

Roy Beck, Washington editor of *The Social Contract*, reports on several recent conclaves in Washington, DC and New York City. Parts of this report on administration officials Babbitt and Browner were included in an article by Mr. Beck previously published by *Negative Population Growth, Inc.*

Washington Notepad:

More Confirmation of Immigration Problems But Symptoms, Not Source, Get Attention

By Roy Beck

The problems of immigration-driven U.S. population growth are receiving increased attention — and confirmation — in the capital city. But Diogenes would find an honest man in Washington more quickly than he would find a major voice asking whether one way to deal with those problems would be to slow or stop the growth.

In a number of recent incidents, an observer could see government agencies, officials, private think tanks and academics figuratively fishing drowning people out of the river but almost never going upstream to do something about the folks throwing the people into the river in the first place.

In short, the underlying assumption throughout the city continues to be that high immigration-population growth is inevitable and beyond the scope of government action. Thus, the only role of public policy is to manage the effects of growth.

Incident One

RAND: Urban Schools Reeling From High Immigrant Levels

A new RAND Corporation study indicates that the growth of immigrant populations in major cities is wreaking havoc in the school systems.

"Education failure is the norm," according to Paul Hill, one of the authors of "Newcomers in American Schools: Meeting the Educational Needs of Immigrant Youth." He revealed key findings at an Urban Institute briefing in March.

A major problem, Hill said, is that the million or more newcomers a year tend to move into school districts that already are experiencing severe problems and declining funding.

Not only are the immigrant children ill-served, but the school systems are unable to educate the natives. In those schools, the European-heritage natives have a high school dropout rate approaching 50 percent, Hill said. More than 25 percent of the African-American males who stay in school are placed

in special education classes, in part because the "handicapped" designation draws more funds into the district, he said.

Immigrant students pose many problems for a school district, Hill said:

- **Language.** The number of non-English-speaking children has so outstripped the supply of bilingual teachers, and other resources, that the old debate about whether to maintain kids in their original language is "a dead issue."

- **Weak academic preparation in home countries.** "Much lower than past immigrant waves."

- **Random arrival and mobility.** Like other poor Americans, immigrants move a lot just before the rent is due, constantly changing schools. But, also, many foreign-born students disappear before Christmas to go to their countries of origin for visits, often not returning until around Easter.

Hill said the survival of inner city communities is at stake. Fewer than one of two kids going into these high schools comes out employable. Black students are especially at risk because they are concentrated with the Latin American immigrants.

The "size of the wave and the chaos of the situation are too great" to have the resources to keep poor natives in school, Hill said.

Answer: More Federal Programs

But the RAND study showed no sign of considering the immigrant-induced student population growth as a factor that could be changed or controlled. Proposals centered around better and bigger federal programs to help the school districts accommodate the immigrant children.

Michael Fix, the Urban Institute's director of immigration policies, called for the nation to make major structural changes in education to handle the influx. When a person in the audience asked why primary and secondary education are a federal responsibility, pointing out that local entities traditionally have handled it, Fix answered that the federal government as gatekeeper on immigration has a higher responsibility for immigrant children than for American children.

During a reception afterwards, David W. Stewart, director of Program Development at the American Council on Education, related the RAND study to his own new book, *Immigration and Education: The Crisis and the Opportunities*. "No governmental action has had more effect on American education in the last 30 years than the 1965 Immigration Act," Stewart said.

Incident Two

Ford Study: Communities Tense, But Immigration Not Real Cause

Troubled by news reports of rising tensions among natives and immigrants in various U.S. communities, the Ford Foundation funded a study begun in 1987 and concluded this year, using dozens of researchers and professors. They examined how high immigration changed communities, and the effectiveness of various attempts to mold inter-ethnic relations.

In a crowded room at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in June, Robert Bach, principle author of the 72-page "Changing Relations: Newcomers and Established Residents in U.S. Communities," outlined the findings about six cities: Miami, Philadelphia, Houston, Chicago, Garden City, Kan., and Monterey Park, Calif.

