

Surrendering the Colors

Should only citizens vote?

by Ken Hamblin

It's no secret that I can be pretty hard nosed when it comes to defending the symbolism of the red, white and blue.

I have written on numerous occasions that I am in full support of a constitutional amendment to protect this nation's flag from the whims of the disgruntled malcontents who would discard not only the symbols of America, but the very fundamental principles for which they stand.

From the first shot that sparked the American Revolution, fired off the bridge at Concord, Massachusetts, in 1775 to the flag-draped coffin that carried the broken body of Army Sgt. Donald Dugan, our nation's first casualty in Bosnia, back to his family and friends, the colors of our nation have been present to illustrate the concept of justice and freedom for which Americans of every social and economic caste have gallantly given their lives.

Freedom isn't cheap; it isn't free. An endless column of names carved into this nation's war memorials stands as testimony to that fact.

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I do not believe that it is possible to keep the flame of our liberty burning bright when the symbol of our unity and strength, Old Glory, is reduced to the status of a floor mat or a rag to be burned and trampled in the dirt in the name of free speech.

I believe eventually such disrespect for the symbol weakens our strength as a sovereign and free republic.

It erodes the very principles upon which our nation is built.

A prime example of that erosion is embodied in the wishes of Mabel Teng, a San Francisco supervisor who currently is lobbying for a law that would make it possible for noncitizens of the United States who have immigrated here legally to vote in school board elections.

By the logic of supervisor Teng, as recounted in a recent edition of the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

Legally registered aliens living in the United States [I wonder how many coincidentally happen to reside in the supervisor's district] work and pay taxes and just because they have not passed the legal requirements for citizenship, we (lawful citizens of the U.S.) should not disenfranchise them.

Disenfranchise them? When did they earn the right to be enfranchised?

Disagree with me if you will, but I think this is the kind of disjointed left-wing political rhetoric that comes from trashing, denouncing and reducing the traditions and the symbols of our nation — such symbols as the flag — to nothing more than a red, white and blue rag.

Clearly such disrespect has inspired politicians like Teng to conclude that we are a nation of people who have matured to passively accept the public denunciation of our heritage and our national symbols, so we must be ready for the sanctity of our citizenship to be snatched away.

"...the right to vote [given to] legal immigrants is an obvious next step for an indulgent San Francisco politician."

With tens of thousands of illegals slipping across our southern border every year and openly demanding to be fed, clothed, housed, educated and medically comforted, I guess we should realize that the right to vote for legal immigrants is an obvious next step for an indulgent San Francisco politician.

Why not? After all, I'll bet the illegals in her district already are garnering all of the benefits of

the legal immigrants.

To justify her proposition, Teng uses New York as an example of a state where noncitizens who have legally immigrated to the U.S. have been given the power of the vote in school board elections.

Well, I say no. Two wrongs do not make a right. I mean, why bother to become a citizen of the U.S. and live up to your civic

duties when you can demand and get all the benefits without any of the headaches?

Headaches like sending your son or daughter to far away places such as Iraq and Bosnia when the government calls.

I think bold and shameless demands like Teng's are just one more reason why Mr. and Mrs. America ought to hang their heads in shame to weep over the pathetic job we have done when it comes to maintaining the legacy of this great nation.

Proposals like the one from Teng can't help but give me pause to wonder where and when did we misplace our national pride? Could it be we lost it on the day we surrendered the colors? □

Get Ready for the Explosion

Or perhaps it is an implosion

by Charlie Reese

Three freight trains speeding toward the same intersection are going to cause a heck of a pileup. They are population growth, loss of jobs and the corruption of the American political system.

Lin Yutang, a Chinese author who lived in America, once wrote that God creates humans

Charlie Reese is a syndicated columnist. This article is reprinted with special permission of King Features Syndicate.

with a bottomless pit— their stomachs. Every morning of our lives we wake up hungry. To satisfy our hunger there is only work, charity or crime.

That's why we need an economy that creates not just corporate profits or stock market averages but real jobs for real people. Only a sliver of the American population can live off corporate profits, interest and stock dividends. The majority needs jobs.

Moreover, the government welfare system needs Americans working in the private sector. The money spent on welfare, Medicare, Medicaid,

Social Security and all the rest comes straight out of the paychecks of working men and women. If you doubt it, look at your pay stub.

