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Sweatshops [Folder 2] [2]

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
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Contractor	Back wages found by Wage & Hour to be due contractor employees	Manufacturers Identified as Doing Business with Contractor During Investigation Period
Line 8, Inc. 2438 E. 11 th Los Angeles, CA	\$45,000	Azteca Production ² 5804 E. Slauson Commerce, CA JNCO ³ 3780 Union Pacific Los Angeles, CA Mepotex ³ 19550 Dominguez Hill Rd. Rancho Dominguez, CA Guess ?, Inc. ^{2,3} 1444 S. Alameda Los Angeles, CA
Jeans Compstela Magnit 5050 Everett Ct. Vernon, CA	\$44,009	RSV Sport (Lei) ² 6565 E. Washington Commerce, CA
Le's Fashion Stitching 60 Clayton St. Dorchester, MA	\$43,500	David Smith ³ 48 Main St. N. Reading, MA Foxcroft ² 1 Ace St. Fall River, MA

¹ Manufacturer contacted because of own violations.
² Manufacturer agreed to begin contractor monitoring program, or has a monitoring program in place.
³ First time manufacturer has been included on Enforcement Report.

Reaping Abuse for What They Sew

Sweatshops Once Again Commonplace in U.S. Garment Industry

By William Branigin
Washington Post Staff Writer

NEW YORK—After an arduous trek across the border from her native Mexico, Aurora Blancas made her way to New York City and took the first job she could find: sweeping floors and packaging clothes sewn by other illegal immigrants at a sweatshop in the garment district.

No experience—or documents—necessary.

"I started working the same day I asked for the job," she said. "The boss asked me my name and how old I was. Nothing more."

But unlike her fellow workers, Blancas, 28, did not accept quietly the exploitation and abuse that followed when she was hired last summer to work in the dilapidated Eighth Avenue building.

Although her willingness to speak out makes Blancas unusual, the place that employed her and the conditions she found there are not.

Despite a ledger of laws against them and periodic pledges by government and business leaders to crack down, sweatshops have made a remarkable comeback in America, evolving from a relative anomaly into a commonplace, even indispensable, part of the U.S. garment industry.

They have also evolved almost entirely into a phenomenon of immigrants. According to federal investigators and union officials, most such factories are owned by newcomers from Asia, who often exploit other immigrants, many of them illegal, either from Asia or Latin America. Typically, both the workers and the employers see themselves as victims of a system dominated by increasingly powerful major retailers.

In Blancas's case, the owner of the 14th-floor shop in which she

worked is a South Korean immigrant whose clothes were sold to suppliers of such stores as Wal-Mart and Kmart. According to Blancas and another former worker, he refused to pay the minimum wage or overtime to his three dozen, mostly female employees. The workers typically toiled at their sewing machines and presses for up to 60 hours a week in a room with wires hanging from the ceiling, three small fans that served as the only source of ventilation and no fire exits. Wages, usually paid in cash to avoid taxes, often were arbitrarily cut or delayed if the owner ran short of funds. Employees who missed a day would be illegally "fined" \$30, on top of losing a day's pay.

When workers made mistakes, the owner's wife would scream at them, throw garments in their faces and sometimes pull their hair or hit them. One newly arrived young woman was summarily fired for yawning on the job.

Last July, after Blancas demanded higher wages and brought the sweatshop to the attention of a garment workers union, she was fired.

Whether operating openly in decrepit buildings in New York or Los Angeles or hidden away illegally in people's homes in Dallas, sweatshops violate labor and tax laws amid cutthroat competition for orders that filter down from the retailers.

Underground Economy

The return of the kind of sweatshops that flourished early this century—and were thought to have been largely eliminated—reflects fundamental changes in the garment industry and, more broadly, in American society. The shops have become part of a vast underground economy, shielded by an overlay of laissez-faire practices and tacit accommodations.

Clothing designers and retailers depend on the sweatshops for fast delivery and big profit margins. Unions, hopeful of eventually organizing these workers, appear to be

more interested in preserving manufacturing jobs than driving them out of business. Large pools of illegal immigrants are so anxious for work that they accept the shops' meager wages and are often too fearful to complain. Consumers keep gravitating toward the lowest prices they can find. And government agencies do not field enough investigators or cooperate sufficiently with each other to pursue the shops effectively and enforce the laws that would eradicate them.

Helping sweatshops to thrive have been technological advances that allow retailers to determine instantly what is selling and to order more of it. This allows stores to limit inventory and avoid getting stuck with large volumes of unpopular apparel. But it also requires quick turnaround, which favors domestic manufacturers. The pressures on these manufacturers to produce garments quickly and still compete with cheap foreign imports have tended to drive down wages and working conditions among the sewing shops that lie at the bottom of the industry.

Yet, there is no shortage of workers for these jobs because of a broader change in American society: increasing waves of legal and illegal immigration since the 1970s and growing concentrations of immigrants in cities such as Los Angeles and New York.

The sweatshops' revival also reflects a weakening of unions in the garment industry in recent years, in part because of their difficulties in trying to organize workers who are here illegally in the first place. For them, even a sub-minimum wage in the United States generally beats what they could earn in their homelands.

Although the clandestine nature of much of the industry has made it hard to track, recent federal studies point to a rise in the number of U.S. sweatshops and a worsening of their conditions.

Union and Labor Department officials estimate that minimum wage and overtime violations, two of the

basic parameters that define a sweatshop, prevail in more than half the 22,000 U.S. sewing businesses. Many also pay their workers "off the books" to avoid various local, state and federal taxes.

The sweatshop conditions described by Blancas are "typical of the bottom of the industry," said Jeff Hermanson, director of the Garment Workers' Justice Center, a branch of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

"Physical abuse is unfortunately quite common, and there's always the yelling," he said. The long hours,

low wages and lack of benefits often found in Korean-owned sweatshops are also routine in shops run by Chinese and Latino owners, he said.

In New York, a garment center where much of the industry's changing dynamics play out, Koreans own up to 40 percent of the city's roughly 4,000 contract sewing shops. Chinese immigrants own almost all the rest. Yet, the Korean-owned shops have attracted relatively more attention from labor investigators, mostly because they tend to hire Latino workers, who are less reluctant to complain than Asian employees.

Intimidation

Chinese-owned shops tend to hire only other Chinese, said Maria Echaveste, administrator of the Labor Department's wage and hour division. In some cases, she said, workers have expressed fear for their lives if they reveal labor violations. Many Chinese sweatshop workers are believed to be indentured servants toiling under a form of debt bondage to pay off the heavy cost of being smuggled into the United States.

"The workers lie to us," one investigator said. "In Chinese shops, the falsification of records is absolutely down to a science. It's almost impossible to break unless the shop goes out of business. It's only then that workers tell you those were not the hours and rates they worked."

In the Korean-owned shops, poor working conditions are often exacerbated by the lack of a common language between the Koreans and their mostly young, female Latino employees.

"They [the Korean owners] think they can make themselves understood by yelling," said Hermanson of the Garment Workers' Justice Center, which tries to organize workers and defends them in disputes with shop owners. The result, especially

when owners hit their workers, is an "atmosphere of terror and intimidation," he said.

The Korean Apparel Manufacturers Association says it has been trying to get its 400 member companies in New York to pay at least the minimum wage. Most now do so, the group says. But these owners are themselves victims of punishing market forces, the group argues.

"The problem for the sewing companies is that the minimum wage goes higher and higher, and the price from manufacturers stays the same or goes down," said a spokeswoman for the association who gave her name only as Hung.

She acknowledged that some owners treat their workers harshly but said most do not. As for the illegal aliens among them, she conceded, "That's a problem."

For Blancas, trouble started almost immediately after she was hired by a shop called New Young Fashions. The owner, Kim Young Han, paid her less than the \$160 a week she said she was promised. She worked six days a week, starting at 7:30 a.m. and finishing at 6 p.m. each weekday. Her pay averaged \$2.54 an hour, according to figures compiled by the workers' center.

When she found out what the minimum wage was and told her co-workers they should be getting at least \$4.25 an hour, "they were astonished," but refused to back her in a confrontation with the owner and his Korean wife, Blancas said.

"They were robbing us," she said. "I was very angry. . . . I said, 'Talk, compañeros, talk,' but they were terrified. The [owner's wife] told me to shut up and leave, and the others just kept quiet."

Her co-workers, most of them fellow Mexicans and Ecuadorans, feared being deported as illegal aliens if they complained, Blancas said.

Interviewed at his factory, Kim said he had resolved all of his employees' complaints and that he is now complying with labor laws.

After Blancas was fired from New Young Fashions, the workers' center helped her recover some of her back wages. She later found work in another garment shop that pays more, though still not the minimum wage. She took a second job in a store.

Blancas said she left her home in Mexico City to seek work in the United States because her husband had died in a car accident a year ear-

lier and she needed to support her young son. She crossed the border with an uncle, who also works in a sweatshop, and trekked all night over hills to reach a road that would set them on their way to New York.

Bertha Morales, a 25-year-old Ecuadoran who worked in another Korean-owned sweatshop, said she was sent by her boss to help out at New Young Fashions one day and was shocked by what she saw. At one point, she said in an interview, the

owner's wife struck a worker on the back for sewing buttons incorrectly. Other workers described similar punishment, and one told of an incident in which the boss grabbed her hair and pulled on it.

One new employee, a 19-year-old woman from Nicaragua, was summarily fired by the owner's wife for yawning and left the shop in tears, Morales said.

The Food Chain

Sweatshops such as Kim's lie at the bottom of what the Labor Department describes as a garment industry "food chain" beneath layers of suppliers, designers and middlemen, who compete fiercely for orders from the big retailers at the top.

It is a system that regulators and union officials say effectively insulates the big-name stores and fashion labels, allowing them to profess shock and ignorance of sweatshop conditions in which their clothes were sewn.

Major retailers, such as J.C. Penney, Sears and Wal-Mart, have quality-control inspectors who regularly visit work sites, and they know how much it costs to produce a garment at the minimum wage, a Labor Department official said. But under a 60-year-old law, the retailers can be held liable only if they had "direct knowledge" of labor violations involved in producing their goods.

The system also adds markups far in excess of the actual cost of the labor and material that went into the garments.

Retailers say too many variables go into the final price of a garment to generalize about any of them, but Labor Department and union officials estimate that labor typically accounts for less than 3 percent of the

cont'd

U.S. retail price of clothing made in domestic sweatshops and as little as one-half of 1 percent for garments sewn abroad.

Because of the pressures weighing on those at the low end of the industry, shop owners such as Kim Young Han believe that they, too, are victims of the system.

Sitting at his worn desk in a corner of the shop floor, Kim blamed his problems on creditors, saying he was owed thousands of dollars by garment manufacturers who had subcontracted several large jobs to him. He produced letters to them demanding payment and threatening "legal action." All were written in longhand; he does not have a typewriter.

Wearing jeans and a denim shirt, the lean, craggy-faced Kim, 61, said he had been a lecturer at a junior college in Seoul before coming to the United States years ago to study for a doctoral degree in linguistics under Noam Chomsky. Although that alone makes him a rarity among sweatshop owners, union officials said his violations of labor laws were all too familiar.

Asked about the specific allegations against him by the garment workers union, Kim became visibly upset and pleaded for understanding.

"Help me, please," he begged. "I'm in trouble."

Seemingly on the verge of tears, Kim complained of having to compete with cheap imports and denied making any windfall profits. "I want to close my factory," he lamented over the din of sewing machines and a radio blaring Spanish songs. "The market's no good. . . . No hope at my age."

The National Retail Federation, which represents 2,000 major U.S. retailers, in turn blames sweatshop conditions on subcontractors such as Kim.

"The retailers don't employ these workers," said Pamela Rucker, a spokeswoman for the federation. "The retailers many times are at least two or three steps removed from the problem." She asserted, "It's not the retailers who are reaping the benefits from these criminal activities. It's the greedy subcontractors."

Enforcement

Shops at the bottom of the industry often go out of business, relocate and open under new names. Some fail altogether, never to reappear. But despite decades of lawmaking against them—and a public campaign by the

Clinton administration following the 1995 exposure of a virtual slave-labor garment factory in Los Angeles—the system designed to eradicate the sweatshops has largely failed, union activists say.

Local, state and federal agencies charged with enforcing labor, immigration and tax laws have often failed to work together, allowing shop owners and workers to slip through the cracks of the system. Under a directive renewed by Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, a strong supporter of immigration, New York authorities are prohibited from sharing information with the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

At the direction of the administration and Congress, the INS has thrown the bulk of its resources at the southwestern border to prevent illegal immigrants from crossing into the United States from Mexico. Nationwide, only about 1,700 INS investigators are assigned to the interior of the country, and they spend less than 20 percent of their time enforcing immigration law at work sites of all kinds, according to the agency.

In a special effort in New York last year, INS agents arrested 1,824 illegal aliens during inspections of 150 work sites, most of them garment shops. However, because of a lack of detention space, almost all were released on their own recognizance and told to return for court hearings.

"The percentage that shows up is minute," said Russ Bergeron, an INS spokesman. Most simply find another job in the underground economy, and many return to work at the same shops where they were arrested.

Ironically, labor groups such as the Garment Workers' Justice Center also play a part in keeping the sweatshops in business. Among the literature the center distributes, for example, are fliers in English, Spanish and Korean that advise shop owners how to fend off searches by INS and Labor Department agents.

The fliers encourage employers to challenge inspections on grounds of discrimination and use legal stalling tactics that the INS says often enable them to fabricate employment eligibility records. Fliers in Spanish urge workers to "remain silent" when asked about their nationality, birthplace or entry into the United States.

The union says its main aim is to protect workers and preserve their jobs, regardless of their immigration status. When faced with labor violations, the justice center usually tries to

work out a solution with the employer without government involvement.

Critics call the policy misguided. "If you're trying to defend a living standard, the minimum wage and Social Security and deal with legitimate companies," one independent labor activist argued, "helping these sweatshops exist would seem to be counterproductive."

Retribution

For some garment workers, the punishment for exposing sweatshop conditions comes from their employers. After complaining about what she saw at New Young Fashions while filling in there last year, Bertha Morales was fired by her own Korean boss, who was a friend of Kim's.

Others, including two illegal immigrant sisters from Mexico, said workers do not tell authorities about labor violations and physical abuse out of fear that their shops will then be raided by immigration agents.

In the case of another outspoken worker, the consequences of going public—or at least the perception of those effects—became evident after she appeared at a forum on sweatshops in Arlington last summer. The worker, Nancy Penaloza, 29, said she has labored in Korean-owned sweatshops in New York for nine years, working up to 66 hours a week in filthy conditions. In her current job, she said, she sews high-quality women's suits, earning \$6 apiece for garments that usually sell for \$120 or more at stores such as J.C. Penney and Ann Taylor.

"I get paid off the books," Penaloza told the forum. "Even though I am working legally, my boss doesn't pay any taxes or Social Security. . . . I never get a vacation. I never even get a whole weekend off." She said she works in constant fear, not only of her temperamental boss but of the "big rats and mice" that continually crawl over her feet.

A day after she spoke, INS agents raided her factory and arrested most of her co-workers, who were illegal immigrants, Penaloza said. Three days after that, a Labor Department wage inspector showed up. Although she is sure the INS raid was a coincidence, because she did not name her employer at the forum, her co-workers blamed it on her.

A former secretary in Mexico, she said she originally crossed the border as an illegal alien herself, then "became legal" a couple of years ago.

She said her Korean boss routinely smacks his workers in the head when they make mistakes. He also orders them to tell the Labor Department that they are receiving their proper wages and overtime, she said, and that is what they did during the latest inspection.

"The workers are afraid," Penaloza said. "They don't want to lose their jobs."

And so, she said, "they lied to the inspector," thus perpetuating a cycle that helps the industry to survive.

TUESDAY, FEB. 25

**Hughes Aircraft Co. v.
United States, ex rel. William Schurer**
No. 95-1340

Certiorari to the 9th Circuit. Whether the 1986 amendments to the False Claims Act govern fraud claims allegedly committed before the amendments were enacted, and what level of public disclosure of the alleged fraud must occur before a private individual is barred from bringing a *qui tam* suit under the False Claims Act.



Seth Waxman

For petitioner: Kenneth Starr, partner, Kirkland & Ellis, Washington, D.C. For respondent: Laurence Gold, of counsel, Bredhoff & Kaiser, Washington, D.C.; and Seth Waxman, deputy solicitor general, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. (for United States, as amicus curiae). (One hour for argument.)

Joyce Johnson v. United States
No. 96-203

Certiorari to the 11th Circuit. Whether a conviction for perjury or other false state-

ments must be thrown out when the trial judge, and not the jury, makes the determination that the false statements were material to the case.

For petitioner: William Sheppard, Sheppard and White, Jacksonville, Fla. For respondent: Michael Dreeben, deputy solicitor general, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. (One hour for argument.)



Michael Dreeben

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 26

**Bernadine Saitum v.
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency**
No. 96-243

Certiorari to the 9th Circuit. Whether a landowner must first attempt to sell development rights to his property before he can challenge a Fifth Amendment takings

action by the government that prohibits development on the property.

For petitioner: R.S. Radford, staff attorney, Pacific Legal Foundation, Sacramento, Calif. For respondent: Richard Lazarus, professor, Georgetown University Law Center, Washington, D.C.; and Lawrence Wallace, deputy solicitor general, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. (for United States, as amicus curiae). (One hour for argument.)

Marion Johnson, et al. v. Kristine Fankell
No. 96-292

Certiorari to the Supreme Court of Idaho. Whether a plaintiff who has brought a federal civil rights claim in a state court is entitled to an interlocutory appeal of a state judge's dismissal of the suit based on qualified immunity.

For petitioners: Michael Gilmore, deputy attorney general of Idaho, Boise, Idaho. For respondent: W.B. Latta Jr., solo practitioner, Boise, Idaho. (One hour for argument.) ■

CIVIL RIGHTS

**Race preferences
return to the fore**

Civil rights faded as a 1996 campaign issue, but the debate is sharpening over divisive items like preferences and set-asides for minorities. President Clinton drew criticism last week from the private, liberal-leaning Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, which pressed him to enforce civil rights laws more aggressively and to name a top aide on rights issues.

Meanwhile, Californian Ward Connerly met with Republican congressional leaders to promote a national campaign—based on his state's Proposition 209—to end preferences based on race, gender, ethnicity, or national origin. Although a vote in Congress is not expected this year, groups in Florida, Colorado, Arizona, Oregon, and Washington have expressed interest in following California's lead.

Still, few are likely to copy Proposition 209 until it gets a court test. Clinton opposes the measure; his overall strategy may not be clear until he fills the job of chief Justice Department civil-rights enforcer. —Josh Chetwynd

**Connerly**

Hold manufacturers liable for sweatshops

by Lora Jo Foo, Laura L. Ho and Leti Volpp

The El Monte, Calif., factory where Thai immigrants were found in virtual slavery sewing garments for major U.S.

manufacturers and retailers is just the tip of the iceberg. While the El Monte operation was certainly more egregious than most, paying far below the minimum wage for 17-hour workdays, sweatshops flourish throughout the garment industry's underground economy.

In Los Angeles, most garment workers receive less than the \$4.25-per-hour minimum wage and no overtime. Even in San Francisco, a city whose labor law violations are among the lowest in the industry due to strict law enforcement, nearly 40 percent of workers receive no overtime pay for 10- to 12-hour days.

Only with the revelation of involuntary servitude behind barbed wire, however, has State Labor Commissioner Victoria Bradshaw admitted that state and federal laws are incapable of curbing rampant abuses in the garment industry. Unfortunately, her cynical and misguided response is to call for private industry self-regulation.

While Bradshaw can be commended for her prosecutorial stance against the manufacturers and retailers who benefited from the El Monte factory, the same can't be said for her commitment to holding them liable for conditions they create throughout the industry by demanding low contract prices.

Last year, Bradshaw opposed legislation passed by the Assembly and Senate that would have required overtime pay and discouraged manufacturers from contracting with factories paying less than minimum wage. In vetoing the legislation, her boss, California Gov. Pete Wilson, blamed the exploited workers for the sweatshop conditions and suggested that harsher immigration laws would

somehow stop labor law violations.

With the Bradshaw-Wilson team enforcing state labor laws, it's little wonder that the greatest profiteers from sweatshops, manufacturers and retailers, have little incentive to change their practices.

Indeed, many manufacturers and retailers who were selling garments from the El Monte factory already subscribe to self-regulating devices like codes of conduct. Montgomery Ward, one of the major retailers scrutinized by state officials for its dealings with the El Monte factory, says it will not contract with those who employ "slave, prison or child labor, which violates state and federal law." That policy, however, did little to halt the flow of garments from indentured women and men to Montgomery Ward before the factory was exposed by government officials. Only with the threat of liability for wages are the retailers enforcing their codes of conduct. Without state and public scrutiny, the codes of conduct are little more than public-relations ploys.

Officials have touted state and federal law that allows confiscation of goods produced in violation of labor laws as a way to hold manufacturers and retailers liable. But what use is confiscation when virtually all the goods made in the last seven years already have been shipped and sold?

Only by holding manufacturers and retailers jointly and fully liable for labor law violations will they begin to show enough concern about what occurs in their contract shops to put an end to abuses like those found in the El Monte garrison. How many more El Montes must there be before the governor and his labor commissioner see that?

Lora Jo Foo is staff attorney and Laura L. Ho is a fellow with the Asian Law Caucus in San Francisco. Leti Volpp is a fellow with the Equal Rights Advocates in San Francisco. They wrote this article for the Los Angeles Times.



INS News Digest

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- 3 **POLICE IN PARIS SMASH IMMIGRANTS' SIT IN**
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- 4 **EDITORIAL, LETTER, WA. POST, 8/24/96**
- 5 **ALL U.S. POSTS NOW ISSUING VISAS THAT EASE SCREENING**
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The Washington Post

Republicans Seize Upon Unusual Issue to Assault Clinton: Terrorism

By John Mintz
Washington Post Staff Writer

Republicans have launched a broad attack on President Clinton's policies in confronting global terrorism, seeking to portray him as ineffective and negligent in dealing with assaults that have killed 24 U.S. military personnel in Saudi Arabia and with the possible sabotage of TWA Flight 800 in New York.

Presidential nominee Robert J. Dole and other leading GOP figures assert, for example, that the Clinton administration failed to isolate Syria for its embrace of terrorist groups, and gave Iran a foothold in Bosnia by not objecting to its weapons pipeline to Bosnian Muslims.

Moreover, the Republicans say Clinton has been lax in carrying out a four-month-old law to deport suspected terrorists, and has adopted "politically correct" standards at the CIA that complicate efforts to recruit informants abroad who could help in the battle against terrorism. The GOP also says Clinton must prepare to bomb strongholds of terrorists suspected of plotting attacks on Americans.

The Clinton administration scoffs at the criticism, saying it has strongly opposed terrorism on every front. It cites as an example Clinton's signing a law earlier this month imposing new trade sanctions on Iran and Libya. It also says that new CIA rules on recruiting informants have not hurt efforts to penetrate terrorist groups and that it is aggressively seeking to deport suspected terrorists in this country.

The administration accuses the GOP of not playing fair in the criticism, saying Republicans know the administration cannot talk about everything it is doing without divulging classified material.

The Republican offensive over terrorism is noteworthy in part because it is rare for one political party to mount such a wide-ranging political assault on the issue, especially with terrorist incidents fresh in the public mind, according to terrorism experts.

"In the past terrorism was never treated as a partisan issue," said Noel Koch, counterterrorism chief of the Reagan-era Pentagon from 1981 to 1986. "Nobody was anxious to make a public issue that [a terrorist bombing] was a screw-up."

An exception came in 1980, terrorism experts said, when candidate Ronald Reagan said Iran's imprisonment of U.S. hostages was "a humiliation" that President Jimmy Carter could have prevented. But Reagan returned to the issue only sporadically.

In 1992 candidate Clinton chided President George Bush for being too cozy with Syria, and alleged Bush as vice president supported selling arms to Iran in exchange for freeing hostages in Lebanon. But Clinton did not elevate it to a major issue.

"Charging your adversary is soft on terrorism is not an issue I've seen used a lot," said Victor LeVine, a terrorism expert at Washington University in St. Louis. "It's an area where acrimony has been remarkably absent because the two parties pretty much agree on everything."

LeVine expressed concern that a possible announcement that terrorists caused the July 17 TWA crash could put undue pressure on Clinton to retaliate against a foreign country.

"I'm nervous about that," LeVine said, because the politics of the moment may propel Clinton into acting tough without knowing enough to pick the right target or be effective. "That kind of action serves only to

let the U.S. blow off steam. . . . In any case, whom do you clobber? Proving a link to a terrorist act is so complex," LeVine said.

In his acceptance speech to the Republican convention, Dole criticized Clinton's foreign and defense policy principally over missile defense, military budget cutbacks and terrorism.

"On my first day in office," Dole said, "I will . . . put terrorists on notice: 'If you harm one American, you harm all Americans. And America will pursue you to the ends of the Earth. In short, don't mess with us unless you are prepared to suffer the consequences.'"

Dole said the president "defends giving a green light to a terrorist state, Iran, to expand its influence in Europe, and he relies on the United Nations to punish Libyan terrorists who murdered American citizens."

Some of Dole's and his surrogates' attacks on Clinton's terrorism record have lacked specificity, and glossed over some subtleties.

Dole's reference to Iran concerned Clinton's decision not to oppose clandestine Iranian arms shipments to Bosnia's Muslims, in violation of a United Nations arms embargo. Dole did not mention that he and many other Republicans also supported arming the Bosnian Muslims, that other countries also provided arms to the Bosnians, and that in any case it is unclear Iran will end up with a Bosnian beachhead.

Dole's Libya remarks did not mention the U.N. sanctions against Libya to punish it for failing to turn over two Libyans charged with the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 were set in place in 1992 during the Bush presidency.

Dole's speech echoed criticisms in the Republican platform. "Terrorist states have made a comeback during Bill Clinton's administration," it said,

adding that Clinton "has treated their rulers with undue respect."

8-25
A3

The Washington Post

Warren Christopher's 20 or so visits to Syria to arrange an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement, a Republican Party official said.

Both parties anticipate a grim struggle over the issue next month, just as the presidential campaign heats up, when Defense Secretary William J. Perry makes public an exhaustive Pentagon investigation of the circumstances of the June 25 truck bombing of a U.S. Air Force dormitory that killed 19 airmen. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) has said Perry should consider resigning because of the bombing, a suggestion Democrats dismiss as politically inspired.

Republicans said they feel free to

attack Clinton on terrorism because they think he set a precedent by attacking them and the National Rifle Association for blocking efforts to require insertion of tiny chemical markers called taggants in explosives, to trace explosives' origins. The Republicans cite a recent radio address in which Clinton said of the GOP, "once again they're listening to the gun lobby over law enforcement. It may be good politics, but it's not good for the American people."

"He's used [the terrorism issue] as a political tool," a Dole campaign spokesman said. "He's the guy who started it."

Earlier this year the Dole campaign asked Koch, a Republican who is now a security consultant in Virginia, for help in fashioning campaign strategy. Sensing Dole planned to use the terrorism issue to attack Clinton, Koch declined.

"I don't think it's a partisan issue," Koch said in a letter to the Dole campaign. "We Republicans got some 700 Americans killed mismanaging this issue ourselves, so we're vulnerable." Koch was referring to Americans killed in three terrorist bombings in Beirut in the 1980s, as well as the Pan Am bombing in 1988.

L. Paul Bremer III, the State Department's counterterrorism chief under Reagan, disagreed with Koch. "Counterterrorism policy is a legitimate issue in an election," said Bremer, a Republican.

Clinton is politically "vulnerable," for example, for not aggressively pursuing suspected terrorists in this country, he said. "Elections are supposed to be about differences," he added.

In recent weeks, House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) repeatedly

has suggested Republicans would be more forceful than Clinton in attacking terrorist cells in the Middle East.

"We don't wait around until after they take out the World Trade Towers," Gingrich said.

"We . . . say [to terrorists], we have a reason to believe you're not behaving correctly. You should convince us in the next 24 hours that we're wrong or we will take you out."

In response, administration officials said it is difficult to know which group is responsible for an act of sabotage, much less to anticipate an attack.

Officials also disputed criticisms that Gingrich raised in interviews Aug. 2 and 4, when he said new Clinton-era rules for recruiting CIA informants have "crippled" U.S. capabilities in investigating terrorists.

"The Clinton administration's ground rules make it almost impossible to recruit the kind of people we need to penetrate these kind of organizations," said Gingrich, echoing the views of some retired clandestine operatives.

The Republican platform made the same point, saying Dole "will not constrain U.S. intelligence personnel with 'politically correct' standards that impede their ability to collect and act on intelligence information."

Gingrich and the platform writers were referring to CIA rules established earlier this year by Director John M. Deutch after a scandal over the agency's hiring as an informant a Guatemalan military officer who was linked to human rights abuses.

The administration rejected the criticism. The CIA still recruits unsavory characters, but, Deutch said in a speech last year, "what will be different is that we will not do these

things blindly, without thorough vetting."

Intelligence officials said they have stepped up recruitment of people in touch with terrorist groups the last 18 months.

"We regret that the speaker attempted to inject partisanship in the intelligence policy on counterterrorism," said National Security Council spokesman David Johns earlier this month. "We don't believe it can become a political football; it remain effective."

The GOP platform also said Clinton has failed to carry out several provisions of an antiterrorism bill signed into law in April, such as deporting suspected foreign terrorists and freezing their assets. It does not name any individuals.

"The Clinton administration is playing a big game, but when you look at what they've done, they fall short," Dole campaign spokesman said. "Their implementation of the law has been weak."

The law establishes a new antiterrorist court with controversial powers to deport suspected terrorists while denying them the right to view all evidence against them. Civil libertarians and immigrant advocates say the law is unconstitutional and they will challenge it in court. The new court's operations are classified.

"We've done a lot" in establishing the new court, a Clinton administration official said.

"But we can't tell you about it because it's classified. . . . Things have to be done right. It's a remarkable change in the law. Clearly it will be challenged. If we do a sloppy job, we'll be in trouble. . . . From July to August is a minimal span of time to start attacking us."

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CONT'D

The New York Times

8-24-96

Police in Paris Smash Immigrants' Sit-In

By CRAIG R. WHITNEY

PARIS, Aug. 23 — As the church bells sounded a tocsin and the priest frantically tried to start a Mass, police officers in riot gear swarmed into a church occupied by illegal immigrants from Africa early this morning, using axes to break down the doors and hauling off more than 200 immigrants to a detention center.

The raid on the Roman Catholic church of St. Bernard de la Chapelle was denounced by some as a disgrace to a centuries-long tradition of tolerance and openness to immigration, but was welcomed by others as a long-overdue sign of firmness against uncontrolled immigration. It ended a seven-week hunger strike by 10 of the immigrants who were protesting the tightening European immigration laws of the 1990's, and is certain to result in the speedy expulsion of some of the protesters to their home countries.

Firemen took the hunger strikers on stretchers to two military hospitals where eight remained under observation and under guard tonight; the two others were transferred to the detention center in Vincennes, east of Paris.

Though the police said that no one was wounded in the operation, some people were seen bleeding after struggles with the police, who appeared sparing in the use of clubs but handcuffed men inside the church who had tried to keep them out by piling chairs against the doors. The police took about 210 immigrants, including 68 children, to a detention center, and did not allow reporters to contact them.

The authorities chose the day before millions of French families return from August vacations to crack down. In anticipation of just such a move, several hundred French supporters had surrounded the church in recent days.

"The church was stacked," said Alain Krivine, a human rights supporter, dramatizing the morning's events.

Earlier this week, in an attempt to persuade demonstrators to call off the protest, Government officials promised to allow "scores" of the immigrants to remain in France.

However, scores of others, many of whom have lived here illegally for years, are to be expelled, starting immediately.

The French political left — labor union leaders, many intellectuals, human rights organizations and supporters of the Socialist and Communist opposition to the conservative Government — rallied at a protest demonstration that brought several thousand people into the Place de la République this evening.

Members of the Government parties and politicians of the extreme right who have been demanding the return of the millions of black and Muslim immigrants who have changed the makeup of French soci-

refugees wandered from a theater complex to an abandoned railroad warehouse before landing in St. Bernard's at the end of June. Most of the 125 single men in the church, including the hunger strikers, came to France from Mali and Senegal years ago, seeking asylum and staying on illegally after their applications were rejected.

Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debré acknowledged after the raid that many people were asking why the Government had taken so long to enforce strict anti-immigration laws that were enacted and supported by a broad political consensus in 1993, after French unemployment had crossed the double-digit threshold.

"The moment had come to apply the law with firmness," he said, and after re-examining all the cases, the authorities determined they would be able to grant permission to stay for 30 or 40 percent of them by taking extenuating circumstances into account. Some are married to French citizens or have children born in France before 1993, when babies born to foreigners here acquired French nationality automatically. But 64 of the people in the church who had children here after 1993 were also demanding to be allowed to stay.

Prime Minister Alain Juppé said on Thursday night that the Government had no choice but to expel all those whose appeals had been exhausted and that it would not hesitate to do so.

