

RALPH YARBOROUGH AND THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN

For 11 years in the United States Senate, the Mexican-American people of the United States have looked to Texas Senator Ralph W. Yarborough for cooperation and leadership in achieving their goals.

From his days as a young lawyer in El Paso during the 1930s, Senator Yarborough has been acutely aware of the injustice and the lack of opportunity which has restricted the development of the two million Texans of Mexican descent, limiting them to a minimal participation in determining their destinies, and to a sub-standard life. The Texas Senator has fought to remove those barriers by emphasizing education for the poor, coupled with training and job opportunities.

That is why Senator Yarborough became a leading crusader in Congress for abolition of the "bracero" worker importation program, which brought cheap farm labor into the United States from Mexico while knocking resident farm workers out of work.

The Senator was the sole Southern Senator to vote for the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was principally aimed at rights for Negroes, but also brought great new strength to Mexican-Americans.

His Cold War G.I. Bill of Rights, granting broad educational benefits, became law in 1966 and was strengthened in 1967. He fought for it eight years because he recognized that a large percentage of Texans who go into the military were from Spanish-speaking families. He saw them returning to civilian life, but unable to find work or to take a responsible role in Texas. Over and over in speeches he stressed that, "with a proper education, nothing can hold the Mexican-American back."

In 1966 there was a new feeling sweeping South Texas--the feeling that united, the Mexican-American workers who toiled in the fields could obtain dignity and a fair wage. From that feeling came "La Marcha," the historic march on the State Capitol at Austin to request a minimum wage. The only statewide officeholder to participate in that march--walking at the head with a "Huelga" sign and a proud face--was Ralph W. Yarborough.

Senator Yarborough returned to South Texas in 1967 for hearings on migratory labor problems. He has pledged a continuing fight against unlimited importation of foreign workers under the "Green Card" system.

In 1967 the Senator also introduced two bills in Congress expressly aimed at the Mexican-American's plight. The Bilingual Education Act was one of them, and it became law that same year. Yarborough's Southwest Human Development Act, which would pump \$5 million into a variety of special programs for betterment of the Southwestern States, is still before the Congress this year.

4/24/68