Researchers said they were pleased to learn that after the largest immigration since the turn of the century, only infrequent "dramatic episodes of violent conflict" were occurring. But they noted more prevalent relations among natives and newcomers that involved competition, tension and opposition. "If a single source of conflict stands out, it involves the use

of different languages, one of the most contested issues in relations found in all six of the research sites," the final report says.

Natives Feel Loss

Researchers found that the large-volume immigration was "an essential ingredient in the transformation of community life," leaving many natives with a sense of loss. Although the immigrant-fueled population growth leads to increases in overall economic growth, there is a dark side, the report states. The growth in an area like the Los Angeles region, which includes Monterey Park, can be uneven and lead to "the diminution of living standards for many. Rapid expansion has also been accompanied by class polarization and widening differences between high- and low-income groups." In Garden City, "migrants strained the availability of housing, increased school enrollments dramatically, and raised the demand for medical services."

The Ford study noted that Latino immigrants in Miami are becoming the authority figures in native black neighborhoods which often see them as the cause of black deprivation and powerlessness. And conflict between native blacks and Haitian immigrants has been so intense in one school that it was closed several times. Anger and resentment are common among established residents — particularly in black communities — who feel increasingly vulnerable to the Latino immigration and feel there is nothing anyone can do to slow or stop it.

About Monterey Park natives' opposition to the "encroachment" by immigrants, the report said it is not sufficient to dismiss the feelings as racism, xenophobia or intolerance. "It is not only the established Anglo groups who articulate anxiety and opposition, but the established Mexican and Japanese communities as well. All established residents experience a dramatic change in the nature, the feel, and the meaning of community life."

Groups Co-Exist By Separation

The reason there is not more overt conflict in communities with large immigrant population growth is that "newcomers and established residents coexist primarily by maintaining their distance from each other ... separation, not integration, characterizes the divided world..."

In Philadelphia, working-class whites are described as experts at passive resistance. They admit that they do not speak up in community organizational meetings about the problems they perceive for fear of being accused of racism. "This attitude stems from pervasive assumptions in the media and among the middle class that whites are inherently racist and that the first step in cultural understanding is for them to admit their racism. Rather than risk ridicule by going against the dominant (pro-immigrant) tone of the meeting, whites gradually dropped out, using excuses of lack of time or illness, leaving the original issue unresolved."

Researchers were struck by the resentment of Houston blacks who used to work at the ship channel. The researchers said the jobs were lost due to mechanization and the economic downturn in the 1980s, but the blacks believe discrimination is the reason few blacks work there now, while a lot of Latinos are there.

Problem: Too Much Homogeneity

Having uncovered all those problems, the Ford Foundation report concludes that the cause is not immigration, but Americans' and their institutions' weaknesses in being able to adapt.

"Immigration itself is not the difficulty," the report states. "The problem that many observers claim faces America — the potential for fragmentation — is not produced by immigrants or by their diversity."

Author Bach, professor of sociology at the State University of New York at Binghamton, offered at the Carnegie presentation that "the problem in America may not be diversity but homogeneity. Most people in this room were raised in an America with the highest homogeneity in history." By growing up in a time of low immigration (when the nation was at its "most insular and provincial," in the report's words), today's leaders were ill-equipped to respond to the internationalization of U.S. communities during the '80s and '90s, he suggested.

One sentence of the Ford report (on page 21) does acknowledge that a question could be asked about whether the United States might address the challenges in its communities by changing the volume of immigration. But in the next sentence, it dismisses the thought by noting that "these are issues largely settled by recent congressional debate and passage of the Immigration Act of 1990." If indeed the floor is closed to more questions about immigration numbers, the Ford Foundation helped close it. Groups funded by

Ford were integral to the lobbying that led to passage of the 1990 act that increased legal immigration by 40 percent as the nation moved into an economic recession.

