FOREIGN WORKERS AND THE AMERICAN LABOR MARKET**

1. ATTEMPTS AT REGULATION


This brief description of the impact on employment, earnings and economic growth in both the United States and Mexico, finds that while some new jobs in service industries and wholesale and retail trade have been created on the American side of the border, the magnitude of the shift of jobs to Mexico is difficult to determine.


The Bracero program, which was in effect from 1942 to 1960, was both an attempt to halt the flow of illegal Mexican migrants and to respond to the manpower shortages caused by the second world war. The author presents a well-documented study of the legal migration of seasonal farm labor under conditions and controls agreed to by the governments of Mexico and the United States. It is, nevertheless, a chronicle of exploitation in which the imported contract labor gradually replaced the domestic farm worker and the requirement for paying the prevailing wage was largely ignored.


A history and analysis of the legislation which is designed to control the impact of foreign workers on the American labor market by re-

* Prepared by Helen Fairbanks, Librarian, Industrial Relations Library.
** Items from this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.
quiring certification that the would-be immigrant possess needed skills. The author concludes that the program has had no effect on the supply of workers and very limited effect on the micro labor market.


These hearings were held on pending legislation designed to prevent employers from knowingly hiring illegal aliens and providing graduated penalties for repeated violations. Among the many witnesses who testified as to the adverse effects of illegal aliens on employment were representatives from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Department of Labor and the American Federation of Labor—Congress of Industrial Organizations.

2. IMPACT OF FOREIGN WORKERS


The author discusses the magnitude and causes of the migration of Mexican workers to the U.S. which has exerted serious influence on the labor force in the Southwest and, increasingly, in some northern cities. The Chicanos have suffered most from the competition not only for jobs, but also for low income housing, welfare and health facilities, and community services.


This paper traces the nature and extent of legal and illegal immigration from Mexico since the 1940s and describes government programs, both Mexican and American, to find solutions. The author finds that the alien workers are victimized by employers, have no legal protection and have depressed the domestic wage rates.


Lower wages, higher unemployment, more violations of the wage and hour laws, and less collective bargaining are cited in this article as indications of the adverse effect of the commuter system.
“How illegal aliens rob jobs from unemployed Americans.” Nation’s
pp. 18-20, 22, 24. Available by subscription only.

In an interview, Leonard F. Chapman, head of the Immigration and
Naturalization Service, stresses the difficulty of effectively controlling
the entry of illegal aliens. He argues for legislation which would im-
pose penalties on the employer who knowingly hires illegal aliens and
points out that illegal aliens are no longer engaged in low-paying jobs
but are increasingly employed in industry and service occupations.

“The impact of new immigrants in low wage markets.” In Proceedings
of the twenty-seventh annual Winter meeting, December 28-29, 1974,
Industrial Relations Research Association. Madison, Wisc. 53706. The
Association (7226 Social Science Building, University of Wisconsin).

A brief introduction by Bruno Stein stresses the social as well as the
labor market implications of immigrant labor. Walter Fogel in his
article on Mexican labor comments on the number and occupational
characteristics of both legal and illegal Mexican workers. He finds that
their presence has resulted in lower wages, greater unemployment and
less unionization. The paper by Michael Piore is concerned with the
influx of Puerto Ricans and Spanish-speaking aliens in Boston and the
Northeast. He finds these groups replacing Blacks, youth and legal
immigrants at the bottom of the low income sector. Vernon M. Briggs,
Jr. and Dale L. Hisstand comment on the two papers.

Jones, Lamar B. “Alien commuters in United States labor markets.”
International Migration Review (Center for Migration Studies, 209
65-86. $2.50.

This study of “green carders” finds evidence to indicate that the com-
muter labor does adversely affect employment and wage standards of
resident workers.

Keely, Charles B. “Effects of U.S. immigration law on manpower char-
acteristics of immigrants.” Demography (Population Association of
America, P.O. Box 14183, Benjamin Franklin Station, Washington,

As a result of the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nation-
ality Act, the labor force characteristics of immigrants changed con-
siderably both as to area of origin and occupational composition. More
workers with lower skills come from Europe and the Latin American
countries with white-collar, especially professional, immigrants coming
from Asia, Africa and Oceania.

This study of commuters across the border, both legal and illegal, is concerned with its origins, causes and impact on the resident American work force. Most border crossers do unskilled labor, the largest single occupation being agricultural labor. The author finds that the border crossers have a serious impact on the employment prospects, wages and working conditions of the working poor in the border areas.


The author uses the findings of his case study of Puerto Rican workers in Boston as the basis for his hypotheses of the role of the migrant in American industrial development.


This study which was prepared for the federal Department of Labor, is based on interviews with nearly 800 illegal aliens in May-June 1975. The study found that the respondents were likely to be young, disadvantaged adults with less education and lower skills than the U.S. labor force. The authors conclude that these workers have an adverse effect on the domestic labor market by displacing low-skill legal residents and by depressing labor standards.


The author stresses the difficulty of assessing the economic impact of immigration. He points out that the per capita income of the native population will increase with the number of immigrants. As most immigrants are likely to have low skills, they will tend to compete with low skill residents and increase distributional inequality within the country.