

**UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S.  
POLICY IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

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**HEARINGS**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON**  
**INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS**  
**OF THE**  
**COMMITTEE ON**  
**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**NINETY-FIFTH CONGRESS**  
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Mr. BRYCE-LAPOORTE. Well, I think one of the consequences of migration—and that is where I think the intellectual concerns must be played with—is that you know it is not only a matter of whether people have jobs or not have jobs; it is also a question of understanding that, really in intellectual terms, you are having a play between people and states.

You have two different entities at play here and what this migration perhaps more than any—but what all migration does is that many times it blurs, reduces, confuses, or depresses the meaning of boundaries—in contiguous terms more sharply so, of course, than others. So that you have ideas coming across and identities coming across and ideologies coming across.

I think that what role Caribbean immigrants and communities will play will be—first of all, I do not think they will play a role that is any more distinct to the role of other ethnic groups in the United States relative to their own lands. With respect to your question, the Cuban case was cited because I was talking about the Caribbean, but one could speak in terms of the Middle East or Europe and see the same thing in play.

I think, in fact, relative to most of the others, that the Caribbean immigrants are less in a position to make that impact, with the exception of perhaps the possibilities with Haitians and Dominicans who are large in numbers enough to their home islands. But for most of the others, the Caribbean as a single political entity is not even a reality; the Caribbean is not a reality in terms of political operation. It is like saying Asian-American.

When you say "Caribbean," you have to speak about Jamaicans who may, in fact, be in contest with Trinidadians and do not always think of themselves in terms of "Caribbean" in political terms when seeking to manipulate the United States.

So I am saying one might be overplaying the importance of those groups, the impact of those groups, when viewed as a single political comment rather than national groups, in the United States. On the other hand, one cannot overlook the fact that migration obscures national boundaries. And questions of remittances and a number of other issues could be institutionalized in fact if one were able to either obscure the notion of national boundaries or if the two countries—the sending and recipient countries—would cooperate as if the lines were minimal.

Mr. YATTON. Thank you very much, Doctor.

With your permission, the subcommittee would like to submit questions to you in writing so that we might have time for a discussion with the other three witnesses. We appreciate your appearance here today. We will see that you receive additional questions for you to answer.<sup>1</sup>

Thank you very much.

And now we will begin with the next gentleman, who will be Dr. Briggs.

#### STATEMENT OF VERNON BRIGGS, JR., PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Mr. BRIGGS. Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity also to speak before the committee.

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 7, p. 450.

I am not going to read my testimony but just summarize a few points of it and just make a few introductory remarks, if I might.

I tend to be associated with the position that illegal immigration is a serious problem in this country, and consequently, I always like to say a few things in an introductory way.

My feeling is one of not trying to make illegal immigrants the scapegoat, but at the same time to realize that illegal immigration does have an impact.

Now, my training is economics. I am not in sociology or political science or a historian. Speaking as an economist, when you increase the supply of anything, it has to either drive down the price or slow down prices from increases. And that is just a truism in economics.

Now, I can't say that there are not political reasons for violating the laws of economics. But I am simply saying that I think in this issue. I have backed into the issue of illegal immigration because of a sincere interest in efforts to unionize low-wage workers, which has been almost impossible, and which I find illegal immigrants to be an increasing factor—not the total factor but they are one factor.

I find illegal immigration to be a factor perpetuating poverty and low wages in this country: not "the factor" but "a factor."

I cannot say much about the numbers of illegal aliens involved. No one can. But to me, the numbers' issues is irrelevant. As long as everybody with whom I am familiar with—all the literature, people I have spoken with, scholars—agree that the numbers are large to begin with, it does not make any difference what the actual number is. If everyone agrees the numbers are large to begin with and that they are increasing annually, it makes no difference that we cannot speak with precision.

On the other hand, I believe the lack of numbers is one reason why there are so few economists dealing with this question. Economists almost by definition follow the numbers these days. And if there are no numbers, they will not get into it. I am one of the few that will venture in.

Consequently, I am open and fair game to a lot of criticism dealing with a subject that is quite intangible. On the other hand, I am also impressed by the fact that there is no major social issue in this country that I know of in which there is any good data. We can start right with energy. There is no data on the availability of energy supplies in this country. We can go to mental health, crime, youth unemployment.

I am also working and studying youth unemployment in this country. The data on youth unemployment is terrible. Despite this, everybody believes it is a serious question. But when you get into local labor markets, the data is almost nonexistent.

So I understand the dangers in working in areas where there is poor data, but I also want to be sure that my perspective is clear: that I do not want to blame the illegal immigrants for all the problems of this country. Many of the problems would exist if they were not here. On the other hand, I think they are a factor and becoming a more prominent factor in certain areas.

As far as labor economics is concerned, their impact is that they tend to be concentrated in certain labor markets. If they were dispersed among all occupations it wouldn't be a particular issue; or

if they were dispersed among all regions, it wouldn't be a particular issue. But because they do tend to be concentrated in selected local labor markets and in certain operations, they are a serious issue in those localities and those occupations, especially low-wage occupations and especially certain parts of our country.

