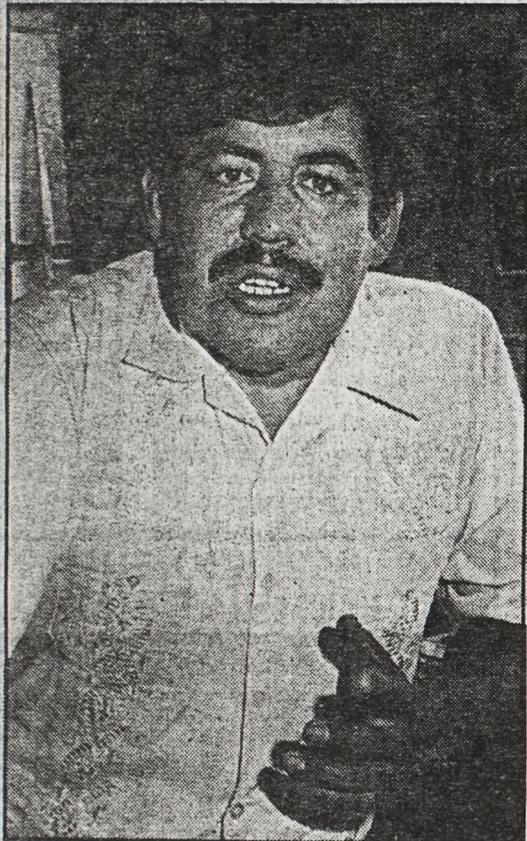


South Bay spokespersons clash

Simpson-Mazzoli: two views

By **MAX BRANSCOMB**

Star-News Staff Writer



Star-News photo

HERMAN BACA

He says its a racist piece of legislation that discriminates against Chicanos.

Immigration — the influx of foreign-born persons into the United States — remains one of the most controversial, emotional topics of the 1980s. From economically, politically, and socially repressed areas all around the world, people are trying to make their way into this country — either temporarily, to work and support families back home, or in hopes of a new life in this country.

Unauthorized immigration, particularly from war-torn and economically-depressed Latin American nations, has been on the rise in recent years, prompting cries for immigration reform from some circles.

RESHAPING America's immigration laws has been a mammoth and unpopular task. Efforts by the Carter administration bogged down and died, as did a bill introduced last year by Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyoming) and Rep. Romano Mazzoli (D-Ky.).

A resurrected version of the Simpson-Mazzoli bill, however, was passed overwhelmingly by the Senate earlier this year and has a good chance of

gaining House approval in September. Battle lines are forming between conservatives favoring the bill and a loose coalition of civil rights and human rights groups who oppose it.

The Star-News asked a pair of leading local spokespersons to explain their respective views on the Simpson-Mazzoli bill.

Muriel Watson of Bonita, a national advocate for the U.S. Border Patrol, favors passage of the immigration bill.

Herman Baca of National City, chairman of the committee on Chicano Rights, opposes the legislation. Both have long-standing backgrounds in the immigration controversy and have followed the attempts at immigration reform from the outset.

Watson answers questions first:

Why do you favor the Simpson-Mazzoli bill?

Watson: I favor the passage of immigration reform, even though I'm not in total agreement with the Simpson-Mazzoli package. It has its imperfections I don't like, but the bottom line of the package is that it is something; good, bad, or indifferent.

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Star-News photo

MURIEL WATSON

She says it's needed to bring the borders under control.

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✓ Simpson-Mazzoli:

two views from here

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Our current laws are a mockery. You are breaking American law if you enter this country without documentation. But if you hire somebody who is here illegally — someone who is breaking the law — you are not breaking the law. That's paradoxical, ridiculous. Why lump all the responsibility on to a foreign national, when the person who encourages him to step over (the border) can escape with clean hands? That's wrong. It's morally and legally a wrongful situation and needs to be rectified.

How would passage of the Simpson-Mazzoli bill rectify this situation?

