

July 16, 1959

One of the ringleaders and the chief exploiter of the Mexican laborers is B.A. Harrigan of El Centro, Calif. He is the manager of the Imperial Valley Farmers Association of El Centro, Calif. This man wields great political power and dominates local enforcement agencies.

Nine years ago, B.A. Harrigan was the County Farm Agent. He was known as a one suit man. Now he is driving Cadillacs. Nine years ago, he became the manager of the Imperial Valley Farmers Assoc. Harrigan did not invest any money in this organization. This organization is supposed to be a non profit organization.

Many farmers belong to this organization so that they can get workers (imported Mexican laborers). If a farmer wants to get workers, he has to do what Harrigan tells him. I have found that the biggest farmers are in fear of Harrigan.

There are many camps where the Mexican laborers live. The owners of these camps are in fear of Harrigan. Harrigan will not permit Mexican laborers to live at these camps if the owners dont do what a Harrigan says. Harrigan makes the camp owners buy almost everything through him for example: beds, blankets, food etc.

Harrigan has set up a wholesale food concern and the camp owners have to buy from Harrigan. The camp owners feed the Mexicans and make \$1.00 per laborer feeding him daily. If the camp ~~xxxxxx~~ owner has 1000 workers, he makes \$1,000.00 profit daily. The camp owner is out of business if Harrigan does not let Mexican workers go to the camp. The stage is then set for kickbacks to Harrigan.

Harrigan in buying beds, blankets, food etc. from manufacturers and big food processors and having the monopoly to do this for 15,000 workers ~~xxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ has the stage set for kickbacks from all these big suppliers to him.

We know two Weber bread Salesman-drivers who were supplying a camp near Seeley, Calif. Then the camp owner told the drivers, He cant buy from them. Harrigan ordered this change. Continental Baking got the business.

Systematic examination of the books of these camp owners, quizzing of the camp owners, quizzing of the big companies and checking of their books will reveal the information about B.A. Harrigan.

I have never seen a private individual who is so univerally hated and feared as B.A. Harrigan and these camp owners are ripe to spill the beans.

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Joe Corona, 1201 B St, Brawley, Calif. is Secretary Treasurer of Desert Growers Association of 1551 East Main St. Brawley, Calif. Previous of 1956, the Imperial Valley Farmers Association was the only importer of Mexican laborers. Under this setup, all the farmers were afraid of B.A. Harrigan, the manager, because if he did not give them laborers, the farmers would be out of business.

B.A. Harrigan then got into a fight with the Continental Casualty Co. of Chicago. This insurance company was swindling the laborers and Mr. Harrigan was not getting his cut. Continental Casualty Co. was forced out as the insurance company for Imperial Valley Farmers Assoc. (This fight will be taken up in another release)

Continental Casualty Co. of Chicago got good and angry and helped organize another Mexican laborer importing organization called the Desert Growers Assoc. of Brawley. Continental Casualty Co. has a lot of political and financial influence down in Mexico City and had the Mexican government approve Desert Growers. Lots of the farmers in Imperial valley who were afraid of B.A. Harrigan since previously, he and his organization had the monopoly on the importation, were now glad to join Desert Growers. With two organizations, the farmers thought things ~~were~~ would be free and easy. The farmers were mistaken. Desert Growers under Joe Corona began to do the same things that B.A. Harrigan with the Imperial Valley Farmers Assoc. had been doing.

Joe Corona asks every supplier of Desert Growers for a kickback. Locally, when he was buying cotton picking bags, Joe Corona got a kickback from Nick Robolino of Brawley. Desert Growers buys from big wholesalers in Los Angeles, and San Diego and Joe Corona gets kickbacks from them.

It must be understood, that by U.S. Law #78 and the standard work contract, Desert Growers is supposed to feed the workers at cost. In other words --not make a profit on feeding the workers. The truth is that at the height of the season with Desert Growers feeding 2,000 to 3,000 workers, Desert Growers makes \$2,000.00 to \$3,000.00 profit daily in the feeding of the workers. In order to fool the U.S. Dept. of Labor, Joe Corona gets padded bills from the suppliers who in return kick back in cash to Joe Corona. Therefore on the books of Desert Growers, the food costs are high and Desert Growers can prove by these faked figures that they are feeding the workers at cost.