In many parts of the world, it's already too late. Population has outgrown the carrying capacity of the land, outgrown the most optimistic economic scenario. It is not yet so in America.

Yeah, I know some people worship a new golden calf — technology. They think technology can solve any problem in the world. But these people are nearly always untrained in science and

engineering. They nearly always prefer to read science fiction rather than science. Otherwise they would know that technology is not a god and that there are limits to what we can do with it.

Moreover, technology, like all human activities, is both good and evil. It has increased productivity and saved lives, but it has also killed millions of people and is now eliminating jobs via automation and globalization of production.

The timing is bad. While family-sustaining jobs are being eliminated at an unprecedented rate in the United States, the numbers of people who need jobs are increasing at an unprecedented rate. Since 1945, America's population has increased by 100 million. Today from legal and illegal immigration alone it grows annually by 2 million or more.

So we have two urgent tasks. We have to slow the population growth, and the quickest way to do that is to cut back the immigration. And we have to find a way, in the face of globalization and technological changes, to provide family-sustaining jobs.

“While family-sustaining jobs are being eliminated at an unprecedented rate in the U.S., the numbers of people who need jobs are increasing...”

Otherwise, you Liberals better buy a gun, because when great masses of people are rendered economically surplus, you will see an increase in both crime and political violence and turmoil.

People are funny that way. As much as elitists would like them to, most folks just won't passively sit around and be content with a subsistence income, much less sit around and watch their children starve. Bad conditions put folks in a bad mood.

And this brings us to the third train — the corruption of our political system. At the very time when we have urgent problems

to solve that will require wise and courageous leaders, the political system has become so corrupt it is incapable of producing such leaders in its present unreformed state.

Bill Clinton is a shameless demagogue, promise-breaker and sellout to big money. The man most Republicans think can replace him is Bob Dole, a lifetime career politician who doesn't even know what the problems are, who is himself a dishonorable opportunist and a sellout to big money.

The one man with courage and convictions, Pat Buchanan, the system crucified.

Reform of the political system is no longer a nice thing to do. It is an urgent necessity. As the greatest of all samurai, Mishima, has said, timing is everything. The convergence of population growth and reduced economic opportunity for average Americans will create one big explosion.

But I see the American elite as blind to reality and as arrogant as the old French aristocracy, which found out that it can be fatal to misread reality. □

Mexico's Double Standard

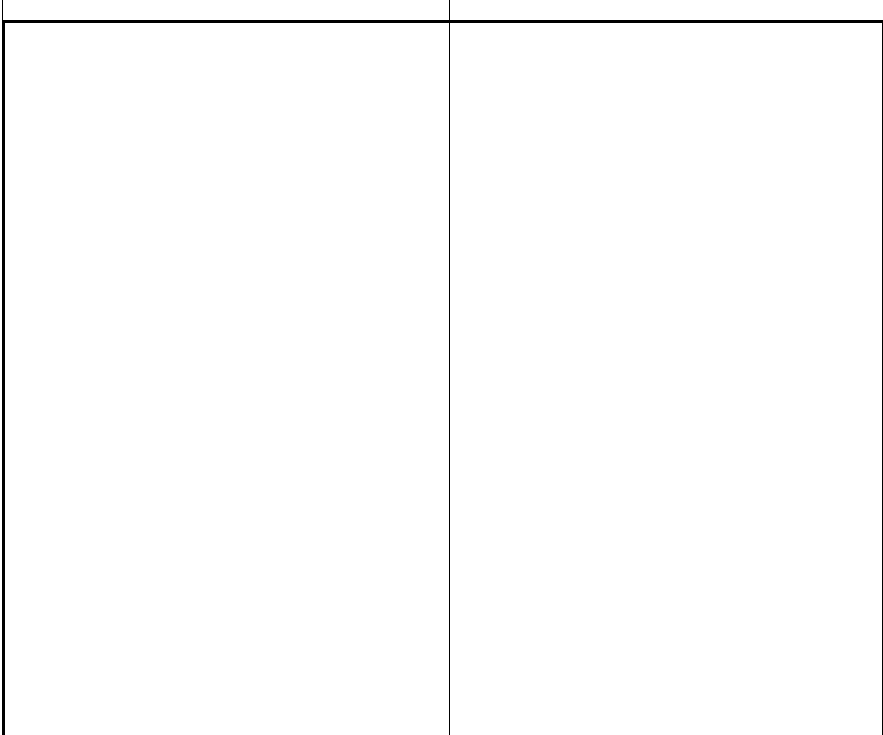
Different policies for southern and northern borders

Michael J. Zamba is a U.S. journalist who lives in Mexico City. Reprinted by permission from The Christian Science Monitor, February 2, 1996.

by Michael J. Zamba

Carlos Fuentes once described the United States-Mexico border as a 2,000-mile “scar.” It is sensitive to even the slightest touch.

