

Letter from the editor

Jumping the Queue

The focus of this issue is the “citizen child” — otherwise known as an “anchor baby.” Both terms refer to the practice of granting citizenship to children born in the United States of illegal alien parents. Opposition in this year’s Republican Party platform to this practice brought it from obscurity to public attention. That in turn elicited horrified gasps from the major news media, from Democrats, and even the Republicans’ own presidential ticket. These reactions were based on almost no knowledge of the underlying issues.

Associate Editor Wayne Lutton opens with information on the costs of the practice. Then Congressmen Bielsonson and Bilbray — a Democrat and a Republican respectively — recognize the problem and propose solutions, the one legislative, the other through a constitutional amendment. Lawyers Stein, Bauer and Chip give us their views on the fine points, reminding us of the old dictum about the mills that “grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small.” There follows an article by Yale professors Schuck (law) and Smith (political science) summarizing the views presented in their book, *Citizenship without Consent*, the main resource on the topic. They feel that the Supreme Court has not settled the question.

Beyond the practice’s inherent absurdity, there are significant demographic ramifications. In 1992, for instance, nearly 96,000 babies were born to illegal aliens in California alone. Extrapolated to the whole country, perhaps as many as 200,000 citizen-children were added to the population that year. Compare that to the average total annual migration to the United States 1925-1965: 178,000! The number of “anchor babies” exceeds that of many other immigration categories, such as spouses, minor children of citizens, refugees and skilled immigrants. And, of course, none of these citizen-child “admissions” is counted in our immigration statistics.

Beyond these 200,000 additions to our population that are unattributed to immigration there lies a demographic time bomb with a twenty-one year fuse. A main reason for coming to the U.S. to give birth is to jump the immigration queue, since

the mother and her family are then related to a U.S. citizen! This allows the citizen-child at age 21 to petition for the admission of parents, brothers and sisters, their spouses and own children, and so on.

Given the large-family-size characteristic of the home countries of many illegals, what multiplier should be applied to the number of citizen-children to predict potential population growth — five, perhaps? That would account only for two parents and two siblings, small by Third World standards.

How many citizen-children/anchor babies have been born in the U.S. over the past twenty years — individuals who are in the pipeline and waiting for the time when they can apply for the admission of their relatives? Not surprisingly, no one knows, but if the annual average number of such births is half the 1992 figure given above, there may be as many as 2 million. If the multiplier is 5, that is 10 million additional people — more people than live in each of 44 of our states — and does not take into account the further multiplier of the siblings’ spouses, their parents, siblings, and children and on *ad infinitum*.

I believe this is the first time that this aspect of the immigration debate has come to light. Note that these people do not show up on any list of backlogs. This “immigration debt” is perhaps analogous to the unfunded federal debt — pensions and other benefits promised, but for which no money has been set aside. Whew!

The center section of this issue of our magazine is only marginally lighter reading. In it you will find an article on family reunification, a challenge to the census bureau, a further listing of “infamous immigrants” (following up on our essay on this topic in Vol. VI, No. 3, Spring, 1996), and excerpts from an internet debate on Guam’s immigration policy that pushes the limits of the discussion on cultural questions. The book review section of the magazine will acquaint you with several volumes well worth knowing. Perhaps you will want to read one or more of them in their entirety.

So, *bon appétit!*

JOHN TANTON

Editor and publisher