

Honesty on Immigrants

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Body

To the Editor:

George J. Borjas and Richard B. Freeman, in their Dec. 10 Op-Ed article on the National Academy of Sciences report on immigration, attribute statements to me that I never made. They assert that I fail to mention that the bulk of the increase of the gross national product from immigration goes to the immigrants themselves. In fact, I go out of my way to make precisely that point.

They claim that I have argued that the drop in wages in low-skill jobs caused by immigration are good for the less skilled because it gives them an incentive to finish school. While these wage cuts do provide such an incentive, it would be absurd to argue that less skilled workers are better off, and I have never done so.

I am proud of the quality of scholarship and balance reflected in the report. The public presentations that my colleagues and I will continue to make on the report reflect that balance.

JAMES P. SMITH

Santa Monica, Calif., Dec. 11, 1997

The writer was chairman of the National Academy of Sciences panel on immigration.

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