

Immigration: Vox Populi versus Special Interests

by James H. Walsh

The following headlines, selected at random from thousands that appeared in U.S. newspapers during the past year, suggest a confrontation between the voice of the people (the voters) and powerful special interests charting the chaotic course of U.S. immigration policy. The citizenry want immigration law and order, while special interests benefit financially and politically from an unchecked flow of illegal aliens.

February 1, 2003: "Illegal stays in U.S. soar,"
The St. Petersburg Times

May 2003: "Scarce Social Security Funds...
to Illegal Aliens," *Immigration Report*

August 20, 2003: "School offers a lesson in
success," *San Antonio Express-News*

September 28, 2003: "Arizona voters back
ban on illegals," *The Washington Times*

October 25, 2003: "Muslims Stand Fast
on Head Scarves," *The Washington Times*

October 29, 2003: "40 Names to be Stricken
from WTC Death List," *The New York Post*

December 10, 2003: "Ridge: Give illegal
entrants status," *The Miami Herald*

February 11, 2004: "Environmentalists renew bitter
fight over controlling U.S. immigration,"
The San Francisco Chronicle

Illegal Stays: The Numbers

The effect of illegal aliens on national security is enormous. Whether Mexican or Indonesian or Syrian or Pakistani, an illegal alien poses a threat to American well being. Although many illegal aliens may not harbor violence towards the United States, it only takes one terrorist to fly a plane into a building or poison a

water supply. The average U.S. citizen has never been told the truth about the millions of illegal aliens in this country. From 1987 until 2002, the U.S. Border Patrol detained and returned an average of 1.1 million to 1.5 million illegal aliens a year. In 2003, border apprehensions were down to 931,557 illegal entrants. This is not counting the minimum of five to six aliens who slip by the patrols or overstay their visas for every illegal alien apprehended. Islamic terrorists usually overstay their visas or use fraudulent documents for entry. According to U.S. Border Patrol figures and allowing for the 10 percent of illegal aliens, who either die or voluntarily return to their homelands each year, as many as 22 million illegal aliens are currently in the United States.

The news media does not question the accuracy or methodology of illegal alien numbers compiled by immigration special interests. If a non-governmental organization quotes a number, it goes unchallenged. Government agencies also tend to low-ball illegal alien numbers, and every year the Census Bureau changes or re-calculates its population estimates, especially when local governments claim illegal aliens were miscounted. For the most accurate estimate of illegal aliens residing within the United States, talk with any Border Patrol agent. While the U.S. government strictly enforces international treaties to prevent the entry of at-risk plant and animal species at U.S. borders, illegal aliens – many at great personal risk – slip by the Border Patrol.

Costs of Illegal Stays

The welfare services given to illegal aliens and their families increase real property taxes, personnel property taxes, and federal and state income taxes. The standard retort of immigration special interest spinners is that "undocumented workers pay taxes." They most likely pay sales and gasoline taxes, but no federal or state income taxes, no personal property taxes, and no real property taxes. Conservative estimates indicate that 36 to 42 percent of all illegal aliens in the United States obtain welfare benefits. The Social Security

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Administration pays an estimated \$183 million a year to Mexican nationals in Mexico, who claim they paid into social security. Unfortunately, phony social security cards are easy to obtain. The Social Security Administration has not verified these claims; but, as an example, when a U.S. citizen in Texas applied for social security on his 65th birthday, he received no response. Finally, in reply to a series of complaints, he was advised that five other people were being paid

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When an illegal alien abuses, neglects, or abandons his or her child, and the state steps in to protect that child or children, money starts flowing out of local, state, and federal budgets. Welfare costs begin with the sheltering of the children. Salaries for the officers who shelter the children, for the foster parents who care for the children, for short-term medical and dental needs of the children, for psychiatric, medical, and dental needs of long-term care children; and for court expenses. All such expenses are paid by U.S. taxpayers. Illegal alien parents are entitled to the assistance of interpreters and attorneys in their efforts to get their abused children back from the Dependency Court. Those costs and the salaries of the judge who hears the cases and the supporting staff – all are at taxpayer expense. The costs can continue for 18 years, until the children come of age. The United States and the state of residency are committed to protecting all children within their borders – legally or illegally. Foreign nationals know their children will never get better treatment anywhere. The risk of illegal entry is

worth the effort. U.S. social workers never ask whether a child is a U.S. citizen or whether the parents are U.S. citizens. Don't ask, don't tell is the rule nationwide. Legislation has been proposed at the state level to address this issue, but the chances for enactment are slim.

