

MEXICAN PEON CHIEF FACTOR IN BEET INDUSTRY, IS CLAIM

Doing Work No One Else Will Do on Most Profitable Crop Farmer Can Grow, W. P. Hogarty Tells Legion.

The Mexican laborer is the foremost man in the beet sugar industry and it is his efforts which make it possible for one-quarter of the total farm land of Yellowstone county to produce nearly twice as much in dollars and cents as the other three-quarters. W. P. Hogarty, manager of the Billings plant of the Great Western Sugar company told the members of the Yellowstone post of the American Legion at the Commercial club hall Tuesday night.

Yellowstone post had invited Mr. Hogarty to address its members on the sugar beet industry and in particular the relation of Mexican labor to it as it exists in this section of the country. A general invitation had been extended to the public to attend, and the hall was filled to its capacity.

Hostiles Are Present.

At the conclusion of his address Mr. Hogarty invited questions from any who desired information on any particular phase of the matter and while it would not be proper to say that it was a hostile audience that he addressed, the nature of the questions put by a number of the dozen or so who sought the floor did indicate that there was a distinctly hostile feeling towards the Mexicans among a large number of those present.

"The total farm acreage in Yellowstone county," said Mr. Hogarty, "is 45,000, three-quarters of which is given

over to the production of alfalfa, beans, wheat, potatoes and other crops, and one-quarter of which is devoted to the production of beets. For the last year the gross return from the three-quarters of the total farm lands was \$740,000 and from the remaining one-quarter, devoted to beets, \$1,089,000.

Pick-and-Shovel Men.

"It has been reported to me indirectly that you boys believe that the sugar company is importing peon labor into this country to take the place of American working men," said he.

"There must be some pick-and-shovel men. There is work that must be done, that you won't do. We only bring men to Montana at the request of the taxpayers of this state who need the services of those men in his work. Every farmer who is a beet producer is a partner in the business that we operate.

"The Mexicans are brought in because they will fill the place that nobody else will fill."

Mr. Hogarty dispelled the idea that Mexican beet workers are now being supported by the county by stating that the sugar company is now supplying food and clothing and paying rent for 280 families of Mexicans who were this year induced to remain here over winter.

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Mexican Labor Defended

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