I also sincerely believe that if illegal immigrants were coming into white collar occupations in this country, coming as lawyers, doctors, college professors, and business executives, we wouldn't be here today. This issue would be stopped and stopped fast. And it is only because the illegal immigrants are largely coming in to low-wage occupations and blue collar occupations and service occupations—groups that are notoriously inadequate in terms of being able to represent themselves politically—that this issue is allowed to continue and fester.

And I am also impressed by the fact that quite often people who minimize the problem of illegal immigration are quite often tenured professors and people who do not have to worry about job competition.

But I say that I think there is a real issue here and that there are citizen workers who are adversely affected.

Now, without going into a lot of other things, I know you asked me to talk about the international aspects. And I would say this. That as I look at this issue, it is essentially an evolving one and developing one because our current immigration policy is absolutely unenforceable. It is an unenforceable system. And I think that is the premise from which we must begin. We simply have to ask ourselves whether or not as a Nation we wish to have an immigration policy. And if we wish to have one, it ought to be enforceable whatever it is. I do not care what it is, but whatever we say in writing should relate factually to what actually happens. And our policy currently is not that way at all. We write one thing as being our immigration policy, which in fact is quite different from what it is in actuality.

And I think that is largely due to the fact that illegal immigration is making our legal system a mockery. And I think that is dangerous for the short run and very dangerous for the long run.

We are having mass immigration into this country. And as I am sure more knowledgeable people have indicated, mass immigrations of people always take place when you have push and pull factors. They both have to be there.

You can have pioneer immigrants who just move for the devil of it, or because of the challenge or what-have-you. But when you have mass movements, which is what we are experiencing today, there has to be both push and pull factors.

Now, I think in the past perhaps the pull factors have been more dominant. And we can find plenty of examples in our history, especially in the Southwest, in which the pull factors have been very powerful and maybe the dominant factor of the two. But the push factors have generally been there as well.

My own feeling is that the push factors are today perhaps the more important of the two forces. That is why I welcome the opportunity to speak before this committee, since your concern is international relations which takes us into the push factors a lot more than the other congressional committees which are largely dealing with legislation to restrict the pull factors.

I think we need to realize these two work in tandem and the policy remedies have to work in tandem. We have to have policies directed

at both push and pull factors if we are going to have an effective policy.

Now, the pull factors are very briefly those that stem largely from the differences in economic development between the various countries, especially between the United States and Mexico—but between a lot of other countries as well. Certainly in the past the pull factor in the Southwest has been affected by the tendency of our system to accentuate labor-oriented rather than settlement processes, that is, accentuating the use of the braceros or commuters, or illegal aliens as workers but not looking into the longrun consequences as to the settlement aspects that might come from continuing those endeavors.

Third, I think part of the strength of the pull factors is derived from the current immigration law. We have a policy today that is totally unforceable policy. In fact we are saying, we welcome illegal immigrants into this country. And that is because the current state of this law is really a script for a Keystone Cops comedy. If it were not for the human tragedy involved, it is a perfect script for a farcical comedy. When you don't put a penalty on employers for hiring illegal aliens, when essentially voluntary departure is the only method of dealing with people who are apprehended, when the INS force is so small that it is a fraction of the Capitol Hill police force, it is a farcical script.

But, on the other hand, that situation is one in which, as I say, the current status of the law has implicitly said that illegal immigration is to be welcomed despite all our formal overtures that we do not want illegal immigrants in the country. I think that is partly due to short-run labor policy again having dominance over other long-run considerations.

There are a few other things in my paper, but I would like to say as the push factors are concerned, that I think that these are extremely important and, perhaps, even more important explanative factors today than pull factors.

In other words, if you addressed just the pull factors alone, you could not resolve this issue at all. The push factors would still be there.

With respect to Mexico, the Mexican economy, as I indicate in my testimony, is growing very rapidly. And on paper, in fact, the Mexican economy is one of the most lively and most rapidly growing and prosperous economies in the world, and certainly in Latin America.

On the other hand, we have learned only so well in dealing with aggregate statistics, that aggregate statistics cover a great deal of variation and that much of the benefits of economic growth in Mexico and its rapidly increasing levels of income and gross national product are lost because the benefits are not distributed very well at all. In fact, the distribution of the gains is extremely unequal. And consequently there is a great deal of unrest within Mexico and there is a great deal of legitimate concern about the fact that these aggregate data do not really describe the lives of so many people.

There is also, of course, the population issue which we are quite familiar with and the rapid growth of the labor force in Mexico, which is rapidly outrunning the ability of the Mexican economy to provide jobs. For many who do work, the wages are very poor and the hours are quite irregular and the days of work are quite irregular

especially in northern and central Mexico. There is massive poverty. We could elaborate more on those and I have done so in my paper.