Watson: The bottom line of Simpson-Mazzoli

businesses that employ illegal aliens. It's not fair.

You have argued in the past that America must have more control of its borders. How would Simpson-Mazzoli help in this respect?

Watson: The borders are out of control. That's probably the most overwhelming reason why we should pass immigration reform. We have a question here of sovereign dignity and national security. There are thousands of people making illegal entries every minute of every day and we don't know who they are or why they're coming. That is not right.

It's not fair to you and I and it's not fair to all of those who have waited

'In Disneyland they know how to control crowds. They don't limit the number of people who can ride on Space Mountain, but they control the crowds waiting to get on. I'm not for closed borders, just controlled borders.'

—Muriel Watson

... is to put the responsibility for employing illegal aliens on to the employers where it belongs. American citizens do not have the right to hire alien workers when other people in business are hiring American workers and conforming to wage and time regulations.

We have countless examples of horrendous abuse stories in which the foreign workers are abused and taken advantage of by unscrupulous businesses. Stories of people being locked into the places they work for months, kidnappings, labor law abuses, exploitation, blackmail are ignored by the American public. When you're here illegally you're not too likely to make a stink about the way you're treated.

The honest businesses and businesses in the Midwest where the access to this pool of cheap labor isn't there can't compete with the

so long to enter legally.

It has been argued by some that curtailing the supply of undocumented workers to the secondary work force would have adverse affects — even fatal affects — on some businesses and industries. Your response?

Watson: You hear all kinds of spook tales. If these industries (clothing, farming) could exist at the turn of the century, they could exist now.

This argument is a justification for sweatshop labor that the American labor unions have tried to halt. The conditions in these shops and farms are miserable and need to be improved. Feeding more eager bodies into them will not help this happen. By the garment industry's own admission, 99% of their work force is comprised of illegal aliens, most of which are treated terribly in the classic sweatshop sense.

History has a way of repeating itself. This same argument about the need for cheap labor was used to fight the labor union movement at the turn of the century; same song, second verse.

People will always need food and clothes, so these industries will not curl up and die. They may cost us a bit more, but it's worth it to get people living on a decent wage.

Our country was built on a foundation of hard-working immigrants who were looking for a new opportunity. Why is the immigration situation different now?

Watson: That's right, the United States has always been a sanctuary of sorts for downtrodden people of the world, and it still is. Show me another country that has welcomed as many boat people, Cuban refugees, Haitian refugees, or Russian dissidents.

There are several differences, though, between those who entered legally and those who are entering illegally. Not that the people are necessarily any different — they are still the ambitious, hard-working young people who form the cream-of-the-crop of their nations. Therein lies part of the tragedy... these people are needed in their native countries.

You have called undocumented immigration "the silent invasion" and the Border Patrol the "phantom agency." Does the immigration situation constitute an invasion?

Watson: Yes, in the sense that we have lost control of our borders. People we know nothing about — some with nefarious backgrounds — are entering our country by the thousands every day. In Disneyland they know how to control crowds. They don't limit the number of people who can ride on Space Mountain, but they control the crowds waiting to get on. I'm not for closed borders, just controlled borders.

In March the Border Patrol apprehended 49,000 persons trying to enter illegally — that's enough to fill San Diego Jack Murphy Stadium. Every year 400,000 illegal aliens are caught trying to cross, but for every one apprehended, at least two get away. We've got to beef up the Border Patrol.

Aliens are a drain on our economy because they send money they earn in this country back across the border. They don't spend it here. Banco de Mexico released a study that said wages earned in other countries were now number three on the list for sources of gross national income. Tourism is now fourth.

Simpson-Mazzoli is not perfect, but it is a step in the right direction.

(Muriel Watson is a National Advocate for

the U.S. Border Patrol, and was previously the agency's national spokesperson. She has testified a number of times before congress and has argued for immigration reform on TV, radio, and print forums across the country. She recently ran unsuccessfully as the Republican candidate for the 40th District State Senate seat won by Wadie Deddeh.)

program. This is a windfall of cheap labor for the businesses drawing from the H-2 pool.

