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FROM : HABANA 368 February 16 1950

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SUBJECT : LABOR NOTES ON HABANA FEBRUARY 1-15, 1950

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Workers in the movie houses in Habana staged a brief work stoppage during the evening of February 9, 1950 in protest to the deduction of three per cent of their wages for the Commercial Workers Retirement Fund (Embassy's despatch No. 917, November 15, 1949). The workers' objection to the deduction is based on the fact that a separate Retirement Fund bill has been approved by the Senate and only requires the approval of the House of Representatives to become law. The case was taken to the Ministry of Labor, which agreed to suspend the deduction until such time as the National Congress acts on the Motion Picture Workers' Retirement Fund bill.

New interventors were named in the Havana Electric Company, United Railways of Havana and Marianao Race Track. Raul PI Muñoz replaces Alfredo FLORES in the Havana Electric Company, Raul RAMIREZ O'Bourke succeeds José MORELL Romero in the United Railways and Raul TRELIES de Portillo takes the place of Armando de LEON Sotolongo in the Marianao Race Track.

Workers in the Partagas cigar factory have complained to the Ministry of Labor that the management refuses to hire non-union labor. The complaint also alleges that Communist elements control the union and that preference is given to members of the Communist Party (PSP) in hiring. The workers who called on the Minister of Labor requested that an interventor be appointed to make a complete investigation of labor conditions.

The Air Transport Workers Syndicate of Guantanamo, Oriente has recently signed a labor contract with the agency of Compañía Cubana de Aviación, which provides for a salary increase of \$7.50 per month, as well as free uniforms for all employees. The contract became effective on February 1, 1950 and will terminate in one year.

The National Council of the Federation of Medical Workers held its eleventh meeting in Santiago de Cuba, February 11-12, 1950. The agenda included such items as: a) Retirement Fund (the question was whether medical workers should be included

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in the Commercial Retirement Fund or whether a separate fund should be set up); b) Employers' non-compliance with existing wage scales in pharmacies and laboratories; c) The approval of a minimum wage scale for trained nurses, laboratory technicians, etc.

The following labor groups have announced plans to hold congresses:

1. The Third National Congress of Bank Employees will convene in Habana on February 24, 1950. Preliminary meetings have been held in the various Provinces for the purpose of selecting delegates for the national meeting.
2. The Fourth National Congress of Tobacco Workers is scheduled for February 26-27, 1950 in Habana. A tentative agenda includes the following items: a) The crisis in the tobacco industry; b) Wage rates; c) The control of private workshops to prevent clandestine practices and reduced wages; d) Mechanization of the industry; and e) The Retirement Fund.
3. The Communist faction of the CTC has called a meeting of the General Council for February 28, 1950. The gathering is to be climaxed by a mass meeting in the Parque Central in Habana.
4. The Executive Committee of the National Federation of Sugar Workers recently set April 5-8, 1950 as a tentative date for the National Congress. A tentative agenda, approved by the committee, covered the following subjects: a) The freezing of wages upon the termination of the decree now governing wage rates; b) Medical assistance for sugar workers; c) The Sugar Retirement Fund; d) Low cost housing for workers; e) Non-compliance with law providing for 48 hours pay for 44 hours work, on the part of certain employers; f) The suspension of Decree 1581 of 1948 which provides for the use of bags not exceeding 200 pounds in place of the present 325-pound bags; and g) The designation of April 5 as Sugar Workers' Day in commemoration of the death of labor leader Felix V. PALU, at the hands of the Communists.

For the Ambassador:

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Ray H. Crane  
American Vice Consul

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