Impact on Schools

Schools and school boards controlled by well-paid educational bureaucrats (educrats) and the National Education Association (NEA) have chosen not to mention that the dramatic rise in student population over the past 15 years is not caused by children of U.S. citizens but by those of illegal aliens. The Urban Institute, an immigration special interest, acknowledged that children of immigrants comprised 20 percent of the national student population in 2003, and these numbers are growing exponentially. Muslim families are having five or six children compared to the 1.4 children per U.S. citizen family. Federal and state educrats have overlooked the growing illegal alien population and have failed to fund properly for this influx of students. Political correctness bars civil discourse, let alone investigations, as to exactly why public school budgets are stressed and classrooms crowded.

Consequently, no objective analysis is being made of school problems, only political rhetoric about the horrible state of public education. Billions of dollars have been spent on education in the United States since creation of the U.S. Department of Education under President Jimmy Carter. The results seem to be a dumbing down of U.S. students by clogging school curricula with nonsensical subjects and politically correct courses.

The multicultural sophism espoused by educrats and the NEA leads to accommodation of illegal alien children and the unapologetic overcrowding of school districts. This same accommodation raises school costs, such as the hiring of teachers who speak the many languages of the illegal aliens in addition to extra guidance counselors and school nurses. Language difficulties of immigrant children translate into lowered test scores. These factors result in U.S. schools and education scores reflecting the lowest common denominator. Year in and year out, politicians rail about the sad state of education, yet fail to meaningfully address unregulated immigration as a major cause of education deficiency.

Banning Benefits for Illegal Aliens

In Arizona, 70 percent of surveyed voters support a proposed ballot initiative that would cut voting rights for illegal aliens. The initiative would require proof of citizenship when registering to vote, proof of identity when voting, and proof of eligibility for non-federally mandated public benefits. In 1999, among the estimated 435,000 unverified names on the Arizona voter rolls, most were illegal aliens. Arizona welfare costs of \$200 million in fiscal 2001 rose to \$1.2 billion in fiscal 2002. Supporters of the ballot initiative attribute this mercurial rise to the number of illegal aliens receiving welfare. The Democratic governor of Arizona opposed the initiative, as did the two Republican U.S. Senators and several congressmen; so much for the voice of the people.

Obstacles to Assimilation

Immigrants devoted to their own cultures and religions are not influenced by the secular politically correct facade that dominates academic, news-media, entertainment, educational, religious, and political thinking today. They claim the right not to assimilate, and the day is coming when the question will be how can the United States, as a secular multicultural nation, regulate the defiantly unassimilated cultures, religions, or mores of foreign lands? Such immigrants say that their traditions trump the U.S. legal system and chic secularism. They use the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights to demand favorite treatment for their cultures, religions, mores, and traditions. Balkanization of the United States has begun.

The opening salvos in a campaign by immigrants to overturn U.S. laws are being fired now by Muslim women, who wear the hijab (facial or head scarf). They are demanding permission to wear the hijab regardless of school rules, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) rules, driver license rules, motor vehicle and airline passenger safety rules, national security regulations, and customer service job descriptions. The hijab, they say, is part of their religion and religious practice. The question may soon arise whether the Muslim religion trumps all other religions, if Muslim women are granted a constitutional right – under freedom of religion – to wear the hijab at will. The initial legal test rejected the claim, but it was merely the first salvo.

