

Amnesty — Shamnesty

Congress and the administration use language for an end-run around immigration regulations

by William Buchanan

Any In the early 1970s, Rep. Peter Rodino, then Chairman of the House Immigration Subcommittee, proposed legislation that would discourage illegal immigration by imposing employer sanctions. Immediately, there were demands (from opponents) that in the event of passage, legal status must be granted to illegals who had put down "roots" here. There was some justice to this since up to that time America had condoned illegal immigration by making no serious effort to control it.

IRCA.

A decade later, in 1986, Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). It provided for both employer sanctions and legal status for long-term resident illegal aliens. Unfortunately, proponents abused the English language by calling the latter an "amnesty."

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Employer sanctions, as codified in the IRCA, proved to be a complete bust — they were simply unenforceable, as written. At the same time, however, illegal aliens from all over the world descended upon America and an unprepared INS. They flashed false documents and claimed to have harvested cucumbers from trees and dug bananas from the earth. Over 2,700,000 illegals got green cards — far more than anyone could have imagined.

More Illegals Arrive.

Following, as on a conveyor belt, were the spouses and children of the newly-credentialed aliens. These new illegals settled-in, awaiting the availability of family preference visas. Their friends back home, under-standably, got the impression that the U.S. was incapable of enforcing its new immigration law and that more so-called amnesties were likely.

This seemed to be confirmed when "Temporary Protected Status (TPS)," included in the 1990 Immigration Act, was used to delay deportation of illegal Central Americans. How can we return people home, we were asked, in the midst of a civil war? These countries are bankrupt, we were told, and only the remittances of the illegals kept them afloat.

"Pent-up demand" finally resulted in "relief" when 150,000

Nicaraguan and Central American illegals were green-carded in 1997, long after the end of the civil wars. And 50,000 Haitians were similarly accommodated in 1998.

Now Clinton is said to be considering green cards for 240,000 (or is it 600,000?) more illegals from Central America. We can't send them back, we are told, after the devastation of Hurricane Mitch. These countries are bankrupt, we are told, and only the remittances of the illegals keep them afloat.

Opponents sometimes refer to these as "rolling amnesties" in an effort to attach a pejorative connotation to the activity. We propose the use of a new word, *shamnesty*, to describe this antic federal behavior. So what is the difference between an amnesty and a shamnesty?

Forgiveness and Reward

Amnesty, as normally defined, implies forgiveness. It has a positive connotation. It removes the penalty for committing a crime. A shamnesty goes much further — it also rewards the violators.

A tax amnesty, for example, forgives violators for not paying taxes in a timely manner but still requires the taxes be paid. Draft dodgers received an amnesty sometime after the Viet Nam war ended but they were not granted

VA benefits. America routinely forgives (amnesties) illegal aliens for breaking our laws but then goes on to reward them with the most treasured of all gifts — *legal immigrant status and the right to become a U.S. citizen in five years!*

Amnesties Are Self-Limiting

Amnesty is an administrative convenience applied to an offense that is unlikely to be repeated. This is because new offenders are likely to get caught and penalties are severe — heavy fines and/or imprisonment.

Shamnesties Encourage More Violations

Punishment for illegal immigration, on the other hand, hardly deserves the name. If the alien can be identified, and if the alien is caught, and *if a* penalty is

imposed on the alien, it will consist of denial of legal entry for a period of time. Big Deal! Shamnesties are therefore granted to people who have nothing to lose and, experience shows, much to be gained. They encourage yet more violations — more illegal immigration.

Saying 'No'

The fact is that we will *never* get a handle on illegal immigration until we make it clear that shamnesties are a thing of the past. It will now take at least a century of saying "No" to get our point across.

The Word Game

As noted above, the word "amnesty" has a positive connotation. It is employed to sugar-coat rather than describe. When immigration reformers use it, they are unwittingly playing the open-

immigration lobby's game.

Ironically, it is in the nature of this game that the subject of amnesty must always be raised first by immigration reformers. The various shadow scams under which illegals gain some intermediate status eventually arouse the suspicions of the reformers. They invariably describe what they see as the seismic signature of yet another "amnesty." The other side is mum until they slip the shamnestv into some obscure wormhole of an appropriations bill.

We must stop playing the open-immigration lobby's game by using their preferred language. We must arm ourselves with a new English word: *Shamnesty*. Shamnesty is shameful! It is a sham of an amnesty — a shameful sham of an amnesty!

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