

### ***La Prensa: Daily Independent Newspaper*** **Wednesday, April 4, 1923**

#### ***The Time for Mexican Laborers<sup>1</sup> Has Arrived***

- **The Mexican Consulate has resolved to duly protect laborers who are contracted for hire in various places.**
- **The contracts are signed under public notary to guarantee legality.**
  - **A work contingent that departed yesterday is traveling to Pennsylvania under excellent conditions, and it is hoped that more laborers will depart within a few days.**

The first contingent of Mexican laborers hired through the Mexican General Consulate in San Antonio departed yesterday morning for Philadelphia, PA, where they will offer their services in a powerful industrial agreement.

On board a special train contracted by the "Bethlehem Steel Co." of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, two hundred Mexicans left this city yesterday morning as the vanguard of a great contingent of workers who will in the course of the present month travel to the north and to the east of the United States to offer their services as laborers, supported by a contract that the aforementioned consulate signed with the representative of the said business and by which our compatriots are guaranteed their salary during the time of their service as well as any return-trip that might be made in the case that, because of special conditions, they cannot or do not want to continue offering their services in that part of the country.

The participation of the Mexican Consulate in this agreement, which was made with the approval and goodwill of the federal authorities from American Immigration, forms part of an extensive plan of protection that the said Consulate has drawn up in favor of our nationals and whose first results have left everyone satisfied on behalf of whom they have intervened.

#### **Consulate Asks for Information**

Some time ago the Mexican Consulate received a request from the "Bethlehem Steel Company" asking them the conditions under which the Consulate could provide a contingent of Mexican workers, and later the Consulate required the necessary information in order to know the solvency and honorability of the aforementioned business with the purpose of being able to assure the Mexican laborers that they would not suffer any fraud and that upon embarking on such a

---

<sup>1</sup> The Spanish term is "*bracero*," (from "*brazo*," meaning "arm") and will consistently be translated as "laborer." "Bracero" was and still is a common term for unskilled immigrant labor. On an interesting etymological sidenote, "manual" labor derives from "*manus*" (latin) which means "hand."

long journey, they would do it with the certainty that their work would be well remunerated and guaranteed in every form.

When the offices of the Consulate verified that the mentioned company possessed a social capital of five hundred million dollars, that they employed more than twenty thousand workers of thirty distinct nationalities, and of various other advantages that this company offered, the Consulate called a representative of the said company and in the presence of Notary Mr. Hugo Allen Pahl from this city (San Antonio), they proceeded to form the respective contract.

### **The Work Conditions**

The Mexican workers who do not have a specialized job, that is, those who are going to be standard workers only, will earn thirty cents per hour as a minimum; but if for any reason the manual labor rises in importance or if there is a worker of another nationality who earns a larger amount, this amount will also be paid to the Mexican.

For the costs of food and lodging, the workers will pay one dollar<sup>2</sup> and thirty cents daily, but they retain the option of choosing if they want to pay this amount or if they want to acquire their necessities on their own. The railway passage will be charged to the workers in small bi-monthly payments, but the company is obliged to return to this city (San Antonio) all workers who for any reason cannot offer their services, even if they have not worked the sufficient time to cover their debt.

The company is obliged to put all children of workers into schools that make no distinction whatsoever among children (of different races), not charging one cent for their instruction, and also taking responsibility for any medical attention in case of sickness.

The contract that the said company and the Consulate have signed will be good for one year, but if some workers for reason of ineptitude, laziness, or other reason do not fulfill what is stipulated, the company is obliged to transport them to this city and present them to the Mexican Consulate in order to prove that they were not left abandoned in that region for any reason.

The Mexican Consulate in Philadelphia will be the representative of this General Consulate to oversee the strict compliance with the clauses of this contract and they may undertake any inspection visits that they deem necessary.

### **More Workers Will Go**

According to what was said yesterday afternoon by Mexican General Consul of this city Mr. Alejandro Lubbert, the powerful aforementioned business wishes to transport a great number of Mexican workers for their various factories, waiting only to finish the special accommodations that are being raised in order to give the workers lodging with the goal of providing the highest comforts possible.

The same functionary told us that since it is already impossible to avoid this exodus of Mexicans, the General Consulate of Mexico has pledged to alleviate as far as it is able the problem of Mexicans who in their desire to find work accept the first conditions that present themselves without calculating the possible results and occasioning thereafter serious difficulties for the Mexican government.

---

<sup>2</sup> Although “*peso*” is used here and not “*dolar*,” the most likely reference is to United States currency, as peso can be used colloquially for dollar.