I do think that in terms of addressing the push factors—and again I know my recommendations will be a little bit naive because again I am a domestic labor economist who has backed into an international issue over the past years—but I do think we need to talk seriously about increasing direct economic aid to many countries who are sending illegal immigrants into this country. Mexico has a great adversity to accepting direct economic aid, but they are quite willing to accept economic aid that goes through international agencies. And I should hope that that route could be pursued: Whether it be the World Bank or the Export-Import Bank or whatever other international entity might be involved.

I sincerely wish that we could reduce tariffs on Mexican imports into this country. Mexico is a leading importer of American goods. The Mexican economy needs to be able to export more freely into this country—especially agricultural products, light industry manufacturing, et cetera. I realize that there will likely be some domestic impacts to such increased imports but I think in many cases the benefits of free trade from Mexico would far outweigh the cost. I think we have got to give Mexico a chance to develop its own economy.

In my paper I try to go through some of the precise numbers in showing how dependent Mexico is to our country in buying our exports, in creating a lot of jobs for U.S. citizens, but I think at the same time we should be welcoming a lot more trade from Mexico which would also create jobs for Mexicans.

I also think the same thing should be said for most of the Caribbean countries. I think a Caribbean common market of some sort is long overdue; giving special concessions for all countries in this area as Europe is doing for its regional neighbors. This region should be doing the same.

I think we need to increase technical assistance, which is something the United States has been fairly good at in the past either in terms of population control measures or technical aid for industrial development. I think much greater attention should be paid to providing technical assistance.

The last policy issue I think we need to address from an international standpoint is the restriction placing Mexico under the 20,000 legal limit of immigrants to the United States. It is totally unrealistic. I think Mexico should be returned to the privileged position it had before. It was not covered by any quota restrictions from 1924 to 1965. Beginning in 1965, Mexico was included in a total hemispheric of 120,000 persons but no specific country quota. Between 1965 and 1976, we were accepting on the average of about 50,000 Mexicans a year as legal immigrants. The range was from 40,000 to 70,000 persons but averaging about 50,000. There is no magic in that number. But I think the most important thing to do is eliminate illegal immigration. And I think the 20,000 limit on Mexico is totally unrealistic.

Consequently, I think that specific quotas should be altered to, say 50,000 a year.

In conclusion, I would say that I think it is way past time to begin acting on this issue. I feel that this issue is mushrooming. I don't think the urgency is shared yet. I think people are beginning to sense it here



in Washington. But I think the urgency of this issue is still not appreciated enough. I fear that within a few years it is not going to be possible to discuss this issue in terms of these types of political remedies and recommendations.

I think you can see some symptoms of that. For example, I only need to remind you about last week's decision of the Texas Supreme Court which upheld the State law requiring illegal alien children to pay tuition to go to public schools. I think this is the beginning of signs of punitive legislation that is going to, in the long term, hurt this country terribly. And those kinds of remedies I will never support even though I am very much in favor of restricting illegal immigration. However, I am adamantly opposed to something like this development that has happened in the State of Texas, but I am afraid it is going to happen elsewhere. I fear that punitive legislation will institutionalize a subclass. We have had subclasses before, but we are in the process of doing something now that we have not done since slavery and that is to permanently institutionalize a subclass by denying them all kinds of social privileges, forcing them into lives of fear or detection and deportation. The long-run consequences of these developments are as ominous as the long-run consequences of slavery were a generation before.

In the past when slavery was an issue in this country nobody ever thought about the long-run because they were looking at the short run gains. The long-run consequences, however, have been terrible in this country to both the former slaves and to the country as a whole. I think the same thing is going to happen here with illegal immigration.

So I would urge a sense of urgency in addressing this issue.

Thank you.

Mr. YATRON. Thank you very much for your testimony.

I would like to ask you this: You indicate that U.S. borders should remain relatively open because of domestic labor policy. Would you refute for the subcommittee the argument that movement across the border remains fairly free because of foreign policy considerations?

Mr. BRIGGS. Well, I am not sure. You say "refute the argument that the border remains open because of foreign policy implications?"

Mr. YATRON. Foreign policy considerations.

Mr. BRIGGS. Well, I am not sure that it remains open for foreign policy implications. As it is I think in the Southwest this issue has existed for a long time. And it has become a major part of Southwest labor policy; that is, using Mexico as a source of cheap labor. And I think in some sense it is only because it is now recognized that there is a substantial flow from other countries of the world, that it is not just a regional issue, that we are beginning to talk about it on a national level and then raise some of its international consequences.

Basically in the past the movements in the Southwest have been a way of trying to find cheap labor and take advantage of Mexico as a source of that cheap labor, looking only at the short run and not at the long run. The braceros program is one instance and illegal immigrants is another. And I think in some sense it has been more a response to employer interests in the Southwest to forestall efforts to unionize, to keep wages low and to keep them significantly lower than they are in many other regions of the country. And I think that that has been a conscientious part of regional public policy.

Now, I don't know that I can lay too much of the emphasis on foreign policy other than the fact that foreign policy has permitted it to go on.

