

MAN LEADS CRUSADE TO CUT NUMBER OF ALIENS

Daily News (New York)

November 17, 1997, Monday

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Section: News; Pg. 25

Length: 459 words

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Body

In a city that prides itself on welcoming immigrants, John Brock has chosen a controversial cause barring the door against many newcomers.

As an organizer of Tri-State Immigration Moratorium, the Manhattan computer programmer says New York is being overwhelmed by the tide pouring into the city from around the globe.

"The people who are here are getting squeezed. They can't find jobs," said Brock, 41. "One of the reasons is you have a lot of immigrants willing to work long hours for very little money."

He and other TRIM members say the nearly 1.3 million legal immigrants and hundreds of thousands of undocumented aliens who have arrived since 1981 have made neighborhoods nearly unrecognizable to long-time residents.

"The people who live there no longer feel at home. They feel foreign," said Brock.

The 160-member New York-based group, formed in 1995, also says relaxed U.S. immigration policies have created a growing environmental problem. Fast-growing population equals faster depletion of resources, said Brock.

The local group, joined by the national Federation for American Immigration Reform, says annual U.S. immigration should be cut from more than 900,000 to no more than 300,000. That's roughly the level before U.S. immigration rules were eased in 1965.

About 70 TRIM members held a recent City Hall Park protest to publicize their views. Carrying signs that said "Protect Our Borders" and "U.S. Jobs for U.S. Citizens," they criticized Mayor Giuliani for championing immigration.

Not surprisingly, the group is not warmly greeted in a city that's home to the Statue of Liberty, three Chinatowns and the largest Russian community outside the former USSR.

"They seem very racist to me," said Miguel Maldonado, director of the Immigrant Workers Association. "When you look around the city, you see immigrants making neighborhoods better."

The criticism doesn't faze Brock, the 41-year-old grandson of Slovakian immigrants.

"People accuse us of all sorts of things. They say we don't want immigrants coming here because we don't like the color of their skin," he said last week. "That's not true. We're just fighting for the rights of Americans."

There's evidence that more than a few New Yorkers agree with the group's cause. A 1993 poll by Empire State Survey showed that 63% of city residents felt New York had too many immigrants.

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The poll also showed that 51% believed the Emma Lazarus poem welcoming immigrants at the Statue of Liberty belonged to another era. "Basically, New Yorkers said: 'Keep your tired, poor and homeless,' " said poll co-director Doug Muzzio.

Armed with such findings, TRIM members are trying to build grass-roots support. They plan another protest in the spring.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: IMMIGRATION (96%); IMMIGRATION LAW (90%); CITIES (89%); POLLS & SURVEYS (85%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (78%); RACISM & XENOPHOBIA (78%); FOREIGN LABOR (78%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (75%); CITY LIFE (73%); POPULATION GROWTH (72%); MAYORS (71%); BORDER CONTROL (70%); GRANDCHILDREN (50%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2008 (50%); HOMELESSNESS (50%)

Company: FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN IMMIGRATION REFORM (55%)

Organization: FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN IMMIGRATION REFORM (55%)

Person: RUDY GIULIANI (57%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (79%); NEW YORK, USA (94%); UNITED STATES (93%); RUSSIAN FEDERATION (53%)

Load-Date: November 18, 1997