

should they fail their licensure exam. What makes their situation especially difficult is that they must take the licensure exam on the first date that it is available after their arrival in the U.S. An unlucky nurse could enter the U.S. one month or one week before the exam and she would be required to take it. There is no consideration for adjustment to the country, studying for the exam, etc. And even if they had a chance to study, the refresher courses are too expensive to afford. (The government does not provide any such free courses.)

Under the U.S. economic system, there is always a certain percentage of the labor force who are unemployed or underemployed. When there is a boom in the economy, the percentage of unemployed in the labor force is lowered. When the economy is heading towards a recession, the percentage of unemployed among workers rises. At present, the U.S. economy is in a period of recession, with unemployment running high. This is the reverse of the situation in 1965 — a boom period — when the third wave immigrants began coming. At present, the U.S. government and big business is no longer interested in recruiting foreign-trained professionals to meet its labor shortage. On the contrary, they are now trying to restrict entry and harass those that are already here.

For the new immigrant professionals, it is not uncommon to be barred from a job because of no local experience; if they are hired, they are placed in entry level positions way below their skill and educational experience. And as newly-hired workers, they are an easy target for lay-offs.

What these third wave professionals are experiencing differs only in degree from what the lessor-skilled first wave immigrants experienced during the depression of the 1930's. The reduced production and heightened unemployment of the recession economy provokes a scramble among the workers for the few available jobs, pitting immigrants versus native-born, white versus minorities, men versus women, and young versus old. Divisions among the working population become acute. Immigrants and minorities become the scapegoats for the system itself which is not able to produce to meet peoples needs. Racist and chauvinist ideology gets promoted to rationalize scapegoating these groups.

Historically, minorities and immigrants have borne the brunt of these attacks because of deeply-ingrained prejudices within the fabric of American society which has developed since the days of black slavery. The defenders of the capitalist system can always appeal to these prejudices during times of crisis to divert attention from the failings of the system itself.

## INS — Tool of U.S. Big Business

It is in periods of economic recession that the role of the government becomes most clear in relation to immigration policy. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has the task of controlling entry into the U.S. borders in the interest of the labor needs of the big corporations. In periods of boom when there is a labor shortage, restrictions are lowered and certain sectors of workers are let in. Other restrictions are simply ignored for a time as inspectors "look the other way." However, in periods of recession where there is high unemployment, restrictions are raised and all sorts of regulations that had been forgotten about in the previous period are now paraded forth to harass people with. This essential role of the INS is what explains why certain regulations are ignored at times and strictly enforced at other times. It explains why the INS is now "cracking down" in this period of economic recession, on immigrants.

This INS "crackdown" has big implications on the Filipino community. One example is third preference visas. Third preference is a visa status for professionals who are given permanent resident status in order to practice their profession. Recently the INS has been harassing people with third preference visas who are

not presently practicing their professions. The law regarding their preference states that a person coming under the visa preference must practice his/her profession that they immigrate under. However, the INS knows that because of discriminatory licensure procedures and diminished employment possibilities, it is often impossible for a third preference person to practice their profession. Despite this, they continue to admit third preference people for years, people who were forced to take lower paying positions within their field. A case in point is Leticia Monserate,

a CPA in the Philippines who entered the U.S. as an accountant. However, no employer would hire her as such, so she accepted accounting-related work with Bank of America. Through this position she hoped to eventually work her way to an accountant's job. (Of course, she is essentially already doing work comparable to an accountant, only not getting paid for it). After four years in America and a promotion, she went home for a vacation only to be stopped at the airport upon her return and told that because she was supposedly not practicing her profession,

she was subject to deportation for violation of her visa. Only by generating public support over this outrage was the INS forced to back down and rescind her deportation, after subjecting Leticia to the trauma of harassment, arrest, and anti-Filipino remarks.

Another example of INS harassment is the Supplement Security Income (SSI) case, which is public assistance to the elderly and disabled. There have been numerous cases where elderly non-citizen Filipinos have been stopped on their way back into the U.S. and threatened with deportation because they were receiving SSI payments. The INS laws state an immigrant is subject to deportation of he/she becomes a "public charge," and the INS is now interpreting this to include receiving SSI.

These immigrant regulations and others like them were not strictly enforced during the period of economic boom, but during this present economic crisis they are being rigidly implemented. So law enforcement is subject to the ups and downs of the labor needs of the American economy. Immigrants are treated as nothing but pawns on the economic chessboard, to be played with when needed, but discarded when not.

The INS attacks against the Mexican-American community are much more blatant than the attacks against the Filipino community. These people have toiled in the fields and the clothing sweatshops for decades making billions of dollars of profits for the growers and factory owners. But they are now subject to INS raids in the fields, factories or neighborhoods like East Los Angeles, searching for "illegal" workers. These people are charged with "taking away jobs from Americans." In fact, the jobs they are performing are so undesirable that very few white workers can be found to do them. The INS performs its function as a "safety valve," releasing the economic tension over unemployment by blaming Mexicans and other immigrants as the root cause of the problem.

