

The Social Contract

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A Note from the Editor

What Should Be the Purpose of Immigration Policy?

Two national commissions have concluded that United States immigration policy is “out of control” and “in need of significant redefinition of priorities.” In this issue, we feature an interview with distinguished labor economist Vernon M. Briggs, Jr. of Cornell University. For years, Professor Briggs has warned that current policies ignore labor market consequences. In this interview and in an accompanying article, Professor Briggs discusses what needs to be done to bring immigration policy in line with our national interests. We thank Professor Briggs for spending time with John Rohe, a regular contributor to *The Social Contract*.

Debating U.S. Population Growth

“By how many more millions will the U.S. population expand?” is one of the questions being raised in the current debate over the Senate’s immigration bill (the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act, CIRA, S.2611), which would legalize millions of illegal aliens and allow their families to join them here. It would also admit hundreds of thousands of “temporary workers” each year and more than quadruple the number of jobs-based permanent visas available annually.

The U.S. population is expected to hit 300 million in October, an increase of 19 million people since 2000 and almost 100 million since 1970.

For the first time in memory, The Heritage Foundation weighed in on the issue. In a paper, by Robert Rector, their Senior Research Fellow in Domestic Policy Studies, the Heritage Foundation analysis calculated that the Senate bill, if enacted, would likely result in 103 million immigrants obtaining legal status or entering the U.S. legally over the next twenty years.

The Heritage estimate that 103 million immigrants would gain legal status under S.2611 was based on: how many people would be added to the U.S. population base over a period of two decades; the number of legal immigrants who would enter the country under current law; the number of illegal aliens currently residing in the U.S. who would receive amnesty; and the increase in new legal immigration brought about by the Senate bill.

Again, we have to ask: what should be the purpose of U.S. immigration policy? How many immigrants should be admitted annually? Who should be admitted? And how can we humanely enforce the rules?

Wayne Lutton, Ph.D.
Editor