

‘How Many Is Too Many?’

A progressive considers limiting immigration

BY BRENDA WALKER

Immigration control used to be a bipartisan issue, at least to a degree, and certainly was among honest environmentalists. For example, David Brower, the late iconic conservationist and three-time Executive Director of the Sierra Club, was one who expressed concern about the issue. He stated forthrightly, “Overpopulation is perhaps the biggest problem facing us, and immigration is part of that problem. It has to be addressed.”

He wasn’t the only one. When some Sierra Club members organized to reverse a management policy denying immigration-fueled overpopulation’s negative effects, numerous environmentalists signed on as endorsers to a 1998 ballot initiative affirming the limits to growth. They included Lester Brown, Dave Foreman, Gaylord Nelson, Galen Rowell, Paul Watson, and E.O. Wilson, among others.

Nowadays, though, American politics have become so polarized that positions are stubbornly staked out even when they are sometimes illogical. How any environmentalist could approve a paved-over America jammed with double today’s population is a mystery, but many do by their support for big immigration.

The bench of honest environmentalists has sadly thinned with the deaths of giants like Brower and Nelson. Worse, the punishment-based thought control of the left keeps younger thinkers from taking their place.

But a welcome exception is Philip Cafaro, a professor of philosophy at Colorado State University, who makes the liberal case for immigration limits in his new book *How Many Is Too Many?* published by the University of Chicago Press.

The book is written for a liberal audience, so conservative restrictionists may find its sympathetic portrayal of individual foreign job thieves to be irritating at times. Still, he takes on many “controversial” areas of the debate, like the basic “how many” question, which

suggests that limits are possible or even desirable.

Explaining the fundamentals is necessary for approaching liberals who base their planned utopia on abstract and sometimes counter-productive ideas, for example that every woman can have as many kids as she (or the husband) wants, even if she can’t feed them. Another liberal dream is that everybody may live wherever they want on the planet because borders are mean-spirited conservative constructs.

HOW MANY IS TOO MANY?

The Progressive Argument for Reducing Immigration into the United States

By Philip Cafaro



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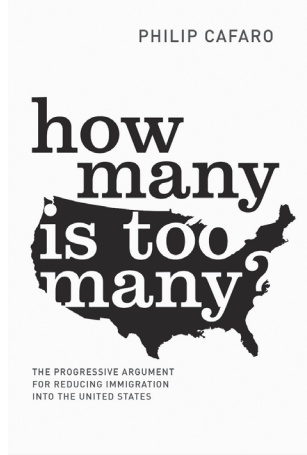
An inconvenient fact for leftists is how the supply of labor affects its worth and therefore the wages of Americans. The oversupply of labor from immigration directly harms black citizens, about whom the left claims to care. Cafaro clearly makes the case that immigration creates winners and losers. The losers are working class citizens of all races who have lost their jobs to foreigners or have seen wages fall from the same economic force. The author effectively interviewed workers who had been personally hurt by excessive immigration in construction, meatpacking, and landscaping.

The winners in the immigration game are the “one percent” business owners and otherwise wealthy, the oft-condemned enemy of the left. Cafaro observes, “Immigration is now the main driver of American population growth and a leading contributor to growing economic inequality in the United States.” But a current trend is for loud activists to demand drastic increases in the minimum wage for low-skilled jobs (which will push some businesses to more automation) rather than suggest a decreased supply of foreign labor. Unfortunately, the force of reason is weak among the minimum-wage activists.

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Cafaro deftly avoids the topic of culture clash for the most part, sticking to more concrete subjects. But culture matters even when numbers are the main topic. When a few dozen Muslims enter as immigrants, the cultural effect is negligible. But when hundreds of thousands arrive, they settle themselves into self-balkanized communities where customs can be maintained, like misogyny. As a result, America has become the site of polygamy and honor killing. A recent addition to the FBI's Top Ten Most Wanted is Yaser Abdel Said, who is sought for murdering his two teenaged daughters in Texas who had become too westernized for his taste.

The book's handling of the environment is complex. There's no question that the author values the outdoors highly and does not want to see a paved-over



America. He correctly notes that the public has not been clamoring for a more crowded, population-dense country; rather “every legislative change that has increased immigration numbers has been sold to the public as something else.”

However, the treatment of the struggle for reform in the Sierra Club starting in 1998 leaves out vital elements, and they are important. Were

any of the reformers interviewed? Apparently not. The book quotes Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope as saying that he had once believed that immigration should be reduced for environmental reasons, but that the issue could not be debated in the organization “without stirring up racial passions.”

That's an odd thing for a professional defender of the environment to say: Well, we wanted to protect America's environment, but people got angry so we won't talk about immigration any more. In fact, the Sierra Club supported the terrible 2013 Senate Gang of Eight bill that would have doubled legal immigration in perpetuity.

So it's not David Brower's Sierra Club any more, and the reason was leftist politics combined with big money—over \$100 million secretly donated by Wall Street investor David Gelbaum over the years 2000 and 2001. But the gift came with strings attached: “I did tell Carl Pope in 1994 or 1995 that if they ever came out anti-immigration, they would never get a dollar from me.” (“The Man Behind the Land,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 2004)

But that secret bribe was not known to the grassroots reformers (and I was one of them) who worked for

eight years within the Sierra Club's democratic structures to return the issue of excessive immigration to its proper place as being understood as a negative force on the environment. Had we known that the fix was in, we would not have wasted so much time trying to fix a deeply corrupt organization.

The reformer group, known as SUSPS (Sierrans for US Population Stabilization until the Club management threatened to sue), did have some success in getting true conservationists elected by the membership to the Board of Directors. But when we were close to gaining enough votes on the Board to reverse the official quashing of immigration as an environmental issue, the big guns came out to protect the Club's secret sugar daddy.

The method of attack was to ferociously smear SUSPS's excellent Board candidates as racist right-wingers in every way possible. One of their targets was the former Democratic Governor of Colorado, Dick Lamm, who as a student had helped organize an NAACP chapter at UC Berkeley. “This is the worst election that I've ever run,” he said. “What's the worst thing you can call somebody in this day and age? A racist. Now they're saying I'm in bed with the Ku Klux Klan.”

(For more about this unfortunate saga, see my Spring 2011 *Social Contract* article, “The Sierra Club's Profitable Descent into Leftism.”)

The absence of these facts from the book's depiction of the Sierra Club debate over immigration is not a small thing. The secret money and the bogus claims of racism defeated the honest conservationists, and the Sierra Club has been the worse for it. The dirty tricks contributed to the environmental issue no longer being bipartisan, but rather the domain of one-note climate warmists of the left. Needed discussions of vital issues are harder to have when trust has been burned up.

False accusations of racism are the left's weapon of choice now in the Obama era, more than was the case a decade ago. If you disagree with the most extreme leftist President ever, then it's because of his hue, not his policies. The frenzy in Ferguson continues to worsen because of racial flames being fanned by those who want to fundamentally change America, like billionaire George Soros, who spent \$33 million to support the angry anti-cop movement. If a crime is suspected of having a racial aspect, the media play it up, while non-racial mayhem gets the snooze treatment.

Welcome to the hyper-racialized America, where increased diversity was supposed to bring peace, justice, and happiness. Only it hasn't.

Author Cafaro is doing noble work by trying to convince liberals that immigration control is good for things they value. But the Sierra Club example shows that it can be too easy for liberals to fall into the demagoguery of race when facts are unkind. ■