



RICHU GROVES, INC.

R. M. CLEWIS, FOUNDER (1881-1950)

RICHARD M. CLEWIS, JR.
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December 4, 1964

Honorable Sam M. Gibbons
Member, House of Representatives
Tampa, Florida

Dear Sam:

I wish to call your attention to a matter of serious concern in the Florida citrus deal. I am referring to the extreme difficulty the industry is having in securing an amount of off-shore labor. *adequate*

I have been informed that the current maximum allocation of off-shore labor is theoretically 3,500 men. However, even this final amount is not available because some sort of graduated scale based on some sort of labor statistics makes the current allocation only 2,500 men. I understand an additional 500 pickers will be available by December 16th, bringing the actual total up to that date to 3,000 laborers.

The difficulty is that even 3,500 men is much too small a figure on a state wide basis.

As you know the picking and marketing of tangerines is the most difficult harvesting problem in the citrus industry. Tangerines which are not picked in time for the Christmas market bring only fractional returns when picked after Christmas. Because of the fragile nature of the fruit and its ready tendency towards being "plugged" if carelessly picked, it is necessary therefore to clip this fruit.

It is my belief that the Florida State Employment Service is aware of our problem, but that Florida's efforts to obtain a reasonably adequate supply of off-shore labor is stymied by the Atlanta office of the United States Department of Labor, and probably also by policies set by the United States Department of Labor in Washington. I am appealing to you as a citrus grower to do all in your power to help the Florida citrus growers get an adequate supply of off-shore labor.

As a citrus grower, it burns me up that the Department of Labor is the department which is making these valuable decisions instead of the Department of Agriculture, where such decisions rightfully belong.

"Our fruit has a rich hue"

Honorable Sam M. Gibbons -2-

Today I have been riding through several blocks of tangerines in the Lutz area, including my own grove, the Crowder groves (with which your brother Myron is familiar), and I regret to inform you some of this fruit will not get picked in time for the Christmas market. A tangerine is a fragile fruit and quickly puffs after it reaches its physical peak. Not only will unpicked tangerines bring a lower price in the post-Christmas marketing period, but much of it will have by that time become so puffy that it can not be picked at all.

I think you know me well enough to know that I am not one to holler "wolf, wolf" without justification. I know from my own personal knowledge that the W. H. Clark Fruit Company has at its own expense on numerous occasions, including this season, brought ^{down} out of state domestic labor and has continually used the day to day labor sent out by the Florida State Employment office here in Tampa. I wish you could see the quality of most of these workers. Like most citrus growers I find it necessary to use outside labor during part of the season for such purposes as irrigating, stacking wood piles preparatory to firing, etc. Several of these men are working on my grove now. If ten such men report for work on Monday it is a rare occurrence when as many as two of the same ten are working the following Monday. Some of these men are winos, some are drifters, and many are content after earning a few dollars to move on to some easier form of work.

If you think I am merely trying to concoct a hard luck story, I will be glad to take you personally out to the Lutz area and let you see for yourself.

I will appreciate, and I am sure my fellow citrus growers will appreciate any efforts you are able to make to help relieve a bad situation.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



R. M. Clewis, Jr.

RMCJr/v1

January 11, 1965

Mr. R. M. Clewis, Jr.
P. O. Box 2288
Tampa, Florida

Dear Dick:

Since writing you last, I have been in touch with the Secretary of Labor with reference to adequate labor for the Florida citrus industry.

The Secretary reported that they cannot allow any more workers to come in until they are convinced there has been an all-out drive to recruit and attract domestic workers to replace temporary foreign workers. He also pointed out that there were 650 more foreign workers for citrus this year than last.

I am not satisfied with this situation, and I plan to meet with Mr. Clark Ghiselin, Secretary of the Citrus Industrial Council sometime next week to discuss all of the farm labor problems facing the Florida citrus industry.

I will keep you posted of any further developments.

Best personal regards.

Sam M. Gibbons
United States Congressman

SMG:h

P.F.
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON

JAN 2 1965

Honorable Sam M. Gibbons
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

DEC 30 1964

Dear Congressman Gibbons:

Thank you for your letter of December 10, 1964, enclosing a copy of a letter from Mr. R. M. Clewis, Jr., of Richu Groves, Inc. in Tampa. Mr. Clewis expressed concern over the number of foreign workers which our Bureau of Employment Security's regional office in Atlanta has approved for citrus activities. He felt the number was too small.

The foreign worker allocation figures Mr. Clewis cited are accurate. However, he did not mention that we have approved some 650 more foreign workers for citrus in Florida this year than we did last year.

Representatives of the Florida State Employment Service and our Federal Bureau of Employment Security will meet with Florida growers in the very near future to explain the situation which lies ahead. Specifically, there must be an all-out drive to recruit and attract domestic workers to replace temporary foreign workers. Only after this is done will we be in a position to consider the overall foreign labor picture. The ultimate responsibility to obtain a sufficient work force is clearly that of the employer. While we gladly provide our fullest assistance and cooperation in recruiting workers, we cannot guarantee him a work force. It is up to him to make his job sufficiently attractive to interest and retain the available workers. In this connection, we are engaging in a crash recruitment program to obtain additional domestic workers. The success of the program will depend more than anything else on the conditions offered by the employer, on his cooperation during the recruitment, and on his real efforts to retain the workers he hires.

In reviewing requests for the importation of temporary foreign agricultural workers, we will take into consideration the efforts of employers to recruit additional domestic workers under conditions which will encourage workers to accept employment and stay on the job.

Sincerely,

W. Walland Wirtz
Secretary of Labor