But these faked figures are also to fool the Internal Revenue Service. These cash kickbacks are not reported by Joe Corona and his partners. His partners will be taken up in a later release.

The poverty stricken helpless, Mexican laborers ~~are~~ being swindled on his food costs and Joe Corona is getting illegal money which he does not report on his income tax.

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The partners of Joe Corona are:

Jake Brown 426 West G St. Brawley, Calif.

Eugene Marsh 244 Andrita Pl. Brawley, Calif.

Charles Vonderahe 255 H St. Brawley, Calif.

Charles Graham (now the estate of Charles Graham)
255 H St. Brawley, Calif.

The Desert Growers Assoc. is supposedly an association of farmers for non profit. However, the articles of incorporation whi will show how it was organized by Joe Corona and the above men and set up in such a fashion that these five men divide the profits. The rest of the farmers in the association are purely passive. They joined just to get Mexican workers to work on their farms. They, the other farmers, do not invest any money in the Desert Assoc. and do not share in any profits. They, the other farmers, joined to get away from the domination of B.A. Harrigan of the Imperial Valley Farmers Assoc.

As pointed out in the release on Joe Corona, the big profit of Desert Growers Assoc. is in the feeding of the workers. The workers are intimidated so that they are afraid to eat anywhere else. The workers pay \$1.75 for three meals a day. These meals are chiefly beans and the cost to Desert Growers is about 75 cents so that Desert Growers makes a profit of \$1.00 per man per day. Feeding 2000 to 3000 men per day gives a clear profit of \$2,000.00 to \$3,000.00 per day. The only way these big profits can be drained off so that the Labor Dept. of U.S. does not find out about the big profits which are forbidden by law, is for Desert Growers to enter into a system of Kickbacks with wholesale food suppliers from San Diego and Los Angeles. All these 4 partners share with Joe Corona in these cash kickbacks. Through the grapevine, we have heard that there is a lot of bickering amongst the partners because some of the partners believe they are not sharing in all the cash kickbacks.

The penniless Mexican workers who pay for these meagre meals, of course are the victims. But to show how cruel this exploitation is, I have been told time and again by Mexican laborers who have been in the Pioneers Memorial Hospital for 2 to 3 weeks, that when the laborer gets back to Desert Growers and gets back to work, that the laborer has deducted from his pay, charges for meals at camp even though the laborer was in the hospital during that time.

At other times, the charge for meals for 2 to 3 weeks, is deducted from the disability check for the employee. When an employee is sick, he is supposed to get \$14.00 per week while in the hospital. The Desert Growers collect the mail and when the check for the employee comes into the camp, the Desert Growers open the mail and force the employee to sign the check and hand it over to them for payment of meals at camp when in reality, the laborer was in the hospital during that time.

At other times, the Mexican worker is kicked out to Mexico before his disability check comes in. Then the Desert Growers open the mail and forge the name on the check and whoever does this collects the money.

Because of the multiplicity of methods to swindle and cheat the Mexican laborers, the partners and employees of Desert Growers are in a constant uproar. Employees are being fired because they get the laborers disability checks. The partners want to get the checks. The matter of the employees and their participation will be taken up in a later release.

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Two main employees of Desert Growers Assoc. who are active in the exploitation of the imported Mexican workers are:

Arthur Dalke --manager

Joe Rodriguez----bookkeeper

A man by the name of Silva was fired as a manager to bring in Dalke as manager. Dalke was brought in as a shrewd man to really put the squeeze on the Mexican workers. It was he who put in the scheme of charging a sick worker who is at the hospital, for meals at the camp. When the Mexican protested at camp that he had not eaten meals at camp because he was at the hospital, Dalke would threaten the laborer with discharge to Mexico. The laborer afraid to lose his job would shut up.

Dalke would open the mail of the Mexican worker when he saw that the man was getting a disability check from the insurance company. Then he would force the Mexican under threats of sending the Mexican back to Mexico, to sign the check. Dalke would say that the check was in payment for the camp meals during the weeks the Mexican had been sick in the hospital.

At other times, the sick Mexican would be sent back to Mexico before his disability check arrived. Then Dalke would take the check and forge the name and collect on it.

