

Ambassador to Mexico Harry Turkal reportedly made a confidential report to the White House last year, calling for fenced-in industrial parks straddling the border. The fences apparently would have something to do with customs matters, but one can see they'd also be ideal for keeping out union organizers. One wonders if they might also serve to keep out U.S. fair labor standards.

The Mexican government and some Mexican and U.S. business organizations work hard to encourage firms to come into the border area. Seminar-type meetings have been held in California, Texas, New York City and Washington, D.C., to sell PRONAF to manufacturers.

Glorified labor contractors have sprung up to provide consultant and management services aimed at overcoming the shyness of some U.S. businessmen toward moving into a foreign area. Cal Pacific of Newport Beach, Calif., for instance, will handle the whole Mexican operation for a U.S. manufacturer, charging \$1.25 to \$1.40 per hour for each man hour of work performed in the plant.

The ad with which this article begins is another example.

With so many of the border-jumping U.S. companies in our industry, the IUE has been extremely active in seeking information and alerting the labor movement to PRONAF.

Says President Paul Jennings:

"We want Mexico to industrialize, but not on an unsound, runaway basis. If U.S. companies can flee to Mexico to exploit the low wages prevalent there, then they'll surely up and run elsewhere if labor costs go up in Mexico."

INVESTIGATION MADE LAST YEAR

Last year, Jennings appointed District 12 President Drohan to conduct an investigation of the border problem. Largely as a result of information uncovered by Drohan with the help of District 9 Administrator Charles Snodgrass and District 10 Secretary-Treasurer Ben Dolan, and coordination and contacts by Dave Lasser, President Jennings' assistant for international affairs, the AFL-CIO Executive Council adopted a resolution calling for:

Congressional repeal of Section 807 of the Tariff Code, which provides import advantages to the U.S.-owned border strip plants.

Major considerations by the U.S. and Mexican border commissions to the interests of workers, and formal consultations by the commissions with the labor movements of both countries.

A U.S. government policy in opposition to this type of unregulated, low-wage operation; government refusal to assist such runaways, and federal officials' making information publicly available concerning them.

The council noted that the AFL-CIO "has consistently supported efforts to improve economic, social and political relations between the U.S. and Mexico" and "will continue policies based on mutual benefit to workers in both countries."

"Since U.S.-owned PRONAF plants are, in effect, operating within the U.S. economy, it is our conviction that U.S. labor standards should prevail."

Mary Callahan, chairman of the IUE Electronics Industry Conference Board, expressed our union's concern in a speech at the AFL-CIO Convention in December. Following her remarks, the convention unanimously adopted a resolution in line with the position taken by the council.

In addition, AFL-CIO President George Meany appointed a committee to investigate further and seek remedies. The committee, headed by Amalgamated Clothing Workers President Jacob Potofsky, includes IUE President Jennings, former International Ladies Garment Workers President David Dubinsky and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Secretary Joseph Keenan.

In her speech to the AFL-CIO Convention, Mary Callahan called for cooperative efforts between the labor movements of the two countries. She also spelled out just why we are concerned.

"We are attempting to organize the Transatron Company, an important manufacturer of semiconductors in Massachusetts," she said. "They have just established a plant employing 1,500 people on the Mexican side of the border, paying those miserably low wage rates. This gives the company a weapon against organizational efforts by the threats of moving production to Mexico."

One runaway IUE fought hard to expose was Motorola's Nogales plant, opened last fall to handle work sent from the firm's facilities in Phoenix, Ariz.

As in the case of most PRONAF operations, Motorola's was a hush-hush affair. The company refused to confirm or deny initial reports on its plans.