

Give to Mike Kasman

WHO WILL GUARD US FROM THE GUARDIANS?

About six weeks ago, the Giannini Foundation of the University of California issued the latest of its periodic apologies for the foreign contract labor system in agriculture. About five weeks ago, a number of students at the University began raising some very serious questions about academic and constitutional freedoms (and they still are). About four weeks ago, Hal Draper issued a pamphlet called "The Mind of Clark Kerr," which documents the University president's vision of totalitarian liberalism from his own writings. And, next week, Dr. Ernesto Galarza of San Jose will issue a book, entitled Merchants of Labor, which is a careful study of the administration of the bracero system -- in effect, a study of totalitarian liberalism in action. These seemingly unrelated developments all combine to remind me of a not-so-funny story. I'd like to tell it to you.

A few years ago, a young man with graduate degrees in Sociology and Public Health was hired by the University of California as Principal Investigator in a field study of the health of braceros. Among other things, this was an interesting study because it was the first -- and, in fact, to date still the only -- attempt to study this peculiar institution in terms of rigorous survey methods. And it was one of the very few rigorous studies of culture change in any population group. But that's not the main point of my story.

In May, 1958, after he had been in the field about a year and a half, this young researcher got a request from the American Friends Service Committee, asking for his opinions about the bracero system. He prepared a personal statement, on his own time, as a private citizen, for the AFSC Executive Board. This memorandum was entitled "Social Justice and Foreign Contract Labor: A Statement of Opinion and Conscience." I'll quote just enough to give you something of its flavor.

In all likelihood, much could be done, through patching and tinkering with the (bracero) system, to lessen (its abuses). But injustice is built into the present system, and no amount of patching and tinkering will make of it a just system... I am convinced that the bracero program -- indeed, foreign contract farm labor programs in general --...in whatever form and guise, will by (their) very nature wreak harm upon the lives of the persons directly and indirectly involved and upon human rights which our Constitution still holds to be self-evident and inalienable...

I only ask that the issues be discussed. I believe we would see the American conscience -- even the Congressional conscience -- appears torpid largely because it is appealed to so infrequently. ... Let the important questions be aired. What is the value of half a million Mexicans, a million Americans, and their million and a half families? What is the price of a religion, of a culture? What is the worth of a single human being, his liberty, and his joy?

I am confident of the outcome, once the proper questions are asked.

As I go on, bear in mind that statement, and its optimism.

A few weeks later, the young researcher received letters from the Director of the California Department of Employment, and the Deputy Director of the regional office of the U.S. Department of Labor, indignantly complaining that they had been accused of "dereliction of duty", and demanding proof of what they called "allegations" and "charges." The memo, it seems, had fallen into the hands of the agencies which are supposed to administer and police the bracero system.

The researcher was somewhat puzzled that his views should have aroused so belligerent and self-righteous a reaction from theoretically neutral, tax-supported public servants. But he answered them patiently, saying, in part:

...the temporary transplanted of nearly 500,000 men a year from a pre-industrialized, pre-urbanized, Spanish-speaking culture, into a highly industrialized, urbanized, English-speaking culture, could not possibly be perfectly policed. ...the two countries in question are inhabited by human beings, not by angels. ...I tried to say that the wrongs of the bracero program should be laid, not to the mortal men involved, but to the system within which they are immersed.

The Deputy Director of the Department of Labor's regional office in San Francisco (who has since then been promoted) wrote to his superiors in Washington, D.C., enclosing copies of all the correspondence. He said, among other things:

Mr. Barber (of the Immigration and Naturalization Service) joins us in feeling that (this) reply is not a retraction of the unsupported charges, and accordingly, he has requested an immigration officer to (try to obtain) a complete and unequivocal retraction of all the charges. If he is unsuccessful in doing this, we propose to bring the matter to the attention of the officials of the University of California...and request them to...take whatever action is necessary.

When the researcher continued to decline to retract his views, these public servants who administer the bracero system called their friends in the California Farm Bureau Federation: persons they were supposed to be policing. Officials of the Farm Bureau, in turn, called their friends within the Administration of the University of California -- which was not difficult, since the state headquarters of the Farm Bureau were located on the Berkeley campus itself. The researcher was later told quite frankly that the Farm Bureau's mode of persuading the University administration went along those lines: "It won't be long before you'll be going to the state legislature again, asking for an appropriation to run the University. We have good friends in the legislature, particularly in the Senate. It would be very embarrassing to you if a Senator were to ask you why you have on your payroll this fellow who's been running around making these reckless statements about the backbone of the agricultural industry."

