



CODES:

New Citrus  
Modern Economy  
New Ekonomik  
Speedkode

## C. M. BROWN

Packer and Shipper of

CALIFORNIA ORANGES, LEMONS, GRAPES  
AND APPLES

REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA 9-20-29

Mr. A. E. Isham, Secretary,  
Chamber of Commerce,  
Redlands, Calif.

Dear Sir:-

Referring to yours of the 18th, the question involved therein is one of material interest to California. Therefore I must confine myself to the part of the situation with which I am thoroughly familiar. Having farmed extensively in the Imperial Valley, as you know, for many years, it has given me an absolute insight into conditions. I am not going to try to answer you categorically, as you have outlined, but you may take this letter and reconstruct it yourself.

In the first place, I will start with your No. 1, and say that we depend wholly and entirely on Mexican labor for the gathering of the orange crop. There is no white labor available for this work, nor is there a probability that there will be. Unfortunately, employment of labor for orange gathering is very unsteady. When we have a normal rainfall, we do not work the men more than one-half to two-thirds of the time, and it is entirely satisfactory to the Mexican. The white man cannot make a living at that kind of work.

Now the Mexican works through the orange season, and then a large percentage go into the Imperial Valley; when that is over with they go into grapes, walnuts and other fruits in other sections of the state. They transfer from section to section of the state, living in tents, huts or any kind of a place they can get to live. I think it is safe to say that from 50% to 65% of the Mexican labor is migratory.

In reference to the number of months of the year this field work is carried on, as outlined above, there is something to be done all the time, weather conditions permitting.

In the early days of this industry, when we only had a small amount of fruit, we got our oranges picked much cheaper than we do now by the Mexicans. They are not desirable labor, but since the old days when we had plenty of Chinamen, and even now when the Japs are cutt off, they are absolutely indispensable, and candidly, I do not know what we would do with our crops without the Mexican. As an illustration: I had a good friend by the name of Mathews, a watermelon grower in Georgia. He came to the Imperial Valley, made an investigation of conditions and decided to go into business there, but did not understand the situation.



CODES:

New Citrus  
Modern Economy  
New Ekonomik  
Speedkode

## C. M. BROWN

Packer and Shipper of

CALIFORNIA ORANGES, LEMONS, GRAPES  
AND APPLES

REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA

A.E.I.2.

He decided that he would bring his white help with him, so he picked up help from wherever he best could get it, some from New Orleans, and some from Texas. He brought two carloads of them. They did not know what hot weather meant. They got to the Imperial Valley and Old Sol had gone up to 130 to 140 in the sun and 110 to 120 in the shade, and they worked about a week and then Mathews had no labor left whatsoever and the writer volunteered to go out and hunt up Mexican labor to save his crop. That was the only thing that saved his crop.

Now, in answer to your No. 3, "Does the wage paid Mexican labor determine the scale of wages for field crews in the Orange industry, etc?"

Yes, it does, from the fact that they do all the work, at least 95% of all the oranges are picked by the Mexicans.

Relative to the question, "Will the Mexicans work for less, or do they do better work than white men?" They will work for less until they get a few dollars in hand, enough to live on a day or two, and then it is all off. They will get the highest wages going.

Good white help is always superior to Mexicans. I regret that white help is not available, or that the industry is unable to locate first class white help. You understand we have what is known as "fruit tramps" in California. Quite a number of white men and women go from place to place following this industry, doing the packing in the sheds and warehouses, but not in the fields.

Contract labor is used with the Mexicans to a considerable extent. In some sections they work by the day, but it is expensive.

You ask if migratory Mexicans compete with permanent Mexicans? They do when work is scarce, but not at a lower wage.

Relative to Restrictions on Mexican Immigration working harm on the Orange industry, it would in a short time at least work indescribable injury to the orange, cantaloupe, lettuce and other crops. There are probably enough Mexicans here yet at the present time to carry on with restrictions for two or three years. Frankly, it is impossible to even guess what would befall us in the way of labor troubles if the Mexicans were not allowed to enter this country.

If there is any further information you desire I shall be glad to give it.

Our good friend Ex-Senator Phelan was down a short time ago and paid me a visit and went into this thoroughly, as he is still on some Advisory Committee in the Senate on this subject.

Yours very truly

C. M. B.