Muslims do not separate their religious beliefs from their everyday living. For them, there is no such

concept as separation of church and state. The nation-state must yield to the Islamic religion and mores. While the question of the hijab is being explored in western countries, another facet of Muslim or tribal culture is equally troubling. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), while not part of the Muslim religion per se, is practiced in African Muslim countries intertwined with tribal culture. Fear of FGM was recognized by former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno as a reason for granting asylum in the United States to African immigrants, but any attempt to interfere with the practice by African immigrants in the United States may be met with cries of religious persecution and cultural deprivation.

Europe is experiencing Muslim orthodoxy, as Muslims object to a crucifix in the classroom. In England, a city council member is a Muslim who speaks no English and needs an interpreter. France has an estimated 2,700 mosques and a large Muslim community that motivated President Jacques Chirac to act as spokesman for the Muslim community interests prior to the end of the Iraq war. Now, however, President Chirac wants to maintain the secularity of French schools, forbidding Muslim female students from wearing the hijab to school. With five million plus Muslims in France and the number growing from immigration and childbirth, France is realizing its nationality problem.

Once again in history, Spain is being overrun by Muslims from North Africa. This influx is causing environmental, national security, and welfare problems on the Iberian Peninsula. Germany has continuous problems with citizenship for Muslim Turks. The United Kingdom is addressing illegal use of the National Health Services by non-citizens. Even the Swedes are concerned by the influx of Muslims and their demands for Swedish conformity to the Koran. To the surprise of many one-worlders, the Dutch government is fast-tracking legislation to expel some 26,000 persons who have been denied asylum, the majority of whom are Muslims. Some of the prospective deportees are second- and third-generation Dutch-born immigrants. The Dutch action may be a precursor of things to come. Western Europe is awaking to the new Europe—a Muslim Europe. In January 2004, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan criticized Western European nations for anti-immigrant actions in a speech to the European Parliament. The Secretary-General is concerned that

Western European countries are being influenced by a tide of anti-immigrant politics that could lead to vilifying and dehumanizing asylum seekers.

World Trade Center Wake-Up Call

Americans had no gut interest in immigration matters until 9/11 and the destruction of the twin towers at the World Trade Center by Muslim terrorists. Prior to that, Americans were touched by an occasional human-interest headline, such as Elian Gonzalez's forced return to Cuba. When mugshots of the 9/11 terrorists appeared on the front page of U.S.

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newspapers along with verification of their illegal immigration status, Americans began to realize the deadly impact of illegal aliens on their daily routine. Personal security and national security concerns followed, as Americans cast a cautious eye about them as they left home each day or boarded an airplane. Since 9/11, the American people have begun to demand control of immigration, legal and illegal.

Two years after the 9/11 attack, 40 names are being removed from the World Trade Center death list, simply because, as illegal aliens, their presence at Ground Zero is unverifiable. Some relatives say the 40 illegal aliens listed as dead were not at the World Trade Center at the time of the disaster. On the other hand, more than 40 illegal aliens have wrongly claimed that their relatives perished in the terrorist attack. The world will never know the exact number of illegal aliens who died on 9/11, but it is well known that a ghost population of illegal aliens worked as menial laborers in the twin towers.

Open borders undoubtedly impact national security. Terrorists, of whatever nationality or

religious persuasion or political ideology, recognize porous borders. They recognize political weakness and the control of U.S. immigration policy by special interests. Terrorist groups have the same access to the TV, newspapers, radio, and Internet as do U.S. citizens. These groups analyze the strengths and weaknesses of politicians, political posturing, special interest lobbying, and the views of vigilant citizens. The United States currently has a lax immigration policy and lax border enforcement. The terrorist threat is still not fully understood by U.S. citizens, and among the reasons is the desire of the news media to hide the truth from the American people. The U.S. Government chooses not to publicize intercepted and thwarted terrorist plots to avoid compromising intelligence sources and investigative techniques.