Mr. Juppé, explaining on national television that the Council of State, the highest constitutional administrative tribunal, had approved the Government's application of the law, said he would not approve expulsions that would separate married couples, break up families, or put pregnant women or sick people on chartered planes out of the country.

France sent back 7,352 illegal immigrants in this way in the first six months of this year alone, and the daily Le Monde said today that a charter plane would be ready on Saturday morning to take the first 40 of the immigrants to their country of origin, apparently from a military air base in Creil.

200 are detained

after the police

break down church

doors with axes.

ety over the last three decades applauded the move.

"This should have been done 45 days ago," said Jacques Bompard, a leader of the ultra-right National Front party, referring to the hunger strike, which began in early July. "Churches are places for the exercise of the Catholic religion, and for anybody else to occupy them is an act of aggression."

The police moved into the church, in a neighborhood of largely Muslim immigrants from North Africa, without the permission of the parish priest or the Archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger, church authorities said, but on the authority of the Paris Prefect of Police.

Most of those who had been camping in St. Bernard's started their protest against the country's tough immigration laws last winter by occupying another Catholic church, St. Ambroise. The police expelled them from there on March 22 at the request of church authorities, and the

No More Sweatshops

8-24

Hispanics Don't Support A Second-Class System

8-24

AT LEAST 200 million of the world's children work full-time, many of them in slavery, many of them as young as 10. Millions of children and adults alike earn a pittance for laboring 12 or 15 hours a day, often in dangerous and demeaning circumstances. Sweatshops did not die in the early part of this century, and U.S. purchasers of moderately priced sweaters, soccer balls and running shoes often are the unknowing beneficiaries.

The Clinton administration, led by Labor Secretary Robert Reich, has waged a public campaign against sweatshops. The unmasking of talk show host Kathie Lee Gifford as an unwitting sweatshop profiteer, and her subsequent enlistment into the anti-sweatshop cause, gave new impetus to the campaign. Now President Clinton has convened a task force of clothing retailers and others to study, for six months, what can be done.

Workers with few options in impoverished nations may covet jobs in factories that seem like sweatshops to Americans. Countries such as South Korea, where workers now can earn reasonable wages producing cars and computers, began their climb up the global economic ladder with sweatshop-style factories turning out textiles and other low-cost goods for export. Many poor nations today want the same chance, and they view Western concern as a smoke screen for protectionism and for resentment over lost jobs—which it often is. Yet certain widespread practices are—by any measure—abhorrent, and U.S. retailers, manufacturers and consumers can help curtail them.

As a first principle, the United States should enforce its laws at home. The discovery last year of 72 Thai immigrants being held as virtual slaves in a Los Angeles garment factory focused attention on sweatshops in this country. A random Labor De-

partment sample this year found 43 percent of garment factories in California failing to pay minimum wage, while more than half owed unpaid overtime wages. Hundreds of thousands of children, mostly of migrant farm workers, still work in American fields, again often earning very little.

Government cutbacks have hampered official efforts to inspect and enforce wage laws, but even without those cuts, private-sector self-enforcement would be key. The increasing competitiveness of the global economy—the rise of chain and discount stores, refinements in distribution and inventory technology—puts pressure on subcontractors to squeeze every possible penny from their costs. But some manufacturers have responded successfully by improving technology and efficiency rather than turning to sweatshops, and some U.S. firms—such as Levi Strauss and the Gap—are showing they can make money while responsibly monitoring suppliers.

The best way to eliminate sweatshops and child labor in developing countries is to promote prosperity and freely available primary education. To that end, the United States could accomplish a great deal by lifting its Draconian quotas on textile imports from many of the poorest countries.

But it is wrong to shrug off labor abuses as inevitable in poor countries. In the past three years, attitudes have shifted dramatically; just this week, Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto pledged to eradicate child labor. To help her succeed—and to keep Pakistan from suffering competitively as new sweatshops spring up in Nepal, or India or Bangladesh—U.S. firms should refuse to buy goods produced by children or indentured laborers anywhere. It is not too much to expect the industry task force, during the next six months, to devise ways to make such a pledge practicable.

Claims about GOP immigration policy made by U.S. Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Tex.) [letters, Aug. 19] demand rebuttal.

Mr. Smith claims that Hispanics overwhelmingly support efforts to reduce illegal immigration and, therefore, that the Hispanic community supports GOP policies that would deny citizenship entitlements to those Latinos born in the United States to undocumented parents.

Mr. Smith is right on one point only: U.S. Latinos do support humane, non-martial border policies and interventions that maintain our nation's sovereignty. However, U.S. immigration policies that strengthen our country's borders are distinct from domestic policies that discriminate against Hispanics in our public schools and public health clinics in an "after the fact" attempt to discourage illegal immigration.

U.S. civil rights ensure that every American taxpayer is granted equal civil entitlements and equal protection under the law. If Mr. Smith and the GOP break this covenant for Hispanic Americans, they break this national trust for all Americans.

This nation must come to grips with the economic facts that underpin our immigration dilemma. Much of American "big business," especially agri-business, wants "leaky borders" to cut labor costs—and to drive up corporate profits. We cannot allow these same special business interests through their control of the GOP to create a new, domestic environment of second-class-citizenship through enactment of policies that Mr. Smith endorses—policies that clearly violate the civil rights of Hispanic Americans.

HENRY STEVENSON-PEREZ
Kensington

The Washington Post

8-25-96

All U.S. Posts Now Issuing Visas That Ease Screening

Reuter

All U.S. consular posts now are issuing machine-readable visas, a move designed in part to prevent suspected terrorists from entering the United States, according to the State Department.

Computer software that creates and reads the visas automatically checks the applicant against a database of more than 4 million aliens who potentially are ineligible to enter the country, State Department deputy spokesman Glyn Davies said Friday.

He said the new visas, which include a computer-generated photograph of the passport holder, also would help prevent visa fraud and speed up the clearance process for people arriving in the United States.

The U.S. consulate in Perth, Australia, on Friday became the last of 221 U.S. posts throughout the world to start issuing the machine-readable visas.

Here at home, Davies also said the State Department expected to issue a record 5.6 million passports to U.S. citizens in the 1996 fiscal year.

He said the figure partly was due to a record number of newly naturalized U.S. citizens applying for their first passport. More than 40 million Americans traveled overseas last year.

Davies said the passports had been issued even though government shutdowns—caused by budget disputes between Congress and President Clinton—closed passport offices last winter for all except emergency issues.

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WASHINGTON EDITION

Los Angeles Times

8-26-96
B1

WWII's 'Other' Detainees Press Claims Against U.S.

■ **Camps:** Japanese kidnapped from Latin America seek apology. They're refused because they weren't here legally.

By HECTOR TOBAR
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The police came to take the family away—a husband and wife and four children, each allowed to pack one suitcase. The family land, including a cotton plantation, was lost forever. Placed on a ship, guarded by soldiers with machine guns, they sailed across an ocean to a concentration camp.

The camp was in Crystal City, Texas. And the soldiers with the doughboy helmets who took Alicia Nishimoto and her family from Peru were members of the U.S. Army.

It is a little-known, dark chapter in U.S. history. During World War II, the Roosevelt administration ordered the detention of more than 2,200 people of Japanese ancestry from 13 Latin American countries, the overwhelming majority from Peru.

Although no official explanation for the internment was ever offered, historians believe the Japanese Latin Americans were abducted for reasons similar to the much larger detention of Japanese Americans on the West Coast of the United States: They were believed to pose a military threat to the U.S. and its Pacific allies.

Nishimoto, then a 10-year-old citizen of Peru, spent two years in the Texas internment camp. Half a century later, she

and hundreds of other abducted Latin American Japanese are still being denied an official letter of apology from the U.S. government.

The reason for the denial is a bureaucratic Catch-22 that has kept alive the sting of the old injustice: Since the Japanese Latin Americans were abducted and brought to the U.S. against their will, they were not legal U.S. residents, and thus, not eligible for an apology under the law.

"How can they call us illegal immigrants when we were forced to come here?" asks a dumbfounded Nishimoto, who has lived in Gardena for the past 33 years.

A few of the Japanese Peruvians were exchanged for Americans held in Japan, but most spent the duration of the war behind the barbed wire of the camp in southwest Texas. Some were held until 1948, three years after the war ended.

Frustrated after being denied both the apology and the redress payments first granted to Japanese American internees in 1990, the Latin American Japanese plan to file suit this week in federal Claims Court in Washington, D.C.

"These actions were a violation of international law," said Grace Shimizu, an activist in the movement for redress and the daughter of a Peruvian Japanese man held in the camps. "This was kidnapping civilians from a third country not at war, taking them across international waters and jailing them. It's important to hold the government accountable."

Officials with the Justice Department's Office of Redress Administration acknowledge that the abductions occurred, but say the Latin American Japanese are not covered by the

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provisions of the 1988 reparations law, which was restricted to those who were U.S. citizens and legal residents at the time of their detention.

Justice Department officials said Congress recognized the suffering of the Latin American Japanese in the 1982 report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. A small number of Peruvian Japanese did receive redress payments because they became legal residents before the June 1946 date established by the law.

Still, at least 300 applications by Latin American Japanese have been denied because they did not meet the redress law's residency requirements.

The former internees say the \$20,000 reparation payment is less important than etching their families' story in history.

"Our parents are the ones who suffered so much but they are gone," said Carmen Mochizuki of Montebello, a Japanese Peruvian whose father was deported to Japan from Texas and died in Okinawa soon after the war's end. "I feel sorry when I think of my parents and I'll feel that till I die."

Only 200 internees were allowed to return to Latin America after the war. Some traveled to Japan, others remained in the United States, eventually becoming citizens.

Decades removed from the Spanish-speaking lands of their birth, many of the Latin American Japanese retain a love for their former home and a nostalgia for South American culture.

Carmen Mochizuki greets a Latino reporter with a handshake and a "*mucha gusto*," while Art Shibayama recalls that in Spanish his name was Arturo—"My friends from Peru still call me that." Even Grace Shimizu, a generation removed from her father's Peruvian roots, retains a fondness for Peruvian recipes.

Still, for many, Peru and Latin America will forever be tarnished by memories of being abducted, uprooted from homes, schools and friendships.

Shibayama, now a 66-year-old resident of San Jose, remembers the years he lived in fear as a boy in Lima, Peru. Whenever a U.S. ship docked in the nearby port of Callao, his father would leave the city and go into hiding in the countryside.

singled out for arrest were affluent businessmen and community leaders.

C. Harvey Gardiner, a historian whose book "Pawns in a Triangle of Hate" documents the abduction of the Peruvian Japanese, said their deportation was fueled in part by growing xenophobia in Peru, where the immigrants were seen as an economic threat.

The day Peruvian police arrived at Carmen Mochizuki's school, they demanded that the 11-year-old take them to her father.

She walked them to her home, told the police that she would need to go around the back to open the door, then warned her father who escaped out a back window. Eventually, he turned himself in.

Mochizuki, now 63, was the youngest of 10 children. "We knew that it was wartime but I really didn't know why they were doing this to us, why they would arrest us and put us in jail."

When the Peruvians agreed to the American request to detain the Japanese immigrants, most of the logistics were arranged informally, with phone calls and face-to-face meetings between officials and diplomats. Few decisions were committed to record, Gardiner says, because the officials involved were aware that "they were operating in a highly questionable area in terms of international law and in terms of fundamental morality."

The first U.S. ship, the Etolin, sailed from Callao in April 1942, with 141 Peruvian Japanese. The abductions continued for the next three years.

Shibayama recalls a journey in 1944 that lasted 21 days, the ship hugging the coastlines, escorted by gray destroyers and the low profiles of submarines. Men were in cabins below decks, separated from women and children. Few spoke English and confusion spread about their fate.

"My sister thought they were going to shoot us," Shibayama says. On the ship that took away Nishimoto's family, including her eight-months pregnant mother, was another rumor. "Some people were saying they were taking us to the Amazon."

Instead, both ships ended up in New Orleans, where the detainees were forced to disrobe and sprayed with DDT, an experience that was especially demeaning for the women. "You know Japanese ladies," Shibayama says. "They're very shy." Then came a railroad trip to

Texas, in Pullman cars with the windows covered so that residents of passing towns, still angry over Pearl Harbor, wouldn't attack them.

The Texas internment center, converted from migrant worker housing, came to be known as a model camp. Many of the surviving internees were children then and have fond memories of camp life, where their ever-adaptable families learned to appreciate such American practices as baseball.

Nishimoto's father opened a tofu store in the camp (and his daughter's name was Americanized to Alice). Shibayama's father became a camp policeman.

Shibayama's father had him enroll in the camp's Japanese school because he thought it would be more practical than learning English. (There were no classes in Spanish.) In 2 1/2 years in the internment camp, Shibayama spoke only Spanish and Japanese.

When the war ended, the Latin American governments that had deported them didn't want them anymore. Some, like Shibayama and his family, stayed in the U.S., thanks only to a program that hired them out as cheap labor to the Seabrook Farms processing plant in New Jersey.

Nishimoto's father decided to take his family to Japan—convinced that Japan had won the war. He held on to this belief even after the family had boarded a passenger ship in Seattle. Finally, they reached Tokyo Bay and saw American warships anchored there.

"That's when he knew Japan had lost the war," Alice Nishimoto says.

Tokyo had been devastated by U.S. bombing raids that killed 124,000. The family moved on to the city where most of their relatives lived—Hiroshima, which months earlier had been leveled by the first atomic bomb.

At school, Nishimoto suffered through the indignity (and the irony) of schoolmates who called her "Yankee" because she had lived in the United States.

The Mochizuki family lived on sweet potatoes as hunger spread throughout the ravaged country, vivid memories Carmen has held onto for decades.

"Today, when I see the homeless, the suffering people in this country and I know what they are suffering, if I didn't go through that [in Japan], I would be a different

person today, I would be selfish."

Both Mochizuki and Nishimoto eventually returned to the U.S. and married American citizens. Shibayama obtained legal residency in the U.S. and was drafted into the Army during the Korean War, serving in Germany, where a fellow soldier suggested that he apply for citizenship.

Despite the wartime deportations, the Japanese presence in Peru remained strong. Alberto Fujimori, the son of Japanese immigrants, was elected president in 1990. One of Nishimoto's cousins married another high-placed Japanese Peruvian, the minister of interior.

In 1990, the Justice Department started presenting official letters of apology and \$20,000 checks to 60,000 surviving Japanese American internees, the culmination of a long struggle for redress.

Most of the Latin American Japanese, however, received nothing. Shibayama, Nishimoto and Mochizuki all applied for redress and all received similar replies from the government: They did not qualify because they were not legal residents.

"My parents didn't want to come here," Mochizuki says. "They worked hard to build up what they had [in Peru]. Suddenly the war started and they lost everything."

For years, civil rights attorneys have tried unsuccessfully to persuade officials to grant exemptions to the Japanese Latin Americans, said Robin Toma, a Los Angeles attorney active in a coalition of groups seeking redress for the internees.

"We've met with the Office of Redress Administration and met with congressional staffers who've said there is nothing that can be done because the law is very clear," Toma said.

The lawsuit will name as plaintiffs the former internees who now live in Peru, Japan and the United States, demanding that they be granted the same status as interned Japanese Americans.

Because most of the internees—even those who were children in the camps—are now senior citizens, the lawsuit may represent a last chance for an official acknowledgment of their suffering while they are still living.

"Some day I will be gone," Mochizuki says, "but I want people to know everything that happened."

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The Washington Post

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'Now, All I See Is My Dreams Going Away'

By William Claiborne
Washington Post Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES—Claudia Acosta, a 20-year-old single mother from El Salvador, was watching television news with her infant daughter asleep beside her when she heard that President Clinton said he would sign the welfare reform bill barring benefits to most legal immigrants who are not citizens.

"I started to cry. I looked at my baby, and thought, 'He doesn't know what he's doing. He's not even aware of the suffering this child is going to go through,'" said Acosta, who could lose virtually all of her public assistance.

Mostly, Acosta said, she felt an overwhelming sense of aloneness. Her mother died of AIDS last year and her father and an aunt, who was in this country illegally, died this year. She said she has no one to turn to for help.

Acosta, who was 3 when her parents immigrated here in 1978, lives with 60 other single mothers at La Pusada, a teenage maternity home in the heavily Hispanic Pico-Union neighborhood west of downtown Los Angeles. She is trying to make ends meet while awaiting approval of her application for U.S. citizenship. She is in her third semester at Los Angeles City College and hopes to earn a

degree that could land her a decent-paying job.

Acosta went on welfare when she was eight months pregnant and says that when she did so, she felt ashamed. "I don't want to be a burden to this country, but I had to do it. I had nothing and no one. I know no one told me to get pregnant, but I was naive and foolish. I don't know what I'm going to do now."

Acosta receives \$100 each month in child support from the father of her 8-month-old daughter, and earns about \$280 monthly in commissions selling cosmetics door-to-door, barely enough to pay her rent. She picks up a few more dollars sweeping streets in a program run by a Central American refugee center.

What she stands to lose under the welfare bill's cutbacks in assistance to noncitizen immigrants is \$470 a month in Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC), the main federal-state welfare program; \$82 a month in food stamps; and free medical care under Medi-Cal, California's Medicare program.

The welfare law allows states to decide whether to deny immigrants Medicaid benefits, and the California legislature has yet to debate the issue.

"I can't afford medical care if my daughter gets sick. What this means is that I'll have to drop some of my college courses and take another

part-time job, which means even more time before I can find a good job with health insurance," Acosta said.

Acosta said she believes she is a victim of a backlash against immigrants that began in 1994 with the adoption of California's Proposition 187, which called for the withdrawal of social and education benefits for illegal immigrants. The measure currently is tied up in court appeals.

Acosta said she can understand some of the reasons for the backlash, such as the exploitation of the social services system by some illegal immigrants with forged documents who claim benefits while earning livable wages.

"But I think that it is really sad that because of these people who abuse the system, I have to pay for that. I want to and will get out of welfare. It's not something I'm proud of. But I just need some time to get my education and get a good job," she said.

Acosta said the anti-immigrant backlash makes her feel pressured to return to El Salvador, but she knows no one there and could never find work.

"I'll do anything to stay in America. If I have to, I'll go in the Army and fight. But now, all I see is my dreams going away. I never thought it would happen," she said.

The Washington Post

At a California Clinic, Outbreak of Uncertainty

By William Claiborne
Washington Post Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES—Uncertainty hangs in the air in the waiting room of Clinica Romero. Everyone knows something bad is coming, but no one is quite sure what. Or when.

Rosita Garcia, an unemployed housekeeper who immigrated here legally from El Salvador 15 years ago, knows that her diabetes and high blood pressure require frequent medical attention, and she is vaguely aware that some sort of new welfare law could end her Medicaid benefits.

"Has it passed yet?" she asked last week, nearly a month after Congress enacted the bill and the day before President Clinton signed it into law. "Where will I get money to pay the doctor? If I find work, my employer won't pay for medical care."

Margot Rodriguez, 38, a legal immigrant from Guatemala who said she took home \$90 the previous week from her job as a garment worker, asked, "How long can I come here? Where else can I go to see a doctor?"

And Carlos Lopez, 38, also a legal immigrant from Guatemala, seemed confused by the intent of the welfare reform bill. "Even for legals it's in effect?" asked the unemployed laborer, who came to the clinic for treatment of a respiratory ailment. "Is this going to happen all over America?" he asked.

It is. Nationally, when the new law takes effect Oct. 1 about 650,000 legal immigrants, most of them already in the United States, may no longer have access to Medicaid. An estimated 1 million legal immigrants, many of them children, will be ineligible for food stamps, and roughly 500,000 residents will be cut off from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) targeted to the needy elderly, blind and disabled.

Nowhere will the change be felt more acutely than in California, home to nearly 40 percent of the approximately 1.5 million documented aliens who receive federal assistance. The state's Health Services Department has estimated that 260,400 legal immigrants receive benefits under SSI and Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program, and immigrant rights groups say that 425,000 legal immigrants, half of them children, will lose food stamp benefits.

In Los Angeles County, which has the state's highest concentration of immigrants, 200,000 families with children could lose benefits under Aid to Families With Dependent Children, the main federal-state welfare program, if the state exercises its new authority to disqualify legal immigrants, according to the county's Administrative Office. More than 300,000 county residents could lose eligibility for food stamps.

California's Legislative Analyst's Office estimated recently that the welfare reform law will likely result in a net reduction of \$6.8 billion in federal funds to the state over the next six years, about two-thirds due to the elimination of federal aid to noncitizen immigrants. However, the report said the precise effect on the poor could only be determined after state implementation policy is set and some of the new law's provisions are interpreted.

Gov. Pete Wilson (R) and the Republican majority in the state Assembly are considering calling a special session of the legislature to decide on implementation of the reforms and address such issues as when to exercise the new option of withholding Medicare assistance from legal immigrants and how far to scale back other benefits.

Under state law, the counties—as the designated providers of last resort—are responsible for maintaining a social service safety net for the

poor. They presumably will bear new costs in emergency medical care at county hospitals and cash benefits under the general assistance program. The burden will come at a time when a number of counties, including Los Angeles County, face fiscal crises and have closed county medical facilities.

Because of the uncertainty over how much the California legislature—particularly the Democrat-controlled state Senate—will cut immigrants' benefits, immigrants rights advocates and providers of social services say they are unable to accurately predict the impact on needy aliens. Leaders of both parties predict major battles in both the Senate and the Republican-controlled Assembly.

But social service providers say they are certain that the welfare reforms will have wide-ranging unintended consequences, particularly for immigrants who, out of ignorance or unfamiliarity with English, fail to seek assistance even in emergencies because they believe they will be turned away no matter how dire their situation.

The most vulnerable among the immigrant population will be the elderly and women and children, said Luke E. Williams Jr., executive-director of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), one of six groups that have banded together to lobby the state legislature to soften the implementation of the welfare reforms and to prepare service providers and recipients for the changes.

"The service providers haven't even begun to deal with this, and they can't begin to act until the legislature has spoken. They're calling us and saying, 'We have someone who is getting dialysis and he's an immigrant. Can we continue providing it?'" Williams said.

His greatest fear, Williams said, is picking up the newspaper and reading about an 80-year-old Asian immigrant being found dead in his apartment of starvation or lack of critical medical attention because he believed he was ineligible even for emergency assistance.

Another unintended consequence could be immigrants who assume they are no longer eligible for food stamps, cash payments or medical care, but are in fact exempt from the cutbacks, Williams said. For example, he said, veterans who are not citizens remain eligible for benefits but some of them may not realize that.

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Also exempted from the ban on aid are immigrants who have worked 40 quarters (10 years) without receiving any means-tested aid. Welfare rights advocates say that many immigrants, particularly nannies and housekeepers, cannot prove they have worked 40 quarters because their employers failed to pay their Social Security taxes.

"We have to educate the service providers and the recipients so that we aren't disqualifying everyone who comes in speaking with an accent or is unable to produce naturalization papers. We need to put the onus on the agencies to determine if there are exemptions. But we have to start preparing them before it's too late," Williams said.

"Also, how do you define 'medical emergencies?'" he asked. "We're going to see a big increase in emergency room care, which is not exactly cost-effective. But there is still too much uncertainty over who can get such care," Williams said.

Another provision that Williams predicted will become a problem is the "deeming" requirement in federal means-tested programs, in which the sponsor of an immigrant who comes after Oct. 1 is responsible for the immigrant's welfare for the first five years here. Even after five years elapse, many immigrants still will be ineligible for help under new standards that count the income of their sponsors as their own.

"What happens when an immigrant's

son who has a nice aerospace job for three years suddenly loses his job and can no longer provide for his father? Does the old man move to the street? This bill doesn't give you any guidance where it's not cut and dried. That's where the greatest potential for damage comes in," Williams said.

Welfare officials and immigrant rights advocates said the numbers of immigrants forced off public assistance could be lower than predicted if, as expected, large numbers of aliens seek citizenship. However, they said, waiting lists for naturalization are already long.

President Clinton on Friday ordered Attorney General Janet Reno to reduce delays in processing citizenship papers. He also promised to lessen the impact of the welfare cutbacks on legal immigrants who lose benefits by assuring that they will not be denied non-cash services needed to protect life and safety, such as access to soup kitchens, emergency medical services and child protection. Clinton said the administration will grant waivers allowing states to extend eligibility for food stamps to the maximum time allowed by the law—one year for most aliens and two for those who are elderly or disabled.

At the Clinica Romero—a state and county-funded free clinic that serves mostly immigrants from Central America in the heavily Hispanic Pico-Union neighborhood just west of downtown Los Angeles—Human Resources Director Oscar Lopez said he expects a sharp downturn in patients. He said many are likely to hear about the welfare cutbacks, assume they are no longer eligible for assistance and won't seek medical care. He recalled such a downturn in 1994 after Proposition 187 was adopted, which, he said, reflected fear and uncertainty of the future.

Proposition 187, whose implementation is stalled by legal appeals, required a ban on social service and education benefits for illegal immigrants. The federal welfare reform act specifically bars illegal immigrants from most federal, state and local public assistance, although it does not stop undocumented aliens from receiving public education.

"The situation for us is dramatic, and our future is not very bright, to say the least. Even now, with all this immigrant-bashing hysteria in California, many people are too scared to seek medical help. Now with this [welfare reform] we're going to have to go out

and talk people into coming here for help," Lopez said. Their reluctance will impair efforts to contain sexually transmitted and other communicable diseases, and jeopardize the lives of persons with life-threatening illnesses, he said.

Immigrant rights advocates say it is up to the state to soften some of the impact of the welfare reform bill.

"The state legislature has to do what Congress failed to do, and that is deal with the unintended consequences. They have to provide some kind of safety net for the poorest immigrants or our worst nightmares are going to come true. We're going to be picking up the paper and reading about tragedies," Williams said.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read an overview citing who is eligible for Medicaid as documented by the Health Care Financing Administration by clicking on the above symbol on the front page of The Post's site on the World Wide Web at <http://www.washingtonpost.com>

8-24-96

Over a pleasant lunch in his office this summer, Gen. Barry McCaffrey explained to me his policies that "drugs are a cancer, not a war."

"Drug use in America is down one-half — by 50 percent," he began. "Drug-users fell from 23 million to 11 million between 1979 and 1994. Cocaine use is down by 75 percent. Remember, one-third of the armed forces were using drugs in the 1970s. It was then that we started talking about it as a war."

"That sounds good," he went on, "but when your mother is addicted to Quaaludes, she's not the enemy."

Retired Gen. McCaffrey, who was appointed the Clinton administration's "drug czar" after a sterling military career of leadership in the Gulf war and in Panama, is a spare, plain-spoken man. No one questions his honor, his determination or his dignity.

In his speeches, he has laid out the realities for his country. In one, for example, he said, "At stake are trust in our public institutions, the security of our neighborhoods, the health and safety of our schools and work environments and the future of our young people. Drugs have killed 500,000 Americans and cost us \$300 billion during the decade of the '90s."

Czar McCaffrey has done his work well. In fact, in the relatively few months that he has been in office, he has put together a solid and balanced anti-drug program

Moral outrage lacking in drug war

for at least the next 10 years. But the White House itself tragically lacks crucial weapons in the war and medicines for the cancer.

Let us examine the newest revelations of our complicated drug problem.

This week a report was released showing that teen drug abuse has skyrocketed: It increased 105 percent between 1992 and 1995, climbing 33 percent from 1994 to 1995. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in its annual survey confirmed Gen. McCaffrey's data that general drug use in America remained flat. But its findings that drugs are now used on a monthly basis by 10.9 percent of children ages 12 to 17, up from 8.2 percent in 1994 and 5.3 percent in 1992, were staggering.

Bush administration drug czar William Bennett immediately jumped into the fray, accusing the

Clinton administration of a "national disgrace." Public policy, he said, is a "manifestation of attitude," and this administration has been "cavalier, unengaged and unconcerned about illegal drugs. I have never, never, never found any administration that's been so silent on this great challenge to the American people."

Mr. Bennett is right and leads us to the heart of the policy problem: One major weapon the administration has not used is the moral.

Only last month, for instance, information came from congressional testimony that background investigations on White House employees had found that more than 40 of them had used drugs, some in recent years, including cocaine, crack and hallucinogens. Furthermore, the Secret Service had actually rejected White House passes for an unspecified number of those Clinton employees because their drug usage constituted a security risk, but the president allowed them to work anyway.

White House spokesman Michael McCurry then compounded the disgrace when he cavalierly tossed off a remark that he, too, had "smoked a joint from time to time" in the 1970s. It was when Gen. McCaffrey called him, telling him his remarks were "incomplete" because they contained no moral regret, that Mr. McCurry publicly apologized.

You see, the Reagan and Bush

administrations' "War on Drugs" — with its balance between Nancy Reagan's much-maligned "Just Say No," rehabilitation, and a stern, non-nonsense interdiction program — was working.

However, when Bill Clinton became president, he barely even mentioned drugs. In line with the administration's love of therapy and hatred of any kind of war, funds were deliberately shifted from interdiction to the treatment of hard-core addicts, and the drug office was cut from 120 staffers to 25 (some czardom!).

Another weapon in the war — or medicine for this cancer — has also been severely cut back. That is the sure use of force against the drug trade. The administration's obsession with non-military solutions to just about everything (they fight only "economic wars") has now led it to punish Colombia by withdrawing certification of its drug-fighting resolve, at least in substantial part because the Colombian military is such an aggressive fighting force.

Most of all, where is the moral outrage over what drugs are doing to America and to Americans. Gen. McCaffrey has that sense of outrage and shows it, but the president and the rest of the White House do not. The unavoidable explanation is that they simply do not feel it.

Georgie Anne Geyer is a nationally syndicated columnist.

Latin America policy should be about more than drugs and immigration

It's a sham that foreign policy experts of the Republican Party now see Latin America only in relation to drugs and immigration, while any expansion of North American Free Trade Agreement has been shelved. No wonder Mercosur is looking to Europe for leadership.

On drugs, it is conveniently brushed aside that just as Prohibition helped build powerful criminal organizations in this country, the "war on drugs" has made the cartel chieftains millionaires. Yes, the laws of economics also apply to illegal and black markets. And when a

New York or Washington street seller of drugs makes in a bad night what a Latin American police officer or judge earns each month, even bureaucrats should understand the consequences.

On immigration, it is hypocritical to believe in the free flow of goods, services and capital, but not of labor. The "immigration problem" is not a problem created by excessive freedom, but by the American welfare state. To blame poor Mexican peasants for taking advantage of bad laws passed by college-educated U.S. legislators is laughable.

Your columnist Arnold Beichman ("Love affair with Scottish heroin ... and the Mexican drug threat," op-ed, July 30) goes too far in calling Mexico a "narco-democracy" and a "high-tech kleptocracy." Does the American intelligentsia nostalgically yearn for an explosion of gringo-hating protest, and the stoning of embassies, and U.S. companies? Get real!

CARLOS BALL
Venezuelan journalist
Agencia Interamericana De Prensa
Economic
Boca Raton

Tucson Citizen
A-1 8/23/96

U.S. agent shoots Mexican

• The agent claims he was pelted with rocks near the Douglas-Agua Prieta border.

By PAMELA HARTMAN
Citizen Staff Writer

A U.S. Border Patrol agent shot a Mexican man in the back yesterday along the international border at Douglas, after the agent apparently was pelted with rocks by a group of immigrants, Mexican authorities said yesterday.

The Mexican man, identified as 48-year-old Miguel Felix Perez of Guaymas, Son., was shot in the lower back and was in stable condition last night at an Agua Prieta, Son., hospital, Mexican Consul Roberto Rodriguez Hernandez said.

Rodriguez said doctors would determine today whether Perez requires surgery to remove the bullet.

"He is OK," Rodriguez said. "The bullet is inside his body."

U.S. Border Patrol spokesman Rob Daniels said the incident occurred at 3:35 p.m. in an area west of the Douglas port of entry that has been a site of frequent conflict between agents and illegal immigrants. Douglas is about 120 miles southeast of Tucson.

Daniels said the shooting occurred in U.S. territory, but Rodriguez said it occurred right along the international line that separates Douglas from Agua Prieta.

Daniels said the agent was not injured in yesterday's incident. The agent fired one shot from his service revolver, and the immigrant was able to get back into Mexico after being shot, Daniels said.

Daniels refused to identify the agent or release any information on how long the agent had worked for the Border Patrol. He said no decision had been made on

BORDER, continued/4A

Border agent shoots man

Continued from 1A

whether to place the agent on leave while the incident is investigated.

Rodriguez said Perez admitted throwing a rock, but denied throwing it in the direction of the patrol agent.

"At this moment, nobody knows exactly what the situation was, and why the border agent shot," Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez said Perez was an agricultural worker who used to be homeless and was staying for several days with friends in Agua Prieta.

"He seems to me that he's very inoffensive," Rodriguez said. "He doesn't represent any kind of danger. Supposedly, he was trying to protect some children from the actions of the Border Patrol officer. But who knows?"

Rodriguez said two people witnessed the shooting.

Rodriguez said the Mexican attorney general's office is opening an investigation. Officials from the U.S. Inspector General's Office arrived in Douglas last night to investigate the incident.

igate the incident.

Agua Prieta Police Chief Alfredo Fragoso said Perez was drunk at the time of the shooting and was with a group of men who were throwing stones at two patrol agents.

