

NEWS LETTER FROM DR. BEN YELLEN

Brawley, Calif.

Sept. 25, 1960

TO ALL MERCHANTS AND BUSINESSMEN OF IMPERIAL VALLEY

I have just returned from Washington, D.C. and New York City where I went to publicize the serious economic situation of you merchants and businessmen.

I visited retail merchants associations, wholesalers associations and manufacturers associations. Not one of them had heard how U.S. Public Law 78 permitting Mexican farmworkers to come to the United States, was injuring merchants and businessmen. Neither did the U.S. Senators and Representatives know about the bad state of business.

Three letters were made up by me and I had them printed and sent to every Senator and Representative. They were also sent to all businessmen and merchants associations and to the lobbyists in Washington, D.C. who represent these associations.

Even the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor which consists of 65 organizations in Washington, did not know that the merchants and businessmen of the farm towns of the Southwest were seriously hurt by the importation of braceros. Some of the members of this Council are the National Council of Churches which represents most of the Protestant churches, and the Catholic Rural Welfare Conference which represents the Catholics. These 65 organizations have been in the forefront of the fight to prevent the continuance of U.S. Public Law 78. These groups state that the American farm worker is lowest on the totem pole as regards to wages and the bringing in of braceros depress the wages even more and put Americans out of work. These groups did not know that the merchants and businessmen were also being hurt so that they never testified about this to Congress.

The situation when I arrived in Washington, was as follows: U.S. Public Law 78 was due to expire in June 1961. In April 1960, the House of Representatives voted to continue the Law for another 2 years until June 1963. Do not forget Congressman Saund voted to extend this law contrary to the best interests of the merchants and businessmen. I arrived Aug. 8th, the U.S. Senate was scheduled to consider U.S. Public Law 78. My letters to the lawmakers and lobbyists of the trade associations, had for the first time given the true economic facts about how bad business was. I gave the names and addresses of businesses that had closed up. I told about going businesses which were not making money. It was emphasized that the same situation was true all over the Southwest in the farm towns.

The big farm interests realized that if the matter came to a vote in the Senate, that they would be defeated. Therefore, they told the Senate that their crops would be in the ground by Spring 1961, and if the Mexican workers were removed in June 1961, they would not have workers to harvest the crops in the Fall. A compromise was reached whereby Law 78 was extended only 6 months to Dec. 31, 1961.

The big farm interests are going to try again in the next Congressional session to get another extension. We need publicity to stop them. Send me donations. Make your checks payable to "Cash" so that the big farmers will not be able to boycott you. I will cash the checks without my name appearing on the endorsement.