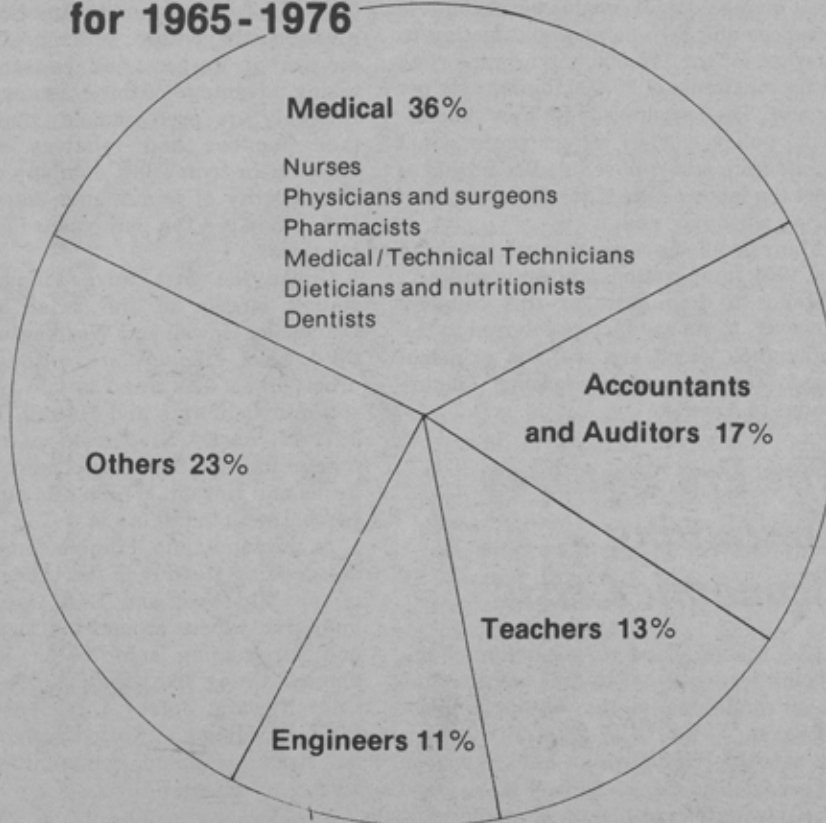
The Filipino community is not immune from the blatant harassment that the Mexican-American community is undergoing. One has only to recall the treatment of the first wave Filipinos with the riots, killings, burnings, etc. The H-1 nurses, third preference, SSI and other cases of harassment against Filipinos are only harbingers of what is to come for the new third wave immigrants as the economic crisis continues to deepen.

The Filipino community in the U.S. is over 70 years old and is a mixture of three waves of Filipino immigration and the generation descending from them. There are complex needs and problems facing our community in this coming period. We have made invaluable contributions to the building of America as farmworkers, clerks, nurses, doctors, and other workers. We stand firm with the other workers of this nation as the life force of the country. As immigrants and minorities in this country, we share a common experience of discrimination.

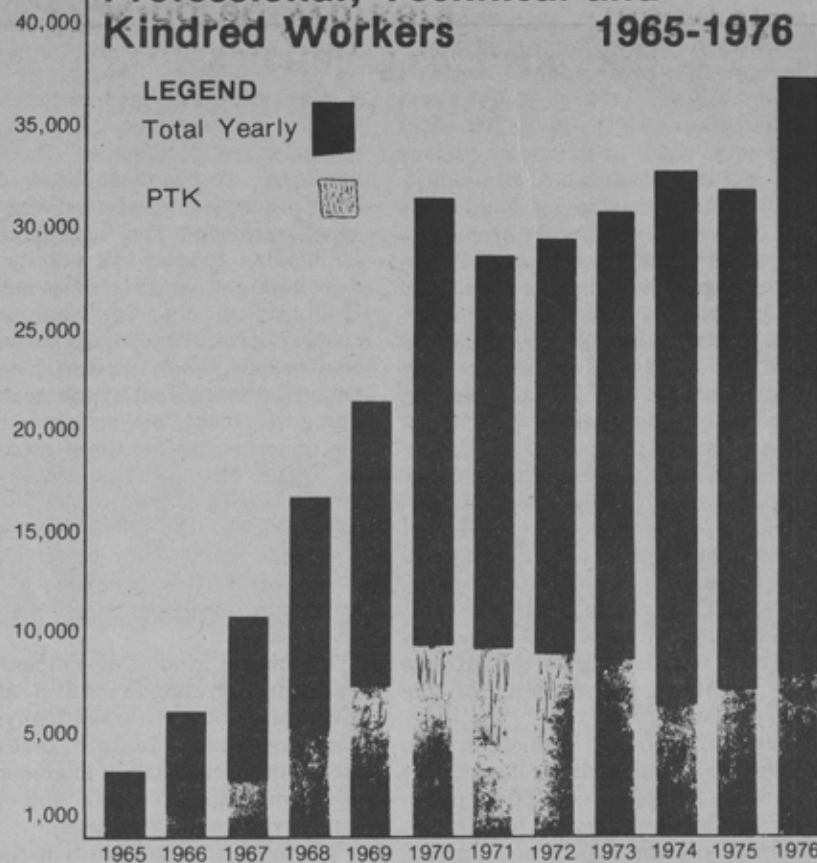
At present, the most unstable sectors of our community are being targeted for harassment by the INS. These are the very people least in a position to defend themselves, the very people who can be most easily intimidated by the INS. If we are to respond effectively to these attacks, the more stable sectors of the community will have to take an active role in countering this harassment. We need the united community, people from all three waves plus our Filipino-American children to stand up for the rights of those currently being singled out for harassment.

What's more, we must understand that this harassment is not an isolated phenomena by individual INS agents, but rather is the result of national policies of the U.S. government to meet the current economic situation. These national INS policies must be changed, for they violate the rights of immigrant workers. What will it take to change these policies? Local responses to injustice is not enough. We must have a nation-wide movement within the Filipino community to generate grass roots pressure on the INS to change these policies. And finally, to be effective in this struggle, we must link up with similar efforts in other immigrant communities, such as the Mexican community, to form one strong united voice against injustice. □

### Top Four Filipino Professionals for 1965-1976



### Immigrants Admitted as Professional, Technical and Kindred Workers 1965-1976



Source: INS Yearbook

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