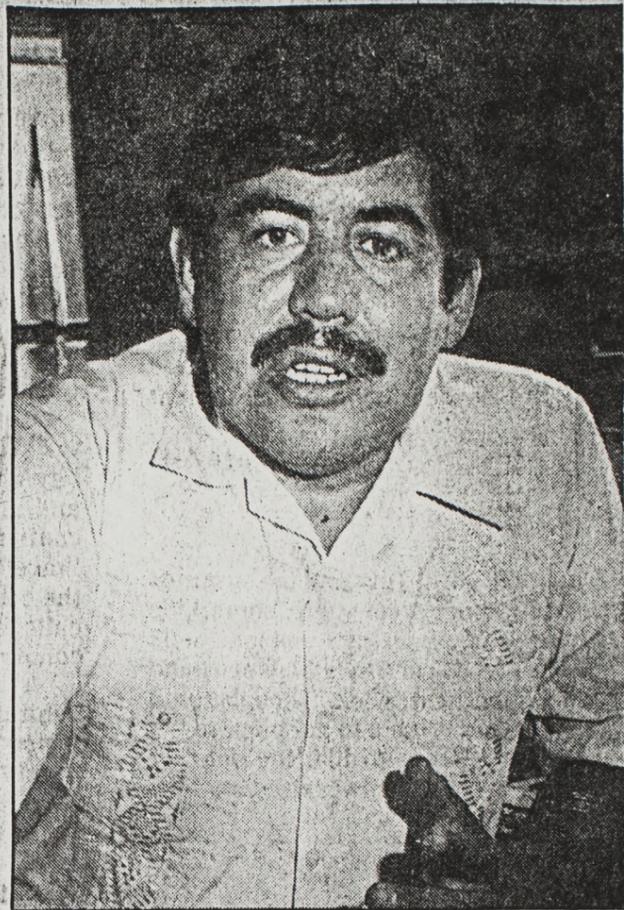
Won't the proposed sanctions against employers who hire undocumented workers curb the abuses we see now by penalizing employers who are perpetuating the secondary labor sector?

Baca: No. In fact, it will have the opposite effect. Why does a so-called immigration bill address labor matters? Wouldn't it be better to

can buy in Tijuana for \$5 or from a smuggler for \$50. It sounds reasonable on the surface, but what it really does is give the employers one more club to use against workers. If a worker gets uppity and starts asking for decent wages and working conditions, the employer can say, "Hey watch it, or I'm going to turn you in."

Another problem lies in the proposal to increase the Border Patrol. The Border Patrol has nothing to do with immigration, it is, in fact, an enforcement arm — a private army — of the secondary labor sector. Their job is to ensure that there is no change in the status quo, as we have seen by their efforts in disrupting organizing efforts by people who were trying to improve conditions and upgrade the wages for those workers who are not franchised.

The only parallel there is between the Border Patrol and the past is the Texas Rangers, a private army for cattle barons



HERMAN BACA
He's against it

Star-News photo

Now, Baca answers:
Why do you oppose the Simpson-Mazzoli bill?

'In my opinion, the Simpson-Mazzoli bill is the most racist and most blatantly anti-Mexican piece of legislation since the end of the U.S. Mexican War in 1850.'

—Herman Baca

Baca: In my opinion, the Simpson-Mazzoli bill is the most racist and most blatantly anti-Mexican piece of legislation since the end of the U.S.-Mexican War in 1850. Simpson-Mazzoli is not an immigration bill, but a labor bill. The bill is intended to do two things that will be very damaging to the human rights of those who compose the secondary labor sector of the U.S. economy, which is composed of the agribusiness, the hotels and motels, the garment industry and the live-in domestics throughout the Southwest.