Mr. YATRON. Could you provide the subcommittee with an estimate of the proportion of Mexican undocumented aliens who are repeaters?

Mr. BRIGGS. I would have no idea. I would say there is a substantial flow back and forth. I think, though, that there is a tendency nowadays to downplay the immigration from Mexico; saying essentially it is just a short-run phenomenon. I think that is a mistake. There is the Cornelius study at MIT, which has gotten a great deal of publicity recently, and as you know, the Cornelius study was done entirely in Mexico and only interviewing returnees.

And if I were to stand before this committee and say, let's discuss the impact of Californians on the labor market of Washington, D.C., and I am going to conduct all of my research out in San Francisco, you would laugh at me. Obviously you would talk to some people coming back from Washington and didn't like Washington or liked it but are back visiting relatives, but, of course, the place to study the impact of Californians on Washington is in Washington.

And I think basically the Cornelius study is excellent in discussing the push factors and the problems of local rural development. But it is totally useless as to what the impact of immigration is in the United States.

And I would say even if they were moving back and forth on a 6-month basis, which I don't think is the case—some do; many do, but even if it were the case, most of the illegal immigrants coming into the Southwest from Mexico, tend to be in industries that are seasonal to begin with. And if they are seasonal for the illegal immigrants, they are also seasonal for the full-time citizen workers. And their presence is just as significant as if they were here the year round; that is, they are in the construction industry, the service industry, agriculture, which are seasonal to begin with.

Mr. YATRON. To what extent are Mexican undocumented aliens seeking higher incomes as opposed to just plain jobs?

Mr. BRIGGS. Well, there is no doubt in my mind that when you have mass movements of people, I would say there are push and pull factors and that people are coming here for a reason because people do not leave what they know and go to what they do not know unless both of those things are operating. And I think the people are coming for higher incomes and the jobs that go with it.

And so in many cases the jobs, even though by U.S. standards appear to be low wage or undesirable compared to the alternative wages, but the minimum wage along the Mexican border, although it varies from city to city, is no more than one-third the U.S. minimum wage. And that is where it is enforced. And it is not enforced very well to begin with.

So there is a tremendous difference in even the lowest wages in this country from what the alternative wages are for many Mexican workers. So I think the income is paramount but it related to the jobs.

Mr. YATRON. You suggest that Mexico should be granted an exception to the 20,000 persons per year quota imposed by the 1976 Immigration and Naturalization Act amendments. Can we single out Mexico without doing the same for other source countries in the region?

Mr. BRIGGS. Well, I think we can. I mean the only two contiguous borders are, of course, Canada and Mexico, Canada has a population of about 16 or 17 million and is not even using anywhere near its 20,000 limit now. I think it is using about 8,000 a year, something along that line. So they are not even making use of what it is. The economic differences between Canada and the United States are not that great and the poverty and population pressures are not that great, and the numbers of people are not that great in number.

But with Mexico, there is a population of 60 or 70 million and expecting 100 million by the end of the century as well as a region of our country which, we must always recall, once was a part of Mexico, so that there are long family ancestries in the region. Well, Mexico is an entirely different situation than is the case with Canada. And I think that even compared to most of the Caribbean nations, that none of them have a population anywhere near the size of Mexico.

I think clearly Mexico is an exception by every standard one could impose. And I would have no hesitancy whatsoever to recommend a significant increase in the number of legal immigrants from Mexico. And it does not bother me one bit that would be a special case because I think it is a special circumstance.

Mr. YATTON. I have one more question to ask. And then we will submit additional questions to you in writing also.

What impact would raising the legal quota have on illegal immigration from Mexico?

Mr. BRIGGS. Well, I think it will reduce some of the pressure. The U.S. immigration system is basically something we should be proud of. There are virtually no other countries in this world that are accepting legal immigrants in any significant number—I understand that there are only six countries accepting legal immigrants in any significant number in this world, and none of them is accepting anything close to what the United States is accepting.

Now, of the other six countries virtually none of them are accepting on a totally nondiscriminatory basis. And almost every one of them also is accepting people on the basis of their ability to contribute to job and labor shortages.

Under the U.S. system, 72 percent of the people who came into this country legally last year came in under family reunification. And I think that is an issue where the same thing will happen with Mexico: that the overriding number of people who take advantage of the suggested 50,000 limit will come in under family unification. I think that will diminish some of the pressures for illegal immigrants. Obviously that has got to be a factor. I mean brothers and sisters wanting to get together again and uncles and brothers wanting to get together again is a powerful influence.

Reunification of families is a powerful drive. And the fact that this country does give such overwhelming sanction to that practice is something that we should be proud of.

And that is the irony of this whole situation. Our immigration policy is something about which we should be boasting of to the rest of this world. In most of the rest of the world people are trying to get out of countries. But in this country they are trying to get in. And we should be proud of it. But, unfortunately, something we are proud of is being perverted by the illegal immigration movement.

