# MEXICAN LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES CHICAGO AND THE CALUMET REGION

## BÝ PAUL S. TAYLOR

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# MEXICAN LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES CHICAGO AND THE CALUMET REGION

BY

PAUL S. TAYLOR

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#### EL ENGANCHADO

This corrido surveys from the immigrant's point of view the clashes which arise from his contact with American industrialism and American customs. The reaction is characteristically that of the male Mexican laborer in his gloomier mood of disillusionment. A handicraftsman at home, his skill is rendered useless by the machine. With patriotism accentuated by expatriation, he excoriates those of his countrymen who yield to American prejudices of nationality or color. The young men come in for criticism on their style of dress. The children, alas, dance and speak like Americans. Aspersion is cast on the substitution of Mexicanized English for good Spanish. But the chief castigation is reserved for the girls and women who follow freer standards of dress and conduct. Here is a glimpse into the Mexican's skepticism over la libertad de las mujeres. In disgust, and alone, he turns again to his Michoacán.



(Literally, the hooked one, or more freely, the contract laborer.)

Deede Morelia vine enganchado ganar los dólars fué mi ilusión compré zapatos, compré sombrero, y hasta me puse de pantalón.

Pues me decian que aqui los délars se pepenaban y de a montón que las muchachas y que los teatros y que aqui todo era vacilón.

Y ahora me encuentro ya sin resuello soy zapatero de profesión pero aquí dicen que soy camello y a pura pala y puro azadón. I came under contract from Morelia To earn dollars was my dream, I bought shoes and I bought a hat And even put on trousers.

For they told me that here the

Were scattered about in heaps; That there were girls and theaters And that here everything was good fun.

And now I'm overwhelmed— I am a shoemaker by trade But here they say I'm a camel And good only for pick and shovel. De qué me sirve saber mi oficio si fabricantes hay de a montón y en tanto que hago yo dos botines ellos avientan más de un millón.

Hablar no quieren muchos paisanos lo que su mamá les enseñó y andan diciendo que son hispanos y renegando del pabellón.

Los hay mas prietos que el chapote pero presumen de ser sajón andan polveados hasta el cogote y usan enaguas por pantalón.

Van las muchachas casi encueradas y a la tienda llaman estor llevan las piernas rete chorreadas pero con medias de esas chifón,

Hasta mi vieja me la han cambiado viste de seda rete rabón anda pintada como piñata y va en las noches al dancing jol.

Mis chilpallates hablan puro "inglis" ya no les cuadra nuestro español me llaman fader y no trabajan y son reguënos pa'l chârleston.

Ya estoy cansado de esta tonteada yo me devuëlvo para Michoacán hay de recuerdo dejo a la vieja a ver si alguno se la quiere armar. What good is it to know my trade
If there are manufacturers by the
score,
And while I make two little shoes
They turn out more than a million.

Many Mexicans don't care to speak The language their mothers taught them And go about saying they are Spanish And denying their country's flag.

Some are darker than chapate\*
But they pretend to be Saxon;
They go about powdered to the back
of the neck
And wear skirts for trousers.†

The girls go about almost naked And call la tienda "estor"! They go around with dirt-streaked legs But with those stockings of chiffon,

Even my old woman has changed on me—

She wears a bob-tailed dress of silk, Goes about painted like a pinata!

And goes at night to the dancing hall.

My kids speak perfect English And have no use for our Spanish They call me "fader" and don't work And are crazy about the Charleston.

I am tired of all this nonsense
I'm going back to Michoscán;
As a parting memory I leave the old
woman
To see if someone else wants to burden
himself.

<sup>\*</sup> Black tar.

<sup>†</sup> Balloon trousers.

t Store

I Literally, suspended, gayly colored container, filled with candies, etc., to be broken by a blindfolded person with a stick as part of the fun at fiestas. Often the container, usually pottery, is covered with a gaudy paper doll.

# MEXICAN LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES CHICAGO AND THE CALUMET REGION

#### į BY PAUL S. TAYLOR

#### INTRODUCTION

Mexican immigrants have entered the heart of industrial America. They are now the latest and lowliest newcomers in the long succession of migrating nationalities that have furnished the labor to build and maintain the basic industries of the United States. There, in an urban-industrial environment, these Mexicans have come into contact more fully and more sharply than in rural areas with a mental and material culture different from their own, and in it they are remaining less a class and race apart. In studying this penetration of Mexicans into the industrial North, the area comprising Chicago and the Calumet region was selected for special investigation. It is the principal meat-packing, steel, and transportation center of the country. In these, its basic industries, Mexicans have come to occupy a rôle which is both absolutely and relatively important. Indeed, barring a couple of railroads with widely distributed labor forces, and possibly Ford's in Detroit, which may have gained the lead since 1928, the largest employer of Mexican labor in a single plant in the United States in 1928-1929 was located on the southern shore of Lake Michigan.

This study is the seventh of a series on Mexican labor in the United States projected by the Committee on Scientific Aspects of Human Migration of the Social Science Research Council, and continued by its Committee on Population. It presents the results of field researches carried on principally during the summer of 1928, but supplemented by observations in the region at various times both before and since, mainly in the summer of 1929. The use of the present tense in the text, unless otherwise indicated, refers to conditions in the summer of 1928. There was a movement of Mexicans

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The industrial district on the southern shore of Lake Michigan from South Chicago, Illinois, to Gary, Indiana, inclusive, is known as the Calumet region, taking its name from the Calumet River which flows through it (see maps).

from this area to Mexico during 1930 and 1931, just as there was during the depression of 1921. The future of the Mexican population of the region depends chiefly upon the demand of local industries for Mexican laborers. In 1931 it seems unlikely, even with continued depression, that the region will be deserted by Mexicans in anything like the proportion in which it was depopulated in 1921. The roots of the colony have gone deep during the intervening years. But this question may be left with the future.

To Mr. José María Rodrigo and Miss Anita Edgar Jones I am indebted for capable and enthusiastic field assistance during the summer of 1928. In this study, in the remarks which sometimes introduce the quotations from Mexicans, the first person singular and plural are used indiscriminately to refer to the author or his field assistants, whoever may have participated in the interview. Mr. Robert C. Jones, who engaged in field work among Mexicans subsequent to our own, has generously compared observations and made available many of his notes and papers. Dr. Robert Redfield, of the University of Chicago, gave access to and permission to use valuable field notes which he had made in 1924. Very many individuals and corporations or other organizations gave generously of information, some of which was readily available, much of which had to be gleaned from payroll or similar records in their possession. Their willing cooperation, extended almost unanimously, has made it possible to trace in detail the course of Mexican migration into the area.

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Map 1, following page 292, Key, line 8, for  $R=r\sqrt[4]{\frac{n}{N}}$  read  $R=r\sqrt[4]{\frac{N}{n}}$ . Map 4, following page 292, Key, line 12, for 100 read 1,000.

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Cost of Living Studies. IV. Spending Ways of a Semi-skilled Group.  A Study of the Incomes and Expenditures of Ninety-eight Street- Car Men's Families in the San Francisco East Bay Region, com- piled under the Heller Committee for Research in Social Economics, Pp. 295-366. February 1931  Index, pp. 367-373.  Vol. 6  Volumes 6-7 of this series consist of a number of studies prosecuted by Dr. Paul S. Taylor under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council through its Committee on Scientific Aspects of Human Migration. The general
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