Fragoso said he didn't think the shooting was justified, and questioned why an agent would use a gun against men who were throwing rocks.

Last week a Douglas patrol agent fired one shot at a group of illegal immigrants who were throwing large rocks at him along the border. No one was hit by the bullet, and no disciplinary action was taken against the agent.

Daniels said yesterday's confrontation was the third in eight days along the border.

In 1992, a U.S. Border Patrol agent in Nogales shot and killed an unarmed Mexican man. The agent, Michael Elmer, resigned from the patrol and was found not guilty on charges of murder and civil rights violations in separate state and federal trials. Elmer argued he had fired in self-defense.

Arizona Daily Star 8/25/96 A-15

U.S. plan to kill coca stirs violent protests

FLORENCIA, Colombia (AP) - As teen-age soldiers with bayonets fidgeted nearby, a Catholic bishop tried to soothe a crowd of angry coca farmers - to no avail.

Tear gas, rocks and gasoline bombs were flying in minutes.

Peasants charged through billowing tear gas on a bridge leading into Florencia, taunting soldiers in gas masks but failing to break through barbed-wire barricades.

"Don't let me die," groaned one protester, bleeding heavily from a shoulder wound as soldiers carried him away on a stretcher. He died soon after.

Peasants in this southern coca-growing region are responding with violence to a U.S.-backed campaign to target the drug trade at its source, by wiping out the shrub whose leaves are processed into cocaine.

The government has said it intends to wipe out the more than 100,000 acres of coca plants in Colombia by 1997, but new fields are being planted so fast that the goal seems out of reach.

Protests against eradication have also taken place in recent years in neighboring Peru and Bolivia, where at least 450,000 people live off the illegal crop.

But the Colombian protests, which started last month, have been more violent. Tens of thousands of peasants have marched on southern towns, disrupting business and transport.

Florencia, the capital of Caqueta state with about 120,000 residents, is now virtually under siege. Aerial fumigation began in the region 240 miles south of Bogota a few weeks ago.

At least six people died in last week's violence, and thousands of protesters are camped on Florencia's outskirts, blocked by army barricades. The mayor has declared a curfew and banned alco-

COLOMBIA

hol sales.

The military says the peasants have been incited by guerrillas whose drug-related activities rival those of the Cali cartel, the world's most powerful cocaine syndicate.

In comments broadcast nationwide by radio, President Ernesto Samper said yesterday that the riots were evidence of "hidden interests" - which he did not specify - that aimed to destabilize his government.

But so many people in Florencia thrive on coca - from the peasants who grow it to the bank owners, truck drivers and store owners who do business with them - that red, blue and yellow Colombian flags have been draped outside many of the town's buildings in support of the protest.

Whether aerial fumigation will even work is dubious. The coca plant offers several harvests a year and harvesters make \$30 a day - more than three times the wage for picking yucca or corn.

"If they fumigate 20 hectares here, we'll cultivate 200 hectares over there," said Cesar Mundaca, a peasant. "They'll have to get rid of the whole forest."

Peasants have also developed ways of protecting their crop against glyphosate, the herbicide supplied by the United States: They douse coca bushes with a blend of water and molasses, which acts as a protective film.

The government stepped up eradication under pressure from U.S. officials angered by evidence that Samper won office with drug money.

U.S. officials say crop eradication is the least painful method for Samper's

government to curb the drug trade. Establishing longer jail terms for drug lords and confiscating their property would be more effective.

But many protesters see the United States as dictating Colombian anti-drug policy.

"Samper, killer kneeling before the gringos," read a sign at the funeral Thursday for a peasant who died from a bayonet wound.

Mourners shouted "Military murderers!" as they trailed a white Cadillac bearing the peasant's coffin to the Florencia cemetery. People on scooters blasted horns in sympathy.

The army claims guerrillas, who shoot at police planes spraying herbicide, force peasants to protest and that rebels armed with handguns have infiltrated the rioters.

The rebel Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, with at least 10,000 fighters, makes \$1 million a day providing security for drug labs, secret airstrips and other drug-related activities, the government says.

StarNet news link

The U.S. State Department issues a report on coca and cocaine.

Lucas
Citizen
C-1 8/24/96

Marines join fight against border bandits in Naco

By PAMELA HARTMAN
Citizen Staff Writer

A contingent of U.S. Marines will begin placing vertical rail tracks along 2.5 miles of border at Naco in an effort to prevent car thieves and drug traffickers from fleeing into Mexico.

Cochise County Sheriff John Pintek said the barriers, which will supplement two miles of steel fencing erected by the U.S. Border Patrol in 1994, will make the area safer for local residents. Naco, near Bisbee, is about 100 miles southeast of Tucson.

On 16 occasions over the past four years, armed robbers have

held up border residents in their homes in southern Cochise County.

The robbers, commonly known as border bandits, often steal residents' cars, cash and possessions and then flee across the border into Mexico.

Pintek faulted the federal government for what he said was failure to address cross-border crime problems in Cochise County.

He has previously compared the border bandit problem to terrorism and has floated the idea of closing the Naco port of entry. Pintek said he devised the rail idea to try to address the community's concerns.

"I'm taking the bull by the horns

and doing it," Pintek said.

U.S. Border Patrol spokesman Rob Daniels said staffing at the Naco station has increased by 50 percent to 60 percent this year, and more than a dozen more agents will be added by the end of the year.

Pintek, who is running for reelection, said he began working on the rail project after becoming sheriff in 1993. Pintek faces two challengers next month in the Democratic primary race.

Larry Dever, a Republican candidate for sheriff, said more fencing won't be enough to stop the

armed intrusions.

"Any kind of effort to reduce border-related crime is a good thing," Dever said. "But frankly, I don't see this particular effort as in the long run making a big difference."

Dever said the Sheriff's Department needs to establish better relations with its Mexican counterpart and encourage deputies to leave their cars and patrol more on foot near the border.

Pintek said Southern Pacific railroad donated the steel rails, which stand about 30 inches high and will be placed so cars won't be able to drive between them.

The rails will replace three strings of barbed-wire fencing that is frequently cut by bandits in an area west of the Naco port of entry.

A Marine engineering unit, part of the Joint Task Force 6 military battalion, will work on the rail project until Oct. 11.

Palomina resident Edwin York who was robbed at gunpoint last year, said he has spent \$6,000 to \$8,000 on home security since the robbery. York said he would like to see the ports of entry closed after cross-border crime occurs.

"This is not a county problem," York said. "This is an international problem."

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Services Not Key for Latinas in U.S. Illegally, Study Shows

■ **Immigrants:** Few rely on public assistance, and most are here to stay. Proposition 187 backers say the UCI report overlooks realities.

By ERIC BAILEY
 TIMES STAFF WRITER

Four of five illegal immigrant Latinas in Orange County see themselves as part of their community and nearly two-thirds hope to remain in the United States, but they don't consider taxpayer-subsidized social services a lure to stay, a UC Irvine study has found.

The study, derived from telephone interviews with 160 randomly selected undocumented Latinas in the county, also found that—despite low incomes and the presence of young children—their use of public assistance and preventive health services was low.

Most of the findings in the study contra-

dict the fierce arguments of illegal immigration foes, who have pushed in recent years to cut access for undocumented immigrants to public health and welfare services.

"The political rhetoric has focused on the negative, that undocumented immigrants have come to abuse our system and if we stop them from using social services, they'll go back," said Leo Chavez, a UC Irvine anthropology professor who helped lead the study team.

"We're saying those assumptions are off. These are people who are basically working class, don't seem to be using exorbitant levels of health care. And they embrace life here, they feel comfortable here. They have an investment here in terms of their

Please see **LATINAS, B11**

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jobs and kids," Chavez said.

But foes attacked the study, suggesting it overlooks basic realities.

"This looks to me to be a complete whitewash of illegal immigration," said Harold Ezell, a former federal immigration official and one of the leading proponents of Proposition 187, the watershed anti-illegal immigration measure approved by voters in 1994. "He's obviously never been to any of the emergency rooms in Orange County to see who's using them—it's non-English-speaking young people with babies."

Ezell added that if illegal immigrants "really want to feel part of the community, they ought to learn to speak English."

Several academicians said the UC Irvine report, despite the pitfalls of conducting sensitive sociological research over the telephone, at the very least echoes the findings of previous studies on illegal immigrants elsewhere in California.

"This is a very meritorious effort to try to get information from a sample of women who are at the heart of a lot of the controversies that have been bubbling over in Southern California for a long time, since well before the passage of Proposition 187," said Ruben Rumbaut, a sociology professor at Michigan State University and author of "Immigrant America: A Portrait."

The findings were culled from a larger, three-year study of 803 Latinas in Orange County—undocumented, legal immigrants and Latina citizens—being conducted by Chavez and three other researchers for the American Cancer Institute. A control group of 422 white women were also interviewed for the project, which is focused on cancer screening and treatment.

As an offshoot of the bigger project, Chavez said, "these were sort of incidental findings. We didn't have an ax to grind or enter into a political debate when we did our research. I think it gives our findings more credibility."

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He also said the study marks one of the first research efforts on illegal immigrants that uses randomly selected subjects. Because illegal immigrants often linger in the shadows of society, it is difficult to reach a broad population.

But in Orange County, 94% of all Latinos have telephones, allowing researchers here to make contact more easily. Most other studies have relied on data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the U.S. Census Bureau or interviews with people befriended in the field.

The study, which is slated for publication in the International Migration Review, provides a telling statistical snapshot of undocumented Latinas in Orange County.

It found that undocumented Latinas represent 3.7% of women 18 and older in the county, where 23% of all people are Latino. These undocumented Latinas have been in the country four years on average, compared with about a dozen years for documented Latinas.

The median age of undocumented Latinas is 27, compared with 33 for legal immigrants. The average undocumented Latina had two children, and a quarter of them lived in households with two or more married couples sharing the same roof.

Less than a quarter of them were employed full time, compared with 40% for documented Latinas and more than 50% for Latina citizens. Of those who worked, 58% held service jobs, predominantly housecleaning and child care.

But very few, the study found, had jumped into the welfare safety net. Only 3% of the undocumented Latinas in the study said they were receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children for their U.S.-born children, the same percentage as for documented and citizen Latinas.

Only 21% had private medical insurance coverage, compared with 52% of the documented and 77% of Latina citizens. The figure for white women was 86%. Even so, just 18% of the undocumented Latinas said they turned to government-sponsored medical programs, the study found.

Although illegal immigrants have been characterized in heated public policy debates as sojourners eager to reap the wealth of the United States and then return home, the study found otherwise.

It concluded that 84% of the undocumented Latinas said they felt part of a community in the United States and more than 63% said they wanted to remain and not return home.

The longer they have been here, the stronger their desire to stay. Of those who have lived here longer than five years, 79% said they wanted to stay. Only about half of those living here five years or less desire to remain.

There also was a north-south bias. Latinas in the northern part of Orange County, which has long-established Spanish-speaking enclaves in Santa Ana and surrounding cities, are more likely to feel a community spirit than those in the upscale South County, the study found.

A sense of community figured strongly in the reasoning of undocumented Latinas hoping to stay in the country. Those ensconced in their community were 10 times as likely as those without such sentiments to express a desire to stay in the United States, the study determined.

Those here longer than five years were three times as likely to stay.

But, somewhat surprisingly, those with a regular source of health care were 65% less likely than those without it to intend to stay, a finding Chavez said might reflect a dissatisfaction with the quality of care, language difficulties and uncovered costs that prove a financial frustration.

The study concludes that undocumented Latina immigrants are lured across the border not by social services but rather because of work, family and community.

"If we shut off health care, if we shut off the schools, the jobs are still going to be here and they aren't going to make a mass migration home," Chavez said. "We need to discuss what kind of society we're creating under that scenario."

Rumbaut agreed, saying that "the moral of the story is we reap what we sow. When you welcome people to a community, you encourage them to feel that they matter, and that they have a stake here. But if you sow hate, you'll reap the products of hate. If you sow exclusion, you can't expect the constructive investments that people who feel they're part of the whole are going to make."

Wayne Cornelius, research director at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at UC San Diego, cautioned that the study reflects only the urban-dwelling immigrant and not those who dwell in rural areas, such as migrant farm workers. But, he said, it still underscores a broad body of prior research showing that most illegal immigrants feel grounded in the United States.

"Politicians like to view this as a population that isn't rooted, one that can be induced to self-deport simply by denying access to social services," Cornelius said. "Study after study has shown that the proportion of undocumented immigrants expressing a desire to stay in the U.S. is high."

He also said that the findings on health care are important. With a population that intends to stick around, the lack of preventive screening for cancer and other illnesses "is worrisome," Cornelius said. "We should be spending more on this population for certain kinds of preventive care, if the object is to reduce long-term outlays."

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U.S. Asylum for Pair From Ex-Soviet State

By NORMAN KEMPSTER
TIMES STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON — The Clinton administration granted political asylum Friday to two opposition politicians from Belarus, accusing the strategically located former Soviet republic of a pattern of human rights abuses that echoes the repression of the Communist era.

It was the first time since the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991 that the United States has conferred refugee status on dissidents from any of the 15 former Soviet republics.

Zenon Poznyak, head of the Belarussian Popular Front, and his press secretary, Sergei Naumchik, announced the decision at a news conference, handing reporters a letter from the Immigration and Naturalization Service certifying that the agency had "established a well-founded fear of persecution were you to return to your country." That language represents the internationally recognized standard for asylum.

The men said they fled Belarus because their lives were in danger from the hard-line regime of President Alexander G. Lukashenko. They issued a statement accusing him of reverting to Soviet-era policies and of subverting Belarussian sovereignty by signing an economic agreement with Russia that reduces Belarus to little more than a vassal state.

Last week, Lukashenko announced plans to cancel a parliamentary election, ordering instead a referendum on extending his powers.

In its most recent human rights report, the State Department said the Lukashenko government's human rights record "worsened markedly as Belarus turned back toward Soviet-era authoritarian practices."

State Department spokeswoman Julie Reside said the Belarussian government's human rights abuses are the primary irritant preventing a closer relationship between Washington and Minsk. She said that government repression also has undermined the Belarussian economy.

"We bring up Belarus' human rights record at every opportunity both in Minsk and in Washington," she said. "We make clear to senior Belarussian officials our belief that Belarus has the potential to prosper and to offer its citizens a high standard of living but [that] an open society is a prerequisite for progress."

Anti-government demonstrations in Minsk this spring were marked by violent clashes between protesters and police; two major demonstrations there in June and July, however, passed without incident.

Still, U.S. officials said Lukashenko remains intolerant of dissent.

The Belarussian government has denied that the two men's lives are at risk and has accused them of trying to cause divisions in the economically troubled republic.

Earlier this month, an aide to Lukashenko said the two men were "destabilizing the political situation in the republic by trying to present themselves as exiles."

Belarus, between Russia and Poland, was far more reluctant than other former republics in Europe to dismantle the Soviet empire.

The Minsk government recently restored the republic's Soviet-era flag and other symbols.

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PAGE A-10

New Welfare Bill Revives Plans for Prop. 187

■ Immigration: Law bars illegal immigrants from most social services, but does not ban children from public schools.

By PATRICK J. McDONNELL
and MARK GLADSTONE
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

The welfare overhaul signed into law by President Clinton this week may breathe new life into Proposition 187, the 1994 ballot initiative that sought to bar illegal immigrants in California from getting most public services.

"There may be a whole host of areas where the objectives of Proposition 187 can be implemented now," said Sean Walsh, spokesman for Gov. Pete Wilson, a prime proponent of the ballot initiative, which is now largely blocked by federal court order.

The new law specifically bans illegal immigrants from most federal, state and local public assistance programs—many of the same programs targeted by Proposition 187 on the state level. Gov. Pete Wilson plans to issue an executive order next week directing state agencies to comply with new restrictions.

The welfare law does not, however, deal with one of Proposition 187's most controversial provisions: banning illegal immigrant pupils from public elementary and secondary schools.

State officials also hope the new law will be legal ammunition in their ongoing court battle to implement Proposition 187, much of which is now blocked by the courts.

"Regardless of the present legal status of Proposition 187, the new federal law has enacted much of what Proposition 187 sought to accomplish—perhaps even more," said Daniel Kolkey, legal affairs secretary for Gov. Wilson. "Many of the objectives of Proposition 187 are now enshrined in federal law."

Meanwhile, the team of lawyers who have successfully blocked the implementation of the ballot initiative met Friday in Los Angeles, partly to discuss the implications for the new law. "We're looking at it closely," said attorney Mark Rosenbaum, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California.

In addition he said lawyers will

be examining next week's executive order from the governor's office.

U.S. District Judge Mariana R. Pfaelzer has blocked implementation of most portions of Proposition 187, calling the ballot measure "an impermissible state scheme" to usurp federal authority on immigration matters. Californians voted in favor of Proposition 187 by an almost 3-2 majority after a heated campaign that helped thrust immigration into the national spotlight.

However, Judge Pfaelzer, in her November 1995 ruling, also stated that California could seek to exclude illegal immigrants from health and social service programs funded entirely by the state. State authorities are awaiting word from the judge on plans to ban illegal immigrants from two state-funded programs—prenatal care and long-term care—that state officials say cost California taxpayers about \$70 million annually.

John H. Sugiyama, the senior assistant California attorney general who is heading the state legal effort to implement the ballot measure, said Friday that it was a "reasonable possibility" that the state may be back in court citing the welfare statute as a legal lever before Judge Pfaelzer in Los Angeles.

"This is a step toward ending benefits for illegal immigrants," said John Nelson, acting press secretary to Assembly Speaker Curt Pringle (R-Garden Grove). "The spirit of 187 was about ending

the welfare draw and ending the special treatment for people who have broken the law."

Assemblywoman Martha Escutia (D-Huntington Park), an opponent of Proposition 187, agreed that the federal welfare law seems to undermine the legal challenge to the initiative. "If anything, this is another way of reviving the issue" of Proposition 187, Escutia said.

However, Yolanda Vera, an attorney with the National Immigration Law Center, an immigrant advocacy group in Los Angeles, said she believes that key Proposition 187-like provisions of the new law are based on questionable legality or would take years to implement.

In addition, Vera warned that any state attempt to implement new bans on social services could face a court challenge. "If the state starts cutting people off benefits because of their immigration status, they've got to deal with the fact that they've got a federal court that has been looking at the case," Vera said.

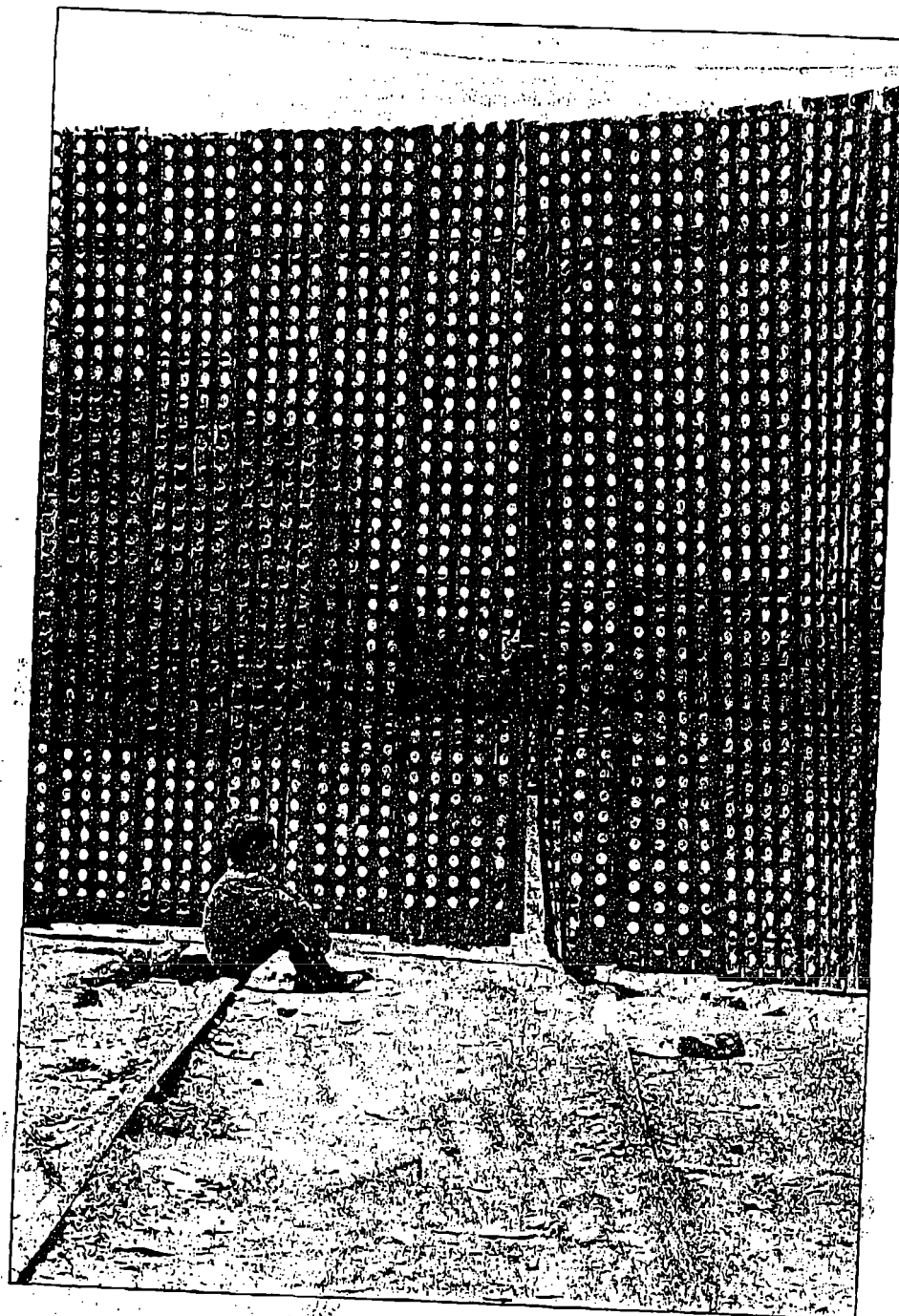
The new welfare law incorporated many Proposition 187-type restrictions on nonemergency health and social service assistance for illegal immigrants. Like Proposition 187, the welfare law includes sections requiring verification of applicants for certain public benefits—requirements that have sent a shudder through the ranks of social service providers in Los Angeles.

And, in another nod to the California ballot measure, the welfare law also voids any state or local law restricting communication about illegal immigrants between state or local government entities and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. That provision, analysts say, was aimed at Los Angeles and other cities that have restricted police-INS cooperation.

The sections of the welfare bill blocking state aid for illegal immigrants is distinct from widely publicized portions of the bill that bar legal immigrants from receiving federal welfare and food stamp benefits. States are also given the option to ban legal immigrants from Medicaid.

Even before passage of the new welfare law, illegal immigrants were already banned from most big-ticket aid programs, including nonemergency Medicaid benefits, food stamps and cash welfare outlays for families, the aged and disabled. But the new federal law widens the ban and extends it to state and local governments.

Under the new law, illegal immigrants will only be eligible for a handful of government programs, such as emergency care, immunization and the treatment of communicable disease, school lunches, soup kitchens and short-term disaster relief.



Border line: A child sits on the tracks near border fence in Tijuana's Colonia Libertad, while youths and some waiting to cross into the United States play soccer on a dusty field near the border.

SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE, Pg. B-1 -- 8/24/96

Key border exit shuts at nightfall

Lack of security cited on pedestrian overpass

By Leonel Sanchez, Staff Writer

The pedestrian overpass at the San Ysidro Port of entry long has been plagued by late-night revelers who fight, pass out and drop things on the traffic lanes below.

Last week, federal officials decided to take action.

The General Services Administration, which owns the port building, installed metal gates on the east and west ramps of the walkway, and officials began closing the quarter-mile walkway from sundown to 6 a.m.

They acted at the request of the building's tenants, mainly the U.S. Customs Service.

"We want it closed for security," said U.S. Customs spokeswoman Bobbie Cassidy. "We have had a lot of problems with fights, some stabbings and purse snatchings. We're experimenting. We want to see how it works at night."

Officials could return to the previous policy of keeping the walkway open all the time, she added.

But for now, the plan is to keep it closed at night, said GSA spokeswoman Mary Filippini.

Community meetings are planned in the next few weeks to hear from the public on the issue, said Cassidy.

The closure has been criticized by pedestrians and San Diego police.

Foot traffic has been affected the most on the east end of the border crossing near San Ysidro Boulevard. People leaving Tijuana at night must now walk two blocks north to a freeway overpass to get to the west side of the port, where many have their cars parked in lots.

The boulevard is congested with people on late weekend nights, including many waiting for a trolley.

Police said that channeling more pedestrians to that area could lead to more problems.

"We're very empathetic about the security issues at the port," said police Capt. Hank Olias of the southern division in San Ysidro. "But as a police captain, I wish they would keep it open so as not to create a bottleneck situation for people returning from Mexico."

"Our position is we would like them to use the pedestrian walkway if they have to get to the other side as opposed to having them walking on San Ysidro Boulevard and mingling," he said. "We're trying to keep people from fighting."

No major incidents occurred during the first week of the pilot project, he said.

Security inside the port building is the responsibility of GSA. The pedestrian walkway is a different story, with federal and local agencies still trying to decide what areas of the walkway fall into their jurisdiction.

GSA says it cannot provide security on the walkway all by itself. "We just don't have the police force size to be able to do it," said Filippini.

As a result the agency has hired security guards and made arrangements with police to enter the area to make arrests when necessary.

Neither U.S. Customs nor police could provide statistics on the walkway problems, such as the number of arrests made. Many of the crimes that occur there are not reported because of the absence of security or because victims and witnesses are uncooperative, police said.

Cassidy said the problems sometimes get so severe

See BORDER on Page B-8

Border

Pedestrians unhappy at overpass decision

Continued from B-1

that customs inspectors must be pulled away from their normal duties to respond to emergencies on the walkway.

"I remember one inspector recently who had to race up the ramp to help a kid on drugs who was unconscious," said Cassidy.

She said most of the problems have occurred on traditional party nights in Tijuana — Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Many people believed the walkway would be closed only for the week of the GOP convention, when police were on heightened alert. The walkway has been closed before to tighten security at the port during protests at the border.

The Republican convention is over. They don't need to do this any longer," said one pedestrian, declining to give his name.

Cassidy said the problem runs deeper than securing the area for protests.

"All we're trying to do is to protect kids from themselves," she said.

Dole shuns GOP plank seeking to deny automatic citizenship

by Frank Bruni

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Bob Dole told a convention of black journalists yesterday that he would not support a constitutional amendment to deny automatic citizenship for children born in this country to legal immigrants.

In so doing, the GOP nominee publicly repudiated a part of his party's platform for the first time since the Republican National Convention.

Dole, who made no secret at the convention that he had not yet read the entire platform, implied yesterday that he had now given it a more thorough review and did not like everything he saw, including the

proposed immigration amendment.

"I have due respect for the platform," Dole said. "I read a lot of parts that I thought were essential. I approved of a lot of parts that I thought were essential. That was not one of them."

Asked directly by a journalist in the audience if he would support such an amendment, Dole answered with a quick and emphatic, "No."

When Dole had been asked at the Republican convention about the same immigration amendment — one of the more conservative and sensitive planks — he did not oppose it but said he would have to think long and hard before supporting it.

**"Jack (Kemp) has
(Bob Dole's) ear
now."**

FLORIDA REP. BILL MCCOLLUM

Dole's more decisive stand yesterday did not please some Republicans.

"It's disturbing, because I believe that the Republican platform stated what is the broad consensus of the

party, and of America," said Rep. Bill McCollum of Florida, sponsor of a bill for a constitutional amendment challenging automatic citizenship for children of illegal immigrants.

The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee, where McCollum is a ranking member.

McCollum said that he always knew Dole had qualms about the bill, but that he had wondered if Dole's bolder dissent yesterday betrayed the effect and influence of his running mate, Jack Kemp, who has been an outspoken advocate of immigrant and minority rights.

"Jack has his ear now," McCollum said. "I suggest it's probably Jack who has influenced him on this sub-

ject."

Dole's comments yesterday were made before hundreds of men and women attending a convention of the National Association of Black Journalists. Four reporters at the convention were allowed to ask Dole or Kemp questions.

It was Jane Tillman Irving, a radio reporter from New York, who asked the immigration question.

"For generations, white children of white immigrants, regardless of their status, enjoyed citizenship," Irving said. "Now that the new immigrants are black and brown, would you support a constitutional amendment denying them citizenship?"

"No," Dole said.

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The Immigrants' View of Education

By Carlos Monsivais

MEXICO CITY

One of the more alarming findings of a recent Rand study on how immigrants fare in the U.S. education system was the low academic aspirations of Mexican immigrant children, compared with other immigrant groups. Even more disturbing, the study found that their academic aspirations weakened in subsequent generations.

Among the many explanations—poverty, classroom size, the language barrier, etc.—offered for this phenomenon, one has been largely unexplored: how Mexican families, particularly the poorest and those most likely to go north looking for work, view education. Whether it is a byproduct of a traditional Catholicism that fears reading “because it poisons the soul” or rooted in the popular belief that “*licenciados*” (a professional with a degree) exist only to exploit people, it is quite common for Mexican families to harbor anti-intellectual attitudes, which, in turn, shape their responses toward education.

Many studies have shown that poor Mexican families see little intrinsic value in acquiring an education. As a result, parents do not ordinarily get involved in their children's education, save for signing the report card. Students are supposed to do their homework without bothering the rest of the family. For single mothers, who make up a very large percentage of the heads of households in Mexico, it is particularly difficult to assist their children with school work.

As long as the current economic crisis continues, more and more children will have to leave school to help feed the family. This is neither considered a deplorable act nor a premature failure in life. It does not precipitate a family crisis. Leaving school is regarded as a natural, albeit undesirable, response to either economic hardship or personal problems. It reflects a deeply held belief, shared by many poor families, that to study is useless, because, as the popular wisdom has it, “no one in the family was born for studying,” which is another way of saying that “either you are born successful, in the right social class and in the proper family, or you will always be a failure.”

For a poor Mexican family, the effort needed to obtain a degree does not imply a devotion toward schooling. There is no cause-effect relation. And lacking a support network, many students face their academic fate not only in isolation but

fighting an adverse environment. Even in the still rare instances where professional parents can assist their children educationally, the environment does not reward their involvement. It is not uncommon in Mexican homes to hear parents scolding their kids for reading when they “could be doing something useful, like fixing the door.”

It thus should not be surprising that the education landscape in Mexico is shocking. Only 14% of 19- to 24-year-olds are in college; merely seven of 100 adults have had some college education, and only 18 of 100 have a high school diploma. Last month, the vast majority of students who took a standardized test required to register for high school flunked the exam.

Mexicans, on average, complete 6.6 years of schooling. An estimated 2.5 million children between the ages of 6 and 14 never “drop into” a school. Thirteen percent of the population is illiterate.

For the last 15 years, annual government spending on education has remained slightly above 4% of the national budget. The average monthly salary of a teacher is \$300.

Still, the surprise and joy of having a child attending college remains a source of pride for Mexican families. In large part, the growth in college attendance is a result of Mexico's economic progress, which has created a middle class more inclined to believe in the value of education. In addition, since the 1970s, many obstacles blocking women from attending college have fallen.

These advances, however, have a weak cultural foundation. One consequence of the economic catastrophes of 1982 and 1994 was to rekindle the anti-intellectualism that is skeptical of the value of an education. Even the educated are not immune to economic hardship. Consider this recent ad in a newspaper, “Wanted: five lawyers with bicycle.”

Unfortunately, modernity in Mexico, and among many Mexican American families, has yet to turn learning into a family enterprise, though, certainly, more and more Mexican Americans are attending college. The negative attitudes toward education that poor Mexican immigrants bring with them are not easily replaced by more positive ones. Until they are, Mexican immigrant children will continue to fare poorly in U.S. schools.

They will not go away, either. Mexican immigrants do not go to the United States to get a free education for their children. They go looking for better economic opportunities, and they will keep on going as long as there are jobs for them there. As for their children, the worse that can happen is to take them out of school. □

Carlos Monsivais is a Mexican journalist, historian and social critic. His most recent book is “Los Rituales del Caos” (The Rituals of Chaos).

THE OREGONIAN

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Register

Clinton moves to protect benefits of legal aliens

GOVERNMENT: To cushion the effects of the new welfare law, he orders measures to make sure aid isn't cut off too soon.

By LAWRENCE L. KNUTSON
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Keeping his promise to reduce the effect of the new welfare overhaul law on legal immigrants, President Clinton acted Friday to make sure benefits are not cut off mistakenly and to speed the citizenship process.

The White House also said legal immigrants who lose welfare benefits will not be denied non-cash services needed to protect life and safety, such as access to soup kitchens, medical services and child protection.

When he signed the welfare reform legislation into law Thursday, Clinton said he did so despite his belief that a provision barring legal immigrants from seeking welfare assistance was unfair and would cause unwarranted harm to many families through no fault of their own.

"This is especially true of legal immigrant families, who have followed the rules, worked and paid taxes and who have suffered a calamity that has forced them to seek assistance," said White House press secretary Mike McCurry.

