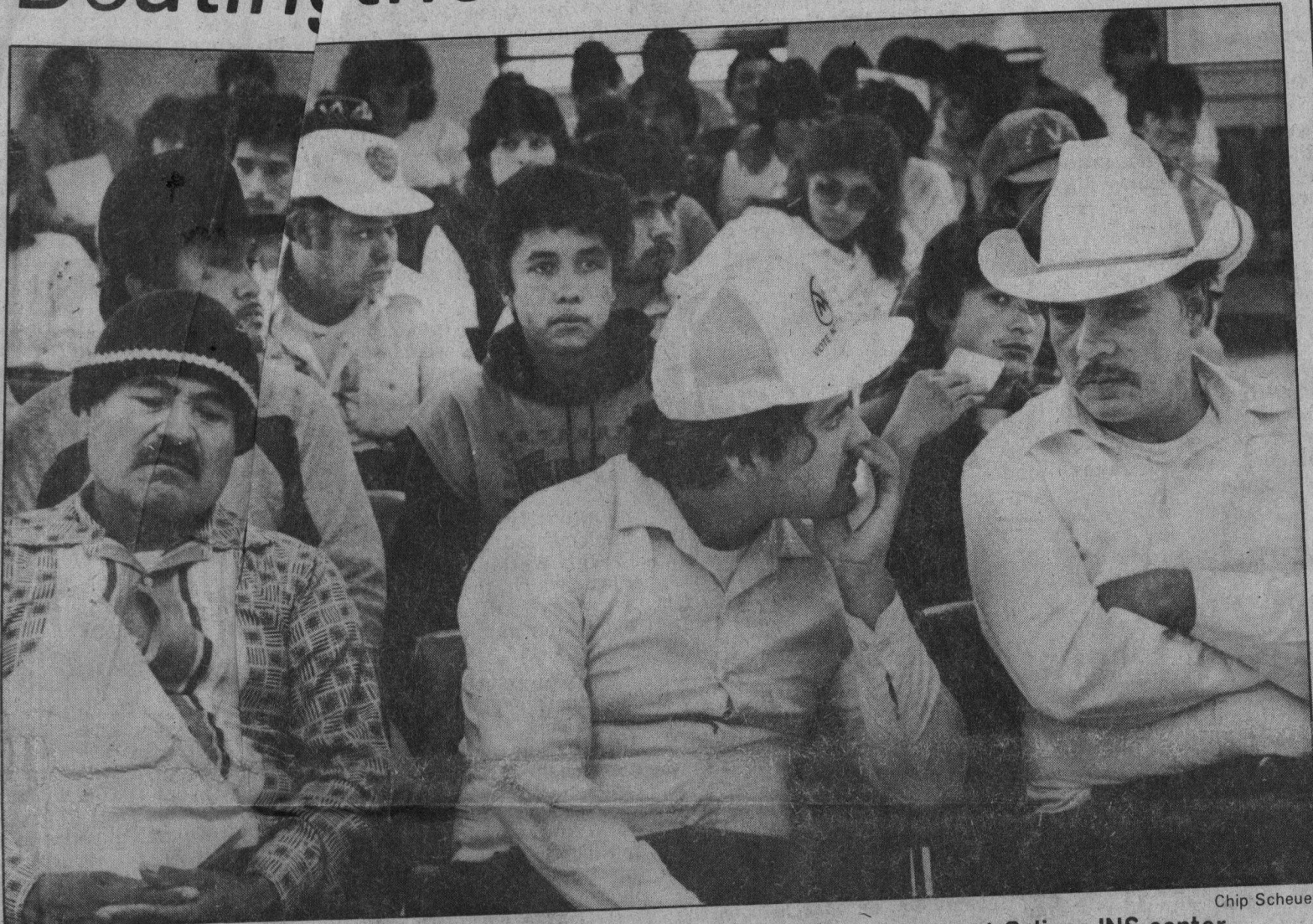


Beating the deadline



Chip Scheuer

Dozens of the more than 800 illegal aliens who showed up wait their turn at Salinas INS center.

Illegal aliens crowd INS center

By LARAMIE TREVINO
STAFF WRITER

This morning, one hour past the midnight deadline, the last application from an illegal immigrant farm worker was accepted at the Salinas center of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

True to their word, staff kept the center open until all applicants were served.

And yesterday, the final day for agriculture workers to file for amnesty under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, the center serving Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties received an all-time high turnout of more than 800 applications.

"That would be our record day," said Gregory E. Ward,

the acting chief legalization officer. "We actually locked the doors about 1 a.m."

Although business was steady and strong all day yesterday, the calm atmosphere that prevailed in recent days was evident, Ward said.

"In fact, it was a lot calmer than an average day," Ward said. "It was probably more pleasant."

In recent weeks the center concentrated on accepting applications and did not schedule interviews, a follow-up procedure after applications are filed.

Since the center opened in the spring of 1987, more than 50,000 applications were turned in by applicants filing under the residency-based and agriculture programs

specified by the immigration law.

The center's chief legalization officer in the early days of its operation, Tom Maddry, estimated there were between 40,000 and 50,000 illegal immigrants in the Pajaro and Salinas valleys.

"It looks like those figures were too low," Ward said this morning.

Except for the nearly 13,000 people who filed under the residency program, which required proof of having lived in this country since 1982, all the applicants filed under the agriculture worker (SAW) program.

The residence-based program applicants had to meet a May 4 deadline.

For this round, people who

submitted incomplete applications have 30 days to provide the missing information, Ward said.

Also, people who filed applications with agencies who have been approved by INS to assist applicants through the process have 60 days to submit all required material.

In addition, people who filed applications at border stations have 90 days to complete the application process.

Illegal immigrants who worked 90 cumulative days (for at least an hour a day), from May 1985 to May 1986, were eligible to apply for amnesty.

Ward expects the center to conduct interviews through January 1989 for the current wave of applicants.