

Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I would like to clarify some statements ascribed to me in Mr. Robert McConnell's article, "Conference: Ethics of Immigration," (**THE SOCIAL CONTRACT**, Winter 1993-94), and amplify upon others.

- While my remarks did include my opinion that "the American family needs time to heal itself," and while I oppose the current high levels of immigration, I do not support a moratorium on immigration.

- While I did say that over 100 million people today live in countries other than those in which they were born, I did not mean to suggest that they would all move here if they could (though several million would).

- While the United States takes in many refugees, I stated that this country annually resettles more immigrants and refugees than the rest of the world combined.

- While I suggested that the U.S. should emphasize the skills of newcomers, and reduce the emphasis on family reunification, I believe that the reunification of immediate family members — spouses, sons and daughters, — should be retained.

My reference to the present policy generating a "false sense of entitlement" referred to other than immediate family members who are caught in a vast backlog. Specifically, immigration experts have suggested that their technical eligibility to immigrate legally in the distant future may encourage them to immigrate illegally today.

Sincerely,
Richard Estrada
Irving, Texas

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Editor:

[Re: Mark Wegierski's review of *Population Versus Liberty* (1971) and *Population Fallacies* (1977), **THE SOCIAL CONTRACT**, Vol. IV, No. 2, Winter 1993-94, pp. 149-152]

Although both of these books are still in print and selling slowly it is not every day that works over twenty years old are re-reviewed at all — let alone favorably. For these reasons I acknowledge at the outset my deep gratitude to the editor, Dr. John Tanton, for bringing this about, and to Mr. Wegierski for the prompt, fair-minded, and scholarly way in which he has discharged the assignment. However, I also welcome the opportunity to comment on two important points which I seem to have failed to get across clearly enough. First a quick one on the inevitable end of economic growth.

The reviewer says that "influenced ... by the 1970s mindset ... [the author] over-optimistically suggests that economic growth will have to stop at the stage where everyone is a millionaire." (p.151). I did

say this but I meant stop at this level *at the very latest*, and not "continue until everybody gets there." I added, (p. 237); "Of course the 'millionaire barrier' is an arbitrary concept ..." and in my first publication of the thesis (of which this brief section of the book had to be a potted version) I spelled out; "If we all did reach the millionaire's standard of living ... it is interesting to speculate who would generate the goods and services we would all want to consume. Would they be generated by machinery? Would differentials increase so much that even at that average level of income enough people were kept in sufficient poverty to make them work? Or would we be able to persuade the mass of people to go on working more or less as they do now, regardless of how multi-multi-millionaire they become?" [Parsons, J. *The Economic Transition* (1975, pp.11-12). In the book I hoped it was clear — though I must admit I didn't spell it out — that this was a *reductio* ..., a thought-experiment conducted tongue-in-cheek, and that the exponential never-never land demonstrates the utter absurdity of the "growthmanship" mentality.

On the even more fundamental issue of population control versus liberty, Mr. Wegierski appears to go along with my analysis of the complex relationships between population growth, control, and individual liberty until very near the end, where he then states: "[I do not] really accept the [Parsons] thesis combining population control and individual liberty. The situation is simply too far gone today." (p.151).

As my theory was intended to be universalistic in both time and space I am naturally rather perturbed by this and so try to justify it by restating the bare bones, as follows:

1. In social systems, individual liberty is basically produced, rather than destroyed, by social controls — by the rule of law.

2. It is also affected by environmental factors, including population dynamics.

3. Therefore, net individual liberty at any given time and place, in both amount and kind, is a result of the interaction of all the factors operating there and then. (Notably the quantity and quality of: a) resources, b) population, and c) social controls.)

In general terms the theory states that as population size changes, up or down, it improves some existing microfreedoms and/or adds some new ones, while at the same time reducing and/or removing some of the pre-existing ones. Similarly with controls. Each one removes or modifies one or more existing microfreedoms in order to enhance others, and/or to create entirely new ones.

My would-be objective analysis of the range of relationship between the liberty-affecting variables was — and still is — accompanied by a moral and

political *cri de coeur* for us to get our act together and apply the necessary population controls (I have in mind ecological education, greater justice and equity between competing groups, voluntary birth control, tax and other (dis)incentives, etc.) early enough rather than too late.

The key issue is optimization, of quantity and quality, of exploitation of scarce resources, of social controls, and of numbers. With a world population anywhere between one person and however many billions it would take to have us all crowded so closely together that we cannot raise our arms, we can still analyze the amounts and types of population, of the elements of the social control regime accompanying these variables, and of the resultant restrictions and freedoms. It follows that while no society can be either too undeveloped or "too far gone" to apply this analysis, all too clearly societies can be much too far gone for a sane and civilized existence; Mr. Wegierski may be right, there.

However that may be, I would still urge that at any stage short of ultimate disaster, an appropriately modified social control policy could a) prevent further deterioration — including any along the dimension of individual liberty — and, possibly, b) gradually turn the corner and begin the return to a more sustainable system. I hope that my simple proposals could help policymaking in this sphere.

Jack Parsons
Wales

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