

Douglas beatings cited in discrimination charges

WASHINGTON (AP) — The 1976 beating of three Mexicans near Douglas is an example of discrimination made worse by mass publicity, the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee was told yesterday.

A. Miguel Romo, former director of the National Congress of Hispanic Americans, testified that the Douglas beating and the deaths of 10 Mexican-Americans while in police custody in Texas are related to "prejudice and discrimination enhanced by mass publicity."

His remarks were made during testimony against an administration-backed bill to deal with Mexicans and other aliens who illegally enter the United States to look for jobs.

Romo introduced for the record a two-page document titled "Mexicans tortured outside of Douglas" that featured the picture of three men identified as Mexican nationals who had been "kidnapped at gunpoint by Anglo ranchers."

The trio had been stripped, kicked and beaten with rifle butts and dragged through the "baking desert sand." The document also stated that two of the men had been hit with birdshot from shotgun blasts and the third had been "hung by the neck but managed to escape strangulation."

The Arizona ranchers charged in the case were acquitted by "the racist, all-white jury," according to the document.

(At the request last October of A. Bates Butler III, an assistant U.S. attorney, the FBI is investigating the August 1976 beating of Eleazar Ruelas Zavala, Manuel Garcia Loya and Bernabe Herrera Mata, all of Chihuahua.

(Also in October a Cochise County Superior Court jury acquitted Tom and Pat Hanigan of charges of kidnapping, beating, robbing and branding the three Mexicans.

(The Hanigans' father, George, who died in March 1977 of a heart attack, was also charged.

(Trial delays, the judge's decision not to move the trial, the ethnic composition of the jury and the acquittals roused prolonged protests from a group led by Douglas Councilman Francisco Barraza and Tucsonan Margo Cowan, then head of the Manzo Area Council.)

Romo was accompanied by Corpus Christi lawyer Ruben Bonilla, president of the Texas League of United Latin American Citizens, who told the committee that the organization contends "President Carter's plan to deal with the undocumented worker is inconsistent with the president's global emphasis" on human rights.

Bonilla said the United States' actions

toward illegal aliens have been marked by "inconsistent policies" of "recruitment and repression."

America sought illegal aliens during the world wars to become American citizens and thus serve in her armies, but initiated mass deportation campaigns during times of economic depression, said Bonilla.

LULAC could support the president's plan, Bonilla said, if the bill provided for:

- No sanctions against employers and no establishment of a national identity card "inasmuch as it would result in widespread discrimination against American citizens of Mexican descent."

- Amnesty to "any alien who has resided in the United States since before Jan. 1, 1977." The president's plan calls for amnesty to illegals who entered this country prior to 1970.

- Abolition of the Carter-proposed temporary work permit status, "since it establishes a second-class citizenship among residents of the United States."

"Basically, LULAC seeks the initiation of a Marshall Plan of economic development for South Texas and Mexico as a means of easing the flow of illegal aliens while at the same time increasing employment opportunities for our Mexican-Americans in South Texas," said Bonilla, referring to the massive American economic aid program to Western Europe following World War II.