

U.S. action on Hanigans still being considered

The U.S. Justice Department is still looking into the possibility of reopening the Hanigan case despite a recommendation by one department official that the federal government has no jurisdiction.

John Huerta, deputy assistant attorney general in charge of the department's civil rights division, said yesterday that his office was evaluating whether federal intervention is possible in the case of Thomas and Patrick Hanigan.

The Hanigans, prominent Douglas ranchers, were acquitted in October by a Douglas jury of torturing three Mexican aliens in August 1976.

Yesterday, John Conroy, an official of the civil rights division who reports to Huerta, said that after an FBI review of the case he had concluded that the federal government could not claim jurisdiction.

He said he had recommended to Huerta that the department decline to intervene.

He said later in the day, however, that Huerta had decided that the case merited additional review.

"We're here to support their strike, not to take over," said Chavez. "We respect what they're doing."

An estimated 3,000 onion pickers are on strike in Maricopa County for higher pay and better working conditions.

Asked whether he condones the hiring of illegal aliens on U.S. farms, Chavez said, "We can't judge who is going to eat. The illegal aliens are here and they have to work."