



Via mail, e-mail, fax, etc.

Hispanic labor not reliable

"We have 10 Hispanics that work for us. I felt your article ("Mexican Labor Moves In," Oct. 1996) wasn't totally accurate, and that it was unfair to American workers. Our Hispanic workers are late frequently, half the crew misses about once a week, they don't call, they don't show up, and they are very hard on equipment. I'm sure there are some Hispanics out there that are hard workers, but I don't think

they are any harder workers than the Americans. There is a downside to having Hispanic workers. There are people in our industry that are dissatisfied with them."

—An assistant superintendent at an Indiana golf course who wishes to remain anonymous.

(We know there are two sides to every story. Joe Loyet, featured in our series on Hispanic labor, does not hesitate to fire anyone not willing to work. Most of the other employers interviewed for the series were satisfied with the quality of their Hispanic workers.

We certainly want to cover this issue fairly without slandering any racial group. We encourage more of you to write in with your comments on the alternative labor force. ed.)

Super workers? heck no!

After having just read the October 1996 issue, I thought the article; "Mexican Labor Moves In," was appalling. I am a white male who has been employed in landscaping, golf course and

agriculture work for over 22 years in Southern California. I have worked with quite a few Mexican and Guatemalans and I have to say they are not the "super workers" which you proclaim in the article. As a matter of fact, the non-English speaking laborers require additional supervision because they usually can't read very well—pesticide labels and other directions etc. Also, while supervising a crew of non-English speaking Hispanic gardeners, I have on occasion noticed some of them have a rather humorous, but potentially damaging method of operating machines, for example: putting a hole in the piston of a weed whacker by trying to start it with starting fluid, or running a two-stroke chainsaw with straight gas and putting the two stroke oil in the chain lube reservoir.

Frank Liebowitz, Lompoc, Calif.

Box trucks make sense

Our movement away from trailers to box trucks could have begun that day over 20 years ago when I was personally pulling a trailer, connected by a slip hitch, on our interstate. Having just dropped a piece of equipment, I was surprised to realize the pin in the hitch must have broke, the trailer I was pulling had come loose, sheared the safety chains, passed me, crossed a grassy median and was weaving through a group of motorcyclists in opposing traffic. Luckily no one was seriously hurt although ultimately the trailer did take the back axle off of a two-week old Cadillac. So certainly some of our greatest motivations were related to safety.

But, in truth, our Fleet Manager Jerry Marion and my brother Lowell were first to propose cube vans for many of the reasons dad already mentioned (Oct. 95, page 12L). Additionally, the reduction in trailers reduced insurance costs, license plate fees, and maintenance costs like tires, bearings and brakes. We also were able to reduce the number of DOT capable drivers we need to have on staff. The cube vans bring flexibility that allow us to equip some of our trucks with custom-made shelving to handle transporting

several hundred flats or pots of seasonal flowers. We also use cube vans to provide cover for skids of granular turf fertilizer during application cycles. And with fall leaf, these trucks provide a tarp-free way of transporting what cannot be mulched. On occasion, installation teams also use our cube vans to transport smaller trees, shrubs and construction items when the weather is less than desirable.

Perhaps one of the greatest single benefits though is the reduction of space under the roof. The ability to store equipment in a cube van eliminates a huge fixed expense that oftentimes only serves a purpose at night or in the off season. This approach has been vital during our growth by eliminating the need to constantly add on more building or relocate to larger sites. Still, for some there may be one major draw back to having the majority of your fleet being cube vans. Pro Care does not perform any snow removal services. Other contractors offering his service would find a 14-foot box van poorly suited to pushing snow.

Mitch Rolsky, President and CEO, Pro Care Horticultural Services, Indianapolis

Nothing wrong with hard work

Just read your editorial on labor in the October issue. What a powerful message! Unfortunately, the message is all too true. The guys and gals my age seem to think they are above hard labor—the fact is that hard labor builds character and, with that, integrity. I look forward to having any employee that has a good attitude and that is mature enough to realize that work is profitable.

Steve White, president, SecondNature Lawn Care, Antioch, Tenn.