STATEMENT OF VERNON BRIGGS, JR., PH. D., PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY  
OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Introduction

Despite the fact that the United States is in the midst of the largest movement of new immigrants into this country in its history, the phenomenon is largely unrecognized or ignored. Since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, legal immigration has provided about 400,000 persons a year (or about twice the annual average under earlier legislation for the years of 1924 - 1965). Between 1965 and 1976, Mexico supplied more legal immigrants to the United States than did any other nation in the world. But it is illegal immigration that is the primary source of new immigrants. In 1976, for instance, a total of 875,915 illegal aliens were apprehended by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of the U.S. Department of Justice. This figure represents a 500 percent increase over the figure of a mere decade ago. To be sure, these apprehension figures are artificially inflated due to the fact that many persons are caught more than once. On the other hand, the vast majority of illegal aliens are not caught. It is believed that for every person apprehended, four or five are not. Moreover, the sharply increased number of apprehensions has occurred with virtually no increase in INS enforcement personnel or equipment. The accumulated stock of illegal immigrants in the United States is estimated to be anywhere from 3 to 12 million persons.

Illegal aliens are streaming into the United States from almost every nation in the world. President Carter's message on illegal immigration of August 4, 1977 stated that "at least 60 countries are significant regular source countries." Yet of those apprehended each year, about 90 percent are from Mexico. This large percentage, however, overstates the actual importance of Mexico as a source country. Illegal entrants from Mexico tend overwhelmingly to be persons who simply walk, swim, climb, or are smuggled into this country (i.e., they are undocumented entrants). Illegal aliens from most other countries tend to enter the country legally but they violate the terms of their limited entry (i.e., they are visa abusers) by not leaving when their visas expire.

At the time of expiration, they can be anywhere in the country. Obviously, it is relatively easier to apprehend undocumented entrants than it is visa abusers. Hence, INS concentrates its attention on the border region of the Southwest. Nevertheless, it is generally acknowledged that Mexican nationals account for between 50 to 60 percent of the total.

#### The Phenomenon of Mass Migration

There are always individuals who will strike out on their own to challenge the unknown. They are referred to as pioneer immigrants. But for most people, leaving what is known and familiar to them to move to a new country is a harrowing experience. It is something to be avoided if at all possible. As a consequence, mass migrations of people usually involve the simultaneous existence of both "pull" factors of other lands that serve as an attraction and "push" factors of their native land that serve as a prod. For instance, the movement of the Irish into this country in the early 19th century was the joint product of both the potato famine at home and the higher real incomes in the United States. The internal migration of the black population from the rural South to the urban North is another example. It was the combination of the collapse of the southern cotton culture (due to both poor farming techniques and the devastation of the boll weevil) as well as the lure of northern job opportunities prior to and during World War I (due to industrial expansion, domestic shortages of labor due to conscripted military service of former workers, and the end to unlimited foreign immigration) that set in motion the mass movement.

Likewise, the history of the Mexican American population (hereafter referred to as Chicanos to distinguish them from Mexican nationals) reflects these same pressures. To be sure, most of the American Southwest once belonged to Mexico (as it earlier did to Spain and before them to the native Indian populations). But as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which ended the war between Mexico and the United States, and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, the United States acquired the land and the people of the present-day Southwest. At that time, it is believed that there were no more than 75,000 persons of Mexican ancestry in the entire region. Moreover, over two-thirds of these persons were in the Santa Fe-Taos area of what is northern New Mexico today. These persons were the legacy of the earlier unsuccessful Spanish settlement process. The Spanish attempts to settle the region had been foiled by the violence of the nomadic Indian tribes (i.e. the Appaches and Comanches). As a result, these early Spanish settlements were forced to concentrate themselves rather than to disperse. Even to this day, those

persons with Spanish surnames in northern New Mexico prefer to call themselves Hispanic Americans (to accentuate their earlier ties to Spain and not Mexico). At the time of the Treaty of 1848, the cultural boundary of Mexico, as distinct from the political boundary, was no where near the land that was ceded or sold to the United States. It was not until the decade of 1910 - 1920 that there began any substantial movement of Mexican immigrants into the United States. During that decade, the push-pull pressures were present and mass migration occurred. The push factors were the extreme violence of the civil war that occurred in Mexico during that period and its aftermath. Over a million people are believed to have been killed with many more maimed and injured. The pull factors were again the shortages of labor (especially in agriculture) during World War I as well as the rapid industrialization that was beginning in the southwest as the last domestic frontier was vanishing. As a result, about 750,000 Mexicans moved into the United States between 1910 and 1930. Thus, the roots of the vast majority of the Chicano population of the United States stem from this period. Recognition that many of the economic problems of the Chicano population today are due to the fact that they were among the last major immigrant groups to enter the United States (not among the first which it is popular to claim today) is the most important step toward understanding many of the difficulties of their current plight. But that is entirely another subject from the purposes of this hearing.

