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837.06/11-251

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

739

November 2, 1951

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
NOV - 6 1951

Air Pouch
PRIORITY

DATE NOV 2 1951

REF : 000183 Labor Developments

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For Dep

SUBJECT: October Labor Summary

Use Only

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October was a relatively quiet period for labor in Cuba. Only one major disturbance threatened to dislocate the economic life of the Island. This was a dispute between the port and dock workers and the shipping companies over the workers' demands for 48 hour pay for a 40 hour work week. They now receive 48 hours' pay for a 44 hour week. Three separate "pasos de jicotea", or slow downs, were called by the workers but management refused to budge from its position. Finally, the new Minister of Labor, Edgardo BUTTARI, after conferring with Eusebio MUJAL, secretary general of the Cuban Confederation of Labor (CTC), and also the leaders of the port and dock workers' unions and the employers, termed the strike illegal and ordered the men back to work. They returned with the understanding that their grievances would be considered at a later date. The firm position taken by the Minister of Labor was seen by some as evidence of the PRIO regime's unwillingness to continue giving in to labor on every issue.

In line with that attitude, President Prio called leaders of labor and management together for round-table discussions of ways and means to bring an end to the recurring work stoppages which have been playing havoc with the Cuban economy. The round-table idea was greeted warmly in the press as a step in the right direction. However, when the labor leaders refused to hold all pending grievances in abeyance until after the round-table sessions had agreed on some policies, the newspapers began to question their value. They felt that such a "peace" was necessary to prove the good intentions of labor. However, three sessions have been held and an agenda agreed upon. The agenda is an ambitious one which includes living costs, labor production and remuneration to workers, profits, housing for workers, use of inactive capital, collective bargaining application and legal procedures, mediation of executive power in dissensions, and regulations in the right to strike and the employer's privilege to shut down.

Negotiations between the sugar workers' union and the managements were deadlocked at month's end. The union is seeking extension of the super production pay principle which they now enjoy, reduction in the size of the sacks from 325 to 200 pounds, company payment of union dues and an increase in base pay. The companies are adamant on the reduction in the size of the sugar sack and the payment of the union dues. Embassy believes that in view of large sugar crop and

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ISLippe:rc
REPORTER(S)

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high price that an agreement will be reached without any major work stoppages.

Unions continue to seek higher pay, with the telephone workers' union announcing that it was out for a 30% increase for its members.

For the Ambassador:

I. S. Lippe
I. S. Lippe
Attaché

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Mr. Newman

Mr. Fishburn

Would it be
desirable to give
some publicity to
this, assuming there
was no objection?
H.W.

~~A R A Hilton~~

Ralph:

I don't offhand
see how this would
be valuable for
publicity but I
may be missing
an opportunity. Well-
man had nothing
specific in mind.
J

Neither do I.

ET G.