Accommodation, Not Assimilation

"The nation frequently forgets its responsibility for immigration; movement to America occurs primarily by invitation... American employers fuel the immigration, American foreign policy embraces it, and American family values maintain it," the new report states. Yet, nowhere does the report allow discussion of whether America should consider changing its invitation.

"Groups funded by [the Ford Foundation] were integral to the lobbying that led to... increased legal immigration..."

Because the government invited the large numbers of immigrants, Americans have a responsibility to change in order to reduce tensions that may arise, the report states. Old ideas of assimilation by immigrants into a dominant American culture fail to take into account new internationalist realities, it says.

"In many places where immigrants concentrate, the reference for adaptation is no longer an image of white, Anglo-Saxon America... Notions of Anglo conformity or assimilation to a single culture simply have no immediate relevance in situations in which newcomers and established resident racial and ethnic minorities interact as dominant groups. These mixed settings further legitimize diversity and provide role models that depart from any idealized notion of what America means."

"Accommodation" of natives and newcomers to each other is the preferred model. The Ford report suggests one tool to accommodation is that while immigrants learn English, natives need to be learning the immigrants' languages.

Ford Study's Solutions

Among the Ford study's other recommendations to lessen tensions in U.S. communities:

- Phase out legal distinctions that result in differential treatment for immigrants based on their country of origin (especially Cuba), whether they are refugees or immigrants and whether they are in American legally or illegally.
- Avoid "get-tough" policies that oppose current levels of immigration into a community or that seek to get rid of illegal immigrants.
- Extend the legalization program of the 1986

Immigration Reform and Control Act to more newly arrived illegal aliens. Bach said legalization has been a "wonderful federal tool" for bringing ethnic groups together in communities as they help illegal aliens gain legal status.

- Non-citizen immigrants should be enabled and encouraged to participate in local elections.
- Existing community organizations, which tend not to be very responsive to their new internationalized settings, need to seek ways to cross group boundaries and widen their membership.
- Local leaders should find common problems which all ethnic groups can address through unified activity that will forge new bonds.

"Immigration presents the nation with a challenge to interpret democracy both as a political doctrine and as a social and economic creed," the Ford study concludes.

Incident Three

Babbittry Of A Different Kind

In a brief informal moment after an April luncheon at the National Press Club, Bruce Babbitt revealed himself to be perhaps unique among all top officials of the Clinton administration. His special trait? He indicated his awareness — and concern — about the consequences of massive U.S. population growth.

Thus, news early in June that the president was considering moving Babbitt from the U.S. Department of Interior to the Supreme Court threatened to extinguish the only flicker of hope thus far that the new administration might pay some attention to U.S. population questions.

The Secretary of Interior must manage the highly controversial rationing of the federal government's vast holdings of natural resources. Babbitt was handed a U.S. population with more than 50 million additional Americans competing for those resources than his predecessor had to deal with in 1970.

During the luncheon, he addressed the Washington press corps about the difficulties of rationing, but did not once refer to the population pressures. After the session, however, I cornered Babbitt, reminding him of the 1972 Rockefeller Commission recommendation for population stability and asking whether he is planning how to ration Interior's holdings with a U.S. population of 383 million forecast for 2050?

"That's just it," Babbitt immediately replied. "That (population growth) is at the root of all of our problems." Could he be counted on to raise that issue at the high reaches of the administration? Babbitt, who was trying to leave the room, turned back and

answered, seemingly a bit reluctantly, "Yes. Thanks for the admonition."

Babbitt could do worse than concentrate on educating Vice President Al Gore. While environmentalists are impressed with Gore's seriousness about reducing U.S. contributions to global problems, Gore has yet to show any recognition of how the U.S. role is exacerbated by adding nearly three million U.S. residents a year. Gore and Babbitt have a standing appointment to meet for breakfast every Thursday on environmental matters.

At the least, the Interior Secretary's recognition of population issues is a form of "Babbittry" far different from the compulsive love of growth for its own sake exemplified by George Babbitt, Sinclair Lewis' fictitious character. And it's a far different perspective than one finds at the Environmental Protection Agency — past or present.