"The president has vowed to repair these provisions of the bill," McCurry said. "In the meantime, however, he is determined to ensure that they are implemented carefully, and that no individuals not actually covered by these provisions are improperly denied the benefits they and their children need."

Bob Dole's presidential campaign took issue with Clinton's action.

"Bill Clinton's actions to weak-

en welfare reform signal loud and clear that Bill Clinton is more comfortable with the broken status quo than he is with new measures meant to improve Americans' lives," said campaign spokeswoman Christina Martin.

In a directive to Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, Clinton ordered that states be given the maximum time allowed by law to ensure that legal immigrants eligible for food stamps continue to receive them.

Glickman will grant waivers allowing any state to extend the certification periods for food stamp eligibility for legal immigrants receiving assistance.

The White House said the waiver has limits and that certification periods may not be extended beyond one year for most immigrants or beyond two years for those who are elderly or disabled. In any case, the government may not allow states to extend recertification beyond Aug. 22, 1997.

In a second directive, the president told Attorney General Janet Reno to make every effort to reduce bureaucratic delay for legal immigrants applying for citizenship.

"In the past, hundreds of thousands of eligible people have had to wait unnecessarily to become citizens," the president said in the directive, in which he told Reno to increase the number of people processing applications.

Clinton's directive also orders agency heads to develop public-private partnerships to provide English-language training to those applying for citizenship, to reach out to those wishing to become citizens and to provide special help to refugees and those seeking asylum.

The Republicans' dilemma on IMMIGRATION

By Jonathan Tilove

Paloma Esquivel, 16, is an eighth-generation American.

But there she was marching the dusty miles to where this country ends in San Diego and Mexico begins, chanting, "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us," and protesting a Republican Party whose "sensible immigration policy" she considers both racist and wrong.

"When people are attacking illegal immigrants they are thinking of people with my color skin," explained Esquivel, a high school student from Riverside. "They see my brown skin, and they think of me as illegal."

Republicans can and have effectively appealed to the social and economic conservatism of many Hispanic as well as Asian voters.

But by becoming the party most associated with ending welfare for legal immigrants, denying schooling and birthright citizenship to the children of illegal immigrants, and making English the official language, the GOP may succeed in alienating the fastest-growing voting blocs in America just as they are emerging as a formidable political force.

"The Republicans are shooting themselves in the foot," said Raymond Aragon, president of the San Diego La Raza Lawyers Association, a Mexican-American advocacy group. "All these young

people will remember which party tried to stick it to them when they were teenagers." The irony for Republicans is that they may be taking a rap for immigration policies about which their own party (like the Democratic Party) is very divided. And the policies, when coolly argued one on



Paloma Esquivel, left, on the march.

one, enjoy some support in the Latino and Asian rank-and-file.

The peril, though, is the message communicated by the cumulative effect of a GOP platform that takes a consistent hard line on immigration questions. And, in the unsubtle and symbolic realm of electoral politics, it is almost impossible to attack the issue of immigration, which for the last several decades has been overwhelming from Asia and Latin America, without sounding as if the critic is attacking those immigrants and the racial and ethnic communities they embody.

"You cannot separate the ethnic and racial aspects of this," said Paul Ong, an authority on Asian-Americans who teaches at UCLA. And thus, said Ong, "the question of motives becomes very important."

The campaign over Proposition 187, to deny public benefits to illegal immigrants, which California voters approved two years ago, is instructive. Two months before the election, polls showed most Hispanic voters backed the measure. But by the time the vote was taken, the debate was so racially charged that only a third of Hispanics voted "yes."

Asian-Americans, who may have felt less defensive because the debate focused on the Mexican border, voted for 187 in about the same numbers

as the general population.

Like the affirmative action issue, "if we let our opponents frame this issue, it could be very polarizing," said Joe Shumate, a Republican political consultant from Sacramento who worked on the campaign for 187. "It's tough to do; it's too easy to take personally."

"The Democrats try to frighten people," said U.S. Rep. Jay Kim, a California Republican who is the first Korean-American in Congress but bristles at being called anything but an American. "I don't appreciate it."

But to Aragon, the San Diego lawyer and Latino activist, it is those seeking to curb immigration, legal and illegal, who inject race into the issue, who really want to stop or to slow immigration because they fear the declining white dominance in places like California.

And even a Republican activist such as Xavier Hermosillo, a Los Angeles radio talk show host and businessman who just completed his term as California chairman of the Republican National Hispanic Assembly, agrees. "This is not about illegals, this is about Mexicans," said the California-born Hermosillo, who is disgusted with the Republican platform's embrace of such measures as 187.

"The Republican Party has set itself back 20 years. It's come full circle. Twenty-five years ago I came into a redneck party, saw it become more and more inclusive, saw it become a big tent, and now the Neanderthals have come in and cut all the ropes and the tent is caving in," said Hermosillo. "I was Mexican for 21 years before I chose to become a Republican."

Hermosillo's successor as California chair of the Republican National Hispanic Assembly, Ernest Feliciano, is less disgusted, but still wary. When Republicans this year put a brown face on illegal immigration in TV ads similar to those run on behalf of 187, the calls from Hispanic voters came flooding in. "There they go bashing us again," said Feliciano, who was greatly relieved that the Clinton campaign is running what he considers equally objectionable ads on immigration. In the long run, the political stakes are significant.

In the first half of the 1990s alone, the Hispanic and Asian populations grew by 20 and 31 percent respectively, largely because of immigration. According to a Census Bureau projection, by 2020 the Asian-American population will again double in size — to about 6 percent of the population — and Hispanics will go from 10 percent to 16 percent of all Americans.

But, at present, more than half of Asian-American adults, and more than 40 percent of Latino adults, are not yet citizens.

Generally, Latinos, and especially Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans, tend to vote Democratic. "Latinos are going to vote 75-percent-plus for the Democratic Party," said Rodolfo de la Garza, a professor of government at the University of Texas.

Cubans are the big exception, voting heavily for the party that has taken the far harder line against the Castro regime they fled. "They're Republicans even before they become citizens," said Margie Kincaid, the Republican chairman in Tampa, Fla.

Asian-Americans, according to UCLA's Ong, tend to be about a third Democratic, a third Republican and a third independent, though most Asian-American elected officials are Democrats.

The question of the coming decades is the degree to which many of these new citizens, Latino and Asian, come to identify themselves as a part of a distinct racial minority requiring the civil rights protections with which the Democratic Party is much more closely identified.

"There are lots of Latinos in this country who really may not even see themselves strongly as

TILOVE writes about national issues for Newhouse News Service.

(over)



NICHOLAS USI / Newhouse News Service

Latinos," said Angelo Falcon, who heads the Institute for Puerto Rican Policy in New York. "They just want to blend in, become part of the mainstream and gladly call themselves Americans. They don't have the same history as African-Americans."

But, Falcon adds, "The only reason they might end up identifying more strongly as Hispanic is because of the reception they get in this country, because they feel they have to do that to get a feeling of protection."

By pressing the immigration issue, Falcon said, Republicans in the long term may be scaring Latinos further into the arms of the Democrats.

But, at least in the short run, it is an attractive issue for the party. Polls have consistently found that lopsided majorities want fewer immigrants entering the country.

Opinion within the Latino community is more complicated, though.

A poll conducted earlier this year by the Tomas Rivera Center, which studies Latino issues out of Texas and California offices, found that Hispanic-Americans in California, Texas, New York and Florida tend to support reducing levels of legal immigration. But, they oppose building walls along the border, or denying illegal or non-citizen immigrants government services.

At the same time, the poll found strongly conservative sentiment on welfare.

"There is a natural affinity with the Republican Party," said Linda Chavez, author of "Out of the Barrio: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation." And Chavez, who directed the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in the Reagan administration, noted that "Reagan, the second time, got almost 40 percent of the Mexican-American vote."

The other complicating factor is that Republicans themselves, despite the consistent tone of the platform, are very divided on immigration policy and policy.

The only two Republicans in the House who

voted against welfare reform — because it would deny benefits to legal immigrants who are not citizens — were Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Lincoln Diaz-Balart, both Cuban-Americans from Miami.

The third Hispanic Republican in the House, Henry Bonilla of Texas, voted for the bill. But Bonilla, who was picked to second Dole's nomination at the convention, said, "I'm proud to be aligned with a Republican governor and two U.S. senators" in Texas who opposed Proposition 187, the California measure intended to deny schooling and other benefits to illegal immigrants.

It was Jack Kemp who particularly antagonized many California Republicans with his denunciation of 187 in 1994. Since his selection as Bob Dole's running mate, Kemp has declared he now supports denying the children of illegal immigrants a public education. But he said he still opposes the platform's call for a constitutional amendment to deny automatic citizenship to children born in the United States to those illegal immigrants. Dole has said that plank also gives him pause.

Outside California, the immigration issue generally is discernibly less pressing and polarizing. Joseph Mondello, the Republican Party Chairman in Long Island's Nassau County, noting that his father's folks came from Italy and his mother is from Puerto Rico, said the New York metro area is accustomed to absorbing newcomers of every racial and ethnic background.

"On Long Island, we've become pretty liberal, with a small 'l.' Even the bigots are pretty tolerant," said Mondello, who said the party's real task is not to slow the flow of immigrants into the country but to make the new arrivals into Republicans. "I can deal with it, we have to deal with it," said Mondello. "You've got to grow. If you don't grow you die."

Republican proposals on immigration may do more than spawn protest marches — they may alienate the fastest-growing voting blocs in the country.

2-

OPINION

Reinventing the U.S.-Mexico border

By Alan Bersin

For virtually all of American history, the California-Mexico border, like the Southwest border as a whole, has been ignored by national politics.

Except for the U.S.-Mexican War in the mid-19th century, and again briefly in the early 20th century when Gen. John Pershing chased Pancho Villa out of Columbus, N.M., the border smoldered on the back burner.

The rule of law evaporated as the border became a workplace and playground for smugglers. While the contraband changed over the decades — from bootleg liquor to cigarettes, then to drugs and illegal immigrants — the culture of lawlessness remained constant. Now, border communities have an historic opportunity to reverse the legacy of political neglect.

Nowhere is this happening more dramatically than in San Diego. Change along the border in the past few years has been immense, and while our border region remains very much a work in progress, it is not too early to declare — for the first time in our history — that we are moving decisively toward a border that functions effectively; one that is a lawful and orderly gateway; one that manages significantly better the problems of illegal immigration and smuggling; and one that promises and routinely delivers handsome dividends from an investment in regional integration.

There has developed unequivocally solid support across the political spectrum to control illegal immigration at the border. The bipartisan consensus here is reflected in the joint commitment by the Clinton administration and Congress to fund border-management efforts adequately for the first time ever. This includes a doubling of the Immigration and Naturalization Service budget (to \$3 billion) over what it was in 1993.

With Operation Gatekeeper, we have doubled the number of Border Patrol agents to nearly 1,800 — with growth targeted to exceed 2,000 agents during the next fiscal year. We have deployed 70 percent more INS inspectors at the ports of entry to detect counterfeit documents and interdict narcotics in concert with the Customs Service.

We have also introduced a state-of-the-art identification system, new helicopters equipped with high-powered spotlights, night-vision equipment, an extension of the metal border fence eastward from the Pacific Ocean, portable stadium lights, additional electronic sensors buried on mountain trails and temporary Border Patrol checkpoints on side roads in East County. All of this represents the first installations on a long-term contract for which neither political party can or should claim a monopoly of credit.

As part of this new effort, the district

attorney, the sheriff and local police chiefs, along with federal authorities, have fashioned a regional law-enforcement strategy. That strategy balances state and federal caseloads so that jointly we produce better punishment and provide more of a deterrent than when we acted as separate entities.

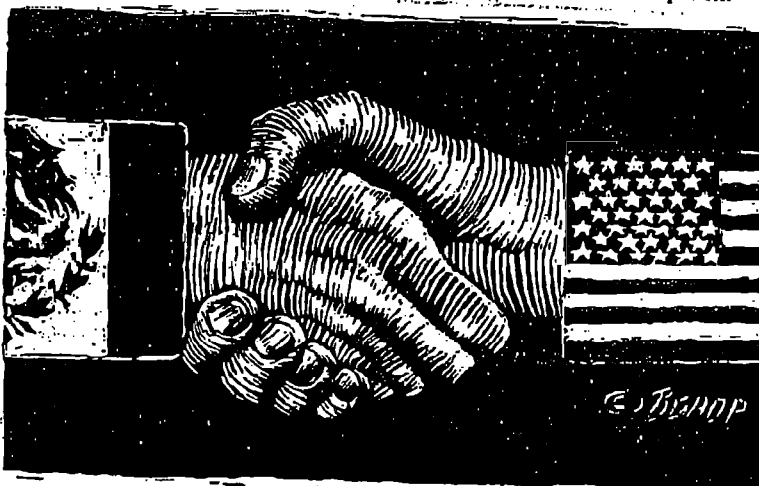
Statistics bear this out. Combined county and federal felony drug prosecutions related to the border nearly doubled in San Diego between 1994 and 1995. Since January 1995, the U.S. Attorney's Office here has prosecuted more criminal aliens (approximately 2,000) for re-entering the country after having been deported than were prosecuted during the 10 preceding years; and in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year, the INS has deported more than 10,000 criminal aliens from California.

Most significantly, overall crime in the San Diego region has decreased by approximately 30 percent in the last four years. Enhanced border control is credited as having contributed materially to

cording to traditional theory, maintains mutually incompatible objectives. On one hand, there is demand to facilitate the flow of people and goods from country to country without unnecessary delay; on the other hand, the very point of border inspection and control is to regulate human and commercial passage at the frontier to prohibit illicit entry.

Through a coalition of business organizations and enforcement groups, we have demonstrated on the San Diego-Tijuana border that corrective enforcement and more efficient traffic management in fact are not incompatible objectives.

Narcotics seizures at the ports of entry have tripled in number since 1990 and have been increasing at an accelerating rate annually since 1994. At the same time, Customs and INS have introduced various innovations — including the opening of additional inspection lanes, the introduction of a high-tech dedicated computer lane, the use of border crossing cards allowing preapproved low-risk commuters to enter without full inspection —



RANDY MACK BISHOP

this decline. According to FBI statistics, San Diego, the sixth-largest city in the nation, now has the lowest crime rate among the 70 largest U.S. cities.

These "north of the border" changes in perspective have been paralleled by an emerging cross-border consensus between Tijuana and San Diego that our economic futures are bound inextricably together for purposes both of implementing NAFTA as well as maximizing business opportunities generally on the Pacific Rim.

Even now, approximately \$2.8 billion is spent in San Diego County by border crossers from Mexico — more than the combined local revenues related to the America's Cup, the Super Bowl and annual use of the convention center, including the GOP convention.

The San Ysidro port of entry, just 15 miles south of downtown San Diego, is the busiest land-border crossing in the world — inspecting more than 40 million persons and 15 million vehicles annually.

Effective border law enforcement, ac-

which have helped to reduce waiting time at the San Ysidro port from as much as 60 minutes to 90 minutes during morning rush hours, to an average of 20 minutes to 30 minutes today.

Finally and crucially, the Mexican government has begun to cooperate on border issues in ways it had never done before. While our views and Mexican government interests are not always congruent (most notably they will not assist us in stemming the tide of illegal immigration into this country), increasingly there is a shared acknowledgment regarding the critical importance of public safety — lawfulness at the border — to the continued evolution of a binational region.

The ways in which this region — with more than 50 percent of the entire U.S.-Mexico border population — handles its problems can serve as a model for other areas along the 2,000-mile frontier. The lesson of our experience and the challenge of our times, to paraphrase poet Paul Valery, is that the future on the border is not what it used to be.

BERSIN is U.S. attorney for the Southern District of California, which includes San Diego and Imperial counties; and the attorney general's special representative for Southwest border issues.



DOUBLY FORTUNATE: This group of Cuban rafters became the first in over two years to be taken to the Transit Center for Cuban Refugees by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

ROBERTO KOLTUN / Herald Staff

MIAMI HERALD

OTHER

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Labor, the Law and Chickens ^{WP} 9/2/96

PLUCKING, PROCESSING and packaging chicken is big business on the Eastern Shore, where 14,000 people are employed in 38 plants, feed mills and hatcheries. Many of them are immigrants, and unfortunately, a substantial number are in this country illegally and subject to deportation. The Immigration and Naturalization Service, charged with finding and establishing the status of these workers, can't cover every job site. But investigators have been able to locate a large number by concentrating on certain industries—poultry processing and restaurants, for example—known to rely on illegal labor.

Last week, INS agents raided two plants in Maryland owned by Allen Family Foods Inc. and arrested 124 workers. This is a company that paid a \$43,000 fine two years ago for knowingly hiring illegal aliens and for failing to keep required records on the immigration status of its workers, so there is a history here. And there may be an even more serious violation of the law in this case, for the company president has said—and the INS has not denied—that the federal government is investigating allegations that plant supervisors participated in a smuggling ring bringing illegal workers into the state.

The immigration law making it unlawful to hire

illegal workers is no secret to American industry. It has been on the books for 10 years. Why, then, do some companies choose to break that law time after time? They cannot be saving much money, since even the chicken plant workers are paid more than \$7 an hour to perform labor requiring no special skills or training. One of the plants raided this week is even unionized, so presumably benefits are paid as well. Company officials claim they have been fooled by fraudulent documents presented by job applicants. If that is true, pending immigration legislation providing for a modern, computerized verification system to check a worker's status should be an improvement.

What harm is done? Illegal hiring undermines the vast and expensive government effort to control the borders. Billions have been spent hiring guards, erecting fences and thwarting smugglers. A continuing supply of jobs on the illegal market will keep the undocumented coming. And the competition certainly hurts American workers and those legally in this country not only by closing off entry level jobs but by holding down wage increases that legal workers might bargain for. Continued defiance of the law merits prosecution. Legal immigration will suffer if the lawbreaking goes unchecked.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Warning: Children at Work

SOME ONE-FOURTH of the developing world's children aged 5 to 14 work—that's a quarter of a billion children. In the 10-to-14 age group, more than half work nine hours per day or more, more than three-quarters work at least six days a week. Some labor on family farms in relatively benign conditions, but tens of millions work in the most appalling and hazardous conditions: as prostitutes, sold into slave labor in factories or plantations, scrambling to survive on the street, imprisoned and hidden away as domestic laborers.

So estimates the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which yesterday marked its 50th anniversary by releasing an annual report focusing on child labor. UNICEF would like the situation to spark as much moral outrage as did adult slavery in the last century, and a photograph on the report's cover should help. A little Honduran boy, exhausted and a bit grimy, dozes over a pile of softballs he has been stitching; we are left to imagine the punishment that awaits him, and the ignorant pleasure that awaits the American children who will pitch and bat those balls.

Yet moral outrage alone will not end child labor. UNICEF's report notes that the world's governments committed themselves as long ago as 1919 to keep children out of factories, yet throughout much of the world, factory owners continue to hire children to manufacture rugs, cigarettes, clothing

and more; they are cheap, after all, and they are easy to control. So what is to be done?

One response that has recently gained favor, and a big push from the Clinton administration, is voluntary monitoring and codes of employment by U.S. importers and retailers. These are useful and appear to be having some effect. But only about 4 percent of child labor is in export industries, so codes of conduct in the developed world cannot alone solve the problem. In fact, imposed carelessly, they may only force children into more dangerous jobs.

The single most important factor in reducing child labor, and one the UNICEF report does not sufficiently highlight, is economic growth. In economies that grow, the number of poor people decreases; as poverty is reduced, so is exploitative child labor. Economic growth depends primarily on the policies of each government. As it happens, though, one of the most important foundations of economic growth is also, as UNICEF says, "the most important single step in ending child labor": the provision of decent, universal, compulsory primary education. Countries that emphasize schooling, including especially for girls, do better than countries that don't. With innovative programs—which, for example, may pay families a small stipend to make up for the lost wages of children—developing nations can burnish their future prospects while rescuing today's children. That should be a focus of foreign aid as well.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

Reich prods US firms to do more on child labor abroad

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - US clothing companies are responding to pressure to reduce child labor in foreign plants, but need to enforce their requirements more strictly, Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich said yesterday.

A Labor Department survey showed that child labor remains pervasive, particularly in Asia, but is

"not now prevalent" in the Latin American countries checked.

With more than 200 million children being exploited, Reich said, there is no easy way to eliminate the problem of youngsters working in dismal conditions at substandard wages.

"We can keep the pressure on companies ... and simply alerting the public to steps they are taking is important," Reich said. "The good

news is that companies are responding."

Concern over child labor has increased after bad publicity over conditions of foreign workers who produce the mounting imports of apparel. The department said more than half the \$178 billion worth of garments sold in the United States in 1995 were imported, compared with 30 percent in 1980.

The bad publicity has involved

such celebrities as the television personality Kathie Lee Gifford, whose name was used in a line of clothing manufactured in Honduras.

Even though celebrities do not have any management control in the companies they work with, Reich said, they have an obligation to find out what system is used to ensure that workers making such clothing are humanely treated.

The department examined the

American companies' codes and visited 70 plants in six countries that make clothing for US firms - the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India and the Philippines.

According to a recent study by Human Rights Watch-Asia, as many as 115 million children are at work in India alone.

The department said that the codes of conduct on child labor that

US companies have developed are only as effective as the monitoring policies the companies use to enforce them.

The department sent a voluntary questionnaire to 48 companies, among them the Gap, JC Penney, Levi Strauss, Liz Claiborne and Nike. Thirty-six of the 45 companies that responded said they have adopted standards against child labor.



An Educational Forum of the
U.S. Department of Labor's
NO SWEAT Initiative

MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY
July 16, 1996

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Anthony Mark Hankins Inc.
Dallas, Texas

Darlene Adkins
National Consumers League
Washington, DC

Jay Allen
Wal-Mart Stores
Bentonville, AR

Joe Allen
Dallas, Texas

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National Employment Law Project
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Dale Apley
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Week in Immigrant Sweatshop Revealed

Continued From Page A1

time, I had gone to work beside these immigrants, to see what it is really like inside an underground industry that has been notorious in New York City for over a century.

Sweatshops have long seemed unknowable; the owners are too secretive, the workers too scared. The list of horrors is well-known: long hours, low wages, dangerous conditions. But is it really that bad? Are the owners so evil, the workers so victimized?

A week inside the Chai Feng sewing factory in Sunset Park, which is typical of the small, new shops outside Manhattan, suggests that there is something more complex at work — a miserable complicity born of necessity in an insular, immigrant world.

At Chai Feng, the woman with the clipboard — the owner, Maggie Zheng — is actually benevolent, albeit in a harsh way. She does not pay minimum wage, but she serves her workers tea. She makes them work until midnight, but she drives them home afterward. She uses child laborers, but she fusses over them, combing their ponytails, admiring their painted fingernails, even hugging them.

And the workers seem to revere her. They call her Nu Qian Ren, or Strong Woman, a Chinese expression

old son, played on the floor with toy airplanes.

Almost all 30 workers at Chai Feng are Fujianese, and from the same district in Fujian Province as Ms. Zheng. They arrived in this country within the last seven years, some legally, and others illegally, with the help of smugglers to whom they owe huge sums. Fujianese immigrants, because of their debts and their desperation, tend to work longer hours and endure more taxing working conditions than Cantonese immigrants.

The workers at Chai Feng later confided that they did not like their job, but they were grimly grateful just to have one. They are not in this country to enjoy life but to make money, they said.

"When you have an education and speak the language, you can afford to be choosy," said Lin A. Qing, who immigrated six years ago. "But for people like us, there aren't that many alternatives. We have to compromise. If we don't like what we do, we stay home and starve."

Most of that week, the workers at Chai Feng sewed virtually nonstop, from 9 in the morning until midnight, pausing only for 15 minute lunch breaks: rice and tea provided by Ms. Zheng.

Time was money, as the workers were paid by the piece, which is against the law if everyone does not make at least \$4.25 an hour under such an arrangement. The least ex-



that conveys affection and awe. An immigrant and former factory worker herself, Ms. Zheng, the sweatshop boss, is their model of success.

The Workers

Not in U.S. To Enjoy Life

That first morning, I walked three blocks from the N train's subway stop in Sunset Park to a brick warehouse that originally held a food processing plant. Now it is subdivided into eight garment shops, including Chai Feng.

Chai Feng is typical of the new, highly mobile shops that have cropped up outside the garment districts in midtown Manhattan and Chinatown. Many of these small shops open and close so quickly that they easily evade inspections by understaffed regulatory agencies.

Ms. Zheng opened her shop a few months ago. But she was really reopening an old shop under a new name. In December, her brother, Michael Zheng, had closed the factory, then called Superior Fashions, and fled, owing his workers \$80,000 in back wages. His sister revived his business in order to make good on that debt, she later said.

It was easy to get the job.

Ms. Zheng did not ask any questions — not my Social Security number, my work history, my immigration status or even my name. She also did not tell me how much I would be paid. And no Chinese worker would ask; it would be considered shockingly blunt.

Ms. Zheng showed me to station five, and gave me a stack of trimmings for practice on the Brother Exedra sewing machine. It would be tough in the beginning, she said, but not once I became familiar with the machine. "Then you can make multiples of \$10 a day," she said.

I practiced controlling the foot pedal and sewing straight lines and even curves. The hum of the sewing machines was numbing; the only distraction came from the scratchy recordings of popular Hong Kong songs emanating from a cassette player. And the cold was numbing, too. Sweatshop was definitely a misnomer; the heater on the ceiling gurgled and gapsed.

Three other people started training that day. Two very young women did not bother to return after lunch. Cao Wu Yi, who had arrived from Fujian only a month earlier, stuck it out, as Zhang Zhong Zhu, her 5-year-

perienched were making less than \$1 an hour. The most experienced and adept made almost \$5 an hour.

At 3 o'clock on my first day, after the straight lines and curves I sewed passed Ms. Zheng's inspection, she brought over a bundle of mint green rayon pants for the New York sportswear company of Christine David Fashions. I was to sew pleats on the front part of the pants, for 12 cents a pair.

Ms. Cao, the other trainee, was doing much better, attaching waistbands to shorts by the end of the day. She confided that before she left China, after she heard that her immigration application had been approved, she had quit her job as a quilt maker in Fujian and trained for sewing full time.

"Now I don't have to know English to make a living," she said.

By 7 o'clock, I had finished only 15 pairs of pants and made \$1.80, at least on paper. I went home before everyone else, exhausted.

The Children

From School Days To Sewing Nights

By my third day at Chai Feng, I was in pain. Curled in one position for 13 hours, moving only my knee to hit the knob that released the clothes from under the sewing needle, I grew awkwardly stiff.

Chen May Xia, who sat at station six, offered a suggestion: "You have what we call sewer's back," she said. "We all have it. Tonight, turn on the shower very hot and let the water spray the area where it hurts. Then lie still in bed until the next day."

She then gave me the Chinese version of no-pain, no-gain: "If you want to work and make money, of course it's going to hurt."

Ms. Chen is 19, a senior at Seward Park High School in Chinatown, who works after school, through the night and on weekends. She said she had been a garment worker for four years, laws against child labor notwithstanding. Hard work teaches her what American teen-agers cannot understand, she said.

"They've never had to work and they don't know how to make their own money," she said. "All they do is complain about how stupid their parents are. They don't appreciate life as much as I do."

It had become apparent that children far younger than Ms. Chen also worked at Chai Feng.

In the perverse logic of the sweat-

Many of the women who work in s



The sign in Chinese to the right of the of Brooklyn. A help-wanted sign on

shop, the workers considered Ms. Zheng a good boss precisely because she was willing to violate labor laws and allow their children to work by their sides. In fact, she is so flexible that she allows mothers to leave in the middle of the day, pick their children up from school and take them back to the factory.

Some days, after 3 P.M., Chai Feng turned into a virtual day-care center, with children playing amid the lint. Inevitably, some helped their mothers work. Eddie Chan, who is 10, snipped loose threads from garments as his mother sewed zippers.

"I want my children to work," said his mother, Chan Juan. "I don't think I'm hurting them by letting them snip off threads. What else would they do at home? Watch TV and eat junk food? That's evil. I am instilling the work ethic in my kids. Because my son works, he knows how hard I have to work to make money. He appreciates everything I do for him. When American kids grow up, they move away and forget about their parents."

Shi Chuen Mei, 11, is a regular at

Photographs by Nancy Siesel/The New York Times



door identifies the Chai Feng sewing factory, in the Sunset Park section. The door says the factory is 'urgently looking for workers.'

Chai Feng; she said she had been working in garment shops since she was 9. She worked, she said, to break the boredom of all the hours beside her mother's sewing machine. Ponytail flying, she quickly and nimbly sewed printed labels that said "Made in the U.S.A." onto the waistbands of Christine David shorts.

That day, Chuen Mei started to moan dramatically in English, which none of the workers understood. "My head is hurting," she said. "It's about to explode. I'm going to die soon. Oh, let me die."

About 7 P.M., she lay down on a mound of clothes and took a nap. When she woke up, Ms. Zheng, the boss, asked the 11-year-old girl to stay late — "Please, please," she said; there was a special order due the next morning. Chuen Mei went back to work without dinner.

At 9 P.M., two steam pressers switched on. The room grew hazy with lint and moisture. Chuen Mei rubbed her eyes constantly as others coughed. At 10:30 P.M., after seven hours of work, her mother told her it was time to leave.

"Yippee!" she shouted.

That night, the hem machines

worked full speed, crackling like machine guns. At midnight, Ms. Zheng thanked the workers for staying late and offered them a ride home. I took the subway with Ms. Qing. She told me how much she missed her three teen-age children, two sons and a daughter. She recently sent them back to China because she could not afford to rear them here.

"Life in America is so hard," she said.

I asked her why she chose to stay. She turned to look at me and laughed.

"Money, what else?"

The Owner

Erasing Shame Of Brother's Debt

On Sunday, my last day, a union organizer came in and spoke to the workers. She explained health insurance and overtime pay, but people seemed most interested in the free English lessons offered by the union.

The organizer confided that she had thought about opening her own

factory after sewing for 20 years. But she would never have been able to afford a union shop, she said: "It's too expensive."

Later in the day, there was another visit, from an irate former employee. He argued loudly with Ms. Zheng, saying her brother owed him money.

"What money are you talking about?" Ms. Zheng shouted. "I opened two months ago. Do I know you?"

Later, when I went back and identified myself as a reporter, Ms. Zheng sat down with me and talked about her background. Ms. Zheng openly acknowledged that her brother used to own the factory and that he had fled owing the workers close to \$80,000 in back wages. She Ms. Zheng's mother, who has a restaurant in New Jersey and originally bought the garment shop as a present for her son, pressed her daughter to reopen the factory. The Zhengs sold one of their three houses in Fuzhou to finance the reopening.

Ms. Zheng, who immigrated a decade ago, said her mother felt concerned that her brother had shamed them. Most of the workers came from the same district in Fujian as the Zhengs; they were "our people," Ms. Zheng said.

Still, Ms. Zheng opened the shop under a new name in an effort to avoid being held responsible for her brother's debts or for the back wages owed workers who did not return. Those who did return said they have been paid regularly.

I left with the promise that I would be paid in three weeks. I had earned \$54.24 by Ms. Zheng's calculations. If I had been paid the legal wage, with time and a half for overtime, the salary would have been \$451.

Both Ms. Zheng and her workers consider American labor laws to be ideals, laudable but impractical.

Ms. Zheng said she would love to pay her workers \$4.25 an hour, the minimum wage, but as a subcontractor, she cannot afford to; the designers' middlemen do not pay her enough. The workers said they would love to earn the minimum wage but would take what they could get. The children said it would be great to make their own money for their labor, but would be content to help increase their parents' earnings.

Everyone quotes a Chinese saying: "The big fish prey on the little fish, the little fish in turn prey on the shrimp, and the shrimp can only eat dirt."

... meaning he can stand up and ...

The New York Times

Agency Missteps Put Illegal Aliens at Mercy of Sweatshops

DATE: 9/21

PAGE: 41

By JAMES STERNGOLD

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 20 — With the raids on garment sweatshops here last month producing the spectacle of scores of illegal Thai immigrants being kept as virtual slaves, state and Federal investigators have begun pointing fingers at each other while issuing assurances that they are taking action to flush out such operations.

But an examination of past investigations in Southern California, home to the country's largest garment industry, shows that a series of missteps dating at least to 1988 have left the workers at the mercy of groups tied to Asian organized crime rings, with little chance of being rescued.

The local office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service appears to have had several chances to address the problem uncovered in the sweatshop raids last month at El Monte, in eastern Los Angeles County. But no action was taken because of a lack of cooperation among Federal, state and local agencies and because of what one agent described as a personality conflict within the immigration office.

In some ways, critics say, the Government's failure to take action illustrates deep shortcomings in the immigration service's effort to protect immigrants. It also demonstrates how competing economic interests discourage local and state governments from cracking down on a problem that has become pervasive in garment districts from Manhattan to Los Angeles.

"Enforcement has always been a stepchild" of the immigration service, said Demetrios G. Papademetriou, an authority on immigration policy at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace. "Businesses complain about the disruptions" caused by strict enforcement, and enforcement costs are very high, he added.

Politics also plays a role. Gov. Pete Wilson has twice vetoed bills that would have held big manufacturers responsible for monitoring their subcontractors' compliance with labor and immigration laws.

