

DEMAND RETURN FARE FOR MEXICAN LABOR

Demands that American companies agree to defray the expenses of Mexican contract laborers from their homes to the scene of their labors in the United States and return will be made by the Sonora government immediately, according to Manuel N. Bernal, chief of the State Labor Bureau, sponsored by the States of Mayagrit, Colima, Jalisco, Sinaloa and Sonora.

Twenty-three thousand laborers are wanted from the West Coast States of Mexico by the sugar beet, cotton and other agricultural interests in the United States this year, figures compiled by the Labor Bureau show. Statistics prove that last year the cotton growers had planted 38,000 acres against 20,000 this year.

In permitting 23,000 Mexicans to enter the United States to harvest this and other crops, the Sonora government, under previously prevailing conditions, would assume the responsibility of returning them to their homes. This, if all returned to the border with insufficient money to defray their expenses back into Mexico as between 90 and 85 per cent did last year, according to Bernal, it would cost the government \$26 each, or \$299,000 in American money.

This the government is unwilling to pay, in as much, the representatives say, as the Mexican laborers furnish a large profit on their work to American companies and leave practically all their earnings in the United States. Bernal said today:

"It is not the desire of the State Labor Bureau to prevent Mexican workers from entering the United States when it is assured that they will be fairly treated and not be a burden on their own government after five or six months of labor abroad."

"Careful investigation has shown us that many of the Mexicans who return to Nogales, alleging poverty and demanding fare home, either have ample money to buy their own railway tickets or have wasted their earnings. These men are being ferreted out and will be punished according to their deserts. Many of the false alarmists have confessed to their falsehoods.

"One feature of the present method, however, is serious, in as much as it menaces the friendly feeling we wish our people to entertain toward the United States and her interests.

"Occasionally it happens that a man with his wife, sons, daughters and other relatives, all under contract, go to the United States. The husband may be unfitted for the tasks imposed upon him or unwilling to perform them. He is returned to Mexico by the company he worked for as unfit, but the rest of the family is returned under their contracts. Therefore, and naturally, the Mexican returns to the border cursing all Americans as having robbed him of his family. In many instances the wife is held and compelled to work out the cost of defraying the husband's expenses to the border. The ravings of the husband has a bad effect upon the friendly relations between the two countries, and these are exceedingly anxious to prevent.

"I am confident that the entire matter will be worked out in a way that will reflect upon neither side of the cases involved, and expect soon to have everything adjusted so that the United States can get all the Mexican labor it wants and the government of Sonora be freed of the heavy expense which it heretofore has borne in caring for workers who return, either penniless or with insufficient funds to take them to their homes."