

Daniel Schorr,
"Reconverting Mexican
Americans" (1946)

The Mexican American's economic frontiers, which were widened somewhat during the war, are beginning to close in on him. The regional office of the Fair Employment Practice Commission closed in December. When war industries began laying off men, Mexican Americans were among the first to go. Frequently this is justified on a basis of seniority, which is another way of saying that previous discrimination makes new discrimination unnecessary; Mexican Americans were usually the last to be hired. It is expected that Help Wanted advertisements for skilled or responsible jobs will soon be carrying the note, "No Mexicans Need Apply." An FEPC official who had dealt with anti-Mexican discrimination during the war told me: "I don't think the Latin Americans will accept this situation. They can be trodden on just so long."

One of the best indices of poverty is disease. San Antonio's festering slums have made it possible for this city of charm and gayety to claim the highest tuberculosis rate of any city in the country, with 151.7 deaths per hundred thousand, as against 113.7 for Chattanooga, its nearest rival. The Mexican death-toll percentage is more than three times the Anglo-American.

But nothing much is being done about it by the local authorities. The Bexar County Tuberculosis Association says 1,200 hospital beds are needed to cope with the problem. The county actually has 139. A tuberculosis specialist, who was appalled at the situation he found when he returned from the Army, told me he had been informed that funds existed to provide additional facilities, but that they were mysteriously tied up in bonds and could not be pried loose.

Every attempt to check anti-Mexican discrimination has been blocked. A bill to outlaw discrimination, introduced in the legislature by Senator J. Franklin Spears of San Antonio, has been defeated at three sessions. During the war Texan bigotry and economic dis-

crimination fought a holding action. Now a counter-offensive is taking shape to wrest from the Mexican Americans their economic and social gains. But bitterness at this "reconversion" is growing and will not long be contained.