 7, Summary and Conclusions, Page 63, Paragraph 2:

----- "As has been pointed out in the preceding chapter, the comparison of the Spanish-surname population of Texas with the Spanish-surname populations of the four other Southwestern states is not very flattering to Texas, for the state is decidedly inferior to the others in terms of educational attainment and income. The contrast with California, of course, is the greatest. While this may be considered natural, because California is a wealthy state with a high level of education and a proportionally small Spanish-surname population, it should be somewhat embarrassing to Texans to have New Mexico, with a proportionally large Spanish-surname population, outperform Texas."

I would also like to quote paragraph number 4 and the first paragraph on page 64.

----- "On the contrary, the most fundamental and recurrent finding for the three Texas ethnic groups is the very large gap existing between the Anglo population on the one hand and both the Spanish-surname and the nonwhite groups on the other.

While important socioeconomic differences exist between the two minority groups, they are in almost no case as great as those between them and the Anglo group. It is, therefore, justifiable to describe the pattern of dominance and subordination in Texas fundamentally as being one with the Anglo group on one side and the minority groups on the other. "

----- "The relationship of the Spanish-surname and nonwhite minorities to each other is a complex one. The Spanish-surname group is superior to the nonwhite population in occupational and income characteristics, but it clearly lags behind the nonwhite group in educational attainment. Although the evidence presented in this discussion has been indirect with regard to this incongruity, it is evident that, while both groups have been, and continue to be, subject to discrimination, the effects are most damaging to the nonwhite group. "

I have requested the Governor of the State of Texas to remove Hackney from the position because he has no compassion, understanding and love for mothers and their children. However, this is nothing unusual coming from the Department of Public Welfare. There is nothing unusual for he merely reflects the feeling and philosophy of most of the Board Members, Commissioners and others in the Department of Public Welfare.

I have here before me the case of J. G., who in a south Texas county was denied help after he applied because of permanent and total disability. After he had been refused help on the local level, "J.G." appealed to the State level and as expected was denied the help. This is in spite of the fact that a doctor testified in writing that he was totally and permanently disabled. This was also supplemented by a doctor psychologist who stated that this poor and sick man had the intelligence level of a "moron."

I would like to present to you the pictures that were taken of this case and you, gentlemen, can judge for yourself by all of these untouched pictures "if they gave him a fair hearing!"

As you can see by these pictures, this man is not only physically disabled but unfortunately also mentally disabled. So certainly

the action of this prejudice Board of Appeals is typical of the feeling that the State Welfare Board has toward the Mexican American. I know that I can depend on the Committee to keep these pictures only for your study and consideration. Please don't publish them.

I would also like to submit to you an article that appeared in LOOK Magazine several years ago to show you that there has been only slight improvement from that time. Certainly no improvement can be expected since the State of Texas has no "minimum wage" to help the working people. We don't even have a 10¢ an hour minimum wage.

Texas has an educational school system that although is improving has not improved sufficiently for modern times. In fact, statistics will show that there are approximately 23 percent who don't have any formal schooling at all. And only 2 percent ever get to finish college. This is caused by a combination of no minimum wage; discrimination in wage level, advancement and job opportunity. Still Texas continues school segregation under the guise of sequence, neighborhood schools, free choice or other dubious means.

The poverty level and exploitation of the Mexican American in Texas is almost unbelievable and I would not burden the Committee with statistics but I would like to request the research people to look into the great number of Mexican Americans living in substandard homes; the great number without any running water; the great number without house toilet facilities; the great number of over-crowding. You will find that these figures in some cases go over 50 percent.

Therefore, I come here to first definitely recommend that the Commission on Malnutrition be approved and that a good percentage of the members of the Commission be "Mexican Americans" and not only state officers of the type of Burton Hackney. Also, that a study be made by your Committee of the Texas Public Welfare which in my opinion is prejudice and discriminating against Mexican Americans in Texas.

It is for this purpose that the State Board of Directors of the American G I Forum of Texas, a Mexican American Veterans family group, met yesterday and asked for the removal of Burton Hackney based on the fact that he has been neglectful of his duties; incompetent; uninformed; and prejudiced.

As far as the statistical report would indicate, Appendix - Table A-1, there are over 50 "poor" counties that could use the surplus commodity program and the food stamp program and that your Committee should look into these counties and force some of those counties to accept these programs. I know that some of these counties would never adopt these programs since they are not interested in the suffering, hunger and malnutrition of the Mexican American families. This I say from experience of 20 years of trying to fight the "establishment" which has been a system which has tried to stamp the "Mexican American" as a second or third class citizen.

However, when the Mexican American mother is insulted so unjustly and cruelly, we must arise to the defense of her honor. Who amongst you would not do the same for your own mother?

I wish to thank this Committee for your valuable time and I hope that you would enlarge all of these programs and if possible administer them through private charitable organizations instead of the Texas establishment.

Thank you.