Proponents of such laws say they would make it more difficult to exploit illegal aliens. But Mr. Wilson, a Republican, has said such regulations would place too great a burden on manufacturers and would drive them out of the state.

There is little doubt that the problem of worker abuse at garment factories is huge and growing. Last Friday, Federal labor investigators said routine inspections of 50 garment contractors here had turned up wage and overtime violations at 46 sites, shortchanging some 600 workers by more than \$500,000. And those were all legally registered factories.

Early last month, in the first of the recent series of raids, 72 illegal aliens were found in peonage at one site in El Monte. They had been

smuggled here by an organized crime gang that confiscated their passports and told them part of their earnings would be kept to repay the costs of bringing them here, Federal and state officials said. The immigration agency acknowledged that the El Monte factory had come under suspicion once before, in 1992.

In that instance, the agency investigated for three months, secretly observing the site, but it dropped the case after a request for a criminal warrant was denied. Federal prosecutors have said the request was rejected because the initial tip came from an anonymous source, which is considered inadequate support for a Federal warrant, and because the information was too old.

The immigration agency now says that instead of seeking a civil warrant to gain entry into the site, it passed along the information to state and local officials and left it at that.

But people familiar with the investigation, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the same Thai sweatshop owners had been investigated even earlier, in 1988. These people said an immigration agent found evidence that illegal immigrants were being held there. He delivered a letter informing the owners that an inspection would take place in a few days. But by the time the inspector returned, the workers had been whisked away.

Three years later, the immigration agency had another opportunity to attack the problem of illegal Thai immigrants being held in such conditions. In mid-May 1991, Phil L. Bonner Jr., a special agent with the immigration agency here, wrote several memorandums proposing raids on five garment sweatshops because he had information that perhaps 200 illegal immigrants were being held there.

Another shop owner had informed him, Mr. Bonner wrote, that the Thais had been smuggled here by an organized crime ring. He also said he had been told that a Los Angeles police officer was involved in smuggling and guarding the workers.

Mr. Bonner proposed placing Thai workers in those factories to gather evidence, and suggested raiding the sweatshops.

No action was taken. Mr. Bonner says he was disciplined, apparently because of a personality clash with supervisors, according to a pending discrimination suit he filed against the agency in July 1992. The suit also says he was not allowed to speak Thai in the office or to pursue any cases related to Thais.

Mr. Bonner says in his suit that he was discriminated against because he married a Thai woman and speaks Thai, and that the ill will toward him caused the agency to mishandle the inquiry.

William S. Slattery, the immigration agency's executive associate commissioner for operations, said the agency would not comment on a pending lawsuit but added that no valid investigation had been run improperly.

The agency began this year's investigation after it got a tip from someone who had escaped from the El Monte factory. When the raid on the El Monte sweatshops took place on Aug. 2, state officials, not the immigration agency, led the raid, even though the Federal agents had spearheaded the investigation.

The escapee, a Thai woman, had told a lawyer, William Livingston, about sweatshop conditions at the

factory. Mr. Livingston passed along the information in May, and the agency began an inquiry. This time Mr. Bonner, who had been transferred to another immigration service office in the Los Angeles area because of his lawsuit, was involved.

He observed the shop, a group of apartments surrounded by a fence and razor wire, from an adjacent trailer park. He discovered that materials and finished goods were going in and out of the shop, but workers neither entered nor left.

The immigration agency brought state Labor Department officials into the inquiry. The agency was still trying to get enough information for

ALSTON CHASE

Is the Unabomber overlooking something?

Time magazine, being environmentally aware, never uses new ideas when recycled ones will do. Being liberal and forgiving, it seizes upon every opportunity to salvage the reputation of sinners. And in a recent issue, it accomplishes both, repackaging old insights even as it elevates a serial killer to the rank of folk philosopher.

In a recent cover story on "The Evolution of Despair," Time discovers what philosophers had been saying for a century: that modern life, as the magazine put it, "can be uncomfortable." This theme — that technology isolates individuals, thereby generating mistrust and despair — is hardly original. It was the favorite topic in college bull sessions half a century ago.

While conceding such angst observations aren't novel, the magazine credits their revival to the Unabomber's well-publicized polemic and to the insights of evolutionary psychologists.

Yet, it also exposes the flaws in contemporary liberal, conservative and revolutionary political ideologies, including environmentalism, libertarianism and the Unabomber's own rationale for violence. For these would exacerbate rather than diminish what is arguably the greatest threat to America today: social disintegration.

For more than a century, great writers have eloquently described how crowded cities and mechanized workplaces isolate individuals from each other, thereby promoting distrust and hostility. Themes of loneliness and alienation

appear in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novella, "Notes from Underground." They preoccupied the French existential writers, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. And they assumed scientific standing in the brilliant 1897 study "Suicide," by French sociologist Emile Durkheim.

These were among the literary works undergraduates in the 1950s were required to read. At that time, most college curricula included mandatory study of Western heritage — called general education — designed to promote shared intellectual experiences and values. But student protests killed such "gen-ed" courses in the 1960s.

Now, Time has resurrected this concern for what was then called "the modern condition" — but credits its articulation not to philosophers or novelists but, in keeping with the spirit of today, to scientists and terrorists. And thereby, the magazine calls attention to a problem for which neither environmentalists nor their critics have an answer.

To environmentalists, technology is evil because it "destroys" nature. And big government, they say, is desirable because it can mandate return to the good old days, when people lived in caves and didn't have to brush their teeth.

By contrast, anti-environmentalists argue that the free market is man's best friend. Thanks to technology, they say, we live longer and can buy things our ancestors couldn't, such as electric beer-brewing machines. The real evil, they argue, is big government, which limits freedom, thereby depressing living standards.

What these adversaries fail to note is that both big government and big business are destructive to human values. Both dissolve the friendship, trust and cooperation that make viable culture possible.

Culture is nothing more than a network of shared values that bind people together, thereby promoting social harmony. Since, as the ancient Greeks knew, it ultimately rests on friendships, it survives only in relatively small and stable

communities where relations between individuals are possible.

Hence, excessive size or mobility kills culture. When communities grow too large or too transient to sustain relationships, they die. Yet since virtually every political ideology today favors either big government or big business, they all promote these destructive conditions.

By revering free markets, libertarians would allow multinational corporations to grow and move

unimpeded in their quest for lower costs and cheaper labor.

Likewise, most preservationists would inadvertently kill culture when they demand that viable logging and ranching communities be replaced by so-called "clean" industries such as tourism and computers. For tourism is nothing more than catering to itinerant pleasure-seekers who have no commitment to the land. Computer companies can't build culture if they may soon move to Mexico or Brazil. Even terrorism of the mail-bomb variety merely gives government an excuse to impose more coercion.

The appearance of the Time article, therefore, may signal that the 1960s generation, which 30 years ago rejected general education, finally realizes that the greatest problem we face is neither ozone depletion nor species extinction, but the very cultural collapse that gen ed was designed to avert.

If so, they will soon realize that the current gaggle of ideologies make matters worse. Rather than appeal to polarizing political agendas, we must revive an educational system dedicated to a common core of learning, seek to sustain small-town culture and find ways to encourage more intimate and stable working conditions.

As E.F. Schumacher said, "Small is beautiful." This is another forgotten idea that perhaps Time magazine should recycle as well.

Alston Chase is a nationally syndicated columnist specializing in environmental issues.

a Federal warrant when state officials moved on their own. Soon after the predawn raid began, the immigration agency was called in and the Thai shop owners were arrested.

Late last month the immigration service raided a different group of sweatshops in Los Angeles County. In these raids, 56 illegal immigrants, most of them Thais, were found to be working in appalling conditions, the Government said, even though they were not being held as slaves.

But that assertion is now being questioned. Julie Su, a lawyer representing many of the workers in a lawsuit against the owners, said they had, in fact, been held in servitude but had been intimidated by their captors into denying it. She said the

shop owners had initially been detained with the workers, which allowed them to continue threatening the workers with reprisals.

Asked about the El Monte case, the immigration agency acknowledged the 1986 investigation. But Mr. Slattery, the agency official, insisted that all cases involving the Thais had been handled properly.

"I don't think there's anything I would have done differently in 1995," he said in an interview. "In 1992, I'm not sure I would have done anything differently."

Many experts say the enforcement agencies will never have enough agents to police an industry that is so large and growing so fast, and whose underground elements can so easily close shops and move on. The alternative being pushed by Federal labor officials is to make the big manufacturers and retailers responsible for insuring that labor laws are followed by subcontractors.

"The goal is to get the major retailers to take a strong stand and use their leverage," Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich said in a recent interview. On Sept. 12, he met with a number of large retailers and manufacturers in New York who said they might consider voluntary compliance programs.

The Washington Times

Senate nears OK for budget amendment

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By Patrice Hill
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The elusive 67th vote to ensure passage of the balanced-budget amendment may be in sight.

Sen. Paul Simon, Illinois Democrat and one of the authors of the amendment, told The Washington Times yesterday that he thinks he has found a Democrat willing to change his vote.

"I'm still wrapping it up," he said, conceding that it would be premature to call for a vote just yet. "But I think I've got it."

The Senate in March fell one vote short of the 67 needed to send the amendment to the states for ratification. Constitutional amendments do not require the president's approval.

That defeat for the new Republican majority was widely attributed to six Senate Democrats who had voted yes in previous years but switched their votes this year.

Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas vowed to bring up the amendment again if a Democrat stepped forward to provide the 67th vote.

Mr. Dole seemed surprised that Mr. Simon may have found that vote. "I'll sniff that out," he said. "I can bring it up any time."

Revival of the balanced-budget amendment could add bounce to Mr. Dole's presidential campaign and lift the spirits of Republicans.

Mr. Dole noted that he has only a two-week "window" before Sen. Bob Packwood leaves the Senate on Oct. 1. Mr. Packwood supports the amendment, and his fellow Republicans would have to find two additional votes if he goes home to Oregon before the vote.

Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota said Democrats are counting on Mr. Packwood's departure to prevent passage.

"I expect we could sustain our position" next month with one fewer Republican in the Senate, he said.

Though Mr. Simon may have found a vote switcher, Mr. Daschle said Democrats who voted yes might switch the other way because they now believe Republicans are "using [the amendment] for political purposes." The

amendment should not be added to the Constitution for such reasons, he said.

"I think there's some that have changed their minds the other way — one or two senators," he said.

Mr. Simon would not say whether the Democratic senator who is considering switching his vote to favor the amendment is one of the six who switched against it in the spring.

Those six are Mr. Daschle, Byron L. Dorgan of North Dakota, Dianne Feinstein of California, Wendell H. Ford of Kentucky, Ernest F. Hollings of South Carolina and Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico.

Mr. Simon said the possible switcher is responding to efforts by Republicans to balance the budget without benefit of the amendment by cutting spending by \$893 billion over seven years.

The Democratic switcher is convinced that Congress will not

cut spending so severely if the constitutional amendment is not in place, Mr. Simon said.

Approval of the measure in Congress would encourage a positive reaction in financial markets, he said. Interest rates would fall, and the government's \$250 billion of yearly interest payments on the \$4.9 trillion national debt would shrink. That, in turn, would make room for more spending, he said.

Sen. John B. Breaux, Louisiana Democrat and a supporter of the amendment, said President Clinton's decision in June to join Congress in trying to balance the budget may have coaxed several Democratic senators to consider supporting the amendment.

The White House is still opposed to the constitutional amendment, which Mr. Clinton has said is not needed because Congress and the president can balance the budget without it.

But Mr. Breaux said other

Democrats are thinking that "if you're for doing it, why not put it in the Constitution?"

Labor Dept. To Go After Sweatshops With Holiday Publicity Campaign By Stuart Silverstein Los Angeles Times

Want to avoid buying a sweat shirt made in a sweatshop? U.S. Labor Department officials hope to tap that consumer sentiment in their latest assault on workplace abuses in the clothing-manufacturing industry.

The day after Thanksgiving, just as the Christmas shopping season begins in earnest, the agency plans to announce names of "good guy" apparel retailers and manufacturers. These will be firms that, in the Labor Department's judgment, are taking extra precautions to ensure that their merchandise is being made by law-abiding contractors and not by the widespread sweatshop operators running roughshod over workplace wage and safety laws.

The intent is to squeeze out the rogue contractors by providing a public relations bonanza for "retailers and manufacturers that have gone the extra mile in seeking to prevent sweatshop abuses," U.S. Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich said in an interview.

While acknowledging that not all consumers will be swayed by his department's lists, Reich said that the initiative can have "a considerable economic impact" even if only a modest number of shoppers decide to shun merchandise that may have been made in U.S. sweatshops.

But the planned retail and manufacturer lists, spurred by the discovery in August of an El Monte, Calif., sweatshop where 72 Thai workers labored under alleged prison-like conditions, has come under fire from industry groups.

For starters, industry officials question whether the Labor Department can do a fair job of determining who is making a good-faith effort to shun sweatshops.

That is especially true, they say, given how little time remains before the initial list comes out in three weeks.

Moreover, the criteria for "good guy" retailers are fuzzy. Generally speaking, they will be required to provide training, cooperate in labor law enforcement efforts and otherwise "demonstrate a meaningful commitment" to selecting manufacturers and contractors with good records.

Among manufacturers, a major complaint is that the initial list will consist largely of companies that previously ran into trouble with regulators and subsequently signed agreements with the government pledging to mend their ways.

"Most of our members don't want to be on that list because they don't want to be associated with the ones that were busted," said Allison Wolf, a spokeswoman for the American Apparel Manufacturers Association, an Arlington, Va.-based trade group that says it represents three-quarters of the domestic industry.

"The focus is on current behavior, and what will be done in the future," rather than what was done in the past, said a department spokesman.

(Optional add end)

A major loophole in the Labor Department's program is that it won't take into account contracting practices overseas, where many of the worst sweatshop abuses occur. "There is no excuse for tolerating Third World working conditions in the United States," Reich countered.

"We need to clean up our house before we can accuse others of having to clean up their houses."

While trade associations representing manufacturers and retailers point the finger at each other, Reich's answer is to pressure both groups to play a greater role in fighting sweatshop abuses.

"A fool-proof formula is not available, but manufacturers and retailers are doing far more than ever before, and there's no reason why others shouldn't be able to do so as well," he said.

Calif. Conservatives Seek to Split Ho. Immigration Bill By Faye Fiore Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON Hoping to pave the way for illegal immigration reform in Congress, 10 House Republicans from California have launched a drive to split a mammoth immigration package in half, creating two bills that would deal separately with legal and illegal residents.

"It is an insult to law-abiding citizens and soon-to-be citizens who patiently followed all laws and regulations to be lumped together in a bill with illegal aliens who have sneaked into this country and have knowingly and willingly broken U.S. law," they said in a one-page letter was drafted by Rep. Jay Kim, R-Calif., himself a legal immigrant from Korea.

If successful, the move would greatly enhance passage of some version of immigration reform in the House by carving out controversial sections aimed at legal residents and addressing what

a majority of Californians believe is one of the state's most pressing problems, observers on both sides said.

"California undoubtedly needs illegal immigration reform more than any other state in the nation, and the members from California ... don't want to do anything that would endanger passage. We shouldn't mix the message in any way," said Beau Phillips, aide to Rep. Frank Riggs of Windsor, one of the 10 Republicans who signed a letter urging separate votes.

The letter from the congressmen was sent to Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill., chairman of the House Judiciary Committee that last month approved a bill requiring employers to verify the legal status of all new workers through a government data bank. It also seeks to stem the tide of legal transplants to no more than 535,000 annually, down from the current level of about 800,000 a year.

Hyde's office has yet to respond.

The letter signals division in the GOP over how to best handle the contentious topic of immigration reform. A separate group of 35 lawmakers, most of them Republicans who support legal immigration limits, have circulated a letter of their own urging House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., to hold the bill together.

The issue will be decided by the Republican leadership; the bill is not expected to go to the floor until early next year.

Immigration rights activists who have fiercely opposed Republican reform efforts applauded the notion of a divided bill, saying it removes some of the language they find most offensive.

"Every group in the country working in the area of immigration is concerned that these issues have been merged and blurred," said Charles Wheeler, executive director of the National Immigration Law Center in Los Angeles. "Most of the incentive behind reforming our immigration laws stems from frustration over undocumented immigrants coming into the country and taking jobs. ... It is not in the national interest to restrict families from becoming reunited or employers from maintaining their world competitiveness by hiring skilled (foreign) workers."

But more conservative groups advocating the sweeping immigration package charged the California lawmakers with "mounting an 11th-hour effort to gut it."

"After years of hearings and debates, the Judiciary Committee produced a bill that holds the promise of beginning to clean up the mess that passes for our immigration policy," said Dan Stein, executive director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform in Washington. He called it "almost unbelievable" that California Republicans would lead the drive to split it "while their constituents are pleading for a break from the costs and stress of excessive immigration. ..."

Democratic even as the South generally rejected
any's candidates in presidential races since 1964.
But that distinction may be a thing of the past, said
Charles Bullock, an expert in Southern politics at the
University of Georgia.

"There used to be a fire wall separating national
offices from state offices," Bullock said. "Whatever
infection Southerners saw in the Democratic Party at the
national level, it didn't touch local races. You'd vote
for good old Bob because he wasn't like Mondale or Dukakis,
you'd hunted and fished together."

"But voters are no longer making that kind of
distinction," he added. "They're just seeing Democrats
and they don't like what they see."

(Optional add end)

In the Kentucky gubernatorial race, both candidates are
struggling to rebuild the fire wall between state and
national party politics after disastrously linking
themselves to national figures earlier in the race,
Rothenberg said.

Democratic candidate Paul Patton, currently the
lieutenant governor and a former ally of President
Clinton, suffered from Clinton's decision earlier this
year to support regulation of tobacco as a drug. Tobacco
is a mainstay of Kentucky's economy.

Patton recovered marginally after stating that he will
not endorse Clinton next year because of the tobacco
issue. But Republican gubernatorial candidate Larry Forgy
is still fond of referring to Clinton alliteratively as
"Paul Patton's president."

Forgy is apparently having second thoughts of his own
about making the race a referendum on larger political
trends. In April, he told voters that he would ensure the
national GOP revolution would continue in Kentucky. But as
public support of the Republican agenda has weakened, so
did Forgy's emphasis on it. By June, he had conceded that
he "might not agree" with everything in the party is
pushing for in Congress.

Rothenberg gives a slight edge to Forgy, who seeks to
become Kentucky's first Republican governor since 1971.

"Kentucky voters are discovering, after a very strong
Democratic history, that you can vote for a Republican and
you don't get struck by lightning," he said.

For all the influences of the larger political world,
nothing can account for the idiosyncrasies of Southern
politics as evidenced by the Mississippi gubernatorial
race.

Gov. Kirk Fordice, an outspoken Republican best
remembered for his stubborn assessment of America as a
"Christian nation" at the 1992 National Governors'
Conference, has maintained a healthy lead over Democratic
challenger Dick Molpus.

But the race took a quirky turn a few weeks ago when
Molpus's wife, Sally, appeared in a television ad
criticizing Fordice for cuts to public education funding.
A few days later, a falsetto Fordice imitated Sally
Molpus's soft Southern drawl at a news conference,
accusing Dick Molpus of hiding behind his wife. Fordice's
imitation angered many Mississippi women and some men, by
many accounts tightening the race.

"You don't want to underestimate the importance of
things like respect for Southern womanhood in the Deep
South," Bullock said. "Nowhere is good breeding as
important."

More Conservative Republicans Hop On Anti-Powell Bandwagon By John M. Broder Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON In an overt effort to frighten Colin L.
Powell out of the Republican presidential contest, leaders of 10
conservative groups on Thursday warned the retired general
not to run and vowed to oppose him if he did.

With a decision from Powell expected as early as next
week, their message was unequivocal: Powell's views on
social policy are antithetical to those of Republican
primary voters and would lead the party to defeat against
President Clinton.

"Any candidacy by Colin Powell must be stopped. He
will be stopped," declared Morton Blackwell, Republican
national committeeman from Virginia.

Powell's spokesman, F. William Smullen, said that
neither he nor the general had seen the conservatives'
news conference and would have no comment. Smullen said
that the general was still weighing whether to enter the
race and promised a decision "soon."

Other speakers at the Washington event representing
anti-tax, anti-abortion and other conservative
organizations were adamant that Powell was unacceptable.

Although the conservative groups represented at
Thursday's event claim millions of members who are among
the most loyal foot soldiers in Republican politics, other
equally influential conservative bodies chose not to
participate, including the National Rifle Association and
the National Federation of Independent Businesses.

Several prominent conservatives, among them former
Education Secretary William Bennett, former Housing and
Urban Development Secretary Jack F. Kemp and Weekly
Standard publisher William Kristol, are encouraging Powell
to run as a way of broadening the party's base and appeal.

But those who shared the stage at the National Press
Club on Thursday rejected the notion that the Republican
party needed "a savior" and insisted that without active
conservative support Powell could not hope to win the GOP
nomination or the general election.

Powell, they said, was a liberal whose candidacy was
being promoted by Washington's opinion-making
establishment to derail the Republican revolution led by
House Speaker Newt Gingrich of Georgia and other social
and fiscal conservatives.

They said they would work against him if he chooses to
run and threatened a mass walkout at the Republican
National Convention next summer if he wins the nomination.

"Colin Powell is the Trojan Horse of the
establishment," said Paul M. Weyrich, chairman of the
Free Congress Foundation. "The ongoing conservative
revolution in this country is a revolution against the
Nelson Rockefellers and Colin Powells of the world. The
Americans who are working for that revolution are finished
forever with politicians and would-be politicians who want
to be something but stand for nothing."

(Optional add end)

Many of the speakers had previously expressed their
opposition to a Powell candidacy. One voice added to the
chorus was that of Frank J. Gaffney Jr., a mid-level
Pentagon official during the Reagan administration now
associated with the Center for Security Policy.

He said that after examining Powell's record as
national security adviser and chairman of the Joint Chiefs
of Staff, he concluded that Powell "would not make a good
president or commander-in-chief."

He said that close scrutiny of Powell's performance
"can only diminish the near-mythic reputation he enjoys
today." Gaffney specifically cited Powell's opposition to
missile defense programs, his advocacy of sanctions rather
than war against Iraq, and his premature ending of the
Persian Gulf War.

Garment Shop on 'Good Guy' List Gets Raided

■ **Labor:** State inspectors find violations at a contractor for Limited, a clothing company held to be exemplary.

By DON LEE
TIMES STAFF WRITER

In an embarrassment to the U.S. Labor Department, state investigators Tuesday raided an El Monte garment contractor that makes clothes for Limited Inc., one of the federal government's so-called good-guy apparel makers that consumers were encouraged to support.

The California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement filed citations against the contractor, Italy International Corp., that include allegations of multiple overtime and minimum-wage violations, using an underage worker, paying in cash and taking kickbacks from some workers.

State officials said they fined the contractor \$21,000.

The owner of Italy International, Juan Li, denied wrongdoing but declined to comment further. His legal representative, Jesse Atilano, a former state labor investigator who is now an industry consultant, said he will appeal the citations, which could eventually bring the case before an administrative law judge.

State labor officials said some of Italy International's clothes were made for Limited, one of about 30 businesses that U.S. labor officials said were taking extra steps to ensure their merchandise was made in law-abiding factories.

The citations issued Tuesday are part of a broader crackdown in Los Angeles and El Monte, which has come under scrutiny since last summer's discovery of a garment compound where 72 Thai workers were allegedly held in virtual slavery.

In fact, the good-guy list was largely a response to that case.

The list, released last December, was initially criticized for leaving out many other reputable companies. The citations Tuesday against Italy International presented more headaches for the Labor Department, which some thought went out on a limb by

putting out such a list.

"It isn't a very good sign that the list means very much of anything," said Jose Millan, the state's interim labor commissioner, shortly after issuing the citations at Italy International.

Al Dietzel, a spokesman for Limited, the Columbus, Ohio-based firm that operates the Limited stores, said he was unaware of Italy International. Dietzel said he would check into the contractor, one of thousands that Limited uses. "We're very tough when we find a violator," he said.

Said Tino Serrano, a Labor Department spokesman: "It's disappointing to see the violations occurring. But the fact that they found violations is not evidence that Limited is not making a good-faith effort."

Serrano noted that the good-guy list was intended to squeeze out unlawful contractors by endorsing retailers and manufacturers that had taken extra steps to monitor contractors and educate suppliers about labor laws.

Nonetheless, the citations issued Tuesday against Italy International include some serious violations, including allegations that a 17-year-old girl was working at the shop without a work permit.

Also, state labor officials said one worker told them he worked 87 hours one week but only took home, in cash, \$167—after paying a 10% kickback to the employer.

Labor officials, who raided Italy International on Tuesday morning, said the firm employs about 20 people. Inspectors alleged that sewers received minimum wage but were not paid overtime. Trimmers and pressers got neither minimum wage nor overtime, they said.

Atilano, the contractor's consultant, argued that state officials illegally inspected the factory even though the owner told the investigators to leave and return with a warrant. Millan denied that allegation. •

ID Card Whisks Travelers Into Canada With No Wait

'Canpass' Holders Avoid Customs Crunch

By Charles Trueheart

Washington Post Foreign Service

VANCOUVER, B.C.—Disgorged by the jetful, weary passengers troop into straggling lines in the Canadian customs and immigration processing center at Vancouver International Airport. As they wait, sometimes by the hundreds, for inspectors to examine their proof of citizenship, many look wistfully at more fortunate fellow passengers who breeze into a special lane marked "Canpass" and are seen no more.

These happy few are among the pioneers of a new high-tech system that carries them through the ordeal in 30 seconds or less with no human interaction at all. Instead of the usual identification check and pop quiz, an automated kiosk takes a swipe of a coded plastic card and conducts an instantaneous fingerprint check of the cardholder.

Canpass is the wave of the borderless future between Canada and the United States, and a child of the world's biggest trading—and visiting—relationship. More than 100 million people every year cross the 5,113-mile-long international boundary.

Canadian officials said the ultimate objective of the program is a merger with an American counterpart dubbed INSPass that is being tested and recently was upgraded at John F. Kennedy and Newark international airports. But the Canadians concede that the United States has a more complicated and challenging situation at its other border that could delay a perfect customs union.

"The concern is Mexico," Canada's minister of transport, David Anderson, said in an interview, noting the traffic in narcotics, guns, babies and undocumented aliens that is far more serious along the United States' southern rim.

Canpass was launched here in Canada's westernmost province, British Columbia, and some form of it eventu-

ally will be available to frequent crossers at most major highway border posts and at every seaport and airport of likely entry.

Already at White Rock, B.C., the crossing 35 miles south of here on the northern border of Washington State, a similar five-year-old scheme allows Canadians and Americans who drive across regularly—families, vacationers and business people in the Portland-Seattle-Vancouver corridor—to purchase a Canpass decal for their automobile windshields. It gives them the equivalent privilege now in place at the airport: a special, much quicker lane where Canadian customs officers check their decal and nod them through.

The Canpass system for land and air is simple. Citizens of both countries are eligible to apply for the Canpass cards. Frequent crossers register and pay a modest fee—\$50 for the airport card, for example—to apply. The Canadian authorities conduct a security check or, in the case of U.S. citizens, ask their U.S. counterparts to do so. If the applicant's record is clear, he gets a ticket to the fast lane that is good for a year.

In the case of the three-month-old Canadian airport program, applicants pose for a color photograph that goes on the card. They also encode their fingerprints—and, as a backup, biometric hand measurements. Upon arrival in Canada, the Canpass user inserts his or her card, answers a few on-screen prompts and presents an index finger for verification. Then, barring glitches, it is on to baggage claim.

Does the passenger have anything to declare? If so, the computer tots up the duty and tax—some things are sacred, even under the North American Free Trade Agreement—and bills the passenger's credit card.

The rationales for Canpass, and its U.S. counterpart, are manifold. Canadian officials said that Canpass, by whisking through known law-abiders and non-smugglers, can free up cus-

toms officials to deal with more likely suspects. Fee-paying Canpass members also thin out the lines that non-members must stand in.

The program is also in keeping with Canada's desire to reduce obstacles for any Americans who might want to do business here. "We want to make sure there's no impediment to the person who wants to establish a factory in Canada," said Anderson. "We don't want anyone to say, 'Oh, gee, we may be held up at the border for a couple of hours.'"

Canpass was officially blessed by President Clinton and Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien at their meeting in Ottawa last February, a less publicized part of the package dominated by the "open skies" agreement that loosened protectionist restrictions on Canadian and American commercial air carriers wishing to operate in the neighboring country.

Just last week, as they announced that Canpass lanes would open at Canada's other two big airports in Toronto and Montreal this year, officials of both countries hinted at even more far-reaching future consolidations of border formalities.

One idea on the table is unifying border operations at remote land crossings—a cost-cutting system that would empower one country or the other's authorities to handle the light traffic in both directions. Another scheme being tested is computerized voice-recognition technology to fully automate little-used highway crossings in the North American West.

To judge by the numbers of Americans who head for Canada without a passport and seem puzzled to be asked for one, the existence of actual Canadian customs formalities is not widely known in the United States. But Canadian and American immigration authorities have tightened security in the last several years, insisting on documentation from U.S.-Canada travelers.

A passport is not the only suitable proof of citizenship, but it is the simplest and surest one. The alternative is a much longer conversation with an immigration officer. The same policies apply at highway crossings, but in practice, identification is seldom requested.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

August 2, 1996

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN APPAREL INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP STATEMENT

The Rose Garden

11:22 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. To Secretary Reich, Phil Knight of Nike, the other business leaders who are here and the labor leaders, leaders of other organizations who are concerned about this issue; to Kathie Lee Gifford, and Congressman George Miller who was just here and had to leave. I want to say a special word of thanks to my friend, Senator Tom Harkin, who is the very first person who ever discussed the issue we'll be talking about today with me.

Before I begin I'd like to say just a brief word about the new job figures. It was reported this morning that our economy produced nearly 200,000 more new jobs in July -- further good news for the American people that our economy is growing and creating good jobs.

Thanks to the hard work of employees and businesses here in our country, we now have the economic equivalent of our Dream Team -- strong growth, millions of jobs, low inflation, low unemployment and growing incomes. That's the line-up we want for America.

I just had a very productive meeting with representatives of some of our nation's largest apparel and footwear companies, as well as representatives of labor, consumer, human rights and religious groups. They all accepted my invitation to meet here today to deal with an issue that is rightly on the minds of millions of American consumers. Just a year ago today, the discovery of more than 70 people working in virtual slavery behind barbed wire in a garment factory in El Monte, California, awakened Americans to the fact that some of the clothes and shoes they buy are manufactured by people who work under deplorable conditions. The well-documented episode involving Kathie Lee Gifford also awakened many people to this problem.

We all are outraged by these awful revelations, but as leaders we have a responsibility to do something about them. When Kathie Lee learned that some of the garments with her name on them we're being produced under terrible working conditions, she didn't bury her head in the sand. Instead, she reacted quickly, decisively, and responsibly. That's what all the rest of us must do as well.

Our nation has always stood for human dignity and the fundamental rights of working people. We believe everyone should work, but no one should have to put their lives or health in jeopardy to put food on the table for their families. That's why I am pleased to announce that the companies gathered here today have agreed to begin working together to put an end to this terrible problem.

They have agreed to do two things. First, they will take additional steps to ensure that the products they make and sell are manufactured under decent and humane working conditions. Second, they will develop options to inform consumers that the products they buy are not produced under those exploitative conditions. They have

MORE

agreed to report back to me within a maximum of six months about their progress.

Human and labor rights are not brand names. They are the most basic products of our democracy. I want to compliment the companies that are here: Phillips-Van Heusen, L.L. Bean, Patagonia, Nicole Miller, Karen Kane, Warnaco, Tweeds and, of course, Frank and Kathie Lee Gifford, Liz Claiborne, and Nike -- companies that have pledged to live up to their responsibilities. And I want to see the results they produce.

The ultimate test of their commitment will be for them to produce tough criteria to make sure that sweat shops are not used and to make sure consumers know it. And then what we want to do is to persuade others in this country to follow their lead and to find ways to make sure, again, that consumers know it.

I don't know what final strategies they will come up with. I do hope they'll develop measures that might include labels, clear signs in stores or other means of getting the information directly involved to consumers so that consumers at the point of sale have an opportunity themselves to be responsible citizens in their purchases.

This is a good start. As I said before, we know that the first job of business is to produce a profit. That is the foundation of our free enterprise system. But for the system to succeed, good corporations must also be good citizens. Our success in the 21st century depends more than ever on the right kind of partnership between all of us to make America the place it ought to be and to set a standard for the entire world.

We're already working with the high-tech community to put computers in schools, with the media and entertainment industry to rate television programs. Today, we are embarking on a new partnership. I hope that it will become a vital part of the battle against sweatshops here in the United States and against abusive working conditions and particularly child labor everywhere in the world.

Thank you.

* * * * *

Q Mr. President, now that Kennedy-Kassebaum appears to about to become the law of the land, I wondered if you think that is enough for health care or if there are some goals that you have should you get reelected, possibly specific programs that you would try to get through --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I'm very gratified that it is law. And I think that it's going to be the law of the land in no small measure because we have had this health care issue on the agenda now for three and a half years, and, frankly, because Senator Kennedy has been fighting for it for 20 years, ever since his own son was taken ill as a young boy.

