

DECEMBER 7, 1972

News keeps reaching the ranchers that Congress is going to pass a bill to make it against the law to work wet Mexicans. Rumors are that this last source of ranch labor is going to become a criminal offense to work.

Unpapered aliens, I think, are sponsoring the legislation. For several years, most of the men coming into the Shortgrass Country have been violently opposed to doing any work.

Scores of them have been by the ranch in the past decade. Of the entire herd, 90 percent of them were on a leisurely stroll through the country, studying the different chuck boxes and kitchens on their route.

Some of them were the best eating and sleeping hands that have ever come from the Republic of Mexico. I wouldn't hesitate to match them against the professionals that abound in our country's unemployment commissions.

The boys at the coffee houses used to brag about the horsebreaking windmill man that had walked up to their place. He'd also be a perfect gardener and a fair sort of saddlemaker.

It'd take the speaker over an hour to tell all the trades this fellow knew. He could fix everything from a pickup to a sewing machine; the horse hadn't walked that he couldn't shoe.

I never did have that kind of luck hiring the sandalled walkers. The ones that came by here were eating their way to the farms up North.

They'd make a bronc crazier and stop windmill from pumping. What they could have grown in the very Garden of Eden wouldn't have been fit to eat, and the only thing they ever did to a saddle was leave it in the horse lot so a calf could chew it up.

When I think back over all the men that we fed and fattened to make them healthy tractor jockeys for our northern neighbors, I believe it's a sin that Congress doesn't make the penalty for working wet Mexicans retroactive.

We just can't depend on the lawmakers to protect us from our own weaknesses. If I'd spent for War Bonds all the money that has been spent on groceries for wet Mexicans, I could live down in Acapulco and see dry Mexicans every day.

Another thing about the deal: I'm glad I'm not in the Border Patrol's place. Arresting wet Mexicans is enough of a hardship without having to start hauling in ranchers, too.

It's going to be mighty tiresome listening to market talk and weather wishes that typify the ranchers' conversation. Being shut up in a patrol car with a load of aliens may not be like watering hot house orchids, yet it'd be better than hearing about every spoiled-bag ewe that was ever sold, and every double-six that was ever blocked.

I don't know what we are going to do to fill up the space when it's against the law to work wet Mexicans. Help is already so short that widow women can't tell whether their suitors are interested in marrying them or getting them to help roundup livestock.

School kids have lost the urge to be cowboys in most places. I thought of putting tape decks in the saddles to see if it'd help lure them back. But I got to thinking what that wild singing at six million decibels a second would do to the old pony's ears, and gave up the idea.

Nearly everyone fears that the law will eventually pass. Congress, it seems, is deadbent on seeing the Senate Club featuring carrot soup instead of sirloins.

It looks like the fellow who invented the one-man band was a fool not to get a patent on his idea.