

# ADVISER IN MEXICAN GOVERNMENT ASSAILS REAGAN IMMIGRATION PLAN

The New York Times

August 5, 1981, Wednesday, Late City Final Edition

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**Section:** Section A; Page 18, Column 1; National Desk

**Length:** 677 words

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**Dateline:** WASHINGTON, Aug. 4

## **Body**

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Mexico's leading expert on migration, Jorge Bustamante, criticized President Reagan's immigration proposals today, saying they served the interests of United States employers and would institutionalize the inferior status of Mexican workers in this country.

The proposal for a guest worker program, combined with a new legal status for some of the Mexicans already here without visas, would "insure employers the availability of cheap labor," Dr. Bustamante, director of the border studies program at El Colegio de Mexico, a respected research institute in Mexico City, said at a news conference here.

The Mexican Government has not officially commented on the Reagan proposals, which were announced last week. Dr. Bustamante, a sociologist who sometimes advises the Mexican Government, said that the Reagan Administration policy would perpetuate a "subclass of workers" and would establish a "reserve army of labor that will be at the disposal of employers."

The Administration proposed to admit 50,000 Mexicans a year as temporary workers in a two-year experimental program. Illegal aliens wishing to regularize their status could apply to become permanent residents after living here 10 years. In the waiting period, they would pay Social Security and income taxes but could not bring their spouses or young children and would not have access to welfare, food stamps or unemployment insurance.

Jorge Bustamante, Mexico's leading expert on immigration, criticizes new US immigration proposal as institutionalizing inferior status for Mexicans Plan Is Defended

Attorney General William French Smith said today that he did not pay much heed to criticism of the Administration's program because it was all directed at individual elements and because the critics rarely offered a comprehensive alternative.

Mr. Smith said that the program was designed to deter illegal immigration while modestly expanding opportunities for legal employment of aliens in the United States.

However, Dr. Bustamante said: "All parts of the program are conducive to an increase in the flow. The announcement of a guest worker program will increase expectations on the part of Mexican would-be migrants. These persons would come in larger numbers. This will increase competition and diminish wages."

For more than 100 years, Dr. Bustamante said, "Mexican labor has been defined and conceived by many employers as a natural resource of the Southwest." But "Mexican labor is not cheap by nature," he said. "It is made cheap by the laws of the United States and the practices of employers."

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## 'Safety Valve' Theory

The labor market in the Southwestern United States has often been described as a "safety valve" for the Mexican economy. But such a view, according to Dr. Bustamante, ignores the value of the foreign workers to businesses in this country.

"The United States needs the migrants as it needs energy," he said. "But undocumented persons are not the same as barrels of oil. They are human beings, they have rights."

Dr. Bustamante said that "employers of the Southwest would go into bankruptcy in less than a week" if the border was closed and all undocumented workers were sent back to Mexico.

As an alternative, he recommended that "organized labor in Mexico get together with organized labor in the United States to define the dimension of the real demand for migrant workers" in this country. Labor leaders, in turn, could negotiate wages and working conditions with groups of employers in various industries, he said.

Dr. Bustamante, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame, spoke at a news conference sponsored by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, a private, nonprofit group with a liberal political orientation.

He criticized the Administration's proposal to double the quota for legal immigration from Mexico on the ground that most of the additional visas would go to skilled and semiskilled workers of the very type most needed in Mexico.

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (91%); US PRESIDENTS (90%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (89%); FOREIGN LABOR (89%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (78%); PUBLIC POLICY (78%); UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (77%); WAGES & SALARIES (77%); SOCIAL SECURITY (77%); SOCIOLOGY (75%); TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT (72%); RESEARCH INSTITUTES (70%); PRESS CONFERENCES (70%); FOOD STAMPS (70%); WELFARE BENEFITS (65%); CHILDREN (65%)

**Company:** REAGAN ADMINISTRATION (91%); REAGAN ADMINISTRATION (91%)

**Industry:** UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (77%)

**Person:** RONALD REAGAN (79%)

**Geographic:** MEXICO CITY, MEXICO (79%); SOUTHWEST, USA (79%); MEXICO (98%); UNITED STATES (94%)