And I was talking with Senator Rockefeller, who is also one of our long-time leaders, about this this morning. As you know, I also recommended in my budget that we take steps to provide for the possibility of coverage for people who suffer long periods of unemployment and when they're in between jobs and when the insurance that they have associated with their previous jobs expires. And so I think that is the next step.

MORE

And I think what we should do -- I still believe the goal that I had to have a system that provides everybody with the opportunity to have health insurance coverage, that emphasizes preventive health, that keeps inflation in health care at about the general rate of inflation -- that these are good and honorable goals, and I think we're going to have to meet them in a sort of a step-by-step basis. And I think when we get Kennedy-Kassebaum in place and see how it works, the new changes may tell us what the next steps are, but I think we should begin to focus on the problems of unemployed families.

And, as I said, I've already tried to address this to some extent in my budget.

Q Mr. President, when do you plan to sign --

Q Mr. President, what can you tell us about these reports of terrorist training camps in Iran, and what, if anything, do you plan to do about it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, there are terrorist training camps in more than one country in the world and we are aware of many of them in many countries. The question here is whether -- who was responsible for the killing of the American servicemen in Saudi Arabia. And keep in mind, we cannot confirm -- I was asked a question by a young man this morning -- we cannot confirm yet what the cause of the TWA crash was, and until we can we shouldn't speculate. But we know that our servicemen in Saudi Arabia were killed by a terrorist attack. Who was responsible for that? Who supported them in that? And was any nation involved in that? These are the questions we have to ask and answer. The speculation or even the existence of actual terrorist training camps do not answer those specific questions.

And so until I'm in a position to tell the American people the answer to those questions I think I should tell you what I have said all along: Our country has taken a tough line against terrorism. We want our allies to help us. We want to have the tools we need here at home to prevent as many attacks as possible and to punish people who carry them out. We want to make airline safety as safe as we possibly can. And that's what we're working on. And then when we find people who have done things that are wrong, we will do our best to bring them to justice, as you have seen in the successful trials and convictions in the World Trade Center bombing and the trial going on involving the Oklahoma City bombing.

Q Mr. President, are you concerned that your Trade Representative was unable to get an agreement on insurance with Japan despite your Wednesday deadline?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, frankly, I'm elated that we got a semiconductor agreement. That is a very, very big issue, and very important for us because of the enormous comeback American industry's had in that area. I thought we would get an insurance agreement. I still think we can. We're really not all that far away, and I think we need to keep working at it.

But I want to congratulate Ambassador Barshefsky on getting the semiconductor agreement. And I know that the people in that industry in America -- there are many, many thousands of good jobs involved in this -- are very happy today.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: Sarah?

Q Yes, sir. Aren't we doing some of this training in the use of bombs in our own Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps?

And we're doing it with people who are not treated or tested for psychiatric conditions? And isn't some of this coming out from after they get out of the services and they are unhappy about things, then they create bombs? Our research shows that that's happening.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, for one thing, it is necessary that people in our military understand fundamentals -- the people in the appropriate units in the military understand the fundamentals of how bombs are made and how they can be diffused and the technology of it. And, of course, I think the people in the military do the best they can to make sure that the rigorous training program that people go through would sort out those who are unsuited.

It is true that some of the people who have the knowledge necessary to cause problems for us domestically -- in instances of domestic terrorism -- have been in the military. But I don't know that we can compellingly say that there's any higher percentage of people who are mentally unbalanced who have been in the military than in any other group. And I don't know that there's any sort of screening process that the military could adopt that would protect against that. That is something that -- I think that's one of the ongoing questions they're always asking themselves whenever we have an incident not just involving a bomb, but if there's something else that a soldier does or a veteran does that may seem tied to his or her military service, they look at that. But I don't know that there's an easy answer to that.

Mara?

Q Senator Moynihan yesterday --

Q -- with this Congress -- welfare reform, minimum wage, Kassebaum-Kennedy -- isn't this an argument to keep things the way they are, with you in the White House, Republicans in the majority and Democrats in the minority of Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, it's come like pulling teeth right here before the election. And it's only come after the American people showed that they were bitterly opposed to the extremism that was the want of the Congress. So if -- the American people, of course, will have to make up their minds, but basically, what we did with the health initiative and the minimum wage were plainly Democratic initiatives, as well as the major environmental initiatives. In welfare, the two parties essentially came together finally. Otherwise, we would have had a totally unacceptable bill. So the American people can make up their minds.

I think what they've seen is that all the things that were said about the Democrats aren't true. The Democrats have turned out to be fiscally responsible, strong on defense, strong on foreign policy, strong on welfare, strong on crime, strong on management of the economy, and good for health care and education and working families.

So it seems to me that our party in Congress ought to feel good about going out and presenting an image of a modern 21st century progressive party and then let the American people make up their mind whether they agree with their philosophy or the philosophy of the other party. That's what the election will be about.

Thank you.

Q Mr. President, will you sign Kennedy-Kassebaum before going on vacation?

Q Will Republican leaders be invited to the signing ceremony?

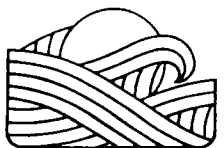
THE WHITE HOUSE

Steve -

Here is the
packet -
What can
we do?

Dms

6:51:40



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1010 South Flower Street, Suite 302
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TO: Doris Matsui
FROM: Stewart Kwoh
RE: El Monte Thai garment workers
DATE: May 17, 1996

As you know, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center is lead counsel representing the Thai workers who were held in conditions of slavery at a garment shop in El Monte, California. In addition to their ongoing civil suit against the manufacturers and retailers whose clothes they sewed, they have been material witnesses in the criminal prosecution of the slave sweatshop owners.

I approach you on behalf of the workers because their case has moved all Americans, but it has had a special impact on the Asian American community. Across the spectrum -- organized labor, civil rights groups, students, lawyers, professors, the business community, media, and others -- have come together in support of the workers. The U.S. Department of Labor has used their case to spotlight abuses in the garment industry.

The criminal case against the owners recently concluded, meaning the workers will lose their designation as material witnesses and become deportable. The Thai workers would like to remain in the United States. There are numerous reasons why their desire to do so is so compelling (see attached).

We have been working tirelessly with the U.S. Attorney's office in Los Angeles, the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., the INS, and the FBI to find ways for the workers to remain in this country legally to work, to contribute, and to support themselves and their families in Thailand.

Attached please find letters (our correspondence with relevant officials) and newspaper articles related to the Thai workers. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Julie Su, Civil Rights Attorney on my staff at (213) 748-2022 x 40.

The workers need yours and the President's support. Please convey to the President our concern for the safety of these workers; anything he can do, even writing a letter or making a call on their behalf to any of the above-named agencies, would be deeply appreciated.

Workers should be given permission to stay and continue working legally in this country because:

1) their lives are in danger if they were to be deported to Thailand; 2 of their captors are still at large; many of the workers' families have received visits from strangers who take pictures of the families' homes and ask questions about "your son/daughter who was in El Monte";

2) they provided the critical testimony for the U.S. government's successful prosecution of their captors; they risked their lives to help the government (without the workers' bravery, there could not have been a criminal prosecution);

3) they have worked almost every single day since they've been in this country; they have not accessed social services or welfare benefits; they are self-sufficient and hardworking; they are paying taxes;

4) they have not received the tremendous amount in back wages they are owed for their many years in El Monte;

5) their own civil suit is still pending, which holds the manufacturers and retailers who ordered, designed, and sold the clothes these workers made accountable; these manufacturers and retailers reaped enormous profit off of the backs of slave laborers and would get off scot-free if the workers were not here to hold them liable;

6) they are standing up to the injustices in the garment industry, hoping that through their courage, other workers will no longer be exploited and the horrendous conditions the Thai workers endured will never, ever be repeated;

7) deportation would send the wrong message to all exploited workers: that your only "choice" is to suffer in silence under deplorable conditions, or come forward and be deported; this choice makes enforcement of federal and state labor laws even more difficult;

8) granting these workers status will not set a precedent in which all undocumented workers have to be given legal status; these workers had their freedom taken away and are therefore, uniquely situated before the INS; their equity argument is particularly strong for remaining in the U.S.;

9) they have come to represent the best hope of America: freedom, justice, hard work, resilience. They have suffered in this country and have earned their place in this country.

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Lisa Winston
From: Julie Su *JS*
Re: Immigration Options for El Monte Garment Workers
Date: February 16, 1996

These are the possibilities we are currently pursuing:

- 1) S visas
- 2) Private bill
- 3) Deferred action

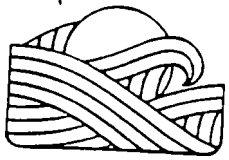
S visas is a new nonimmigrant category created by the Crime Bill of 1994. Basically, this category allows individuals to receive nonimmigrant status if they are selected by a law enforcement agency to provide testimony or critical information in a criminal investigation. "S" visas are divided into two categories. The first category includes individuals who possess "critical reliable information" about a criminal organization. No more than 100 visas are available in this category per fiscal year. The second category provides nonimmigrant visas for individuals who have information about terrorist organizations. Twenty-five visas are available per fiscal year.

Looking at the language of the "S" visa regulations, the El Monte workers would qualify for the first category if selected by a law enforcement agency. Without the cooperation of the El Monte workers, it would not have been possible for the U.S. Attorneys office in Los Angeles to successfully prosecute the defendants in this case.

Private Bill - When strong equities exist and other relief is not possible, private legislation may be introduced to obtain relief. Any member of Congress can introduce private legislation. (See attachments).

Deferred Action is an administrative decision by INS which gives some cases lower priority. The local INS district director can recommend w/ the approval of the INS regional commissioner not to prosecute or deport particular individuals.

Factors the district director will consider include: 1) likelihood of removing the individuals, 2) sympathetic factors, 3) possibility of adverse publicity, and 4) whether removal has been given high enforcement possibility.



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February 24, 1996

Robert Bach
Executive Associate Commissioner of Policy and Planning
Immigration and Naturalization Service
Office of Policy and Planning
425 I Street, N.W. Room 6038
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Bob,

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me while I was in Washington, D.C. Our discussion was really one of the highlights of my trip. Though our meeting was brief, I sensed and appreciate your genuine willingness to explore more permanent immigration solutions for the Thai workers who were enslaved in El Monte, California.

As I mentioned to you, there are several reasons the Thai workers' desire to remain in the United States is so compelling. They were tricked into coming to the United States and held in conditions of involuntary servitude for years. If deported to Thailand, the workers' lives would be in grave danger because two fugitives -- brothers and sons of the criminal defendants who pled guilty on February 9 -- are still at large. Moreover, the workers' families in Thailand have received threatening visits from mysterious individuals who are asking detailed questions and demanding answers regarding the workers. Their fear of retribution for helping the government in the criminal case is a very real one.

The El Monte Thai workers, as you also know, are seeking redress in Federal Court against the manufacturers and retailers who profited from their labor. They seek to get some of the back wages they are owed, but more importantly even, they hope to ensure that the horror they experienced is never, ever repeated. They should be permitted to remain to pursue their civil remedies.

The negative effects of deporting these workers would not fall on them alone. Rather, as we discussed, such deportations would send a clear message to workers and victims that their only "choice" is to remain in exploitative situations. Low wage workers will never come forward to report the kind of inhumane treatment and gross abuses they suffer. Thus sweatshops and slave shops will only be pushed further underground, while corrupt employers continue to exploit workers with impunity.

Finally, with an extraordinary case such as this one, granting visas to these men and women will set no precedent that might prove difficult for you in the future.

We agree that the S-visas should be used in defense of workers who come forward to report rampant violations and criminal activity. In fact, I believe the S-visa is an ideal fit for these workers. While the prosecutors (US Attorneys in Los Angeles, Civil Rights Division in Washington, D.C.) cannot do anything for the workers until after the criminal case is completely concluded, my personal feeling is that they would be helpful in facilitating the S-visa application.

I am quite confident that the U.S. Attorneys office who successfully prosecuted the criminal case would tell you that it was the testimony of these workers that made the criminal case. This was not a case built on paper documents, circumstantial evidence, or expert witnesses. Without the willingness of these workers to aid the government and to provide "critical, reliable information," this important criminal prosecution would not have succeeded.

There is massive public support for these workers not only in California, but throughout the country. They have come to represent some of the basic tenets of our society: freedom, hard work, the struggle for justice. I believe the American public will not only *support* measures to grant legal status to the Thai workers, but the public *expects* that the principles of liberty, shelter, and justice will be upheld in this instance.

The fact that the INS is interested in keeping the workers here is extremely heartening. I want to thank you specifically for your reassurance that the INS will not move affirmatively to deport anyone while we are exploring potential solutions. Have you had a chance to speak to Richard Rodgers about it? Should I meet with him as well? Please let him know that I would very much like to discuss the situation with him.

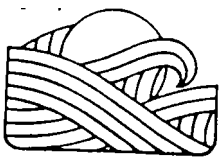
If you think of anything that I can do from here in Los Angeles to facilitate the process, do not hesitate to call. Let's stay in touch.

Very truly yours,



Julie A. Su
Civil Rights Staff Attorney

cc: Lin C. Liu, Assistant Commissioner



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April 11, 1996

Doris Meissner
Commissioner
Immigration and Naturalization Service
Headquarters
425 I Street NW
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Commissioner Meissner:

On behalf of the Thai garment workers who were held behind barbed wire in El Monte, California, I would like to thank you for taking time out from your busy schedule during your brief visit to Los Angeles to listen to some of their concerns.

As you mentioned during the meeting, the successful prosecution of the Slave Shop operators would not have been possible without the courageous testimony of the Thai workers. Even with the threats to their families in Thailand, they were willing to be material witnesses for the U.S. government. Though the defendants have pled guilty in the criminal case, the workers are justifiably fearful of returning to Thailand because two of the Slave Shop operators are still at large and have been threatening the workers' families in Thailand for their role in helping the government.

Additionally, the workers are seeking redress in Federal Court from the Slave Shop operators, manufacturers, and retailers who profited from their slave labor. By holding these entities accountable, the Thai workers seek not only to receive the back wages so long denied them, but they also hope to expose the gross human and civil rights violations in the garment industry. Deporting the Thai workers will only strengthen the position of sweatshop operators who specifically seek out undocumented workers, pay them poverty wages and work them long hours, then threaten them with the force of the INS if workers complain.

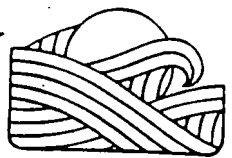
I would like to explore the possibility of granting S-visas to the workers. The Thai workers have provided *critical* and *reliable* information to the U.S. Attorneys in Los Angeles, the INS, the Civil Rights Division and other agencies of the Department of Justice, in a very important criminal prosecution, and thus, fall exactly within the criteria set out for the S-visa. Moreover, their situation is extraordinary and granting them S-visas or other status will not set a precedent.

I know you agree with me that the Thai workers have suffered enough. Deportation of these courageous individuals will not only run contrary to the American precepts of justice, liberty, and freedom, but will endanger their lives and push this type of horrifying exploitation further underground. Thank you once again for your understanding and your kind consideration. I look forward to speaking with you about this again in the near future.

Sincerely,

Julie A. Su
Civil Rights Staff Attorney

cc: Bob Bach, Mike Gennaco, Nora Manella, Deval Patrick, Lisa Winston



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May 13, 1996

Steve Zipperstein, Esq.
Deputy United States Attorney
United States Department of Justice
312 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Steve:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and Mark about the immigration status of the El Monte Thai garment workers. We appreciate your genuine willingness to explore more permanent immigration solutions for them.

As I mentioned to you, there are several reasons the Thai workers' desire to remain in the United States is so compelling. In addition to having endured conditions of involuntary servitude in this country for years, they would face grave danger if deported to Thailand. The two fugitives -- brothers and sons of the criminal defendants recently sentenced -- are still at large. The workers' families in Thailand have received visits from mysterious individuals who ask detailed questions and demand answers regarding the workers.

Moreover, despite threats to their lives, they provided the critical testimony necessary for the successful criminal prosecution. Their very real fear of retribution is a direct result of their cooperation with the government. In light of these factors, the S-visa is a perfect fit for them.

Again, thank you for your continued concern for the Thai workers and for the compassion you, Mike Gennaco, and Tom Warren have shown. There is almost nothing they want more than to remain in this country to work, to live, to contribute, and to support themselves and their families in Thailand. I am grateful to you for recognizing their courage and spirit and for offering them a chance to see that the America they knew behind barbed wire is not what this country is all about.

Very truly yours,

Julie A. Su
Civil Rights Staff Attorney

cc: Mark Rosenbaum

El Monte Thai Garment Workers Slavery Case

Prepared by The AsianPacific American Legal Center
1010 S. Flower St. #302, Los Angeles, CA 90015
(213) 748-2022 ext. 40 or ext.43



RICK MEYER / Los Angeles Times

Thai immigrant workers crouch outside an El Monte apartment complex that was raided by authorities.

Workers Held in Near-Slavery, Officials Say

By GEORGE WHITE
TIMES STAFF WRITER

State and federal agents early Wednesday raided a garment factory in El Monte that allegedly held dozens of Thai immigrants in virtual slavery behind barbed wire for years, forcing them to labor in servitude supposedly to pay off creditors.

The pre-dawn raid by a multi-agency team headed by the California Department of Industrial Relations discovered more than 60 Thai nationals living and working at a gated apartment complex ringed with barbed wire and spiked fences.

The raid exposed conditions that seemed to belong to an earlier era.

Workers told government

agents and The Times that they had been held against their will and that they were forced to toil day and night for less than \$2 an hour. Some said they were told they must repay the cost of transporting them from Thailand, yet the detention continued after the "debt" was repaid.

One worker—who provided only her nickname, "Yat"—said she has not been allowed to leave the complex in the 2½ years she has lived there, even though her debt was repaid long ago.

"I don't like it," she said through an interpreter. "But I have to accept it because they paid my way over here."

"I never would have believed a situation like this could exist in the United States, and I hope I never see it again," said California State Labor Commissioner Victoria Bradshaw, who supervised the search and the questioning. "All the agencies involved plan to prosecute to the full extent of the law."

Bradshaw said the investigation was prompted by informants, some of whom had escaped from the

Please see RAID, A20

RAID: El Monte Site Investigated

Continued from A1

apartment complex, a two-story, seven-unit structure in a residential area in the 2000 block of Santa Anita Avenue. Investigators said they have been staking out the site for weeks.

State agents blocked the driveway of the complex about 5:30 a.m., forced open a gate and roused the workers from their beds one by one. As each apartment was secured, the occupants were brought out, gathered together and ordered to sit on the ground near their apartments.

Translators assured the workers that they would not be punished and that their testimony would be sought for prosecution of the operators. Some smiled and chatted in apparent relief as they watched colleagues being interviewed individually.

Agents from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, called to the scene by state officials, handcuffed eight Thais suspected of operating the ring.

Among the possible state charges facing the operators are slavery and false imprisonment. Among the possible federal charges are peonage, selling into involuntary servitude, extortion, kidnapping, harboring illegal aliens, inducing and encouraging illegal entry and violating passport and visa laws.

However, Michael H. Flynn, acting deputy director for the INS' western region, said the agency has not yet determined the charges or fully identified the suspects, some of whom used aliases. The defendants were to be arraigned by today while federal indictments are sought.

"We're not going to release names [of suspects] because it would be premature," Flynn said. "We're exploring a variety of immigration violations. Charges are something the U.S. attorney will determine after we investigate. Civil rights violations and kidnapping charges are a possibility.

"The seriousness of the situation seems to indicate that there was mistreatment of workers," he added.

In all, the INS detained 63 people from the El Monte site. They are all being held at detention facilities at the INS district office in Los Angeles.

Bradshaw said investigators discovered more than \$750,000 in cash and blocks of gold in a safe at the complex. They also found records indicting the transfer of hundreds of thousands of dollars of cash to banks, she said.

Investigators at the El Monte site said the immigrants toiled an average of 84 hours a week for an average of \$1.60 per hour—far below the minimum wage of \$4.25 an hour. Some of the workers said ring operators deducted half their pay until they repaid the cost of transportation from Thailand.

State officials said the workers are entitled to potentially thousands of dollars to compensate for the difference between the pay they received and the minimum wage. Cash seized Wednesday may be used for that purpose, Bradshaw said.

Some of the workers said they were virtually imprisoned in the complex.

"They took my passport away and won't let me out," said Vuttiphong Vutthiboompronsak, a 48-year-old man who said he has worked at the compound since entering the United States on a tourist visa four years ago. "I work from 7 [a.m.] to midnight. They make you work."

Speaking through an interpreter, Vutthiboompronsak said ring organizers in Thailand offered him employment in the United States and helped him get a tourist visa from the U.S. Embassy in that country.

Labor Commissioner Bradshaw said investigators have learned that at least two "brokers" in Thailand have been sending Thais to the El Monte-based operation. When settled in El Monte, Bradshaw said, some of the employees were threatened indirectly to induce them to work as they did.

"Some of the employees said there would be retribution against their family in Thailand if they didn't cooperate," she said.

Investigators do not know how long the apartment complex has been operated as a garment-making facility. However, one worker said she has worked for the operators for seven years.

It is illegal to produce garments in a resi-

dence, both for safety reasons and because regulators cannot check labor conditions in such an environment. The complex was not registered as a contractor with the Department of Industrial Relations, authorities said.

A document requesting the search warrant said an informant warned authorities "that there is a 24-hour watchman at the said apartment complex watching outside and guarding the workers, who are forced to work long hours without being allowed to leave the premises He also observed that the glass windows in the second floor were paneled with plywood three-quarters of the way to the top."

State investigators said workers at the apartment complex stitched together garment parts that were probably completed at a Los Angeles shop allegedly associated with the El Monte operation. The shop, in the 1300 block of West 12th Place, does business under the name SK Fashion, authorities said.

Simultaneous with the El Monte raid, Los Angeles police and separate teams of state investigators executed a search warrant at the shop and at the Panorama City home of a suspected ring leader.

At the Panorama City site, a single-family home on a quiet cul-de-sac, authorities said an illegal garment-sewing operation was being operated in a back room. Although investigators found no direct links to the El Monte operation, they turned up a variety of alleged record-keeping and workers' compensation insurance violations.

The apparent owner was fined \$11,150. In addition, INS agents took four of the garment shop's employees into custody on suspected immigration violations.

In El Monte, investigators found quantities of cut and sewn fabric inside a truck at the complex. Fabric, garments and dozens of sewing machines were also inside the apartment units.

In addition, investigators found labels of numerous brand-name apparel lines in at least one apartment unit. Investigators said they do not yet know whether the complex operators served as contractors for those brand-name companies. The Southland has a burgeoning business in bogus merchandise, and the labels could be counterfeit, investigators said.

Investigators said the complex operators apparently generated revenue by selling workers much of the food they consumed. A garage was stocked with shelves of food and sundries such as sardines, sugar, canned milk, onions and soap.

Also, workers at the El Monte complex said they were required to use coin-operated washing machines for their laundry needs.

Many workers at the El Monte site said they pooled their money to buy food. Many said they gave most of their remaining money to the managers of the complex who promised to send those funds to the workers' families in Thailand.

Workers said they were not charged for their cramped living accommodations.

Vutthiboompronsak showed investigators a closet-like area measuring about 7 by 4 feet where he said he slept on a blanket on the floor

under a stairwell, located near sewing equipment in a workroom.

Upstairs in the same apartment unit, there were seven sleeping mats in one small bedroom, four in another and three in another.

Some workers seemed resigned to their situation. For example, Weng Kunsar said she has been living in cramped conditions for seven years.

"I don't feel anything," she said when asked to comment on her situation. "I just feel numb."

Another worker who said she has toiled at the El Monte site for three years said she repaid her \$5,000 travel debt during her first year at the complex. She said she is paid \$500 to \$600 per month.

The well-organized, longstanding peonage apparently exposed in the El Monte case is rare, state labor officials said. Somewhat more common are reports of perhaps one or two immigrant workers, particularly in the garment industry, who say they are being held against their will but whose claims cannot always be verified, officials said.

While authorities say large-scale cases of involuntary servitude remain extremely rare, the El Monte raid evoked memories of brutal abuses that took place at the Ventura County flower ranch of Edwin M. Ives during the late 1980s.

Ives gained notoriety in 1990 when prosecutors charged him in what they described at the time as the most far-reaching slavery case in the United States in recent times.

Although the slavery charge later was dropped, Ives pleaded guilty to corporate racketeering and labor and immigration violations in connection with smuggling illegal immigrants into his compound and paying them sub-minimum wages. In all, he paid \$1.5 million to more than 200 former workers, the largest penalty ever levied in a U.S. immigration case.

In the El Monte case, investigators on Wednesday tallied up \$492,800 in violations stemming from improper record-keeping and failure to pay workers' compensation and the minimum wage.

The El Monte site was uncovered by a multi-agency group of about 30 people, including translators and officials from the state Industrial Relations Department, the U.S. Labor Department, the Los Angeles city attorney's office, El Monte police and the California Employment Development Department.

Among those trying to console workers at the apartment complex early Wednesday was Chanchanit Hirunpidok, executive director of the Los Angeles-based Thai Community Development Center. She was moved to tears when commenting on the scene.

"It's disgusting," she said. "It's unfortunate workers are willing to put up with conditions like this. We have to set an example to prevent this from happening again."

Times staff writer Stuart Silverstein contributed to this story.

Asian Leaders Call for Release of Thai Workers

■ **Human rights:** Activists complain that laborers rescued from an El Monte sweatshop are now being imprisoned as material witnesses.

By KARL SCHOENBERGER and SHAWN HUBLER
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Asian American community leaders expressed outrage Wednesday over the continued incarceration of Thai workers who were rescued from conditions of slavery in an El Monte sweatshop last week, only to be locked up in a federal prison as material witnesses pending immigration hearings and possible deportation.

The more than 70 undocumented Thai workers held in detention at the federal facility on Terminal Island are "confused and distraught about their situation," said Chanchancit (Chancee) Martorell, an activist with the group Thai Community Development. "Having gone from one prison to another, these workers have been doubly victimized."

Martorell's group and a statewide coalition of community and labor organizations called for the immediate release of the detainees at a news conference in El Monte Wednesday. Martorell vowed that the coalition, calling itself "Sweatshop Watch," will "lead the community fight for the rights of the El Monte Thai workers to legal redress and back wages."

Legal advocates say they plan to sue for as much as \$5 million in back pay and compensation for civil rights damages on behalf of the workers. So far, however, only eight of the detainees have retained the legal services offered by the coalition, according to Immigration and Naturalization Service spokesman Ron Rogers.

In contrast to the deplorable conditions of the El Monte sweatshop, Rogers said, the workers are being housed in a "fully accredited detention center, one of the finest of its kind in the nation. They're getting three hot meals and a bed, and medical treatment is available."

According to Martorell and others, Thai Consul General Suphot Dhirakaosal and other consular officials have been advising the detainees to waive their rights to deportation hearings and return quietly to Thailand to avoid the shame of publicity.

"The consulate, the Thai government has no interest in helping these people. All they care about is saving their face," complained one of the Thai interpreters volunteering to assist with INS interviews. "The consulate is telling them: 'You're costing the U.S. government money. It's embarrassing. You should go back.'"

Dhirakaosal, the consul general, did not return repeated phone calls on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Rogers said deportation hearings for the 67 women and five men are being postponed until investigators can interview them as material witnesses. He confirmed reports from interpreters and Thai community members that the detainees are being transported in

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THAIS: Workers' Release Urged

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shackles back and forth from Terminal Island to a Downtown detention center for interviews.

"It's just ridiculous to take them out of one kind of imprisonment and then imprison them again," said Julie Su, an attorney with the Asian American Legal Center, which is leading the group of volunteer lawyers. "It sends the wrong message, that if you're exploited and you assert your rights, we'll lock you up."

Meanwhile, intervention has been difficult, Martorell said.

Most of the detainees come from an area of Thailand near the Laotian border, and were suspicious of volunteers from the local Thai community who were mostly from other areas of the country. But workers began to open up this week once a Laotian volunteer offered to help, she added.

The workers are also worried about retribution against themselves and their families back home if they cooperate in the prosecution of the people accused

of enslaving them.

"Material witnesses are concerned that they will not be protected" if released from custody, Martorell said. "They want to be released, but they are afraid."

News of the sweatshop slavery investigation triggered an outpouring of compassion as well as outrage from the local community. So much support has been offered to the workers that Martorell's group has set up a fund to handle donations of food, clothing, toiletries and money.

Los Angeles County is home to the largest population of ethnic Thai people outside of Asia, estimated by the 1990 U.S. Census at 19,016. Martorell estimates the total is as high as 33,000 if undocumented immigrants are included.

"Since the 1980s we've seen a critical mass of immigrants from poor rural villages in Thailand, coming here on false documents or overstaying their tourist visas," she said. "A lot of women have been recruited and smuggled in."

Thailand is populated by a variety of people, mostly ethnic Thai but also Laotian, Cambodian and a large number of ethnic Chinese who have mixed through intermarriage and assimilated into Thai society. In Los Angeles, Thai nationals tend to blend in with the larger population of Chinese in the San Gabriel Valley, but scattered concentrations of Thais are marked by restaurants in the Hollywood and Mid-Wilshire areas.

The Wat Thai Buddhist monastery in North Hollywood has been a focal point for the community, and the Thai detainees reportedly broke down in tears when monks from the temple visited them at the Downtown detention facility on Tuesday.

Indeed, community sources say the unidentified woman who escaped from the El Monte sweatshop three years ago—and triggered the first aborted investigation—initially sought sanctuary at the temple before reporting the labor abuses to an immigration attorney. She is now legally settled in the United States and the working mother of a newborn child.

Los Angeles Times

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21 Thais Found in Sweatshop Are Released

By KARL SCHOENBERGER,
PATRICK J. McDONNELL
and SHAWN HUBLER
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Nearly two dozen of the 72 Thai garment workers who toiled in alleged prison-like conditions in an El Monte sweatshop finally tasted freedom Friday—in some cases years after they began their ordeal.

In all, 21 of the 72 ex-workers— all suspected illegal immigrants— were set free from federal custody after bonds of \$500 per person were posted. Authorities said that most, if not all of the Thai nationals picked up in the raid on the El Monte site should be free by early next week once processing is complete.

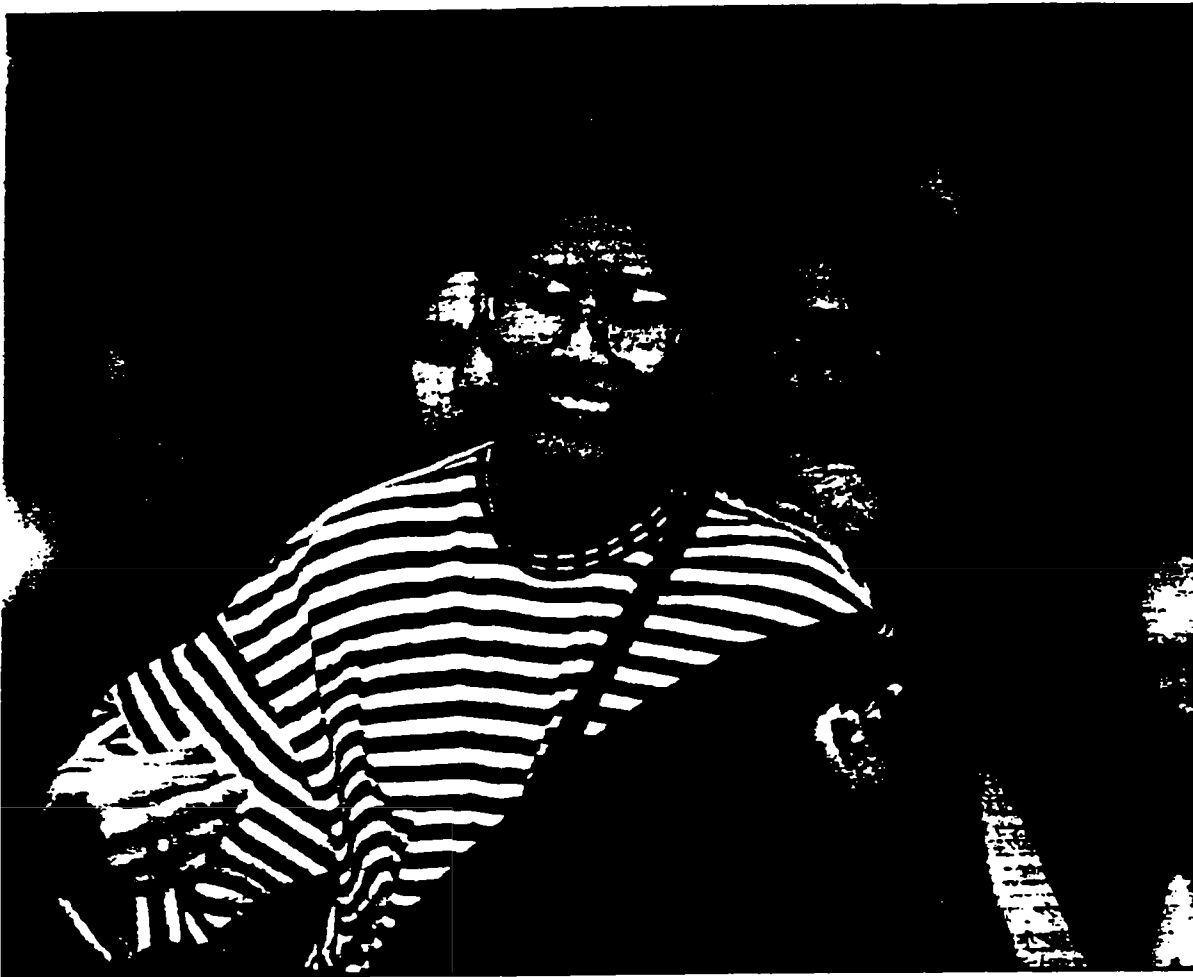
A federal source indicated that all 72 might be released by late Friday or early today.