The scar has been irritated again, this time with a new U.S. plan to field 300 federal agents in a coordinated strategy with local law enforcement officials and the military. Combining sophisticated listening devices



refugees poured across the border into Mexico to escape terror at home.

Today, thousands of refugees still live in UN-run camps in the states of Campeche and Chiapas. Many are still afraid to go home.

Unlike its northern border, Mexico's southern flank has stayed out of the headlines. A dense jungle covers most of the mountainous region, and the small towns along the way generally do not show up on the international or domestic media's radar.

It is this isolation that breeds the potential for abuse, rights activists say. Migrant-rights

with low-tech foot patrols, Washington wants to lick the immigration issue before it becomes a presidential campaign slogan.

Mexico's well-oiled machine that reacts to the northern border has shifted into high gear. The country called on the United Nations to mediate the border dispute, and U.S. Ambassador to Mexico James Jones was summoned to the Foreign Relations Secretariat to discuss the matter.

Ironically, despite all the complaining about the "militarization" of the border, critics have overlooked an important fact: Mexico has used a U.S.-style immigration model along its border with Guatemala.

This smaller, equally painful wound is lost sight of by diplomats focusing on the trauma inflicted along the U.S.-Mexico border.

In the past two years, more road blocks and additional federal officials have been stationed along the southern border in Mexico's attempt to halt an influx of refugees, undocumented immigrants, and drugs.

The Army has regular patrols in the jungle that try to intercept both arms to the Zapatista rebels and uninvited guests. Another military base is to be constructed in Chiapas, which could play a role in the continued militarization in the southern end of Mexico.

Officials are quick to point out that the border serves as a link in the overland route for drug smuggling—the same rationale the U.S. has used for its tightly monitored border.

Like the U.S. frontier, the Mexico-Guatemala border has always been tense. During the early 1980s, Guatemalan

"...Guatemalans were taking jobs from Mexicans and creating social problems."

advocates welcome the attention given to the plight of the undocumented along the northern border, but they feel that it also tends to distract people from looking south.

Where are the witty editorial cartoons, long-winded opinion pieces, and snappy sound bites from officials about the problems on the southern border?

To his credit, Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León did meet privately on January 14 with Guatemala's new president, Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, regarding the border; details of the talks were not

made public, however.

Church groups have played a role in assisting refugees and monitoring the border, but their resources are limited and their constituency is unpopular.

Manuel Bartlett, now the governor of Puebla, said in a confidential memo during his tenure as head of Mexico's Interior Secretariat (which oversees immigration) that Guatemalan immigrants were taking jobs from Mexicans and creating social problems. That is an institutionalized feeling about all immigrants, regardless of where they come from, says one religious leader in Chiapas.

Mexico's indignation over the U.S.'s methods of combating undocumented immigration and the transportation of drugs is justified. Its hypocrisy in the south is not. □

The government of Mexico was always complaining about the treatment of Mexicans in the U.S. But they don't look here ... there are more human-rights violations here in one day than there are in a year in the United States.

— Rev. Ademar Barilli

Mexico

Tightens Its Southern Border

by Colin McMahon

TECUN UMAN, Guatemala—In the \$2-a-night hotels of this predatory border town across

Colin McMahon is a staff writer with The Chicago Tribune. Reprinted by permission from the February 14, 1996 issue.

the river from Mexico, thousands of Central Americans determined to reach the U.S. gather not so much to rest as to regroup.

Some wait to hook up with "coyote" guides who promise to show them the way across Mexico. Others merely jam themselves in, four to a cinder block room, to mend the mental and physical wounds from their

last failed trip and wonder what to do next.