Impossible Dream? An EPA Population Expert Or Desk

During the Bush administration, I called EPA's public affairs office, asking to be directed to an official or researcher who could talk about how population growth has affected efforts to achieve environmental goals.

I was bounced around from phone to phone, office to office and city to city over a couple of weeks. An official in the "mobile source air pollution" area told me: "We don't talk much about growth. We do talk about the number of cars. I think it generally is true that the (Bush) administration doesn't like to talk about population growth." When I asked incredulously if there wasn't at least somebody stuck away in a basement cranny who remembered the earlier ideas of controlling pollution through population stabilization, the official huffed that she certainly remembered "ZPG and all of that two-child family talk" but the idea of controlling population "just doesn't fly in a democratic country. Americans don't want you messing with their freedom."

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I gave up my Diogenes-like search for an EPA population expert.

But a few months later, there were signs of interest in population coming from the general counsel of Bush's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The counsel met with representatives of the Sierra Club Defense Fund, Negative Population Growth and Carrying Capacity Network about beefing up CEQ requirements so that Environmental Impact Statements would have to assess the effect of a project on population growth, and that growth's effect on the environment. Such an assessment was implicit in the 1969 National Environmental Protection Act that set up both the CEQ and the Environmental Impact Statements. But the record has been spotty in translating it into action.

Incident Five

New EPA Chief Shows Little Interest In Population Factor

With the arrival of the Clinton-Gore supposedly dream green team, I was eager to hear how new EPA chief Carol Browner would continue the tentative positive direction of the Bush CEQ on the population issue.

During a May evening with Washington's environmental and science writers, Browner explained that "end-of-the-pollution-stream" enforcement had achieved most of the big gains possible. Although EPA will need to see that those gains are maintained, "we need to move upstream to prevent pollution from taking place in the first place."

That seemed to be a perfect opening for raising the issue of population growth which may be the most important "upstream" contributor to negative environmental impact. With Clinton talking about abolishing the Council on Environmental Quality and giving its duties to the EPA, I asked Browner if she had plans to require population impact assessments?

Browner appeared confused by the question, indicating no knowledge of the issue and finally stating, "I don't feel qualified to answer that."

Probing further for a sign of commitment on the population issue, I told her of my futile search for an EPA population expert and noted that some organizations have called for an EPA population department or desk.

"I can't imagine what a population desk would do," Browner said.

I would have been glad to offer the vision of a population desk that could have played a major role in 1990 by giving expert testimony to Congress about the population and environmental effects of the Immigration Act of that year, and how its passage would undercut the Clean Air Act that Congress approved the same week. But Browner's answers point to yet another administration that "doesn't talk much about growth." For a person who worked closely with then-Sen. Gore, who has mixed with environmental groups for years and who led the state of Florida's efforts to protect the environment under the onslaught of unrelenting population growth there, Browner's lack of population insight is a sad commentary on all the environmentalists with whom she has worked through the years.

Incident Six

Refugee Advocates Indicate Ties To High Population Growth

In March, participants of Amnesty International's conference, "The Global Refugee Crisis: Rethinking Policy and Methods of Empowerment," expressed no disagreement with the assessment that the United States does not have a population problem and can grow much larger without any effects that would deserve consideration.

Some 20 to 30 refugee and human rights groups were represented among the more than 200 participants at New York University. With the United Nations counting some 40 million refugees and displaced persons worldwide and discounting resettlement as a useful option for more than a tiny percentage, the refugee advocates nonetheless spent most of the conference focused on continuing the United States' historic high refugee quotas and on increasing them.

All Immigration Supported

Refugee advocates were feeling beleaguered by the high-visibility media reports about the asylum and visa fraud dimensions of the killings at CIA headquarters and the bombing of the World Trade Center, as well as by President Clinton's publicly popular decision to continue President Bush's policy of turning back Haitian boat people. They were concerned that Americans are becoming more "xenophobic" and less hospitable to refugees.