The point is this: if the United States is to enact an enforceable border policy, it is necessary that public policy measures be addressed to both the "pull" and the "push" factors. To date most of the attention of public policy discussions have focused upon reduction of the "pull" factors. Little attention has been given to the equally important "push" factors. Brief nation, however, needs to be made of both forces since they work in tandem.

#### The Pull Forces

The primary long-run "pull" force is the obvious difference between the economies of the United States and Mexico, which share a common border. Nowhere does a political border separate two nations with a greater economic disparity. In 1972, the Gross National Product of the United States was over \$1.1 trillion; for Mexico it was \$37 billion. The per capita income of the United States was \$5,288 while in Mexico it was slightly above \$707. The vast economic disparity between the nations acts as a human magnet for both legal and illegal migrants. For most Mexican migrants, life in the United States by any barometer of human treatment will represent a considerable improvement over the life left behind. As one writer recently wrote so poignantly:

"To enter Mexico overland from the United States is to travel, in a matter of a few miles, the vast difference between those who have and those who have not, to be stunned into recognizing what most Americans, in our enormous self-absorption, forget: the first couple of thousand dollars make the greatest difference; virtually all of us live closer to the Rockefellers than we do to the overwhelming majority of the world's people."

A second factor is the immigration philosophy of the United States toward Mexico. With the brief exception of the Depression decade of the 1930s, it has been the demand for a cheap source of unskilled labor that has determined the policy of the United States. Mexicans have been welcomed as workers but not as settlers. The migration over the years has been geared to domestic labor policy (especially in agriculture) and not to a settlement process. The fact that United States policy in the 1970s is so tolerant of the wave of illegal entrants, so timid in the enforcement of its existing laws that prohibit illegal entry, and so hesitant to assume a posture of deterrence can lead only to the conclusion that the labor policy continues to dominate.

A third "pull" factor is the anomaly of the current state of the law in the United States involving employment of illegal aliens. It is not against the law for an employer to hire an illegal alien. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 made the importation and harboring of illegal aliens a felony. As a concession to Texas agricultural interests, however, the Act contains a section stating that employment and the related services provided by employers to employees (i.e., transportation, housing, or feeding) do not constitute an illegal act of harboring. The effect of this proviso is to make employers largely immune from prosecution if they hire alien workers. Thus, one of the most important barriers to effective control of illegal entrants is the fact that the act of employment of an illegal alien is not itself illegal. Since an employer incurs no risk, he is free to hire illegal aliens, which encourages a continuation of the human flow across the border. As for the illegal aliens themselves, it is only an unimportant technicality that the law makes it a punishable offense for them to seek employment in the United States. Over 95 percent of those aliens who are apprehended by the INS are simply returned to Mexico by the most expedient form of transportation. Less than 5 percent of the illegal Mexicans are subjected by the INS to formal deportation proceedings that would render any subsequent entry a felony. More frequent prosecution could serve as a deterrent. Neither Congress

nor the President have believed to date that the issue warrants a sufficient increase in the number of hearing officers to raise the level of prosecutions significantly. As a result, those aliens allowed to leave through the voluntary departure system are in no way deterred from returning at will.

Thus, a realistic appraisal of the current situation is that if an illegal alien is caught, he is simply returned to his native land; if he is not apprehended, he works at a job that affords him an income higher than his alternatives in Mexico. For the businessman there is no risk of loss; there are only gains from tapping a cheap source of labor completely bound to his arbitrary terms of employment.

A fourth factor is the cultural affinity that exists between Mexicans and Chicanos. As indicated earlier there have been people of Hispanic ancestry living in what is now the southwestern United States long before there ever was a United States. Over the years, many others have come. In fact, the boundary between the United States and Mexico was an "open border" until 1924 when the Border Patrol was established and immigration restrictions were imposed for the first time. Even though Mexico was not included in the immigration quotas established by the Immigration Act of 1924, restrictions were imposed on the ease of entry of Mexicans and other immigrants into the United States. It became for the first time a felony offense to enter the United States illegally. The flow of legal immigrants from Mexico has--with the exception of the 1930s--generally increased each year. It was not until January 1, 1977 that Mexico was placed under the same 20,000 quota as applies to all other nations. Over these years the Chicano population has grown due to natural increases as well as infusions of immigrants. The size of the Chicano population is hard to specify with exactitude but an estimate of 6.5 to 7 million would seem realistic. Illegal aliens from Mexico stream into communities in which the Chicano population is substantial (e.g., Los Angeles, El Paso, San Antonio, Houston, Denver and Chicago). In these localities, it is easy to blend into the local population.

There is a fifth "pull" factor that is of minor significance in comparison with the aforementioned forces, yet it is of some consequence: namely, the lure of what is perceived to be "a promised land." There are "word-of-mouth" accounts of better job opportunities, high wages, and improved living conditions that circulate from returnees and from letters containing remittances to family members who remain behind. These tales are often exaggerated or, at least, tend to minimize negative aspects. Nonetheless, it remains true that in purely economic terms, life in the United States is likely to offer far more options than the arduous and stifling prospects of perpetual poverty for most who choose to remain in northern and central Mexico.



