

Numbers (Sometimes) Can Make Them Think

JOHN VINSON

In my years in the immigration restrictionist movement I've seen it happen over and over again. You can lead an immigration enthusiast to wisdom, but you can't make him think. For some of them, including Cultural Marxists and libertarians, immigration is almost a religious conviction. It animates their deepest emotions and shuts off any critical thinking.

For the Cultural Marxists, the enforcers of political correctness, mass immigration is the ideal weapon to destroy the Western Christian Civilization they so passionately hate. But do they ever consider how that might turn out? Take, for example, the feminists among them. As they loathe "the patriarchy," they welcome Muslims and others with a decidedly anti-feminist bent. Do they care that a new hyper-patriarchy could be in the making? Evidently not.

Similarly, do white PC activists consider the consequences of their anti-white narrative? As they rail against "white privilege," do they imagine that their people-of-color allies won't take that message to heart and turn on them?

Libertarians push open borders oblivious to the reality that mass immigration is creating a poverty/welfare electorate partial to statism and unfriendly to the notion of limited government. Most ironically, their ideological blinders undermine their ideology.

People without a hard-line ideology can be just as obstinate. Talk about limiting immigration, and they will rhapsodize about the Statue of Liberty and the Huddled Masses. Often too, they will throw in what they think is the clincher: "My grandfather was an immigrant." Sadly, they obsess about grandparents and ignore the future that mass immigration will inflict on their grandchildren.

One way to break through the Iron Curtain of immigration reality denial was suggested by a booklet published by the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). Entitled *How to Win the Immigration Debate*, it poses the following question to put the immigration enthusiast in a dilemma.¹ Is there any level of immigration you would deem to be too high? If he says yes, then he concedes that immigration restriction is legitimate. The issue then is simply where to set the limit. If he says no, he comes across as foolish and impractical.

This question, with the simple force of common sense, has the potential to cut through all the ideology and cant that surrounds the issue of immigration. Make no mistake, though: enthusiasts won't always accept the first option, so stubborn is their faith. No problem. That still leaves them impaled on the other horn of the dilemma.

As case in point, I did a radio debate a number of years ago with a member of the ACLU. In the course of our discussion he informed me that I was an "extremist" for proposing to limit immigration. I replied by asking if he would be willing to let in as many as a billion people if they wanted to come. He replied, "yes." I let that sink in for a moment for the benefit of the moderator and the listening audience. Then I said, "You're someone who wants to let a billion people into the United States, and you're calling me an extremist."

It is hard to say whether a billion or more people are ready to move to our country if we invited them by declaring an end to enforcement of our immigration laws. But the number would be quite high. An international Gallup Poll several years ago found that 150 million adults in foreign countries would like to settle in the U.S.²

Let's assume that perhaps two-thirds are married. Most certainly they would like to bring their spouses. Let's also assume that those two-thirds have two children on average—who certainly would accompany their parents. The total would come to 450 million, close to half a billion. Can anyone imagine that such a flood of

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humanity would not totally swamp us, a country of 327 million?

Sometimes, indeed, such questions can make the enthusiasts think, or at least give them cause for pause. I saw it happen once at a public debate where I was one of the participants. The audience had a lot of pro-immigration people and they visibly warmed to the stories our opponents told about the wonderful immigrants they had known and how America is a nation of immigrants, etc.

I began my reply by citing the meeting in 1979 between American President Jimmy Carter and Chinese Premier Deng Xiaoping.³ Carter criticized China's policy at that time of not allowing its citizens to leave the country. Deng smiled and replied, "Well, Mr. President, how many Chinese nationals do you want? Ten million? Twenty million? Thirty million?" At that point, Carter dropped the subject.

Now, I said, let's apply this same question to our debate about immigration. I noted the huge numbers of people in the world who potentially would like to move to the United States. If you favor immigration, I asked, just how many a year would you be willing to take? Five million, ten million, fifteen million, or maybe fifty million? As the debate went on, I repeated the question several times. It definitely made an impression on the audience.

Finally, no discussion of citing massive numbers for a reality check on immigration would be complete without mention of Roy Beck's gumball presentation.⁴ Beck, who heads NumbersUSA, uses canisters of gum balls to illustrate the magnitude of world population growth, now rising at a rate of about 80 million per year. The stacked gumballs, each representing a million people, provide a powerful visual image of global population—and the utter futility of thinking that our country could make a significant dent in world poverty with even the most generous immigration quotas.

Hard numbers are hard to dispute, but never underestimate the determination of the enthusiasts to cling to their unrealities. Don't expect too much when you lead them to numerical wisdom, but sometimes you can make them think. ■

Endnotes

1. http://fairus.org/sites/default/files/2017-08/FAIR_HowToWin_2015.pdf
2. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/153992/150-Million-Adults-Worldwide-Migrate.aspx>
3. <https://sites.hks.harvard.edu/fs/gborjas/publications/books/hd/HDChapter1.pdf>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPjzfGChGIE>



Deng Xiaoping and Jimmy Carter during Sino-American signing ceremony, January 31, 1979.