As an invited speaker for one session, I suggested that Americans might be less concerned about the impact of more than 100,000 refugees each year if there weren't another 800,000 legal immigrants also driving rapid U.S. population growth.

But nobody at the conference was willing to de-link refugee advocacy from high-population-growth immigration. In fact, no refugee advocate voiced a willingness to oppose even *illegal* immigration. Both legal and illegal immigration are essential to provide alternative channels for foreign citizens who are denied the right to come to the United States as refugees, several leaders said. They said they oppose employer sanctions because the law makes it difficult for illegal aliens to get U.S. jobs.

Mark Handelman, executive vice president of the New York Association for New Americans, which he described as the country's largest Jewish refugee group, acknowledged that refugee advocates in the past have been "fearful of raising the profile of immigrants and resettlement in this country for fear that if too many people knew too much about what was going on there would be a restrictionist backlash against immigration." Now, as a result of highly skilled public communication by groups like the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), Handelman indicated, Americans have become quite familiar with the volume of immigrants and refugees, and indeed are backlashing. Handelman called on the refugee groups to vigorously counter the backlash by

learning the communication skills of their opponents and telling the "success stories and the stories about the contributions that immigrants and refugees have made in this country." There are no rational concerns about current levels of immigration that could drive an American into xenophobia (irrational fear of foreigners), he said.

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Cathi Tactaquin, director of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, focused on California and decried the steadily growing success of "anti-immigrant organizations" in persuading environmentalists that immigration is to blame for the state's pollution, smog, traffic congestion and generally overcrowded conditions. Fortunately, she said, many environmental groups continue to insist that overconsumption, not overpopulation is the problem.

Little Strength In Their Diversity

The advocates of high refugee and immigrant numbers did not appear to be finding great strength in their diversity. Some people there were clamoring for refugee work to place more emphasis on worldwide gay and lesbian concerns. Another group pushed the "women of color" agenda, while another just wanted a lot more priority given to "gender issues." There were people rooting for different continents and different countries. Nobody was much concerned about getting belligerent because nobody has to prioritize under any real ceilings. But it was difficult to see a unified agenda emerging from the meeting. "We have to start to coordinate our efforts," Handelman said. "We are a very fragmented field. Unfortunately, because we are multi-interest groups with different slants on each theme, we have difficulty at times in getting together and finding common ground and really taking a very strong public position, which is a disadvantage in this debate."

Several leaders called for increased efforts to mobilize recent immigrants and turn them into aggressive advocates for high-admissions policies, while countering the process through which many immigrants reach the point that they tell pollsters they favor lower immigration.

Incident Seven

Growth Seen Threatening

Slime, Spineless Species

The bio-diversity within U.S. borders is under intense assault from the expanding population, said Thomas Lovejoy of the Smithsonian Institution to more than 200 participants at the second National Carrying Capacity Issues Conference in June. The three-day event was a rare occurrence in Washington where the implications of population growth were confronted openly.

The most frightening environmental threats of population growth are not the publicized ones to vertebrates like the spotted owl ("people tend to be vertebrate chauvinists") but to "spineless plants and organisms" on which the planet really runs, Lovejoy said. Preservation of species does not involve favoring nature over humans, but is primarily for the sake of humans, he showed.

"The real pharmaceutical factory of the planet is in nature," Lovejoy said. "Things that happen in nature could never occur in the minds of scientists in their wildest imaginations."

He noted that some slime found at the bottom of a pool in Yellowstone is so full of pharmaceutical wonders that "it is driving billions of dollars of diagnostic activity... If there is anything without limits, it is the ability of biological diversity to do things for humans."

China Size Possible Here

Former Sen. Gaylord Nelson, founder of Earth Day in 1970, noted that people legitimately can argue that it is possible for the United States to have a far higher population. China, with 1.1 billion people, has about the same amount of land mass as the United States with 258 million. Thus, U.S. land probably could support four times as many people as it contains now, Nelson said. Apparently that is an assumption that nearly all the people mentioned previously in this article are making as they willingly accede to U.S. policies that propel the country toward a Chinese population density.

