FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA   1006   December 20, 1951

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE. WASHINGTON.

REF : 000183 Labor Developments

SUBJECT: Labor Courts to go before Congress over CTC Objections

Imminent Congressional consideration of a bill setting up labor courts to regulate Cuba's unstable labor-management relations this week drew bitter criticism from Eusebio MUJAL, secretary-general of the Cuban Confederation of Labor and Autentico (government) member of the Cuban Senate.

On the basis of information available to the Embassy's labor reporting officer, it appears Mujal claimed labor had not been properly consulted on the proposed legislation (labor tribunals bill) and threatened to call a general strike of all Cuban workers if Congress considered the measure in its present form. This threat brought indignant editorial reprisals in the press and an angry blast from Senate President, Dr. Manuel A. de VARONA, who challenged Mujal's statement and charged him with an affront on Cuban constitutional processes.

The CTC leader, who at one time expressed support for a labor tribunals law if it met labor's objections and convalidated all present decrees and rulings, accused former Prime Minister Dr. Felix LANCIS and others with agreeing to the bill without consulting him either as a Senator or as labor leader.

"I declare" Mujal said, "in the name of the Cuban Confederation of Labor, that a special national council of the confederation will be called before Christmas with more than 1,000 delegates from all parts of the country in attendance to pass drastic resolutions, because the labor movement cannot accept either the appointment of the experts of the Superior Labor Tribunal by an electoral college composed of the Supreme Court and Habana University, nor the fact that the improvements achieved up to now cannot be guaranteed, nor much less that the tribunals should go into effect within two years, as though the social and economic system of our country could enter into such long-term obligations in two years.

"The CTC has discussed this question of the labor tribunals with absolute calm, has offered conciliatory formulae, but cannot under any circumstances permit laws which will aggravate the relations between capital and labor from day to day. Therefore we raise the voice of alarm and announce in advance that the CTC, after the council meeting, will call a general strike if it is attempted to impose such a solution."

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REPORTER(S)

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In his reply, Varona rejected Mujal's charges, stating that he and the other CTC leaders had been consulted frequently regarding the proposal and that he still has the right to oppose the bill when it comes before the Senate.
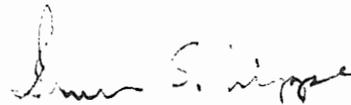
Varona charged Mujal with being contemptuous toward the legislative branch of government and suggested that some disciplinary action should be taken against a Senator who would attempt to intimidate the legislature.

Numerous editorials supported Varona's point of view, and it appeared that the proposal would be considered by Congress. Congressional leaders agreed in a conference with President PRIO at the Presidential Palace to approve the bill. Leaders of the majority party were present, including Prime Minister Oscar GANS and Senate Leader Varona.

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The labor tribunals bill would set up a system of compulsory arbitration, something labor in most countries has traditionally feared and opposed. Mujal's earlier acquiescence and present vigorous opposition to the plan would seem to represent a clash of interests as regards his political personality as Senator of the government party and as a labor leader.

For the Ambassador:

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