It was an emotional moment shortly before 5 p.m. as the 21 proceeded up a ramp leading from the basement parking garage of the Federal Building in Downtown Los Angeles. Some smiled and waved but others wore grim expressions and choked back tears as they walked without comment through a phalanx of journalists and television cameras. They boarded a yellow school bus that community groups had rented to take them to temporary housing.

As the cameras clicked and whirled, community representatives said the workers' release was only the first step on a long road. "Their freedom today is only the beginning," said Julie Su, an attorney for the Asian Pacific America Legal Center, which has been assisting the Thai nationals and is among those helping them to find lodging and jobs.

Even as the workers were being freed, investigators seeking the identity of purchasers of garments manufactured at the El Monte site were busily reviewing ledgers, labels, canceled checks and assorted paperwork seized from the facility.

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FRANCIS ORR / For The Times

A beaming Thai worker—among the 21 immigrants released Friday—leaves Downtown federal building.

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THAIS: Bail Posted for Workers Found in Sweatshop

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and another garment factory near Downtown Los Angeles.

California Labor Commissioner Victoria Bradshaw said Friday that state investigators would be seeking information from yet another major retail chain—Miller's Outpost—in connection with clothing manufactured at the El Monte site. Authorities have already subpoenaed documents from Mervyn's, and on Thursday, Montgomery Ward—the nation's largest privately held retail chain—said it had unwittingly purchased boys clothing that may have been manufactured at the El Monte complex.

Fred Ford, senior vice president of Hub Distributing, which owns Miller's Outpost, said, "As far as we know, we have not" bought clothing produced at the El Monte sweatshop.

State and federal labor officials plan a joint announcement next week unveiling subpoenas of up to 20 other firms that may have bought the sweatshop-produced garments, said John Duncan, chief deputy director of the California Department of Industrial Relations.

In another development, a South El Monte building inspector said Friday that U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service officials never contacted him back in 1992, when the INS closed its initial investigation—a decision that has prompted sharp criticism of the agency. State authorities have already denied receiving any referral from the INS, so the official's comment leaves the INS without corroboration of its contention that the matter was referred by telephone to state and local authorities.

INS officials concede that agency procedures call for such referrals to be noted in writing in the case file, a process that was not followed here.

Many, if not all, of the 72 Thai nationals—67 women and five men—are expected to serve as witnesses in the federal prosecution of the sweatshop overseers, eight of whom have already been charged with harboring or transporting illegal immigrants. Prosecutors may add other charges, including peonage and conspiracy, and investigators are still seeking other principals and smugglers believed to be linked to the operation.



TODD BIGELOW / For The Times

Freed Thai sweatshop workers pray Friday night at Wat Thai Buddhist temple in North Hollywood after their release from federal custody.

Once released Friday afternoon, the former factory workers left for the church where members of the Thai community had arranged lodging for the night. They also visited the Wat Thai Buddhist temple in North Hollywood, a religious and cultural center where members of the area's Thai community had gathered to greet them.

The 18 women and three men knelt and bowed their heads reverently as saffron-robed Buddhist monks blessed them, chanting sutras by a lavish altar backed by a room-sized golden Buddha statue. The workers grinned and hugged each other joyously as they filed out the temple hall for a banquet of Thai cuisine.

Aroon Seeboonruang, chairman of the Thai Assn. of Southern California, stopped a cluster of women and asked how they felt about their new freedom.

"We're happy!" they chirped in unison as they turned, displaying broad grins that suggested both excitement and relief.

Their release followed lengthy negotiations involving federal officials, defense lawyers, Thai community representatives and labor leaders. Volunteer groups have agreed to sponsor the former factory hands and provide them with housing. Thai community and labor groups, assisted by the Thai consulate, helped raise the funds to

post the bond, representatives said.

The release on Friday came nine days after a multi-agency task force swooped down on the El Monte sweatshop complex, an action that exposed slave-like conditions that have shocked the nation and the world.

The 72 immigrant laborers were immediately taken into federal custody after the raid Aug. 2. The INS agreed Friday to their release, and said all would be able to work as long as their presence is needed for the prosecution of the alleged sweatshop operators.

However, all 72 Thai nationals will most likely face deportation proceedings once their testimony is no longer needed. Behind their presence, authorities suspect, is a sophisticated smuggling and forced-labor ring that recruited the workers in Thailand, provided them with false immigration documents and promptly dispatched them to El Monte, where they were kept in debt servitude and threatened with beatings if they attempted to escape.

Apparel firms that purchased garments from the El Monte complex—an unlicensed facility—could be held legally liable for wage violations and may be required to help cover up to \$5 million in back pay that is due the workers, authorities said.

As state officials focused on the role of retail outlets, federal investigators were scrutinizing the business of a half-dozen or so Los Angeles-based garment distributors and manufacturers that may have purchased goods produced at the El Monte site for resale to retailers nationwide.

Steven Katz, vice president of L.F. Sportswear—one of the Los Angeles firms contacted by federal labor officials—described his company Friday as a “victim” of the situation. “We’re doing everything in our power to get to the bottom of it,” said Katz, who declined further comment.

Another Los Angeles clothing concern, New Boys, denied Friday that it had ever purchased clothing from an unregistered manufacturer, and declared that its officials knew nothing of any sweatshop labor. One of New Boys’ retail customers, Montgomery Ward, the Chicago-based retail giant, filed suit this week against New Boys, contending that New Boys was a conduit for boys knit shirts produced at the El Monte facility.

Michael Dave, an attorney for New Boys, said the disputed garments were purchased from D&R Fashion, which he described as a licensed apparel firm in Los Angeles. Federal and state authorities suspect that the D&R site on West 12th Place just west of Downtown—which investigators raided on the same day as the raid on the El Monte facility—served as a

finishing site and front for the unlicensed El Monte sweatshop.

Moreover, Bradshaw said, D&R’s license expired in March. A federal source said investigators have detailed more than \$300,000 in checks from New Boys to D&R between June 16 and July 28.

On another front, interviews with city employees in El Monte and South El Monte shed new light on the question of how the sweatshop had been allowed to operate with impunity for so long.

Records have indicated that, as early as the spring of 1992, INS officials suspected there was a sweatshop in the two-story apartment building on Santa Anita Avenue. INS officials have said, however, that their investigation that year hit a brick wall when the U.S. attorney’s office in Los Angeles determined that they lacked sufficient evidence to obtain a search warrant.

Without the warrant, the INS has said, it was forced to close the case. INS officials have contended that they then called state labor officials and a local building code enforcement officer and notified them of the bootleg factory.

But state labor officials have said they have no record or recollection of any such referral. And on Friday, the building code officer named by the INS said he couldn’t remember receiving such a call, either.

INS Agent Richard Kee has said that when he closed the investigation in 1992, he referred the matter to Gil Lopez, who investigates complaints of building code violations for the city of South El Monte. Kee said he chose Lopez because INS officials had worked with him before, even though the complex is within the jurisdiction of neighboring El Monte.

But on Friday, Lopez said he “was not told anything by anyone at the INS” as far as he could recall.

Officials in El Monte likewise said they had no record of an INS referral. However city records do show that, in 1993, the apartment house was visited at least three times by inspectors after the city received a complaint that someone was operating an illegal business in the garage.

El Monte Fire Capt. Kevin Paulson, who filed the complaint Jan. 18, 1993, said he first visited the complex on that date in response to a report of smoke at that address.

Paulson said he suspected a bootleg business the moment his firetruck pulled up to the apartment house. “We got to the driveway, and the only vehicle there was a big bobtail truck,” he said. Paulson said that he and his crew were greeted by two Asian men speaking broken English.

When he told them he needed to investigate a report of smoke in the area, he said, the men tried to persuade him and his crew that

there was no problem. The two were hesitant to open the door of a garage from where there appeared to be a light on, the firefighter said.

“Finally I think I said something like, ‘Open the door, now!’” Paulson recalled. “They spoke to each other a lot in their native language, and then finally they opened it. And we saw a desk, and I think two or three or four sewing machines, and boxes and bolts of material.”

By that time, Paulson said, the smell of smoke had disappeared, and he left. Later that day, he said, he turned the matter over to the city’s code enforcement unit. In their three subsequent visits, city officials only managed to inspect the garage and did not discover the factory.

Times staff writer Richard Simon contributed to this report.

Los Angeles Times

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Top Retailers May Have Sold Sweatshop Goods

By PATRICK J. McDONNELL
and PAUL FELDMAN
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Clothing produced at an El Monte sweatshop raided by investigators this month may have ended up on the racks of some of the nation's best known department stores, including Macy's, Robinsons-May and Filene's, according to federal officials and documents obtained by The Times.

The list of firms targeted by the U.S. Labor Department provides the first indication of the volume and breadth of the sweatshop's business. The list may grow as the investigation continues, authorities say.

"Our investigation indicates that the clothing produced at El Monte was shipped to major retailers throughout the country," said William C. Buhl, a regional administrator of the Labor Department in California.

The documents also detail the conditions endured by 72 laborers who worked in alleged prison-like conditions at the barbed-wire-fenced El Monte plant. The workers, investigators concluded, labored an average of 115 hours a week and were paid 69 cents an hour—a fraction of the legal minimum of \$4.25 an hour.

Federal and state authorities have signaled their intention to go to court to hold manufacturers and retailers who may have purchased sweatshop-produced garments liable for about \$5 million in back pay owed the workers.

The Labor Department investigation shows that merchandise produced at the inconspicuous El

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LABOR: Top Retailers May Have Bought Goods Made in Sweatshop

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Monte site may have reached retailers from Los Angeles to Boston, from Atlanta to Portland. Authorities say the El Monte site has been functioning since 1988.

Federal officials are expected today to name 33 firms—21 retailers and 12 manufacturers—from which investigators are seeking information on the shipments, said Buhl. The companies include manufacturers, which initially purchased the goods, and the retailers.

Also on Tuesday, California Labor Commissioner Victoria Bradshaw said state authorities will unveil subpoenas for the records of 16 manufacturers that are believed to have done business with one or more of the alleged front firms for the El Monte factory. Authorities suspect that much of the business from El Monte was funneled through one firm, D&R Fashion of Los Angeles, whose state license expired in March.

Bradshaw said authorities will seek information from any retailer whose labels were found in the Aug. 2 raids at the El Monte and Los Angeles sites and a third facility, in Panorama City, that may be linked to the operation.

Federal labor investigators have determined that the 72 Thai workers at the El Monte site are due more than \$4.2 million in back wages, while the mostly Latino immigrant employees of the Los Angeles operation are due at least another \$300,000. Four El Monte workers are owed more than \$100,000 each in wages.

In statements to investigators, the workers said they typically toiled from 7 or 8 a.m. until 11 p.m. or midnight—with breaks for lunch and dinner—and were paid in cash on a per-piece rate. "The shorter break we take the more money I earn," one worker noted.

The workers told investigators they seldom left the El Monte site, except, one worker said, for occasional forays outside to buy groceries—but then only with the operators' permission. They generally purchased food and other items on site. One worker recounted a major outing on the Thai New Year, when the operators took them all to another factory to celebrate. Authorities and acquaintances said all were told they were working off debts of about \$5,000, the up-front money allegedly supplied by the plant operators.

The workers were recruited in Thailand and called the boss "Aunt"—apparently referring to Sunee Manasulangkoon, whom federal authorities have identified

as the ringleader of the operation.

During the raid on the El Monte site, federal authorities arrested her and seven other defendants—three men believed to be her sons, two women believed to be daughters-in-law and two men suspected of having been guards at the facility. The eight—all Thai nationals—are now in federal custody on charges of harboring or transporting illegal immigrants. Federal authorities are seeking two men believed also to be sons of Manasulangkoon—one of whom, nicknamed "Sunshine," is suspected of being the Thailand-based recruiter.

Federal and state authorities are working feverishly to delineate the Byzantine trail from the sweatshop through conduit vendors to the nation's retail giants.

Manufacturers who purchased the garments from D&R for resale to retailers may be held legally liable for some of the back wages. State authorities have already filed suit seeking some \$5 million from the eight defendants and looking to garnish whatever assets are outstanding, including bank accounts, the \$853,000 seized at the El Monte site and the considerable jewelry also found there.

The state Department of Industrial Relations succeeded in winning a protective order in Los Angeles County Superior Court on Monday. The order temporarily freezes the assets of the operators and their businesses: D&R, SK Fashions and S&P Fashions.

But authorities say there is some doubt that the huge amount of back wages can be collected from the defendants alone, or even from the manufacturers. Moreover, there is some question about the potential liability of manufacturers that purchased goods from D&R before its state license expired in March. D&R had a state license during 1993 and 1994, confirmed Bradshaw, the state labor commissioner.

In another development Monday, Bradshaw said that two manufacturers that federal authorities say purchased goods from D&R are themselves unlicensed—a violation of law, she said.

Michael G. Dave, the attorney representing the two firms—New Boys Inc. and Tomato Inc.—confirmed that the two firms did not have state registrations. But he disputed whether such a state registration, or license, was required for garment manufacturers.

Tomato reported on tax forms that it made more than \$3.3 million in payments to D&R during 1993 and 1994, according to federal documents obtained by The Times.

Also somewhat murky is the extent of financial liability of the retailers, some of whom appear to have purchased the goods from legitimate, licensed manufacturers.

State authorities have already said they are seeking information from Mervyn's, Montgomery Ward and Miller's Outpost, but other names are certain to surface.

Federal documents obtained by The Times indicate that a licensed Los Angeles manufacturer, L.F. Sportswear, purchased garments from D&R that were later destined for various well-known retailers, including Macy's West (which owns Bullock's), Portland, Ore.-based Meier & Frank, Boston-based Filene's, Robinsons-May, Pittsburgh-based Kaufman's, Washington, D.C.-based Hecht's, Atlanta-based Rich's and Houston-based Specialty Retailers Inc.

Steven Katz, an L.F. Sportswear vice president, said his firm was "appalled and outraged" by the conditions unveiled at El Monte and had signed an agreement with the Labor Department pledging to monitor all facilities with which it contracts.

Michael Margolis, president of New Boys, which purchased garments from D&R for resale to retailers, said Monday he was "totally devastated and shocked" when he heard about the El Monte sweatshop.

According to federal documents, New Boys wrote checks totaling more than \$311,000 to D&R Fashion—the suspected sweatshop front—in June and July, after the firm's state license expired.

Jim Abrams, vice president of corporate communications for the May Department Stores, said the firm is continuing to investigate whether the El Monte incident involves merchandise being manufactured for delivery to any of its divisions. May's holdings include Meier & Frank, Robinsons-May, Filene's, Kaufman's and Hecht's.

Carol Sanger, vice president for corporate communications for Federated Department Stores, said that her firm has been told by authorities that two of its retailing divisions—Macy's West and Rich's—will be named by federal officials today.

Sanger said Federated has not been told which vendor may have subcontracted with the sweatshop or its front operation. But she added that Federated will take legal action against any vendor that did so.

"When you sign contracts, those contracts specifically say all laws will be adhered to and there will be no violation of any state or federal

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statutes in the production," Sanger said.

Ed Bernard, owner of Bermo Enterprises, a Michigan-based discount chain, said he has been contacted by federal authorities about his purchase of men's shirts from Paragraff Clothing Co., formerly based in Los Angeles.

Bernard, whose 11 stores go by the name MAX 10, said his firm bought a big order of D&R merchandise, apparently through Paragraff, which was going out of business.

He said that retailers are in no position to know how the clothing they purchase was made and how the employees making it were treated.

"We're here in Michigan and don't know. People offer us product, we can't oversee who makes it for them.

"I was horrified when I heard about [the El Monte raid]," Bernard continued. "But when we go to buy product from companies, we don't check to see if they're operating legitimate-type operations.

We can't check. We may buy from 20 different companies a day. We can't be flying across the country making sure they're taking care of their employees properly."

A federal source said investigators were seeking information from at least two other major firms, B.U.M. International, based in Rancho Dominguez, and Specialty Retailers. Telephone messages left at the two firms were not returned.

Times staff writer Don Lee contributed to this report.

9 Indicted in Alleged Operation of Thai Sweatshop

By PATRICK J. McDONNELL
and PAUL FELDMAN
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

A federal grand jury in Los Angeles Thursday indicted nine alleged operators of an El Monte apparel sweatshop, charging that the forced-labor ring recruited workers in Thailand, smuggled them into the United States, confined them under threat, censored their mail and monitored their telephone calls.

All nine defendants are charged with conspiracy and concealing and harboring illegal immigrants. The accused could face up to five years in prison and \$250,000 fines

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THAIS

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on each of those charges.

Among those charged is a fugitive, Sukit Manasurangkul, 40, who, the indictment states, helped recruit the workers in Thailand. An arrest warrant was issued for the alleged recruiter, known to some workers as "Sunshine," who is believed to be in Thailand.

Seven suspects are said to be related, officials said, including four who may be sons of the woman believed to be the ring-leader—Suni Manasurangkul, 65, whom workers referred to as "Auntie." It was she, the indictment stated, who ran the El Monte operation in matriarchal style, giving the laborers working and sleeping assignments and warning them that they were not free to leave, an admonition backed by threats of violence.

Federal authorities are still seeking a 10th suspect, who is also believed to be a son of Manasurangkul. The others in custody include two alleged guards at the El Monte site and two women believed to be daughters-in-law of Manasurangkul.

The first eight alleged ring operators were arrested Aug. 2, when officials raided the El Monte garment factory and liberated 72 Thai nationals who authorities say were being held in near-enslavement. The investigation is continuing, and federal violations including involuntary servitude and peonage could be added, said Assistant U.S. Atty. Michael Gennaco.

The five-count indictment adds a few new details to what is known about the incident, the most dramatic case of alleged slavery uncovered in the United States in recent years.

Workers were recruited in Thailand, provided with false documents enabling them to enter the United States as tourists, met at Los Angeles International Airport and transported directly to El Monte, officials charged.

Once the workers arrived at the factory, authorities charged, the sweatshop operators seized their passports and took back the "show money" that had been provided to them as a cover should U.S. immigration officials question them about their planned tourist itineraries.

Not only were the workers prevented from leaving the El Monte facility, the indictment charges, but their overseers restricted their communication and movement within the "labor camp"—actually a converted apartment complex in the working-class suburb southeast of Los Angeles.

All of the suspects are believed to be illegal immigrants, authorities said, as are the 72 Thai workers.

The workers have said that they believed they were working off travel debts of about \$5,000.

U.S. and California officials have filed lawsuits seeking some \$5 million in back wages due the former workers, who were freed from immigration custody last week and are expected to serve as key witnesses in the criminal case against the sweatshop operators.

Others charged in Thursday's indictment are: Tavee Uvawas, 35; Sunton Rawungchaisong, 30; Rampa Suthaprasit, 32; Suporn Verayutwilai, 29; Seree Granjapiree, 28; Hong Wangdee, and Thanes Panthong, 30.

California authorities have imposed fines on a number of Los Angeles-area manufacturers that may have done business with sweatshop-produced goods. The firms—fined at the rate of \$100 per employee at the time of inspection—were cited for operating without proper licenses, said state Labor Commissioner Victoria Bradshaw. They are: AM Casuals Inc., \$1,600; Balmara Inc., \$300; Beniko Inc., also known as Point Zero, \$2,200; F 40 California Inc., \$5,500; Ms. Tops of California, \$1,500; New Boys Inc., \$2,700; Tomato Inc., \$4,700; U.S. Boys Inc., \$23,300, and Jonquil Inc., \$300.

ON THE RECORD

"I'm really excited about going to Disneyland. It's like a dream."

—Na, the name chosen by a 26-year-old woman to disguise her identity, after being freed from the unrelenting toil of an El Monte sweatshop and the custody of immigration officials. B1



Chanchanit Martorell of Thai Community Development, a social service group, with three freed workers on an outing

Feasting on Kindness

Thais Freed From Sweatshop Discover Good Side of Life in America

By KARL SCHOENBERGER,
PATRICK J. McDONNELL
and ELSON TRINIDAD
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

They gathered around a picnic table shaded by towering eucalyptus trees in a breezy San Fernando Valley park, four refugees from a horror story. Smiling, laughing, beaming with joy and relief.

They're free.

And the future is what they are thinking about now. Decent jobs, maybe legal status in the United States or a happy return to Thailand and a long-deferred reunion with loved ones.

"I've gotten strength from my experience," said a 25-year-old man who chose the nickname "Mack" to disguise his identity. "I'm ready to move on."

Released from the unrelenting toil of so-called sweatshop slavery and the shackles of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, these former Thai garment workers are tasting the thrill of freedom that authorities say was denied

them during long years of confinement and torment at a bootleg factory in El Monte.

The four are among 72 bewildered people bailed out of federal custody by friendly strangers a little more than a week ago. Prison was where they had been taken after the Aug. 2 raid on the converted El Monte apartment compound where, authorities allege, they had been fenced in by razor wire and subjected to forced labor. The INS detained them because officials say all were working here illegally, having been smuggled in with false papers.

Since their release, many of the workers have been feted. Some attended a banquet at the Wat Thai Buddhist temple in North Hollywood. They picnicked in Griffith Park. One group visited Universal Studio's CityWalk on Tuesday night, then dined at the Queen Mary in Long Beach on Wednesday. Disneyland is on the itinerary for all, maybe as soon as this week.

Now they are enjoying some privacy as well as liberty, divided up into small

groups and sheltered by churches and community organizations in confidential locations. Sponsors are trying to shield them, at their own request, from the media pack that swarmed them ruthlessly when they walked out of INS custody in Downtown Los Angeles.

Even earnest members of the local Thai community—offering sympathy, donations and jobs—complain that they cannot get access to many of the freed workers.

But lying low is a matter of peace of mind, say community activists who secured their freedom. The workers express fears of retribution by someone who might not want them to testify against their former captors. A federal grand jury in Los Angeles last week indicted nine of the alleged factor overlords on charges including transporting and harboring illegal immigrants.

Whether that fear is justified or not, is part of the trauma of adjustment from abuse to kindness.

All 67 women and five men now have
Please see THAIS, B

THAIS: New View of U.S.

Continued from B1

six-month work permits, allowing them to remain in the United States and serve as material witnesses, though many may later face deportation. But before getting back to the grind, they are out to have a good time.

"Most people in Thailand don't know much about America, but they've heard about Las Vegas, Hollywood and Disneyland," said Nu, the name chosen by a 26-year-old woman from an impoverished village in northeast Thailand, who said she has been sewing for a living since her early teens. "I'm really excited about going to Disneyland. It's like a dream."

At CityWalk last week, a group of 10 of the Thai workers could have passed for ordinary tourists, indulging in the joy of doing normal things. They were secret celebrities, posing for snapshots with a baby in a stroller and hamming it up with dancers at the Country Star restaurant.

"Little do they know who they're posing with," joked the shelter director who supervised the outing.

At Camacho's Cantina, volunteers instructed them in proper technique for dipping tortilla chips in salsa, using simple English and pantomime. The women countered with a lesson in Thai manners: "Sawadee," they instructed, clapping their hands with gentle bows in the traditional gesture of greeting. Then came a lesson in hamburgers.

Later at the shelter they were treated to a video concert of the Thai pop star Tata, the kind of privilege that was denied them at the factory. "The feeling is so new, I can't really find the words to describe it," said a woman who identified herself only as Tiew. "It really hasn't sunk in yet."

A group of 23 workers sheltered by a Methodist church partied with members of the congregation Thursday night, teaching their hosts classical and folk dance steps from Thailand in exchange for some rudimentary English training.

"Head, shoulders, knees and toes" was the children's song that some of them tried to recall amid giggles the next day at a park.

Doing everyday chores has been a delight for the workers. They have cooked meals in communal kitchens, gone shopping in Thai markets and dined in Thai restaurants. They take walks in the neighborhoods of their shelters, careful not to stray too far—yet relishing the freedom to come and go at will.

On Monday they are scheduled to begin health screening, in most cases seeing doctors and dentists for the first time in many years. The leisurely pace of adjustment is soothing, they say, allowing them to catch up on much-needed rest.

Some, however, are restless and expressing a wish: the deep desire to get back to work.

"We're kind of lonely," explained one woman in her 30s, a mother of two who gave her name as Ou. "We're used to working all the time. Now there's not that much to do."

Ou is among 22 women and one man being sheltered at an Episcopal parish hall in a Los Angeles suburb, their accommodations courtesy of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. Their cots line the tile and wood floor of a former auditorium, along with open suitcases displaying simple belongings.

Clearly, they are happy to be far away from the clandestine apparel factory, where authorities said they were held as virtual slaves and paid an average of 69 cents an hour for work that stretched up to 22 hours a day, seven days a week. So numbing was the routine, many say they lost track of days, weeks—even years.

But many of the workers are determined to return to the sewing machines that have caused them so much misery. Even the most degrading of work had allowed them to send some money back to loved ones in Thailand, where a few dollars can make a big difference in the rural economy.

"Yes, I'd like to go back to Thailand," said another woman at the parish hall who calls herself Nu. She is also a mother whose two children are in the care of relatives back home. "But not right now. First I must work."

Next to her cot, one woman at the Episcopal shelter keeps a big brown teddy bear. She hopes to take it home to her 3-year-old son some day.

If the horrors of the El Monte sweatshop were shocking for Americans, it was equally devastating for the workers, who, authorities say, were enticed here by recruiters bearing false promises of prosperity. Yet, gradually, exposure to the outside world is forging a new view of this nation.

"Maybe the reputation of Americans was not so great at first. Some people were saying Americans have bad hearts," said Bua, 26, who is sheltered at the Methodist church. "But now I love the independence here. The people are very warm at heart."

8 Suspects in Sweatshop Ring Plead Not Guilty

By PAUL FELDMAN
and CARL INGRAM
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Eight alleged operators of an El Monte garment sweatshop that authorities believe forced Thai immigrants to work in slave-like conditions pleaded not guilty Monday to charges that they concealed and harbored more than 70 illegal immigrants.

The defendants, all Thai nationals who officials believe are illegal immigrants, are being held without bail. They will make their next appearance in U.S. District Court in Downtown Los Angeles on Monday to have a trial date set.

Meanwhile, the state Senate joined an investigation into alleged sweatshop operations in the Southern California garment industry, subpoenaing the presidents of six Los Angeles garment manufacturers to

Please see SWEATSHOP, B3

SWEATSHOP

Continued from B1
testify at a public hearing Friday at El Monte City Hall.

At the request of state Sen. Hilda Solis (D-El Monte), chairwoman of the Senate's Industrial Relations Committee, the relatively unusual procedure will be used to garner public testimony from several manufacturers who have also been subpoenaed by the state Department of Industrial Relations and fined for operating without proper licenses.

They are: Janet Grojean of Balmar Inc., Michael Margolis of New Boys and Voltage Inc., Robert Salka of Ms. Tops of California, Chris Wilks of Tomato Inc., and Albert Khodri of Point Zero and Beniko.

Avraham Levy of Caravan Fashion Inc., whose firm is properly registered, has also been subpoenaed by the state Senate and the state Department of Industrial Relations.

After the brief U.S. District Court hearing in Los Angeles Monday, lawyers for the defendants said their clients are bewildered by the array of out-of-court allegations made against them by state and federal authorities. Based on statements by the 72 workers, who were freed during a government raid Aug. 2 and are now serving as material witnesses, authorities believe the defendants held the workers under armed guard for years, refusing to let them go even after they had worked off travel debts of about \$5,000 each.

The charges are similar to those filed in hundreds of illegal immigration cases each year in California, said defense attorney William S. Harris.

"Right now, it's a plain vanilla alien smuggling case, like so many in this county," said Harris, who represents Rampa (Pa) Suthaprasit, 32. "They're somewhat bewildered and amused about why this is such a big case."

However, government prosecutors are considering filing stiff additional charges, including peonage and involuntary servitude.

Defense lawyer Irene P. Ayala, who represents Suporn (Porn) Verayutwilai, 29, conceded that if the allegations of near-slavery conditions at the barbed-wire-gated El Monte factory proved true, "it's rare and this is not a routine case."

The eight defendants—who also include alleged ringleader Suni Manasurangkul, 65, whom workers referred to as "Auntie"; Tavee (Boi) Uvawas, 35; Sunton (Torn) Rawungchaisong, 30; Seree Granjapiree, 28; Hong (Daeng) Wangdee, 32, and Thanes (Noi) Panthong, 30—each face up to five years in prison and \$250,000 fines on the current charges.

Also charged in an indictment last week was fugitive Sukit (Sung) Manasurangkul, 40, who authorities believe helped recruit the workers in Thailand.

At next Monday's session, U.S. District Judge Lourdes G. Baird, the former U.S. attorney in Los Angeles, is due to preside. However, Attorney Morton H. Boren, who is representing Granjapiree, told U.S. Magistrate Judge Charles F. Eick, "I think we have a problem with Judge Baird," because the original federal investigation of the labor camp, which was terminated after the U.S. attorney's office declined to seek a search warrant, was conducted during Baird's tenure in 1992.

In Sacramento, the governing Senate Rules Committee denied Solis' additional request that executives of Broadway and Mervyn's, both major California retailers, also be summoned to testify Friday.

Committee chairman Bill Lockyer (D-Hayward) said it would be unfair to compel executives of the two California retailers who may have purchased garments manufactured at the El Monte sweatshop, but not also demand testimony from officials of retailers based in other states. The Legislature has no authority to subpoena retailers outside California.

Feldman reported from Los Angeles and Ingram from Sacramento.

Freed Thai Workers File Lawsuit

■ **Labor:** Charges by 64 former sweatshop laborers include involuntary servitude, false imprisonment and civil rights violations.

By IAN JAMES
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Sixty-four Thai garment workers who told authorities they were held against their will in an El Monte sweatshop filed a civil lawsuit against their alleged captors Tuesday, seeking several hundred million dollars from 11 factory operators whom they accused of involuntary servitude, false imprisonment, racketeering, assault, and civil rights and labor law violations.

Meanwhile, the federal judge presiding over a separate criminal case filed against nine alleged sweatshop ringleaders excused herself to avoid any apparent con-

flict of interest. U.S. District Judge Lourdes G. Baird was the U.S. attorney in Los Angeles in 1992 when federal prosecutors declined to seek a search warrant to raid the converted apartment complex where authorities say Thai immigrants were lured with the promise of a better life, only to toil long hours for subminimum wages under the threat of armed guards.

A coalition of attorneys representing the workers announced their federal lawsuit at a news conference attended by a handful of the freed laborers.

"We will not be silent in the face of exploitation . . . and we will assert our rights in the workplace and in the courtroom," said Julie Su, staff attorney at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center. "Today, they are here to fight back."

The suit aims to collect compensatory and punitive damages, including all unpaid minimum-wage and overtime pay, from the sweatshop operators—an amount totaling more than \$100 million dollars, according to attorneys.

U.S. and California state officials also have filed lawsuits seeking \$5 million in back wages due the workers, who were freed in an Aug. 2 raid by a state-led task force.

While it is tough to put a price on freedom, the lawyers said, they decided on \$10,000 compensatory damages for each day of freedom denied to each Thai worker named in the suit. Many of those who agreed to have their names on the suit had cut and sewed under threat of violence for as long as three years, the attorneys said.

The coalition said the lawsuit is intended to send a message to garment manufacturers and retailers that accountability is a must in an industry with a history of exploiting workers.

The high damage amount was partly symbolic, Su said, because the alleged operators could not totally repay the victims for what she called their "recklessness" and "inhumanity."

"It's sort of mind-boggling to put a dollar figure on it," Su said.



ANACLETO RAPPING / Los Angeles Times

Garment union leader Steve Nutter, left, answers questions at news conference attended by several freed Thai workers. The laborers filed suit seeking several hundred million dollars in back wages and damages.

New York Times

FRIDAY, AUGUST 25, 1995

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CRIME RINGS TIED TO SWEATSHOPS

Groups May Be Smuggling In
Asians for Garment Work

By JAMES STERN GOLD

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 24 — Raids by Federal officials this week have turned up evidence that Asian organized crime rings may be bringing Asian and other foreign workers into Southern California illegally, specifically to work in sweatshops in the area's booming garment manufacturing industry.

This is the second time in three weeks that such evidence has been turned up, Government officials said. The raids, which were carried out on Wednesday by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, found 56 illegal immigrants at three sweatshops here. Most were Thais who appear to have been recruited to cut and sew garments destined for major American department stores, Labor Department officials said. They also said it appeared that some of the garments might have been shipped to J. C. Penney.