"Nelson suggested pressing Congress and the president to undertake a study of the carrying capacity of the country."

However, Nelson has thought about the practical implications of that assumption and reminded the conference that to accommodate all those additional people, Americans would have to make a rather significant sacrifice — they would have to adapt to the quality of life of the average Chinese. "But who would

want to?" he asked.

Nelson gave the keynote address of the conference involving nearly five dozen speakers who confronted the effects of current U.S. population policies and the chief cause of growth — immigration. Nelson, head of the Wilderness Society, said President Clinton can compensate for all other failures if he becomes the president who successfully sets the nation on a path toward environmental sustainability. To do that, he will need to avoid a growing tendency to consider environmental matters in mainly global terms. "It depends much more on what we (Americans) do than what the international community does," Nelson said.

To move U.S. policy toward environmental pragmatism, Nelson suggested pressing Congress and the president to undertake a study of the carrying capacity of the country. He decried Clinton's plans to eliminate the Council on Environmental Quality, noting that it had been one entity showing some helpfulness in recognizing carrying capacity questions.

Everglades Dead Without Curb on Humans

Several speakers painted a picture of an America much more likely to let the environment slip than to cut material lifestyles to compensate for population growth.

That is particularly true in the treatment of the Everglades, according to Lovejoy, a conservation biologist who originated the debt-for-nature swaps in the Third World and is credited with bringing the problem of the tropical rainforest to public attention. He had just returned from a two-day task force that is looking at the natural wonder: "It is a nightmare what we've done to the Everglades eco-system the last 50 years. It is a dying eco-system."

Incredibly, the federal government has tended to ignore population growth in its assessment of the Everglades' fate, responded Virginia Abernethy, an anthropology professor at Vanderbilt University and a board member of the Carrying Capacity Network which sponsored the conference. She said she had served on a federal advisory committee on the Everglades that was to look at how to protect the eco-system from the effects of the population, without addressing issues of growth — "But [the] truth is you can't save the Everglades if the population continues to grow."

"I'd agree with that entirely," Lovejoy said. And across the country, nobody really knows the extent to which expanding human settlements are threatening species, he said. He advocated a massive project that would "biologically map" the entire country to find where all the species are and to learn what sized natural fragments must be saved to preserve the species.

If It Ain't Broke, Fix It

David Pimentel, entomology professor at Cornell University and a CCN board member, noted that U.S. agricultural land greater in size than the state of Ohio was covered with blacktop or concrete from 1945 to 1975. In 1975 blacktop covered land the equivalent size of Ohio *and* Pennsylvania, he said. He didn't have figures for how much more land has been lost during the last 18 years.

Another sign that U.S. population exceeds environmental carrying capacity is that the country "is mining groundwater 25 percent faster than it is recharging," Pimentel said. "Humanity ought to make a decision: do we want to see how many people we can cram into the world? I see an optimum population of 200 million in the United States and 2 billion in the world, in contrast to 258 million and 5.6 billion today."

Ric Oberlink, head of Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS), pointed out that California now has a population growth rate that is higher than India's and that sometimes exceeds even that of Bangladesh. California's chief population problem is the number of immigrants entering each year. But those immigrants' fertility habits also have led to a new baby boom. While Catholic Italy has the lowest fertility rate of 1.3, Oberlink said, California's fertility rate has soared to nearly double that, between 2.4 and 2.5.

U.S. policies promoting high population growth through immigration are allowed to continue because policymakers are too tied to the motto "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," said Garrett Hardin, retired ecology professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Although California increasingly is looking "broke," most of the country is not yet experiencing catastrophe from population growth. Unfortunately, if you wait until catastrophe hits, there isn't much to do to reverse it, Hardin explained.

"You have to fix it in advance of trouble," Hardin said. "You have to have restrictions and limitations in advance." ■