Joe Rodriguez, the bookkeeper, would assist Arthur Dalke in all this. At times, he would be the one doing it. Between, the two of them, the Mexican would be swindled.

It is not known whether, Dalke and Rodriguez turned in the money to be divided up amongst the main partners of the Desert Growers Assoc.

According to the grapevine, Joe Rodriguez was caught by the partners in some sort of a situation where the partners were supposed to get the money but did not. Joe Rodriguez was fired two weeks ago.

Now Joe Rodriguez and Arthur Dalke are opening up a camp East of El Centro (the old Freedman camp). It is to be repeated that camp operators by U.S. Dept. of Labor regulations are not supposed to make money on the feeding of Mexican laborers. However, no one does anything for nothing. Therefore, Dalke and Rodriguez therefore plan to continue to exploit the Mexican workers. The big question is - where did these two get the money to become camp operators? Is this from the ill gotten gains they made at the Desert Growers camp?

I wish to emphasize to the Internal Revenue Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation that this racket extends from Texas to California. and from the border to Northern California. The U.S. is being cheated out of income taxes and all this money really belongs to 500,000 imported Mexican laborers scattered over all this territory. I of course am giving only local names for investigation.

Ben Yellen, M.D.

Chairman, Committee for the Protection of Mexican Workers.

July 17, 1959

Two other employees of the Desert Growers Assoc. of 1551 East Main St. Brawley, Calif. who are running a racket are:

Elvio Ruiz ---foreman

Ernest Ruiz ---asst. foreman

These two men are brothers. In 1954, both of them were convicted in the Imperial County Superior Court of short weighing the cotton picked by Mexican laborers. At that time, they were not working for the Desert Growers Assoc. They escaped a prison sentence and were fined \$500.00 a piece.

Apparently, this conviction was a good recommendation for them to go to work for Desert Growers Assoc. to assist in the exploitation of the Mexican workers. The Desert Growers Association since its inception has been working a clever racket. Each worker contributes a dollar profit to the association for his daily meal. Mr. Dahlke the manager figured out the scheme of making more money on meals. It works as follows: if the camp had a 100 workers, it would make \$100.00 per day profit. For the week, that would mean \$700.00 profit on the meals. However, if the Association had 200 workers, the profit would amount to \$1400.00 per week. Now the U.S. Dept of Labor has a regulation that a worker is guaranteed \$2.50 per day even if he does not work. A worker working a full day of 8 hours ~~at~~ at 70 cents an hour, for 6 days would make \$33.60. Meals for 7 days would amount to \$12.25 at the rate of \$1.75 per day. The worker would end up with \$21.35 after the deduction for meals. The trick was not to give the worker a full days work. If he was given 4 hours work a day, the worker would have made the \$2.80 or 30 cents over the guarantee of \$2.50. The scheme then is to have 200 workers working half time rather than 100 workers full time. In this way the same amount of work is done and Desert Growers has twice the profit as far as feeding the workers for they are now feeding 200 workers instead of 100. The effect on the take home pay of the exploited Mexican worker is terrific. Working half time, he makes only \$16.80 and when the \$12.25 is deducted from this, the worker is left with \$4.55 only as contrasted to \$21.35 when he works full time. The Desert Growers works this racket all the time and is notorious amongst the ~~the~~ merchants for the low amounts on the workers checks.

This scheme is so obvious to the ignorant Mexican workers that even they recognize the racket. Elvio and Ernest Ruiz have a racket on top of this racket. Many workers dont live at the camp. They live on the ranches and work fulltime and get good meals. So the Ruiz brothers demand a \$10.00 to \$20.00 bribe and they then assign the worker to full time work on a ranch. They of course dont report these bribes on their income tax.

The Ruiz brothers are in some way involved in the appropriation of the disability checks that Arthur Dahlke and Joe Rodriguez have been swindling from the Mexican workers. ~~xxxx~~ About 2 months ago, both brothers were fired and through the grapevine, it would appear that the Ruiz brothers were getting the mail and finding the checks and forging the names to the checks and getting the money.

The same type of rackets is going on all over the Soutwestern U.S. The ~~internal~~ Internal Revenue Service is losing millions in taxes on this racket money. The FBI should be interested in this racket which is interstate and which is a blot on the honor of the United States.