

Treaty Negotiator Tells Tribune

Panama To Recognize No Privileged Group Or Special Class

By GEORGE W. WESTERMAN

When jurisdictional rights of Panama are fully re-established on the Canal Zone, "Panama will recognize no privileged group or special class, but will extend to all citizens and others living within its legal reach all constitutional guarantees."

Ambassador Carlos Lopez Guevara wrote the TRIBUNE from Washington where he is now established as a member of Panama's treaty negotiating team along with ambassador Fernando Manfredo and Panama's resident



Dr. CARLOS LOPEZ G. envoy in Washington, Ambassador Jose de la Ossa. Prior to his departure

last month Ambassador Lopez had a personal interview with the TRIB.

UNE, part of which was carried in the edition of June 26. The second part

he asked to be delayed until he was able to check out certain data pertinent

to the views he expressed. This installment is now being published.

During the interview we (Continued on Page 2)

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(Continued from page 1) suggested the advisability of Dr. Lopez and his associate negotiators meeting and consulting with Canal Zone labor leaders to get their reaction to various aspects of the coming negotiations with the United States.

With respect to our suggestion, Ambassador Lopez said:

"We spoke to the representatives of both Local 900 and Local 907 of the AFL-CIO, as we did with various other groups wanting to exchange ideas with us.

"We listened interestedly to the labor leaders' views which centered mainly about defense of the rights they have acquired as workers of the Federal Government of the United States, and the fear of jeopardizing their positions.

"We made it clear to them that it is not our intention to deprive any worker of his rightful gains or to reduce the standard of living of any group.

"However, there will have to be a phasing-out period covering the canal workers, as when Panama takes over the operation of the canal all activities will be subject to Panamanian labor and fiscal codes."

In conversing with the Canal Zone labor leaders, Dr. Lopez said he stressed the point that "in the course of the phasing-out period it is expected that

very little harm will come to any of the workers, but the changes we seek to negotiate regarding the Canal Zone are so fundamental that they will require adjustments on the part of every single Panamanian governmental system, and this concept implies that those operations will be ruled exclusively by the Panamanian laws," he noted.

The negotiator said he went to great lengths to explain to the Canal Zone labor leaders "how illogical it would be if Panama were to consider setting up two wage standards for its citizens performing the same type of work, merely because one worked on the Canal Zone and the other in the cities of Panama and Colon."

He added that the "Government and people of Panama had waged a long and sustained struggle for equality of treatment and opportunities for Panamanians on the Canal Zone with U.S. citizens."

He recalled that "Panama won its first legal disposition from the United States in this matter back in 1908 when the U.S. Secretary of War issued an Executive Order on this subject in favor of Panamanians.

"Since then," he added, "other Executive Orders have been issued in 1914, 1920, 1941 and 1944; while both the 1936 and 1955 treaties contain provisions

covering the rights of Panamanians to equality of treatment and opportunity on the Canal Zone with U.S. citizens."

He referred to the "equally hard fight" Panama had put up over the years "for the abolishment of the Caribbean Wage Scale theory on the Canal Zone which sought to peg wages of Panamanian workers of the Canal organization at levels not to exceed the Caribbean Wage Scale."

"If through the years Panama has relentlessly fought to establish only one set of standards on the Canal Zone for all workers," he contended, "it is not to be conceived that she, now, could turn around and institute a double standard."

In his viewpoint "the double standard (first gold and silver, then local-rate and U.S. rate) set up by the United States Government on the Canal Zone during an earlier period of the canal operation, helped cast a terrible psychological handicap over the Panamanian workers. It helped also to stifle his initiative and stunt his mental maturity.

"Upon Panama's insistence it was possible to remove this barrier in the 1955 Treaty and a new type of self-assured Panamanian worker is now coming out of the Canal Zone.

"This type of well-trained and properly equipped

employee is willing to prove his worth and match skill against any other employee on the Canal Zone, but he is also willing to adjust to such changes in his employment status as may prove beneficial to his country as a whole."

"Of course," he observed, we have to reckon with the fact that until all phases of the rights of jurisdiction now enjoyed by the U.S.A. are transferred back to Panama, the laws of the United States on labor wages will be applicable on those activities controlled by the U.S. Government."

Dr. Lopez said it is expected that when the time comes "we will see all Panamanians working on the Canal Zone joining with other citizens of Panama in other parts of the country and doing all within their power to ensure the success of the national efforts to have one nation, one jurisdiction and one flag, from border to border."

He asserted that the task ahead is a tremendous one but he was sure Panama's objectives could be met "if its workers, campesinos, business and professional groups all joined together and pledged to make whatever sacrifice may be necessary to ensure that the national aspirations are fully realized for the general welfare."