Number one, it is intended to create a system to legalize the exploitation that exists in the secondary labor sector by liberalizing the H-2 program (legal importation of temporary workers) where a possible one million persons may be brought in.

How would the H-2 program increase exploitation?

Baca: Basically, it is a throwback to the old bracero program, which our society deemed unfit and inhumane nearly 20 years ago. The last director of the bracero program called it a "slave" program which grossly violated the human rights of the people in it.

Simpson-Mazzoli is not an immigration program as much as it is a labor program. The United States will need to import between 5 and 15 million foreign workers by the year 2,000 because of zero population growth in this country.

Simpson-Mazzoli is a labor program for some very powerful blocks in the agricultural and industrial realms. Under the proposed amnesty section of the bill (which proposes granting residency to most of the undocumented aliens who have lived in the United States since 1980), those who do not qualify are channelled into the H-2

have the labor department deal with abuses of workers?

The proposed National Workers Identification Card that would require every worker to carry an ID card would open up a lot of potential for abuse. Who do you think will be asked for these ID cards when they apply for work? The brown-skinned people, that's who.

And what does this card have to do with immigration? What we are seeing now in the halls of congress is a labor bill in the guise of immigration reform in order that the American public can subsidize the exploitation of millions of persons that are going to have to be imported.

You said earlier there were two factors involved in your opposition to the Simpson-Mazzoli bill. What is the second?

Baca: The other factor, as I see it, is an attempt to maintain the status quo among the 20 million Chicanos and Latinos. A large part of the proposal is targeted at the Chicano community in order to ensure that political power and economic power never falls into the hands of this segment of society.

The employer sanctions would be more accurately called employee sanctions because they are much tougher on the workers than on the people who hire them. Under Simpson-Mazzoli, it would be a felony for an immigrant to be in possession of any phony papers you

in the 19th century. Since 1924, that role has gone to the only national police force, the Border Patrol. It is a law enforcement agency

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formed exclusively for persons of Mexican ancestry. The statistics bear this out. Of all the people apprehended by the Border Patrol, over 95% are persons of Mexican ancestry. Of the agency's 2,200 agents, 1,700 are located in the Southwest, even though the U.S. Government in its 1980 census said that only 48% of all the undocumented workers in the country were of Mexican descent.

What benefits would Simpson-Mazzoli have for undocumented workers and the "average" citizen?

Baca: For the American citizens, none. The proposed National Identification Card is a threat to all of our civil rights. It's 1984 and Big Brother stuff in the classic sense.

For the undocumented worker, there

are also no benefits. The amnesty section in the bill will never come about and is so full of loopholes it could be a quagmire of abuses. Those who qualify on the face will have to wait until almost the year 2,000 to get citizenship.

In the meantime, they are not eligible for any social or medical benefits even though they are paying into these funds. This is taxation without representation. These people who are paying taxes to support these programs cannot use them.

Temporary resident workers waiting for citizenship will not be able to bring any members of their families over and will not be able to visit families outside of the country without danger of losing their opportunity to gain citizenship. The amnesty proposal is a smokescreen, a crude attempt to

appease Chicanos. It's a token offering and the trade-off with the other provisions does not add up.

What would you propose as an alternative?

Baca: What we need to do is become more cognizant of the human rights of undocumented workers.

Undocumented Mexican workers are scapegoated as the bearers of everything wrong with society in the Southwest, and that is ridiculous. We are all really just trying to do the same thing — support our families and make a better life for our children. More guns and barbed wire at the border won't get us there. Neither will National Worker Cards or any other liberty-restricting measures. We need a return to dignity and fairness. That's the key.

(Herman Baca is the chairman of the National City-based Chicano Rights Committee, and a National City businessman. He was a former campaign worker for the Republican Party and Richard Nixon in 1968, before becoming disenchanted with the "disfranchised" status of the Chicano community. Baca is a frequent speaker at universities, and TV and radio forums).