### The Push Factors

A review of the Mexican economy reveals a number of factors that will surprise most observers. Contrary to what one might expect, the impetus for outward migration from Mexico in the 1970s is not because the Mexican economy is stagnant. In fact, for the past decade Mexico has had the fastest rate of economic growth of any country in all of Latin America. The Gross National Product since the late 1960s has been increasing annually at a rate of 6 percent or more, with per capita income increasing annually at about 3 percent a year. Moreover, Mexico is one of the world's largest nations. It is thirteenth in geographical size and ninth in population size. In terms of its gross domestic product, it ranked eleventh in size in 1976.

Yet as is always the case, aggregate economic indicators often conceal more than they reveal. The Mexican economy is organized on a basis of state-regulated capitalism whereby most of the benefits of industrialization accrue disproportionately to the small upper-income sector. Pitifully little filters down to the vast lower-income group. Thus, the massive migration of Mexicans (who are mostly from this lower-income strata) represents a safety valve for the Mexican government which reduces the potential for internal problems that could arise from its maldistribution of income and its surplus labor force. The Mexican economy is moving from an agricultural and handicraft phase into an industrial and technological stage. The political regime in Mexico feels it needs time to complete this transition. Moreover, the illegal aliens frequently bring back or send portions of their earnings which, in the aggregate, amount to a substantial sum of American dollars (e.g., one estimate is that the annual sum exceeds \$100 million). As a result, illegal entry is one important way to gain desperately needed foreign exchange and to help Mexico's external balance of trade.

But despite the fact that the Mexican economy is growing, it remains a semideveloped country. For many, extreme poverty is the way of life. Unemployment rates in Mexican cities that border the United States consistently hover in the 30 to 40 percent range. For many farmers and agricultural workers in Mexico's central and northern states, a hundred days of employment a year is the most that can be expected. When work is available, it is often of a hard physical nature for which the monetary reward is but a pittance. The minimum wage in Mexico's border cities--although varying from locality to locality--is seldom more than one-third of the minimum wage across the border in the United States.

Even at this low level, violation of the minimum wage law by Mexican employers is reported to be widespread. Mexico's birth rate is among the highest in the world (about 3.6 percent a year). The median age of the Mexican population is 15 years of age (as opposed to about 30 years of age in the United States). Estimates are that Mexico will need to provide 600,000 net new jobs each year until 1982 just to keep even with its immediate labor force growth. After that year the number will increase. Over 23 percent of the population is estimated to be illiterate. Droughts, pestilence, and diseases are common throughout the rural states. Housing is poor and frequently of a makeshift variety. Inadequate diets and malnutrition cause pervasive health problems. Unfortunately, many influential Mexican citizens and officials manifest little concern toward the plight of most of the poor. As one observer recently succinctly wrote:

"Mexico is changing rapidly but too much of her past remains to haunt her. Quite aside from the population growth rate, there is another dimension: Too many upper and middle-class Mexicans lack a sense of national responsibility; too many adhere to the tradition of caring only for themselves and their immediate families and not about where their country is going; too many continue through tax loopholes and flagrant violations of Mexican law, to live with privilege that undercuts any destiny of equalitarianism, a notion as alien to many rich Mexicans as it was a century ago to the robber barons of the United States."

This attitude is clearly seen by the refusal of the government of Mexico to consider the idea of accepting direct foreign aid to reduce the level of human cruelty within the nation. The "national pride" of the small affluent class that tightly controls the political system of Mexico is largely oblivious to internal pleas for reform and contemptuous of external offers of direct assistance. All things considered, therefore, it is understandable why many rural peasants and urban slum dwellers would seek to flee from the grinding poverty that is to many their destiny for as long as they remain in their homeland. The migration process is not seen by the participants as anything illegal or immoral. To the contrary, the topic is discussed openly and the procedures have been both regularized and ritualized. As Julian Samora has written, the process is often viewed as an accepted part of the fate of poor people.

Closely associated with the pace of industrialization and incidence of poverty factors is the existence of a strong trend throughout Mexico of rural to urban migration. In 1970, 41.3 percent of Mexico's population resided in rural areas. The internal migrations have been toward two destinations: Mexico City and the northern cities located along the border with the United States. The aggregate population of the eight largest border towns of Mexico has increased by 44 percent in the decade between 1960 and 1970. Unofficial estimates since 1970 indicated an even greater rate of growth. The growth rate of parallel United States border cities during this same interval has also been very high and their growth is not unrelated to Mexican migration. The Mexican border towns, however, were mostly poverty stricken to begin with. The stacking-up of the poor rural migrants who have piled into these border cities has completely overridden the ability of these municipalities to provide a semblance of community services. It is not surprising then that there is literally no interest in these cities for the Mexican government to undertake to stop the outflow. From the public services standpoint, any slowdown in the rate of migrants who settle in their cities is viewed as being beneficial. By the same token, there is a substantial amount of private sector business activity in these Mexican cities that thrives on the alien traffic. Numerous individuals and groups are involved in the smuggling of human beings into the United States; the forgery of identification papers (Social Security cards, resident alien cards, driver's licenses, passports); loan-sharking (the practice of charging exorbitant interest rates on loans or credit extensions given to cover the charges by smugglers and document forgers); the recruitment of women for prostitution activities in the United States; the trafficking in drugs; and the arrangement of "phony" marriages with American citizens.

