

GRAND TOUR

Bully Pulpit

By Bruce W. Cook



I believe in the ideal of a world without borders. At this time in the history of mankind, this belief is indeed only an ideal, certainly not a reality. Nevertheless, from an ideal, a democratic nation such as the United States, may find some avenues to practical policy regarding immigration. Make no mistake, the U.S. is facing an immigration crisis that challenges our very foundation of democratic principles.

Without quoting statistics that may be biased or skewed to one particular point of view or another, it is obvious that millions of immigrants now living in the United States without legal authority have altered the demographic make-up of American society from major cities to small towns.

Building a wall on the border will not stem the tide. The human will to survive; the desire to find a better life, a better wage, a roof, a bed, a meal on the table will eventually bring down any wall built to prevent the attainment of basic needs. This coupled with the ideal that the world belongs to all people; that there are no human beings with the sole right to any land just because they got there first, means that in fact all human beings are immigrants of one sort or another. America needs to develop policies that deal fairly and effectively with immigration.

Where do we start? First we need an immigration policy at the Federal level that is practical, enforceable, and realistic. These are nice words, how do they translate into action?

PRACTICAL

Those people now living in the U.S. illegally should be offered the opportunity of citizenship based on very specific requirements.

1. They must speak English or agree to enroll in government supervised classes to learn the language.
2. They must provide proof of residency and employment, even if the employment is presently cash based.
3. They must provide character references, and submit to background checks.
4. They must apply for citizenship and complete the necessary procedures including medical evaluation, take and pass the citizenship exam, and the oath of allegiance, apply for a social security number and be prepared to pay taxes.

To reduce the enormous influx of illegal immigration both the Federal and State governments must change their policies. Aid to illegal immigrants must be reduced or stopped entirely, with the exception of life or death humanitarian assistance. Social services including education, housing and food subsidies should be

reserved for the needs of citizens. Otherwise stated, to participate in programs offered by the government, one must be a citizen of the government.

ENFORCEABLE

Our immigration laws are not administered on a level playing field. Corruption is commonplace. People on both sides of the issue take advantage. The victim is usually the poorest of the poor attempting to follow the rules or at least find a way to stay. This must change. Law makers must set standards, limits, and procedures that permit citizenship without encouraging fraud, payoffs and blackmail. We need to remove the criminal element. We need to send a message that citizenship is possible, however not attainable simply by crossing the border. And, we need to redefine laws granting citizenships as a birthright. Pregnant women crossing the border to deliver babies, often in taxpayer subsidized hospitals and clinics giving medical services to indigent women, needs to be stopped. If free service doesn't exist, they will not come.

REALISTIC

How ironic it is that we live in a time when some would wish to destroy us for our values, when millions more would give their right arm to be a part of the system. Since we do not live in an ideal world without borders, and because national security is of utmost concern, and finally because the U.S. tax dollar is spread thin, how do we realistically face the immigration crisis?

We must not be afraid to say, "Sorry, we have no services to offer." We must not be afraid to require English as the primary language of the land. We must require citizenship or the proper Visa, work-permit or green card for employment. And we must establish a government program that enables immigrants of all backgrounds, including the poorest of humanity, to seek the American dream.

If immigrants want to become U.S. citizens, they will achieve it, managing to move mountains if necessary, learning the language, finding work, educating children, building a life. The American dream was not always color-blind or absent of socio-economic-ethnic-religious bias. Today, that dream is actually much more open to all. Yet, achievement of the American dream should be based on honest hard work. Most Americans respect that ethic above all else. Those people who have found their way from illegal immigration into participating citizenship know this all too well.

Let's make it a standard for all. In doing so we will reverse the negative tide that is tearing this nation apart, and we will once again provide a standard of fair and decent treatment as the American model for the world community. **GT**

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