

REPORT

Cal Sup #1

San Francisco, California,
November 28th, 1942

TO: MR. ELMER DAVIS
FROM: ALAN CRANSTON
SUBJECT: ACTIVITIES IN LOS ANGELES.

My first call in Los Angeles was upon Mayor Fletcher Bowron who was initially sympathetic to my mission, but who became more so when I made him understand that Axis propaganda was giving Los Angeles a black eye the world over by exploitation of the local Mexican situation.

The mayor made appointments for me with the editors and publishers of all four Los Angeles daily newspapers. He then requested me to draw and present to him a program for local action on all fronts of the Mexican problem.

Managing Editor Jack Campbell of the Herald and Express, Managing Editor R. T. Van Ettisch of the Examiner, and Publisher Manchester Boddy of the News all agreed that they would stop using the term "Mexican" in connection with the local disturbances, since Americans are really involved. They likewise agreed to carry positive stories of the war participation of Americans of Mexican extraction, and Publisher Norman Chandler of the Los Angeles Times agreed to do likewise — provided I would see if I could get him more gasoline for his reporters. All four papers have already run several extremely valuable stories of a positive nature, and the Los Angeles O.W.I. office is now busy digging up such stories for them.

In the process of getting to the roots of the local problem in order to draw up the program requested by Mayor Bowron, I talked with innumerable citizens of Los Angeles. Among these were:

Chief of Police Horrell, County Sheriff Biscaluez, the Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors and several members of the Board, Grand Jurymen Henderson, Wurtzel, Braverman, State's Attorney General-Elect Kenny, District Attorney Dockweiler, Chief County Probation Officer Holton, Judge Lester Roth, Carey McWilliams, Guy Nunn of the War Manpower Commission, Irving Walker of the U.S. Treasury, Jack Leighter of the C.I.A.A., Helen Gahagan, Walt Disney, Monsignor Thomas J. O'Dwyer who is the right hand of Archbishop Cantwell, Rev. Willsie Martin of the Committee for Church and Community Cooperation, Rev. Farnham of the Church Federation, Burt Corona of the C.I.O., George Bradley of the A.F.L., and leading Latin-Americans of Los Angeles including Manuel Ruiz of the Coordinating Committee for Latin-American Youth, Frank Fouce who owns the local Spanish language movie houses, Gonzales who edits the local Mexican daily, and many others.

I then drew up a program for local action and presented it to a small group chosen from the people listed above. They approved it with only a few changes and I then selected a small group of local citizens to go with me to present it to the Mayor. We were also invited by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to present it to them. A copy of this program is enclosed, together with the newspaper accounts of its presentation, and of the general program gotten under way in Los Angeles within the past few days.

An extremely well balanced group presented this program to the Mayor and the County Supervisors. Monsignor O'Dwyer actually led the delegation. The following people spoke in behalf of the program to the Mayor and the Supervisors:

Monsignor O'Dwyer, Manuel Ruiz of the Coordinating Committee for Latin-American Youth, Chief County Probation Officer Holton, Rev. Willsie Martin of the Committee for Church and Community Cooperation, Mrs. Bigelow of the League of Women Voters, Mr. Cecil representing Chairman Tibbets of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Burt Corona of the C.I.O., George Bradley of the A.F.L., Rev. Farnham of the Church Federation, and myself. I merely stated that it was not within my province, as a Federal officer, to comment in detail upon this local program, but that I would say that this program would be bad news for Hitler and the Axis and good news for the United States and the United Nations.

The County Board of Supervisors immediately voted to set up a committee to investigate the possibility of putting the program into immediate effect. This committee has already been set up, as you will see in the attached clippings. The Mayor likewise promised to move quickly and it is expected that he will ask the same committee to work for him. The committee designated by the County Board of Supervisors was actually chosen by Monsignor O'Dwyer, Manuel Ruiz and myself, and we took particular pains to see that a preponderance of the members were of Mexican extraction.

The general feeling in Los Angeles seems to be that the program is sound, has had excellent publicity and has strong official and unofficial backing, and will, therefore, really be put into execution. This feeling has already seeped into the Los Angeles Mexican community and its morale is much improved.

On my last day in Los Angeles I visited District Attorney Dockweiler, whose subordinates are prosecuting the twenty-two youths of Mexican extraction. All twenty-two youths -- ages ranging from fifteen to twenty-two years -- are charged with first degree murder for the death of a fellow Mexican in a brawl. This is the first time in the history of Southern California that so many people have been charged with first degree murder for the death of one person. The prominent publicity given to the local Mexican situation in the Los Angeles dailies just prior to my visit to him had shown District Attorney

Dockwiler that Los Angeles is really concerned over its Mexican problem. Thus he was easy to handle. I convinced him that the District Attorney and O.W.I. would have a terrific problem on their hands of the trial was permitted to turn into a Sacco-Vanzetti case -- as it will if many of the kids are given stiff sentences. He eagerly agreed, said that he was personally avoiding the courtroom to keep publicity of the trial to a minimum, and that he had decided to narrow the real case down to two of the youths. He said that before the case goes to the jury they might ask for a general reduction in the charges, and that in any case he would tell the judge about the dangerous consequences of too stiff a verdict. I am convinced that this takes the trial out of the danger zone.

Other projects too many to recount were launched during my stay in Los Angeles. Among other things, Jack Leighter and I persuaded Walt Disney to conduct a poster contest for Americans of Mexican extraction throughout the United States. After Disney's return from his current trip to Mexico, this contest will be announced in a short pamphlet illustrated by Disney which will include suggested themes for the posters -- a device to get all our propaganda to American-Mexicans.

John Lee of the Aircraft War Production Council helped me on a job with Douglas Aircraft. They agreed to launch a high-powered employment drive among local Mexicans, including posters in the Spanish language announcing that hundreds of Mexican workers are needed in the Douglas plant.

Wally Harrison of the C.I.A.A. was in Los Angeles on a Hollywood assignment during my last days in the area, and Jack Leighter and I seemingly have convinced him that the C.I.A.A. should open a local office in Los Angeles -- the second largest Mexican city in the world -- to further good will between Americans and between the Americas. Such office would be able to give invaluable support to the community program now under way, as Los Angeles is obviously sensitive to Federal prodding.

The critical situation has been overcome completely. All that remains for O.W.I. to do is for the Foreign Language Division to continue its present program of war information in the Spanish language to Mexicans in the United States. That this program must be carried on goes without saying, and there is room for considerable expansion of it via the media of posters and radio transcription.