It needs also to be noted that the Mexican economy is extremely dependent on the economy of the United States. In 1975, 60 percent of the total merchandise exported by Mexico was to the United States and 62 percent of Mexico's total merchandise imports were from the United States. In addition, hundreds of millions of dollars are paid to U.S. business firms each year in payment for patent usages and profits on direct investments. The United States has for many years ran a trade surplus with Mexico even during the more recent years when the United States has had large deficits on a worldwide basis. Stimulation and continued growth of the economy of Mexico is obviously in the best interests of both nations.

### Foreign Policy and Illegal Immigration

As indicated earlier, the primary attention of this testimony is with addressing the push factors. But, because of their interdependence, brief mention must be made of the policy needs to address both pull and push factors.

The appropriate policies addressed to the pull factors are related to the need to make it clear that the "unofficial" policy of this country to use Mexico as a source of cheap labor is over. This change, however, will never be taken seriously until the United States moves to adopt an enforceable immigration policy. The present system is obviously unenforceable and no nation will ever take seriously public pronouncements about the need to end illegal immigration until the nation places penalties on employers of illegal aliens. In addition, it is necessary to reduce the automatic use of the voluntary departure system and to step up both the identification of illegal aliens and the use of formal deportation proceedings for repeat offenders. Likewise, the most effective short run measure that could be used would be to increase substantially the budget and the manpower of the INS.

The other set of policy remedies pertain more directly to the push factors. The importance of an expanding Mexican economy should be the foundation stone. To assist in the achievement of this goal the U.S. should at once initiate a policy of tariff reductions on Mexican exports (especially those from labor intensive industries such as agriculture and light manufacturing). Not only would such a policy help create jobs in Mexico which might lessen some of the pressure for illegal immigration but, also, it would probably lead to greater imports from the United States and it might even lessen inflationary pressures in the United States.

Of related importance, the United States should assume a leadership role in efforts to establish a common market of Caribbean countries. Such a market might help to increase trade among all of these nations and it would also help reduce illegal immigration from many of the island republics that are also source countries.

Technical assistance, which has always been among this country's strongest suits, should be made available if requested to Mexico and the island republics. Aid should be both in the form of technical assistance and information on such topics as birth control and family planning. In conjunction with these efforts, economic assistance should also be made available to assist in the construction of infra-structure projects that may enhance both the quality of life and the opportunities for more rapid industrialization. As Mexico has resisted ideas for unilateral assistance but has shown no such hesitancy if international agencies are the conduit, funds should be made available to such organizations as the World Bank, the United Nations,

the Export-Import Bank, or any other appropriate source with an earmark for designation to Mexico. Mexico, of course, should set its own priorities but, if asked, the United States should be willing to assist in the selection of the regions and projects to benefit from such efforts.

As for current immigration laws, the 1976 amendments (effective January 1, 1977) which placed Mexico under the identical quota as all other nations in the world should be repealed. Mexico, as a neighboring nation with historic ties to the United States, should be made an exception to the 20,000 persons per year quota. It should be increased to at least 50,000 a year which would approximate the level of the 1965-1976 era.

#### Concluding Observations

The existence of political boundaries of nation states is the beginning point for this study of all political economy. It is the nation state that is the basic policy making entity. As such it bears the responsibility for the protection of the welfare of the human beings who reside within it. As long as such states exist, no nation can be faulted for its efforts to maintain the integrity of its existing borders. Clearly the United States is confronted with a situation in which its borders and its immigration policy have become a mockery. It is past time to enact an enforceable immigration policy.

The new policy should continue the general characteristics of the present system. That is, it should continue to be liberal in the number of persons it admits each year; non-discriminatory in its ethnic admission criteria; and humanitarian in its overriding preference for family reunification. But it should also include measures to assure that what is agreed upon legislatively is what happens factually. Included in the needed remedies are both policies that address pull factors and push factors. Both sets of policies have foreign policy implications. With respect to the policies addressed to the pull factors, foreign countries must react to United States initiatives. With regard to the policies to alter the push factors, the United States needs the assistance and cooperation of foreign countries. To date, too much attention has been given to the remedies to the pull problem and little has been paid to the push problems. With special reference to migration from Mexico, I believe that, in the past, the pull factors were the dominant factors. But for the present and future, it is much more likely that the push factors will be

the most important consideration. If this is the case, there is an essential need to develop the appropriate policy remedies. I have tried to outline some of the policy needs but completion of the details will require much work. That work must begin immediately. For this issue is rapidly approaching the point at which rational and humane political actions will not be plausible.