

STUDY HAILS EFFECT OF MEXICANS ON CALIFORNIA

The New York Times

December 10, 1985, Tuesday, Late City Final Edition

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Section: Section A; Page 19, Column 1; National Desk

Length: 605 words

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Dateline: LOS ANGELES, Dec. 9

Body

A new study of the impact of Mexican immigrants on California concludes such immigration "has probably been an economic asset" to the state and says no "immigration crisis" exists here.

"Our evidence suggests that Mexican immigrants may actually have stimulated manufacturing employment by keeping wages competitive," which enabled manufacturers to better compete with foreign producers, said the study, released today.

The report, "Mexican Immigration Into California: Current and Future Effects," was prepared by the Rand Corporation, a nonprofit public policy research institute based in Santa Monica. It was sponsored and paid for by the California Roundtable, an organization of 90 of California's largest companies.

The report did not address the issue of whether Mexican immigrants are displacing either whites or other minority groups from jobs. It said, however, that wage levels of non-Hispanic whites and blacks were both "substantially higher" in California than their counterparts nationwide. "Thus, even if the presence of a large pool of Mexican workers has slowed wage increases, it has certainly not erased the earnings advantage enjoyed by California's Anglo and black workers," the report said.

Surge in Immigrants Seen

According to the report, there are between 1.2 and 1.5 million Mexican immigrants in California today and 85 percent of them live in southern California, more than 50 percent in Los Angeles County alone. It projected that the numbers of Mexican immigrants in the state "could almost triple" in the next 15 years.

Fully 45 percent of the state's Hispanic population are either immigrants or the children of immigrants, the report said.

The researchers said that over all "immigrants' contributions in the form of taxes exceed the cost of providing public services that they use," provided that the cost of education was excluded.

It added that the immigrants' use of public services was likely to increase as more of them took up permanent residency in California and made use of available education and other services.

Taxes and Services

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The report qualified its findings by noting a lack of reliable data about tax contributions and about how much it costs to provide immigrants such services. "Furthermore, if, as some maintain, such estimates should include the indirect costs of providing services to citizens displaced by Mexican workers, it is probably impossible to calculate the full costs," the authors said.

Regarding welfare costs, the authors said that the Census data they examined indicated that less than 5 percent of all Mexican immigrants, including citizens, legal residents and illegal aliens, were receiving some form of cash assistance in 1980.

The report credits Mexican immigrants with having slowed the growth of wages in California. In the 1970's, growth in wages in California fell 12 percent behind the national average. In Los Angeles it was said to be 15 percent slower than the national average. The report said that "by keeping costs low, slow wage growth enabled the manufacturing sector to maintain a better competitive position vis-a-vis foreign producers." ----Florida Plea on Haitians TALLAHASSEE, Fla., Dec. 9 (UPI) - Gov. Bob Graham urged the Federal Government today to help ward off a threatened new influx of Haitian immigrants into south Florida.

Mr. Graham said more than 30,000 Haitians have been left in legal limbo in the Bahamas because of a crackdown on illegal residents there.

The Governor said those immigrants might next look to south Florida, where 25,000 Haitians sought refuge in 1980.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: IMMIGRATION (93%); WAGES & SALARIES (90%); RESEARCH REPORTS (90%); RESEARCH INSTITUTES (89%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (89%); RACE & ETHNICITY (78%); MIGRATION ISSUES (78%); CAUCASIAN AMERICANS (78%); MINORITY GROUPS (78%); COMPANY EARNINGS (78%); FACTORY WORKERS (77%); CENSUS (76%); INCOME ASSISTANCE (76%); NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS (75%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (75%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (73%); PUBLIC POLICY (73%); DISPLACED PERSONS (68%); STUDENT EXPENSES (67%)

Company: RAND CORP (71%); RAND CORP; CALIFORNIA ROUNDTABLE (ORGN) RAND CORP (71%); CALIFORNIA ROUNDTABLE (ORGN) RAND CORP (71%)

Organization: RAND CORP; CALIFORNIA ROUNDTABLE (ORGN)

Industry: FACTORY WORKERS (77%)

Geographic: CALIFORNIA, USA (94%)