In the latest case, the abuses have been swept up in Presidential politics, inciting bitter exchanges today between officials of the Clinton Administration and Gov. Pete Wilson of California — not over how the abuses can be stopped or their ominous economic significance, but over who is to blame.

Mr. Wilson, who is staking his bid for the 1996 Republican Presidential nomination in part on his battle against illegal immigration, asserted in a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno that the Clinton Administration had "allowed slavery to exist for years in the United States and ignored it." The Governor called for an investigation of the authorities here who oversee immigration matters, but the Justice Department insisted that it was effectively enforc-

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Raids Link Organized Crime to Sweatshops

Continued From Page A1

ing the laws.

In the earlier case, 72 Thai women who immigrated here illegally were found being held in slave-like conditions in a factory in El Monte, in east Los Angeles, some for as long as seven years.

Those raids were conducted by the State authorities after Federal Immigration officials, first in the Bush Administration and then in the Clinton Administration, investigated but refused to act.

"There's a sense that this is the tip of the iceberg," said Julie Su, a lawyer at the Asia Pacific American Legal Center who is representing most of the Thai women found in the El Monte raid. "There are indications that these kind of labor law violations are rampant here."

William Slattery, the immigration agency's executive associate commissioner for operations, said there was a pattern of Asian-based crime groups recruiting Asian workers with promises of high wages, and then transporting them illegally to California sweatshops.

These Asians are not here by accident," he said. "They are here because of Asian organized crime groups."

The raids carry troubling economic implications. While Southern California has been losing tens of thousands of high-paying jobs in the aerospace industry and with military contractors, the garment industry has been applauded for adding jobs nearly as fast. But now there is concern over what kinds of jobs are being created and how they may be distorting the economy here.

Southern California has surpassed New York City as the nation's largest garment manufacturing center, with about 125,000 workers cutting and sewing apparel. The Labor De-

partment estimates there are 4,000 legally registered garment contractors in the area, and perhaps 1,000 illegal shops.

The industry has been known as a persistent violator of labor laws for some time. A survey done by the Labor Department 14 months ago found that 79 percent of the shops investigated were failing to pay workers properly for overtime, and 69 percent failed to pay the minimum wage to all their workers.

William C. Buhl, the department's regional administrator here, said today that it appears that some of those jobs are going to illegal immigrants who are being recruited by organized crime rings.

"That indicates a serious problem," he said. "We're concerned that there might be some kind of process of recruitment just for this purpose."

Mr. Buhl said department officials found that the illegal workers caught on Wednesday were apparently owed back wages totaling more than \$200,000. He also said the shops might have fabricated time cards in an effort to show compliance with the labor laws.

Garment industry authorities said there were several deeper economic problems at work. One is the fact that, with more and more garments produced in places like China, where wages are a fraction of those in the United States, American factories are finding it harder to compete except in small niches. Some manufacturers accuse the retailers of applying too much pressure on them to keep prices down.

"The retailers in the past turned a blind eye to the effect of their insisting always on rock-bottom prices from the manufacturers," said Richard Reimis, a lawyer who represents eight large manufacturers who have initiated a voluntary labor law com-

pliance program.

Some manufacturers maintain that the real problem is lax enforcement of the labor laws, which has created an incentive for sweatshops — most of them sub-contractors to the larger manufacturers — to hire illegal workers and pay them less than the minimum wage.

"It's the total lack of enforcement of the labor laws that attracts these undocumented workers in the first place," said Ms. Su, the lawyer at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center. "If you have these kind of raids it will only push them farther underground."

Rick Rice, a spokesman for the California Department of Industrial Relations, said, "There is a sense of the fact that the laws have not been enforced properly has allowed this industry to grow so fast here."

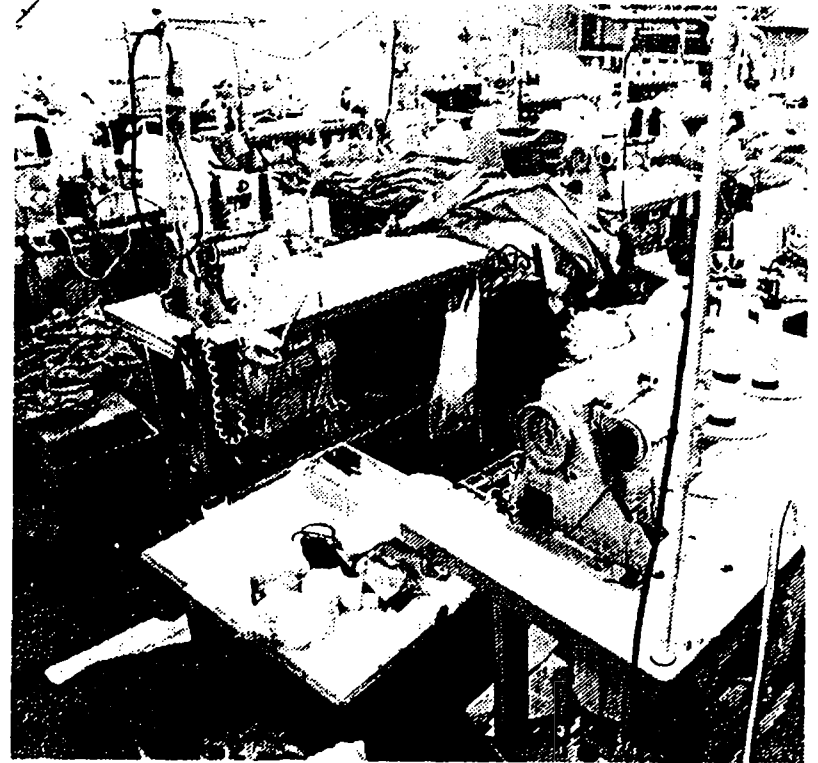
The immigration agency said Wednesday's raids were the result of a tip it got from someone who had been emboldened by the publicity over the raid on the El Monte factory. Of the 56 people being held today, 39 are Thai, 9 are Mexican, 6 are Salvadoran, one is Honduran and one is Laotian, the agency said.

No criminal charges have been brought yet, but Federal officials said they were likely soon. In the El Monte case, nine Thai citizens were indicted on criminal charges that they brought the women here and held them illegally.

State officials identified only J. C. Penney as a destination for garments made at the three shops, although they said there were others.

Hank Rusman, a spokesman for J. C. Penney, said that the company had not yet determined whether it had bought garments from the sweatshops, but added that it "will take appropriate action" if that was borne out.

"J. C. Penney has always been a



Associated Press

Work in a garment sweatshop in Los Angeles was halted on Wednesday when Immigration and Naturalization Service agents took 56 illegal aliens into custody. The aliens, most Thais, worked at three sweatshops.

law-abiding company and we are very disturbed by the reports," he said.

But the discussion today about the problem quickly degenerated into finger-pointing by Federal and state officials eager to score political points.

Virginia Bradshaw, the state labor commissioner, complained that Federal immigration officials had acted improperly by not notifying the state of its actions beforehand. "We were notified by the press," she said. "For them to exclude us like that is highly unusual."

She added: "Was this for political

purposes? There doesn't seem to be any other conclusion you can draw."

Ms. Bradshaw suggested that Federal officials had moved swiftly this week after being embarrassed by the Government's lack of action in the El Monte case. Not only had the immigration agency failed to initiate a raid after receiving a tip about the Thai workers several years ago, but it had also withdrawn from the state-run raid at the last minute, saying it could not obtain a warrant.

Mr. Slattery of the immigration agency rejected those charges. He said the agency had acted properly at all times.

Agency Missteps Put Illegal Aliens at Mercy of Sweatshops

By JAMES STERNOLD

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 20 — With the raids on garment sweatshops here last month producing the spectacle of scores of illegal Thai immigrants being kept as virtual slaves, state and Federal investigators have begun pointing fingers at each other while issuing assurances that they are taking action to flush out such operations.

But an examination of past investigations in Southern California, home to the country's largest garment industry, shows that a series of missteps dating at least to 1988 have left the workers at the mercy of groups tied to Asian organized crime rings, with little chance of being rescued.

The local office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service appears to have had several chances to address the problem uncovered in the sweatshop raids last month at El Monte, in eastern Los Angeles County. But no action was taken because of a lack of cooperation among Federal, state and local agencies and because of what one agent described as a personality conflict within the immigration office.

In some ways, critics say, the Government's failure to take action illustrates deep shortcomings in the immigration service's effort to protect immigrants. It also demonstrates how competing economic interests discourage local and state governments from cracking down on a problem that has become pervasive in garment districts from Manhattan to Los Angeles.

"Enforcement has always been a stepchild" of the immigration serv-

ice, said Demetrios G. Papademetriou, an authority on immigration policy at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace. "Businesses complain about the disruptions" caused by strict enforcement, and enforcement costs are very high, he added.

Politics and competing economic interests have discouraged Federal and state investigators from cracking down on sweatshops in the garment industry. Two of the 72 illegal aliens found in peonage at a squalid shop in El Monte, in eastern Los Angeles County, left a detention center early last month after being held as material witnesses.

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Associated Press

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A garment industry problem caused in part by politics and competing economic interests.

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Letters to The Times

Thai Workers

■ Thank you, Julie Su (and the Skadden Fellowship you're working with), for making it possible to be proud of at least some people in the sorry El Monte sweatshop scandal (Sept. 4). When they had been saved from sweatshop slavery, only to face INS incarceration, thank you for working so hard to give these poor working women some of the freedom for which our country stands.

And thank you too for returning some of the Thai-style hospitality to those workers. It's the same kind of hospitality many of us received as GIs in northeastern Thailand during the Vietnam War era. And my wife and I have received it each time we've returned to Thailand. It's great that we are able to dwell on that hospitality—both Julie Su's and our friends' in Thailand—rather than the greed of the Thai sweatshop gangsters and the bureaucratically small-minded who might have kept those women locked up until they were deported. Set them free—they've earned at least that much.

STEVE JORGENSEN
Dana Point



PORNVILAI CARR / For The Times

Attorney Thongbai Thongpao speaks with his clients in Bangkok who say they are owed wages earned at El Monte garment shop.

Nightmare Continues for Thai Workers

■ **Labor:** Ex-employees of El Monte sweatshop seeking back wages tell of receiving phone threats.

By ELIZABETH LU
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

BANGKOK, Thailand—As one of eight children in a poor northern Thai family, Rungthiwa McAllister had two visions of her future: In one, she was bent over in a rice paddy under the blistering sun, standing ankle-deep in mud from dawn until dusk to eke out a meager living, just as her parents did. In the other, she was a glamorous airline hostess jetting off to exotic places.

Neither scenario came true.

Please see **THAIS**, B6

Thai Workers Sue Top Clothing Businesses Over El Monte Plant

By K. CONNIE KANG
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Attorneys for 68 Thai garment workers who once toiled in alleged prison-like conditions in El Monte on Wednesday took manufacturers and retailers, including Mervyn's and B.U.M. International, to court, charging that the defendants unlawfully profited from the workers' labor.

The companies were added to a federal complaint filed last month that accused the El Monte plant operators of violating the 13th Amendment prohibition against involuntary servitude and peonage, false imprisonment, racketeering, assault and labor law violations.

"These workers labored over sewing machines in dark garages and poorly lit rooms, making clothes for brand name

Please see **GARMENT**, B6

GARMENT

Continued from B1

manufacturers that were then sold in some of the biggest retail stores in America," said Julie Su, a staff attorney at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

The lawyers are seeking \$10,000 for each worker for every day they spent in the El Monte factory. Since some of the workers spent up to seven years at the plant, such an amount would add up to many millions of dollars.

Representatives of Mervyn's and B.U.M. International vigorously disputed the charges and said the suit lacked merit.

B.U.M. International Chairman Morton Forshpan and Mervyn's spokeswoman Sandy Salyer said their companies have no record of doing business with those operating the El Monte facility.

Also named in the amended lawsuit are SK Fashions, S&P Fashions, D&R Fashions, Tomato Inc., L.F. Sportswear, Ms. Tops of California, Topson Downs of California, New Boys Inc. and Italian Club of California.

Since their dramatic rescue in August by state and federal authorities, the 72 workers have found work and now live in Los Angeles, said Chanchanit Martorell, executive director of the Thai Community Center, a nonprofit social service agency that played a key role in helping the workers relocate. Some of the former workers chose not to sue.

Martorell said many continue to suffer from physical and mental ailments. They have been tested for tuberculosis, blurred vision, headaches, back pains and ulcers. But getting them to seek psychological counseling has been difficult because of a cultural stigma, Martorell said.

More than half have returned to jobs in the garment industry while others clean, baby-sit or do other odd jobs for a living.

"Some were so traumatized that they didn't even want to see another sewing machine," Martorell

said.

The Thais were allowed to work and remain in the United States because they may be called as witnesses in the federal criminal trial, which is slated for January.

Meanwhile, the Thais are getting a taste of real life in America.

"All the little things we take for granted—such as opening a checking account, getting an ATM card and taking the bus—are new to them," Martorell said.

"It took me an hour the other day just to teach them how to sign their name in English," she said.

On Saturday, they will start their first English class. Next week, they will go to an MTA office to get monthly bus passes.

The workers say they were forced to work in dismal conditions to pay off the cost of their passage to the United States after they were lured to leave their homeland for Los Angeles.

Attorney Julie Su sued on behalf of sweatshop workers, seeking millions of dollars in back wages and overtime. "They need to be held legally liable, both manufacturers and retailers," she says.



After The Raids

The image of laborers slaving for inhumane stretches of time is no longer a fading picture of early 20th century life. Garment lawyers are hoping to change that for good. **By Penny Arévalo**

Lawyers for the garment industry are finding themselves somewhere between the proverbial rock and a hard place. The topography is made even more uncomfortable by its location — center stage.

The discovery in August of a garment manufacturer operating in an El Monte apartment complex allegedly holding 72 workers, all from Thailand, against their will shone new light on an old problem. The workers were forced to labor up to 22 hours a day in exchange for their passage to the United States. Their dirty living conditions were recorded by television news cameras, their bosses' dirty little secret out.

The image of employees slaving in semi-darkness for inhumane stretches of time was no longer a fading picture of early 20th century life — it captured working conditions at the end of the century as well. The El Monte raid on SK Fashion and D & R Fashion, in fact, was one of a half-dozen or so that month in the greater Los Angeles area alone.

Soon after the raid, Julie Su, an attorney just one year out of law school, went before the cameras that had peered into the untidy rooms of the El Monte sweatshop. An attorney with the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Su announced the filing of a lawsuit on behalf of 64 of the Thai nationals, seeking millions of dollars in back wages and overtime. *Bereerong v. Uuawas*, 95-5958 WDK. She also called for responsibility up and down the clothes line: from the manufacturers who subcontracted with the El Monte sweatshop and the El Monte operators to

the retailers like Mervyn's and HUD Distributing (known as Miller's Outpost) that were scheduled to put those items on their racks. A federal criminal case out of Los Angeles is pending as well, *U.S. v. Manassirangkul*, CR95-714.

Just two weeks ago, Department of Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich called together retailers in New York for a summit on the issue.

While participants walked away with cautious optimism in light of an interdisciplinary pledge to cooperate, it appears that the perception of who is responsible for the exploitation of cheap labor and what can be done about it is based on one's location on the garment industry continuum. Consider:

- "They need to be held legally liable, both manufacturers and retailers," says Su.

- "We do think we have a major role to play, but our role is not to find [sweatshop operators] the Labor Department can find," says Morris G. Cain, vice president of legal and public affairs for the International Mass Retailers Association. His organization represents mass discount stores, such as Target and Wal-Mart, as well as non-garment retailers such as Home Depot and Circuit City. "The retailers don't know [which contractors or subcontractors are sweatshops], and don't have any involvement in it. You might as well go after the consumer who has the garment in the closet."

- "Everybody up and down the line is responsible," says José Millán, assistant labor commissioner for California who oversees garment manufacturing. He is also an attorney. Among those responsible for the problem, albeit not legally li-

able, are the consumers who purchase the clothes and the immigrants who agree to work under the table, says Millan. The government, he says, cannot handle this alone.

• "Self-policing can be real or just ... for show," says Robert K. Hood, a senior group leader in the J.C. Penney legal department. "It comes down to whether you have a company that believes in legal compliance and ethics."

Under California law, registered manufacturers are wholly liable for their own actions. When a manufacturer or retailer directly contracts with another manufacturer that is not registered with the state, then liability is held jointly. A law reintroduced shortly after the raid by state Sen. Hilda Solis, D-El Monte, proposes to hold the manufacturer liable for labor law violations regardless of whether the subcontractor is registered with the state. (Gov. Pete Wilson vetoed a similar law last year, claiming it would drive the garment industry out of California.)

Larry Weiss, coordinator of the labor and global economy project of the Resource Center of the Americas, wrote in the Minneapolis Star Tribune earlier this month that hundreds of thousands of workers can be found in sweatshops that are largely concentrated in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Miami. There, many of them — mostly women — are paid between 15 cents and 90 cents an hour. Some are children; some are forced to work or face corporal punishment or sexual harassment. Some are required to stay until the last piece is finished, others take their work home with them to finish before the next shift begins.

The way J.C. Penney Co. Inc. of Plano, Texas sees it, too many manufacturers want its business for it to put up with lawbreakers. "There's a lot of suppliers out there. There's no need to deal with one that is unwilling or unable to honor its [legal commitments]," says Hood.

J.C. Penney builds into its contracts — as many manufacturers and retailers do — a clause that requires all contractors and subcontractors to comply with the federal Fair Labor Standards Act.

Other companies, such as Dayton Hudson Corp. of Minneapolis — and its Hayward-based subsidiary Mervyn's — adopt codes of conduct for their suppliers, including a requirement that they comply with all labor laws. The Dayton Hudson code includes a "commitment to the betterment of wages and benefit levels that address the basic needs of workers and their families." Mervyn's general counsel Marjorie Randolph referred a reporter to Dayton Hudson general counsel James T. Hale, who was unavailable for an interview.

However, according to an editorial in the July 3 Wall Street Journal, such codes "represent little more than press release gambits, designed to coax Americans into believing that they can shop with a clear conscience."

Su agrees that many retailers talk a good game, but she charges that's all they do. A contract clause that requires legal compliance is just a way to avoid liability.

"Until they match their rhetoric with some kind of action, then those kinds of clauses are just the manufacturers' and retailers' way of pushing liability downward."

"They create legal fictions," Su says. "They still allow sweatshops to flourish."

Some of the intricacy in deciding who should be held liable, according to Millan, California's labor commissioner in charge of the garment industry, comes in defining who is a manufacturer and who is a retailer. For example, many retailers contract with manufacturers to carry a private label. Although the retailer may never have an employee cut material or sew a sleeve, they may, under California law, be considered manufacturers. Then, the same dangers in contracting with another manufacturer who isn't registered with the state would apply.

The Gap Inc. of San Francisco requested the state Labor Department give an opinion about its operations, Millan says. When state regulators decided it was a retailer as well as a manufacturer, it took its business offshore to American Samoa and Saipan, he says. A Gap attorney, general counsel Anne Gust, did not return calls seeking comment.

At the same time, with the proliferation of factory outlets and specialty boutiques, manufacturers can also be considered retailers when they sell their own goods.

Two affiliated companies that have a comprehensive program going beyond contractual clauses to sniff out sweatshops are Pour Le Bebe Inc. and Guess?, both of Los Angeles. Officials there concede they fit a number of definitions — that of retailer, wholesaler and manufacturer. At Pour Le Bebe, which licenses the Guess? name for its line of baby and children's clothes and skin and hair care products, two full-time investigators employed by the com-



"We'd rather have [the contractors work] **legally** and comply with the law and have **quality**." — Deborah Siegel

pany drop by unannounced up to three times a week to each of its approximately 60 contractors, according to general counsel Deborah Siegel. They hunt for signs of labor law violations. They check time cards, verify workers' compensation insurance, even show up early to make sure workers aren't arriving with homework.

Also, contractors are not allowed to subcontract the work without the company's written consent.

The program is modeled after one at Guess? that ran into some trouble of its own with the Labor Department in 1992. After repeatedly being cited for selling "hot goods," meaning clothes cut and sewn for less than minimum wage, Guess? agreed to pay \$570,000 in back wages.

Now, Siegel says, the contractors are so well-versed in what Pour Le Bebe inspectors are looking for, that at least one contractor simply posts her state registration number on the front door.

"We'd rather have [the contractors work] legally and comply with the law and have quality," says Siegel. At the same time, the cost of the compli-

ance program is negligible for a large company. Pour Le Bebe, with revenues of \$150 million last year, considers the "cost of policing in the cost of doing business," she says.

While there was initial resistance on the part of some contractors, she adds, now the program virtually "runs itself."

Cain, of the International Mass Retailers, doesn't believe retailers should have to go as far as Guess? does. For one thing, there are probably between 22,000 and 25,000 garment manufacturers throughout the United States. To visit them every week would be ludicrous, he says. "There's a myth around that retailers have vast numbers of people out in the field, visiting the suppliers."

On the other hand, government has the appropriate police powers — the power to conduct searches and subpoena people, Cain says. He believes the "hot goods" provision is incentive enough for retailers to not to contract with sweatshops. "Cooperating, yea. Policing, no. It's just not practical," Cain says.

But Millan says the government cannot do it all. The state Labor Commissioner has 15 full-time enforcement agents assigned to the garment industry, with another 24 to be hired by next July. Their work is coordinated with similar investigations conducted by the federal Labor Department. "Obviously, we do not have an enforcement office to put on every block," he says.

Manufacturers and retailers can help by snitching on unregistered contractors. They have an "affirmative duty to complain to us," Millan says.

Another idea is to compile a nationwide database of all contractors, easily accessible to manufacturers and retailers, perhaps even the public, Millan says. He's hoping the federal government will undertake such an effort, which would include identifying whether the contractors are registered correctly with their state labor divisions. If everybody contracted with complying contractors, the underground economy would dry up, Millan says.

That theory was broached preliminarily in the New York industry summit meeting Sept. 12. Hood, who represented J.C. Penney at the meeting, says Secretary Reich talked of a "dishonor roll," a listing of all contractors who have had run-ins with the government, and an "honor roll" of reliable contractors.

"With lawyers, there are concerns in creating a dishonor roll. It could become a blacklist. If it came from retailers, we would have concerns," Hood says. On the other hand, if the listing merely included updates on which contractors were not registered with their states, as Millan suggests, that would be useful.

Cain says his organization volunteered to disseminate information from a dishonor roll. Retailers have a difficult time getting timely, reliable information, he says.

For the most part, J.C. Penney relies on its good name to influence contractors to comply with the law, Hood says. "We have a long tradition of being law-abiding and ethical. When we go out to a supplier, [we ask] is the supplier ready to share our commitment of ethics and legal compliance." The contract with suppliers spells out that all contractors will operate in compliance with all applicable laws, and specifically names the Fair Labor Standards Act.

To ensure all workers associated with a garment are paid at least minimum wage and are allowed other rights under the law, profits may suffer, Su acknowledges.

"For the manufacturers, the difference is between being super rich and [just being] rich. For the workers, the difference is between exploitation and dignity," she says.

Rafu

Nov. 3, 1995

LABOR

Firms Deny Connection to El Monte Sweatshop

"Our records show no payments or receipts or any relationship to El Monte," says Mervyn's public relations manager.

By MARTHA NAKAGAWA
RAFU STAFF WRITER

Manufacturers named in a civil lawsuit filed on behalf of 68 Thai nationals enslaved at an El Monte sweatshop deny any connection to the business.

The lawsuit, which also names 11 Thai operators of the sweatshop, was filed on Oct. 25 by a legal team, headed by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California (APALC).

It charges the defendants with peonage, involuntary servitude and other basic rights, including the violation of the 13th Amendment, which prohibits slavery and gives Congress the power to enforce this article.

Carol Johnson, public relations manager for Mervyn's, called the lawsuit without merit. "Our records show no payments or receipts or

any relationship to El Monte," said Johnson, who added that they are trying to track down the source that continually puts their company name out there and is ruining their "stellar reputation."

"We never condone that kind of activity," said Johnson. "Our company has strict policies and standards to ensure that that kind of activity never takes place. We take this seriously. We truly do uphold these standards."

Steve Wasserman, attorney representing L.F. Sportswear, Inc., believes L.F. Sportswear was named because of company labels found at the sweatshop. Wasserman theorizes that perhaps the labels could have gotten there if one of their contractors had brought work to the sweatshop without the company's knowledge.

"There's no way for the manufacturer to know this," said

Continued on Page 3

El Monte Sweatshop

From Page 1

Wasserman, who added that his client was outraged over the situation and that the company "does not participate in any business that violates state and federal laws."

But in August, L.F. Sportswear had signed a compliance agreement with the Labor Department after investigators concluded that the company had purchased merchandise sewn at the El Monte site. The intent of the agreement is to ensure that the company will police its contractors.

Khelly Miller, advertising executor for B.U.M. International, Inc., also believes their company was named in the lawsuit because of claims that their company labels were found at the sweatshop. But Miller said they have heard unconfirmed rumors that the sweatshop may have been a counterfeiting business.

"There's been claims that labels were found but there's no way of telling whether they were counter-

feit or authentic," said Miller. Aldo Gianne, president of Begin Inc. dba Italian Club, said he had no idea why his company was named in the lawsuit. He said his company has never "directly or indirectly" dealt with the El Monte sweatshop.

"We have extremely high work standards here," said Gianne. "We check our contractors to make sure they meet state and federal standards."

Four other manufacturers named in the lawsuit—Tomato, Inc., F-40 California, Inc., New Boys, Inc., and Ms. Tops of California, Inc. and Topson Downs of California, Inc.—did not return repeated phone calls to their office. Ms. Tops and Topson Downs are owned by the same company.

Meanwhile, Julie Su of the Legal Center said they plan to add more defendants to the lawsuit soon. Although she said she could not reveal how many, she noted "It will be a lot."

Los Angeles Times

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7 Plead Guilty in Sweatshop Slavery Case

By PATRICK J. McDONNELL
and MAKI BECKER
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Marking the climax of a slavery scandal that sparked international outrage, seven sweatshop operators who recruited scores of seamstresses from Thailand and kept them imprisoned in a clandestine El Monte garment factory ringed with razor wire pleaded guilty Friday to violating federal civil rights laws.

The shocking case—which made headlines worldwide when state, federal and local officers swooped down on the San Gabriel Valley compound last Aug. 2 and liberated 72 Thai workers—will result in jail terms of up to seven years, authorities said.

The discovery of the El Monte operation also exposed the underside of the Southern California garment industry, the nation's largest, and demonstrated how sweatshop-produced, made-in-U.S.A. clothing ends up on the racks of some of the nation's leading retail chains. Garments produced at the El Monte site were traced to Mervyn's, Macy's, Filene's and other major retailers, authorities said.

In the atmosphere of outrage after the sweatshop's discovery, federal and state officials vowed broad reforms targeting contractors, manufacturers and retailers who profit from sweatshop labor. But independent industry monitors say sweatshop conditions and sub-minimum-wage pay are still commonplace in the garment industry.

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EL MONTE: 7 Found Guilty in Sweatshop Case

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even if cases like El Monte's are unusual.

The workers—67 women and 5 men, all now living in the Los Angeles area and employed in legal, near-minimum-wage garment industry jobs—are still awaiting the outcome of federal and state claims seeking more than \$5 million in back wages from their former employers.

Among those entering guilty pleas Friday were Suni Manasurangkun, the Thai grandmother known as "Auntie" by the workers, who presided over the shop's day-to-day operations, officials said. Manasurangkun, 66, who showed little emotion as her plea was entered in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles on Friday, operated the shop with help from her five sons, three of whom also entered guilty pleas. The other two sons are fugitives and are believed to be in Thailand, where Thai authorities are assisting in a search for them.

"This case is a sobering reminder that vulnerable people can be subjected to conditions most Americans prefer to think could not exist in this country," said U.S. Atty. Nora M. Manella, who noted that the negotiated sentences are among the longest ever agreed to in a modern slavery case—and nearly twice as severe as provided for under federal sentencing guidelines. "The very fact that slavery could exist in this country today is appalling."

Under terms of the plea, Manasurangkun, who pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy, indentured servitude and harboring illegal immigrants, will receive seven years. Her sons—Wirachi, Surachai and Phanasak Manasurangkun—agreed to six-year terms, as did Sunthon Rawangchaison, a hired guard at the site. A female manager, Rampha Satthaprasit, faces four years and a second guard, Seri Kanchakphairi, agreed to a two-year term. An eighth accomplice, Suporn Verayutwilai, a former manager who was cooperating with authorities, pleaded guilty to conspiracy last week; she faces up to five years in federal prison. All are Thai nationals.

As part of the plea, said Assistant U.S. Atty. Michael J. Gennaco, federal prosecutors agreed to drop

kidnapping charges, which could have landed the defendants in prison for life.

The convictions amount to a measure of vindication for U.S. authorities, who were subjected to withering criticism last year when it became known that an initial Immigration and Naturalization Service investigation into the El Monte site was dropped in 1992 after prosecutors judged that there was insufficient evidence to secure a warrant. The U.S. attorney's office was again hesitant to seek a warrant last summer after new proof emerged, and the raid that broke the case last August was actually undertaken by the California labor commissioner's office.

As part of the plea agreements, Manasurangkun and her sons acknowledged running their El Monte garment business from 1989 until 1995 with a captive work force consisting largely of impoverished women recruited in Thailand.

As the operation grew, documents show, the sweatshop operators imposed increasingly harsh conditions, particularly after several escape attempts, some of which were successful. The operators eventually surrounded the compound—a converted apartment complex—with razor wire and spiked fencing, barricaded the doors and windows of the workers' quarters, and hired the two full-time guards. The overseers censored workers' mail and monitored their telephone calls, officials said.

The 72 Thai workers, who were illegal immigrants at the time of their arrests, have been granted one-year extensions of their work permits by the INS, said Julie Su, an attorney with the Asian Pacific American Legal Center who has been assisting them. She described them as "relieved" that their former employers were facing prison sentences.

"It was good for them to see the perpetrators of this heinous crime assume their guilt," Su said.

Nine of the ex-employees showed up in the courtroom and bowed in gratitude to the prosecutors who handled the case.

Some would like to stay in the United States, and advocates are hopeful that federal authorities will permit that.

"They should be allowed to stay

as long as they want," said Su, who noted that the workers' claims for back pay are pending. "They were willing to risk their lives to help out as witnesses in the trial."

Most of the workers are originally from rural areas but had migrated to Bangkok, the Thai capital, where they were recruited by the ringleaders of the El Monte operation.

The garment workers were provided with false passports enabling them to enter the United States as tourists, met at Los Angeles International Airport and taken directly to El Monte, authorities said. Once the workers arrived at the factory, officials charged, the sweatshop operators seized their passports and took back the "show money" that had been provided to them as a cover should U.S. immigration officials question their planned tourist itineraries.

Authorities said the employees were held in what is called "debt peonage," in which they were supposedly paying off thousands of dollars in travel and other expenses provided up front by the sweatshop operators.

But in this case, the pay provided was so low that the workers could never realistically expect to pay off the debts.

The guilty pleas were entered before U.S. District Judge Audrey B. Collins, who is to impose sentences at hearings beginning in late April.

METRO

2 Brothers Sentenced to 6 Years in Thai Slavery Case

By MICHAEL KRIKORIAN
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Two members of a Thai family that ran the notorious El Monte sweatshop were sentenced to six years in federal prison Monday in a downtown court filled with former workers who watched their one-time captors beg the judge for leniency.

The two brothers, Wirachai and Phanasak Manasurangkun, had pleaded guilty, along with other members of their family, to involuntary slavery charges in February and could have been sentenced to 45 years behind bars.

However, their lawyers and the government lawyers agreed on the six-year terms and U.S. District Judge Audrey B. Collins concurred.

The defendants made one last, futile attempt to get a lower sentence by pleading with the judge to take into account the welfare of

their families.

In addition, the judge ordered the Manasurangkun family to pay \$4.5 million to 81 workers, one of whom was kept imprisoned at the El Monte garment factory for seven years.

"They are relieved that this closes one chapter of their long road to justice," said Julie Su, the attorney for the workers, many of whom worked under armed guard 20 hours a day for \$1 an hour, surrounded by barbed wire, and slept in bedrooms with eight other people.

For many the ordeal was all that they would know of America until federal and state authorities raided the El Monte factory last August. The workers had been recruited from Thailand, lured with the hopes of high paying jobs.

"America stands for freedom and human rights," said one worker named Yat, who did not want to give

her last name. "My idea of coming to America was to get a good job so I could support my family back in Thailand. But, as soon as I arrived in El Monte, I felt bad."

Another worker, Jane, simply said: "I felt like I was really living in hell." On Monday, other members of the family, including the brother's mother, Suni Manasurangkun, known as "Auntie," will be sentenced.

The mother, who was the leader of the shop along with her eldest son, Sunchai, is expected to receive a seven-year prison term. Sunchai Manasurangkun has been a fugitive since the August raid, and authorities suspect that he is living in Thailand.

"These are among the largest sentences ever imposed in a modern slavery case," said Assistant Atty. Gen. for Civil Rights Deval L. Patrick.