

Tense Times for Aliens as U.S. Clamps Down

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Body

Tension, turmoil and confusion are mounting for illegal **aliens** here and around the country as the Immigration and Naturalization Service begins to carry out the harsh second phase of the historic amnesty law: penalties against employers who hire illegal **aliens**.

Thousands of undocumented **aliens**, from farmhands in Colorado and Texas to sewing machine operators in Southern California, are being thrown out of work by employers worried about sanctions, which the immigration service began enforcing in August as a way to make **aliens** go back where they came from.

Here in the Arkansas River Valley of southeast Colorado, many are drifting from place to place, looking for work, sleeping under bridges and begging for food outside convenience stores.

"It's just a depressing situation," said E. J. Reed, migrant health coordinator for La Clinica del Valle, a medical clinic that serves farm workers in Rocky Ford. "We had a little boy in here the other day with an ear infection and when we asked his parents for their address, well, they had no address. They were living in a pickup truck. We see families like that all the **time**."

To the immigration service, the situation is an unfortunate but necessary step in reaching the goals of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

That law has two major provisions. The first offers the chance for eventual citizenship to millions of illegal **aliens** with a history of work or residence in this country. The second, intended to discourage further illegal immigration by denying jobs to **aliens**, imposes fines of up to \$10,000 for employers who hire undocumented workers.

But uncounted masses of **aliens** already in the **United States** do not qualify for the amnesty provisions. And many who do qualify have not begun the legalization process, because of poverty, fear or confusion. For the health care specialists, social workers, clergy and others who work with these people, their troubles are a sad drama, often filled with countless struggles and endless tears.

"Before, families at least had some steady income," said Carlos Marentes, director of the Border Agricultural Workers Union in El Paso. "Now they are showing up at our offices with nothing. Every day there are people here asking for food."

The immigration service estimates there are six million illegal **aliens** in the country; so far, 751,000 have started the amnesty procedure and the agency expects about two million to apply before the deadline, next May 4.

Under the law, the rest are supposed to leave the country.

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Here along the Arkansas River, scores of Mexicans who have historically found work harvesting the fall crop of onions, tomatoes and melons are heading back to Mexico - unless they are eligible for amnesty or are determined to hang on and risk poverty or deportation. Many are hopping on drafty boxcars with little clothing or money for the long, bumpy ride home.

"I'm sure there could be some more people on the move now," said Chuck McClure, a special agent with the I.N.S. regional office in Denver. "But eventually they are going to realize that without documentation they won't be able to work in the U.S. These people will have to go back home, wherever that may be. That's the whole point of the law."

'I Will Not Go to Jail'

The law has special categories for agriculture. While other aliens must show that they have lived in the United States since before Jan. 1, 1982, most farm workers can qualify for amnesty if they worked here for at least three months from May 1985 to May 1986. Farmers are exempt from the employer penalties until Dec. 1, 1988, but, like other employers, they must have documents on file proving that their workers have started the legalization process.

Many farmers, though, are not taking chances. "I will never use another illegal," said Truman Lusk, a Rocky Ford melon grower, who this fall is refusing to hire workers who do not have a temporary work permit, the first step toward citizenship. "I will not go to jail to feed this country."

For employers, the deadline for filing Form I-9, documenting that employees had begun the legalization process, was Sept. 1. About 50 members of the clergy in Los Angeles, home to much of the nation's Hispanic population, announced Sept. 12 that they would not comply with the law and urged others to refuse as well.

"We have passed the zero hour -Sept. 1 - and hundreds of undocumented aliens are losing their jobs," said the Rev. Luis Olivarez of the Queen of Angels Church in Los Angeles, one of those making the announcement. "They are trying desperately to find other ways to survive. It is very important the church does not abandon them."

A Knife Separating Families

Confusion about the law is widespread, a situation for which many blame the immigration service. "People are terribly confused," said Dani Arck, a lawyer with Colorado Legal Services in Denver. "There is so much misinformation around that people don't know what to believe. People are scared to death."

But Mr. McClure, the I.N.S. agent in Denver, said: "Anybody who says we haven't done everything possible to inform the public is not correct. We are going full bore, as fast as we can."

In many areas the new law has fallen like a knife, separating friend from friend, husband from wife. "I am sad, very sad," said one farm worker, Cipriano Garcia, a naturalized citizen who drove his wife and two children back to Mexico from Colorado on Sept. 1 because they are illegal aliens.

"For some people, this new law is good," said Mr. Garcia, who earns about \$15 a day picking onions near Rocky Ford. "For me, it is bad because I do not have the money to get my family legalized. I want to see my family very much."

Anxiety and a Suicide

Mr. McClure said that most aliens had had ample time to raise money to meet legalization costs.

"I don't think it's that big of a problem," he said. "They don't seem to have a problem getting money to get counterfeit documents or to pay smugglers to get them into the United States."

For Salvador Carrillo, the fear of being separated from his wife and five children was so strong that it may have led to his suicide.

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All summer, Mr. Carrillo, a naturalized citizen, worked hard in Rocky Ford at two jobs, as a custodian and a farm worker, trying to raise the \$1,100 he needed for birth certificates, fingerprints and other items his family needed to qualify for citizenship.

Then, on Sept. 3, still lacking \$420 for an application fee required by the I.N.S., and mistakenly fearing that Sept. 1 was a deadline for deportation, Mr. Carrillo hanged himself in his home with an extension cord.

Double Blow to Family

"He was worried we wouldn't get our papers by September," said his wife, Herminia. "He thought we might have to leave him and go back to Mexico."

For Mrs. Carrillo, who is 39 years old, and the children, who have lived and attended public school here for seven years, the suicide was a double blow.

"The ultimate bad news is they may have lost their opportunity to get legalized," said David L. Moore, legalization coordinator for Catholic Immigration Services in Denver. "Inasmuch as he was their reason for possibly being able to stay, with his death they may have lost their one opportunity to remain here,"

While many aliens are starting to leave, others are hanging on, hoping to eke out a living underground. "If I get deported, I will just come back," said Ypaulito Torres, a 20-year-old illegal alien lucky enough to have found work picking chili peppers on a farm east of Pueblo.

'Pressure Is Coming Down'

"I am a little afraid," said Mr. Torres. "I feel awful. I don't want to go home."

Andrique Corral is not so lucky. Shortly after Sept. 1, he was laid off from his job picking melons because he had no temporary work permit. Today, Mr. Corral, who is 23 years old, spends his time sitting around a decrepit motel room, waiting for word of work. The walls are bare, the refrigerator empty, the hope all but gone.

"I need work in order to get my papers," said Mr. Corral, who has been doing seasonal farmwork here since he was 15. "Papers are expensive, but without work, how can I get the money I need to get my papers?"

"People are afraid," said Nicholas Dominques, a friend of Mr. Corral. "They are all worried. Without papers, they can't make a living. The pressure is coming down on them."

Graphic

Photos of migrant farm workers picking onion near Avondale, Colo. (page 1); Benito and Maria Lopez with their children; Ypaulito Torres and Cornelia Aguilar, illegal immigrants (NYT/Brian Payne) (page 16)

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