

Many Americans feel that the immigrant flow, while there should be one, should be slowed to allow for assimilation and acculturation. Charley Reese of the Orlando Sentinel argues that there are strong economic reasons to slow down that aspect of our population growth. The column below appeared on July 2, 1991 and is reprinted by permission.

UNTIL WE GET OUR HOUSE IN ORDER, LET'S STOP TAKING IN IMMIGRANTS

By Charley Reese

Are we suffering from unemployment? Yes. In many cities it's in the double digits. Do our governments at the various levels have ample funds to provide for infrastructure and public education? They all say no. Do we have large numbers of Americans living in poverty? Yes.

Then why in the name of reason does Congress admit nearly 900,000 new immigrants every year — and is talking, even now, about admitting more under various categories? Nine hundred thousand souls equals a new major metropolitan area per year.

It's time to shut the door, at least for a few years, until we have a chance to get our house in order financially, economically and socially. We should shut it on a non-discriminatory basis — to everyone.

When you have 28,000 Americans apply for 100 production jobs, as happened recently in Kansas City, you darn sure don't need to be adding 900,000 people per year through immigration looking for jobs.

The United States in 1991 is not the United States of 1890. We have neither the need nor the ability to absorb large numbers of immigrants without aggravating serious problems in our society. We need time to assimilate the millions of relatively recent immigrants already here. There are forces at work that would tend to Balkanize the United States, and this challenge has to be met if we wish to leave our children and grandchildren a viable country in which to live.

Another problem, which immigration is aggravating, is the loss of good-paying jobs people with a high school education or less can work at. We have more and more people competing for fewer and fewer jobs, and that is a recipe for all kinds of nasty things, as desperation and toleration are not found together in the real world.

No kidding, we are facing a problem of historic proportions, and to allow the politicians in Washington to go on catering to special-interest groups in a business-as-usual fashion can have disastrous results.

Nor are we under any moral obligation to accept any immigrants, either as immigrants or refugees. It's a tough world. There are an estimated 15 million refugees in various places and more millions of people who would, naturally enough, love to get into the

United States in the hopes of building a better life for themselves.

Our first moral obligation, however, is to our own people, millions of whom are also desperate for a better life. And when I say our own people, I mean all of them — black, white Anglo, Hispanic, Asian or whatever. Anybody who's here is full-fledged American, and it is the welfare of all these Americans that must be made a priority of the government.

God knows I have sympathy for people suffering in foreign countries, but I'm tired of seeing Americans suffer while American largesse and American policy is diverted to non-American causes. Americans, since the end of World War II, have without too much exaggeration carried the rest of the world on their shoulders, and it's time to shuck the burden.

Congress not long ago increased immigration by 35 percent, and as I said earlier, several attempts are being made to further increase immigration. This isn't rational or kind. It's, first of all, catering to ethnic lobbyists. It's, second of all, catering to those who see immigration as a means to push down America's living standards and to make significant political changes. And third, it's stupid.

Does anybody think New York City has lots of surplus resources? How about Grand Rapids, Michigan? Their unemployment rate is 17.2 percent. And of course, the federal government has no deficit and no Himalayan-sized public debt, does it?

I have never seen in my life 535 men and women more consistently out of touch with reality than the present members of the House and Senate. Let's put our ship of state in dry-dock and scrape off the barnacles. Later we may be able to accept more passengers, but not now.