Even as the Mexican government chides the U.S. for tightening its southern border against migrants, Mexican authorities appear to be doing some squeezing of their own near their frontier with Guatemala. And Tecun Uman teems with deported migrants whose dreams have collided

with the harsh reality of how Mexico treats unwanted visitors.

Mexico expelled to Guatemala about 200 illegal migrants a day last month, up from 150 a day in January 1995. Mexican officials deny employing new measures to stop the flow, but migrants, journalists and other observers report more military and immigration roadblocks in the southern states of Chiapas and Oaxaca, a continuation of a two-year trend.

Moreover, the abuses that Central Americans long have suffered in Mexico persist.

In the early 1980s, tens of thousands of Guatemalans seeking refuge from their bloody civil war fled into southern Mexico. Before the Mexican government officially promised to provide sanctuary, some of those refugees were forcibly turned back into the waiting gun sights of the Guatemalan army. Others made it to refugee camps only to suffer crimes and indignities at the hands of

Mexican officials and citizens alike.

Now at a time when many of those war-weary Guatemalans are returning home, fellow Central Americans who consider themselves economic refugees are encountering similar trials.

Miguel Angel Tovar, 29, made it from El Salvador to within sight of the Texas border at El Paso before being arrested in Ciudad Juarez this month. He said police took what money he had and then threw him in jail for three days. They fed him once, he said.

When Tovar tried to tell the Mexican police of his rights, such as the right to eat, they swore at him, he said.

"You have no rights," Tovar said they screamed, "You have no right to talk. You are a violator of the law."

Other migrants, the luckier ones, complain of similar abuses. The unlucky, such as Orlando Chochon of Guatemala, said they were assaulted by police.

Chochon, 19, said he was pistol-whipped by an immigration officer recently after bandits robbed him of about \$400 and all his clothes. He and six Salvadoran traveling companions were left in Oaxaca with only their underwear.

Mexico's federal judicial police are widely considered the worst rights violators. According to reports, they take what they can from migrants before turning them over to immigration authorities, and punish those who carry nothing of value.

"If you can't pay with money, then you'll have to pay in another way," said Rev. Ademar Barilli, a Brazilian known as the "priest of the immigrants" in Tecun Uman. "And so the police beat them."

"Many of the illegal migrants in Tecun Uman have been deported more than once, and those in transition outnumber the town's 20,000 permanent residents."

Rarely do victims even consider filing a complaint. They say, as do human-rights activists who monitor the situation, that the Mexican judicial system is ill-suited to address their concerns. "The abuses are committed by state agents as well as by criminal gangs," said Jose Miguel Vivanco, executive director of Human Rights Watch/Americas. "But we are not aware of any ... serious

efforts on the part of the Mexican government to either stop these abuses or investigate them aggressively enough to punish those responsible.”

Many of the illegal migrants in Tecun Uman have been deported more than once, and those in transition outnumber the town's 20,000 permanent residents.

Tecun Uman is a sordid place of dirt roads and money changers, 500 government-registered prostitutes and supposedly the highest per-capita thirst for beer in Guatemala.

Exploited for money on the Guatemalan side, the migrants often are brutalized on the other. They tell of shakedowns by Mexican police and holdups by armed groups working with impunity. Women and girls are raped. Laborers flush with money sent from family in the U.S. pay \$1,000 to \$3,000 each to guides who sell them out to authorities or just abandon them along the way.

Last month, Mexican officials in Campeche state found 129 Central Americans, 50 of them women or children, who had been left by their guide and spent two weeks wandering in the jungle. They suffered from malnutrition, dehydration and respiratory infections.

Rev. Barilli, 30, who spent several years working with migrants in Tijuana, observed that getting into Mexico is a lot easier than getting into the United States — it requires only a quick trip on a homemade raft across the Suchiate River. But once past the border zone, Central Americans find the

going more difficult and more dangerous in Mexico.

“The government of Mexico was always complaining about the treatment of Mexicans in the U.S.,” Rev. Barilli said. “But they don't look here. There are more human-rights violations here in one day than there are in a year in the United States.”

The Mexicans bristle at criticism over what they do, and do not do, at the Guatemala border.

“In no way have we been making this military circle that you mention,” said Col. Hector Arvizu, a spokesman for Mexico's Defense Ministry. “It's not true that we want to do on the southern border what the U.S. has done.” □