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Colo. Lawmaker Defends Mexican Insult

By AP/STEVEN K. PAULSON

A Colorado legislator known for kicking a photographer was ordered to leave the podium of the state House of Representatives on Monday because he called Mexican workers "illiterate peasants."

State Rep. Douglas Bruce, who has a history of provoking controversy, made the comment during debate on a bill that would allow the state to help immigrant workers get temporary federal visas. The measure is intended to ease a shortage of farm workers in the state.

"I would like to have the opportunity to state at the microphone why I don't think we need 5,000 more illiterate peasants in Colorado," Bruce said.

His outburst drew an audible gasp from the House.

"How dare you," said state Rep. Kathleen Curry, a Democrat who was serving as chairwoman during the debate. She told the Republican lawmaker he was no longer recognized to speak.

House Minority Leader Mike May, head of the GOP caucus, said legislative leaders were trying to determine what action to take against Bruce.

Rep. Terrance Carroll, a Democrat, said the remark could result in a formal ethics complaint that would require a hearing and possible suspension, censure or expulsion.

Bruce later defended his remarks.

"I looked up 'illiterate' in the dictionary and it means somebody who is lacking in formal education or is unable to read and write," he said. "I don't think these people who are planning to come over here and pick potatoes or peaches are likely to have much of a formal education. I looked up the word 'peasant.' The word 'peasant' means a person who works in agricultural fields.


"These people, most of them, don't speak English. Most of them haven't had any formal education, that's why they're coming over here. I don't blame them for trying, but I don't think we should pave the way for more aliens to come here," he said.

Eduardo Arnal, the Consul General of Mexico in Denver, called Bruce's remarks "unfortunate" and "offensive."

"I believe these types of comments do not contribute to the discussion on immigration between Mexico and the United States nor in the search of solutions regarding this topic," Arnal said in a statement.

Bruce became the first Colorado lawmaker censured by the House after he kicked a newspaper photographer for taking his picture during a prayer.

Republicans later removed him from the powerful State, Veterans and Military Affairs Committee because he refused to co-sponsor a resolution honoring military veterans. Bruce said he believed resolutions were a waste of time because they have no legal effect.

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