Some politicians allege that since the United States has not suffered any terrorist attacks since 9/11, that none has been attempted. Such politicians are either disingenuous or uninformed. Either way, they are doing the American public a disservice and, in effect, aiding and abetting the terrorists. The holocaust of 9/11 was not the action of U. S. citizens. U.S. citizen converts to Islam have spied for, worked for, and taken up arms for Al Qaeda, Hezbulah, and other Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups, but their numbers appear to be small. Sleeper cells of foreign nationals, mostly illegal aliens, may well be within U.S. borders, awaiting orders to act against the best interests of the United States.

Immigrants and the Environment

Environmental activists and their more strident eco-terrorists are warning the United States that the environment is being destroyed and clean air contaminated, yet they fail to link environmental degradation to the presence of 22 million illegal aliens within U.S. borders. Illegal aliens may well be a factor in water shortages in the West and in Florida, but environmental special interests downplay the damage to fragile ecosystems of the Border States that are crossed by millions of illegal entries each year. The ever-increasing illegal alien population is placing a stress on U.S. forests for building products, paper products, and even food products. The rise in automobile usage by illegal aliens increases oil consumption and gaseous wastes, as they drive private and work vehicles with or without a driver's license or insurance. Each wave of illegal aliens means more

energy consumption and added burdens on antiquated energy-producing facilities in the United States. The additional need for food products expands with each new immigrant and immigrant child. The related strain on farms to produce more food increases the use of chemicals that environmental groups say damage the ecosystems. Over the years, environmental groups have remained openly neutral, but behind-the-scenes, they side with immigration special interests through interlocking boards of directors. They oppose any investigations that might show illegal aliens as factors in environmental degradation.

The Bush Plan

Secretary for Homeland Security Tom Ridge declared on December 9, 2003, in Miami, Florida, that the U.S. Government had “to afford some kind of legal status” to the estimated 8 million to 12 million illegal aliens residing in the United States (this official government figure is half the unofficial U.S. Border Patrol estimate). Secretary Ridge was setting the stage for a major immigration reform proposal that would be forthcoming from the George W. Bush Administration.

On January 7, 2004, President Bush introduced his immigration reform proposal. The concern of U.S. citizens and legal residents regarding threats from illegal immigrants received its first significant political attention. The reaction was swift but mixed. His announcement caught the Democratic presidential candidates off guard, and their silence was deafening.

Unsure what form the final legislation will take, most of the immigration special interests, which lobby for those in this country illegally, had no definitive position to share with the news media. The more radical of these groups indicated that the Bush proposal was not enough, as they seek more benefits and ironclad assurances of favorable treatment for illegal aliens.

Until the Bush proposal is fleshed out, and Congressional debate begins, the President’s proposal will be merely a roadmap, albeit an important one. Predictably the Democratic side of the aisle in Congress will play hardball, using political spin and disinformation to pass lax immigration laws. This is the Democrats’ traditional forte.

Immigration, however, is a bi-partisan political issue. Republicans will be playing hardball as well but for different reasons. Even though the Republican grassroots want regulated legal immigration, strict

border control, and quick deportation of illegal aliens, powerful Republican business entrepreneurs and food-crop growers support flexible quotas on skilled and unskilled labor to perform the work that most Americans, including the unemployed, will not or can not do.

In 2004 after announcement of the Bush immigration reform proposal, the morale of U.S. Border Patrol agents experienced a downturn. Why should agents risk life and limb, when the illegal alien and the agent know that Congress and the President are going to legalize them? February 2004 saw an increase in the flow of illegal aliens and a decrease in apprehensions.

Immigration Special Interests

The Democratic presidential primaries of election year 2004 coined the campaign buzzword, “Special Interests.” The Democrats decided this year to be against them, despite the traditional support of immigration special interests by the Democratic Party. Immigration advocates, however, are just as active in other political parties, including Republican, Green, Socialist, Communist-Labor, and Libertarian. It seems that the voters stand alone against unchecked immigration. Politicians are easily manipulated, as campaign contributions make their world go round; and immigration special interests are big political contributors. In return, politicians provide flawed immigration legislation.

The majority of the news media supports immigration special interests by means of favorable press in newspapers, TV and radio networks, and news magazines with an admitted liberal bias or left-leaning agenda. Most news-media professionals identify themselves as liberal and vote the Democratic ticket. This bias is no longer limited to the editorial pages but colors hard news stories.

