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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

February 3, 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL PAUL T. CARROLL  
THE WHITE HOUSE

The attached memorandum is for the President's three  
o'clock meeting this afternoon with Ambassador Tello of  
Mexico to discuss the Migrant Labor Agreement.

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*William C. G. [Signature]*  
W. H. Scott  
Director  
Executive Secretariat

FEB 3 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Mexican Ambassador's Visit to Discuss Migrant Labor Agreement.

Ambassador Tello will call to inform you of President Ruiz Cortines' desire that talks on migrant labor be renewed with a view to reaching a quick, simple *modus vivendi* prior to a more extensive agreement. The Ambassador has requested that his visit be kept from the newspapers.

After a two weeks extension, the old agreement expired on January 15. The United States then started an interim procedure for employing Mexican farm workers applying at our border. Although this involves a United States Government guaranteed contract containing full protection for the worker, it immediately gave rise to much inspired Mexican press criticism of the United States. The new recruitment process is working well, but a formal decision of the Comptroller General, reversing an earlier informal one, has just eliminated the legal authority of the Labor Department to spend funds on this program unless done "pursuant to arrangements" with Mexico. This is believed to be still unknown to the Mexicans.

The United States position is that we prefer to handle the migrant movement in cooperation with Mexico, but that this is worthwhile only if done under a smoothly operating agreement which routes the bulk of the movement through legal channels, thereby protecting both American labor and the Mexican migrants. The old agreement operated haltingly (due to capricious unilateral actions by Mexican authorities), and only 200,000 entries were made under the agreement procedure while well in excess of one million occurred illegally, to the detriment of all interests, including the Mexican migrants. The Mexican Government has been slow to face realities and has wanted to continue the old agreement. On some issues it has refused our request for change and on others it has asked us to accept oral assurances that the objectionable actions of their officials will stop. Our previous experience with such oral assurances has not been happy.

The interested Departments - State, Justice, and Labor - all oppose return to the old agreement. Our Government's willingness to continue working for an improved one has been made clear to the Mexicans. If the Mexicans wish to join with us in the current procedure, pending negotiation of a new agreement, we are prepared immediately to accept full Mexican participation on mutually satisfactory terms to be worked out at once through normal channels. (Their acceptance of such a suggestion would eliminate the problem raised by the Comptroller General's decision and save the United States considerable embarrassment.) If this is not feasible, we might gain valuable time, during which legislation already introduced to eliminate the Comptroller General problem may pass, by offering to assist Mexico to relieve the problem created by thousands of workers assembling at border gates. With the need for workers at a minimum this month, we could announce, jointly if desired, that our immediate requirements have been met and that there will be no additional hiring until further notice.

WALTER B. SMITH