Pressure from the Farm Bureau, and a threat to the budget of the University, were felt to be too important to be handled by the chairman of the University department involved, or even by the Chancellor of the Berkeley campus, who at that time was Glenn Seaborg. They acquiesced in the final decision, but the decision itself was made by the President of the University, Clark Kerr.

The decision was as follows: the researcher was ordered to stop all his field work immediately, even though it was less than half finished at the time; to discharge all his interviewers; to write his terminal report as rapidly as possible. This, for the crime of writing a statement of personal conscience to a private audience.

That, it seems to me, is an interesting story in itself. But that is not the end of it. The researcher, who was still trying to function effectively as both a scholar and a citizen, decided against resigning and taking the case to the American Civil Liberties Union. He decided to write the most definitive report he

could on the basis of a severely truncated sample, and to try to get it published. He worked for a year and a half, and in May, 1960, a preliminary draft of his monograph was completed -- a formidable compendium of historical materials, statistical tables, verbatim quotes from interviews, extracts from Congressional hearings, and so forth, woven together into a single skein, 750 pages long. The researcher had 100 copies of this preliminary report mimeographed, and mailed a number of them to competent persons for comment and criticism.

But on May 29, before there had been time for any replies, an Advisory Committee met, composed of professors from Public Health, Economics, Anthropology, and Sociology. With the exception of the Professor of Economics -- who, incidentally, was the only one conversant with agricultural labor -- this committee viewed the monograph as dangerously controversial. The chairman of the committee was quite candid. He said that he had no intention of going through any more pressure from the Farm Bureau, over an issue not of his choosing, and which he didn't consider that important.

The researcher was ordered to recall immediately all the copies he had sent out for review, and to turn them in, along with the remainder of the run of 100. He was allowed to keep one copy for himself. The others were ordered shredded and burned in the incinerator of a Berkeley campus building which is, ironically enough, named after a civil libertarian, Earl Warren.

I have carefully reviewed the monograph which was destroyed. I have a few cavils and caveats. But I would think the proper way for an institution of higher learning to improve the work of its research associates is through criticisms and suggestions, rather than through the torch.

I find many parts of the monograph intrinsically significant, for their contributions to social theory and methodology, and for their factual descriptions of large sectors of our rural sociology and economy which no one else has even attempted to describe factually. But, most of all, I am intrigued by the treatment which this research project, this monograph, and this researcher received -- particularly when contrasted with the reception of the shoddy, unvarnished rationalizations for the bracero system unfailingly issued, upon demand from bracero-users, by the University of California's agricultural divisions. Clark Kerr has never ordered Giannini Foundation employees to stop what they were doing. None of their writings has ever been recalled and burned in a University incinerator.

Underlying all the serious questions about the bracero system of captive labor, and more basic than the question of whether the Department of labor ought to use public funds to destroy critics of its bracero system, are even more fundamental questions, such as these: Just what are the University of California's standards of academic freedom, competence, and responsibility? Why are some points of view proscribed, while others, certainly no more defensible in any respect, are propagated without hindrance? Why are some pressure groups permitted to influence what research will be done and what will not be done? If Clark Kerr was able to stifle this particular research project, is the freedom of any inquiry within his jurisdiction really secure? If one obscure fledgling scholar can be crushed in this manner, is any scholar, however eminent, truly free? If one monograph can be burned at the University of California, is any monograph really safe? And if bona fide freedom of inquiry and expression are not safe in a university which styles itself one of the greatest in the world -- is there any place where they are safe?

Permit me a final word. I was the young researcher -- now considerably aged -- who wrote the memorandum on social justice; I was the researcher who was ordered to stop his research in midstream; I was the author whose book was burned.

For over four years, now, I have been reconstructing the work which was destroyed. I have been spurred on, these past few weeks, by such developments as the student stirrings on the campus. I completed the task of reconstruction this week -- all 750 pages of it. I have mimeographed 100 copies, in commemoration of the 100 which were burned. I propose to make them available to people who are sufficiently concerned about any one, or some combination, of the questions which I believe are illuminated by this work: cultural dynamics; social research methods; public health; agricultural economics; the making of public policy; and, above all, the right of honest inquiry and the duty of honest conclusions.

I wish I could give all hundred copies away to people who care about such matters. But I can't. I have to ask \$3.95 for each copy, and 25¢ for mailing costs.

The name of the book is A Harvest of Loneliness. If you are interested, you may write to me, in care of KPFA, Berkeley. And as you do so, you might say a little prayer for the government administrators who are supposed to guard the interests of workingmen, and the educational administrators who are supposed to guard academic freedom. And you had better say a prayer for a society composed of guardians such as these, and us, the guarded.

Henry Anderson,
Berkeley, Calif.,
November 13, 1964