Academia is largely pro-immigration (legal and illegal), from college and university professors and well-paid education administrators (educrats) to high school and grade school teachers represented by the National Education Association (NEA) – the national teachers union known for its liberal bias.

Non-profit organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Ford Foundation, and the National Organization for Women (NOW) are dominated by a leftist mentality and a pro-immigration stance.

Pro-immigration corporations and businesses include high-tech manufacturers and construction companies dependent on cheap labor. Among agri-business supporters are organizations of farmers and fruit and vegetable growers and large agricultural conglomerates also dependent on cheap labor.

Immigration advocacy groups include the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), LaRaza, the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, the Lutheran outreach ministry, the Sanctuary Movement members, and other religious support groups. Even at the grassroots, immigrant advocates include homeowners and parents looking for low-cost yard and nanny help. Petty greed is undermining U.S. immigration laws.

Activists in many of these groups rushed to trash President Bush's proposal, hoping to thus doom it to the fate of previous immigration reform efforts, such as the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) and the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). These pieces of reform legislation were emasculated by federal court rulings and legislative "technical" corrections. The courts determined that the Acts were either inarticulately written, or Congress had gone beyond its authority, or the Acts did not pass constitutional muster, or they failed to meet acceptable court-made standards. Attempts at immigration reform have resulted in judicial activism as never before seen.

Since 1968, immigration control has been seized by a net of special interests, and the result has been confused legislation doomed to failure. The federal courts have aided and abetted the planned failure of immigration legislation. Thus, the U.S., with no control of its borders, was left open to terrorist attack.

Membership in immigration special interest groups ranks among the most eclectic amalgamation assembled in U.S. history. Some members of these groups are more active than others; some have limited participation for specific purposes; and some are full-time activists. In short, they seek unlimited immigration – legal or illegal. Some advocates are motivated by humanitarian concerns and others by a need for cheap reliable labor, whether menial or skilled. They have one thing in common – sheer contempt for the opinions of the majority of U.S. voters, voters such as those in California and Arizona who pass anti-immigration propositions or make their voices heard through polls.

Closed-Borders Advocates

Anti-immigration special interests also are bipartisan. In addition to grassroots Republican voters, they include outspoken California environmentalists who fear the impact of immigrants – legal and illegal – on the nation's finite natural resources. They consider the announcement of the Bush Plan just another concession to Hispanic voters and President Fox of Mexico. They seek a decrease in the allotted numbers of legal immigrants and no benefits of any kind for illegal aliens, other than detention and deportation, both costly endeavors.

Recent public opinion polls indicate that 60 percent of Americans believe present legal immigration quotas are too high. Not enough is being done to protect the borders and to deport illegal aliens, so say 68 percent of Americans polled; and 70 percent of Americans do not want the legalization of illegal aliens, as the President proposes. His plan would permit illegal aliens, under certain conditions, to apply for "temporary worker status" with minimum effort and cost. In this way, illegal aliens could become legal greencard holders, with all the rights of citizenship, save voting. The President says his proposal does not offer "amnesty," but many voters read it to mean amnesty, which may be a legislative killer for the plan.

The Traditional Values Americans, those who believe that God, citizenship, duty, honor, and country define the core values of America and its culture and ethos, require that all immigrants play by the rules. They conclude that the giving of an unearned advantage to one segment of immigrants (illegal) to the detriment of another segment (legal) is unfair. They conclude that the giving of certain benefits to persons who entered the U.S. illegally, just because they are here, is not morally right and not legally right. For TVA members, the end does not justify the means.

Conclusion

When immigration special interests meet opposition, they shrug and say, "So what? The President may have an immigration proposal, but we control the legislation." U.S. voters increasingly say, "We're mad as Hell, and we want our country back!" To which, immigration special interests reply laconically, "The American people be damned." While Western Europe turns back from unchecked immigration and illegal aliens, the United States approaches a slippery slope. •