Population, Law, and the Environment - Chapter 7: Immigration

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7 Immigration

To those who would look to the incoming of those of foreign birth, I would say “cast down your bucket where you are.” Cast it among those who have tilled your fields, cleared your forests, built your railroads and cities, and brought forth the treasures from the bowels of the earth. We shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to interlaced our industrial, commercial, civil and religious life with yours.

Booker T. Washington, from his “most famous address” (at the 1895 Atlanta Exposition to an audience of powerful white employers and businessmen)¹

The history of human immigration is as old as the history of the human race. The earliest humans were nomads, leaving one region in search of virgin lands that offered new opportunities. The migration of the earliest humans from Africa was but the first of many in the history of mankind.

A discussion of the effect of immigration on population and the environment might begin by revisiting the Kenyan district of Kisii, which was discussed in Chapter 5 as a microcosm of the world environment. It should be recalled that Ozanne, a journalist traveling in that district, observed that as far as the eye can see, the District is bursting under the sheer weight of rapid population growth. Almost all the arable land is being cultivated, including steep slopes. Plots are becoming smaller and are providing less income as holdings are divided and bordered by hedges, making the fertile equatorial landscape resemble a cluttered chessboard. As farmers overwork the land, soil erosion and exhaustion of fertility are becoming more marked. The pressure on schools and health clinics is immense, and rural employment is growing, bringing increased social and domestic problems. The young are being forced off the land into migrating elsewhere.²

I saved discussion of the last sentence of Ozanne’s observation for this chapter, because it reveals that immigration has historically been a
significant method of deferring Malthusian consequences. It has been noted that such consequences do not occur uniformly and simultaneously around the world. Even when its consequences occur locally, however (as when throngs of Irish, long teetering on the brink of starvation, confronted agricultural disaster in the form of “potato rot”), the quest for the means of deferring Malthusian consequences can cause dramatic social upheaval. The Irish achieved deferral by immigrating to America by the millions (3.5 million alone between 1830 and 1860). The other means, industrial and agricultural technology and innovation have been discussed in previous chapters.

In 1993, 45,000 children died every day from starvation and neglect. While this is greater in absolute terms than at any time in human history, anti-Malthusians point out that in terms of percentage of the world’s population this number is smaller than at the time of Malthus. Starvation is not uniformly occurring around the world, and there are still plenty of places where humans have enough to eat—that proving to the anti-Malthusians that there is no reason to control population.

Anti-Malthusians concede that in some countries, technological and agricultural innovation and economic growth have failed to take root. Those countries have been unable to provide sufficient food and decent living standards for their teeming and growing populations. For such countries, immigration is a means of deferring Malthusian consequences.

Anti-Malthusians have a number of historical cases in point to vindicate their premise. For millions of the Irish living in the 1840s, the harsh Malthusian overpopulation remedy of starvation was avoided by immigrating to America. For millions of others in Europe, where forests were being depleted, arable soils were being eroded, and social and economic conditions were becoming intolerable, immigration also became the preferred method of deferral. Virgin lands, uncut forests, clean rivers, clean air, and fertile untilled soil all awaited the earliest arrivals. Immigration enabled the anti-Malthusians to point to the European migrations as proof that Malthus’ predictions did not have to come true.

The migration of the poor and underprivileged also solved a number of problems for their parent countries. By the early 1800s, many European countries, such as Ireland, were beginning to be confronted with some very awkward choices. Government policies encouraging birth control were not only out of the question, but were virtually unmentionable (see Chapter 5). But the very existence of large numbers of destitute and desperate people was a threat to the established order. (The French Revolution provided example enough of what could happen to those in power when too many of their subjects suffered from the Malthusian disease of hunger.)

The European migrations proved to be a Godsend to all parties concerned. America, of course, benefitted from the labor provided by the
immigrants in developing vast new areas of virgin territory. The immigrants found new land and resources that provided new opportunities for the creation of wealth, and the freedom that enabled them both to achieve and enjoy that wealth. And the European countries were only too glad to relieve Malthusian pressures by sending off their wretched, "huddled masses" to lands thousands of miles away.

The population of Europe increased by 100 million people in the 40 years from 1807 to 1847, putting enormous strains on both the economies and environment of Europe. Garrett Davis, writing in 1849, saw a direct relationship between the expansion of the European population and emigration policies: "The area of Europe is but little more than that of the United States, and from its higher northern positions and greater population of sterile lands, has a less natural capability of sustaining population. All her western, southern, and middle states labor under one of the heaviest afflictions of nations—they have a redundant population." 8

By 1843 the aggregate population of Germany and Ireland alone was rising by 2 million people per year. 7 The effects of this population growth were observed by Davis: "2.3 million of the Irish people [are] in a state of destitution. Large masses of people, in many countries, not only want the comforts of life, but its subsistence, its necessaries, and are literally starving." Davis noted that "England, many of the German powers, Switzerland, and other governments, have put into operation extensive and well-arranged systems of emigrating and transporting to America their excess of population, and particularly the refuse, the pauper, and demoralized, and the criminal." 8

The link between the Malthusian pressures of population and government emigration policy was clear to an observer of the time: "The governments know that they have an excess of population. They feel more intensely its great and manifold evils, and for years they have been devising and applying correctives, which have all been mainly resolved into one—to drain off into America their surplus, and especially their destitute, and vicious population. By doing so, they not only make more room and comfort for the residue, but they think—and with some truth—that they provide for their own security, and do something to avert explosions which might hurl kings from their thrones." 9

England, for example, found emigration to be an excellent way of getting rid of undesirables, particularly criminals. When it was pointed out to British authorities that an expanding population might have the Malthusian result of land needed for food production being divided up into ever smaller and inefficient parcels, Parliament responded by enacting the primogeniture laws, which permitted only the eldest son to inherit estates of land. Second and third sons were often the first on the ships headed for America.
During the 1840s over 4 million Germans emigrated to America. A shortage of farmland in Scandinavia triggered the departure of 1.5 million Scandinavians during the period 1870–1900. Between 1880 and 1920, overpopulation in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and Austria was relieved by the emigration of over 8 million people to the United States. Over 2.5 million Jews from Eastern Europe fled religious persecution, while a million Poles escaped grinding poverty and political repression. In the aftermath of revolution in Mexico, grinding poverty provided the impetus for the first wave of Mexican immigration; over 700,000 emigrated from Mexico alone during the period 1910–1920.

During the 1930s U.S. immigration policies were finally tightened, and, more important, enforced. Less than 500,000 immigrants were admitted to the United States during that entire decade. By the 1940s, however, immigration had begun to rise again as a result of more liberal laws. In 1942, the “Broccoli” program was initiated, which allowed American farm growers to take advantage of cheap, temporary Mexican labor. In the 1950s, immigration laws were substantially relaxed, making it far easier for relatives of Americans to immigrate. In 1965 the system of determining eligibility by national origin was repealed, but 20,000 were allowed in annually from any one country.

The 1980 Refugee Act allowed the immigration of anyone with a “well-founded fear of prosecution on account of race, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.” The 1986 Amnesty law provided that anyone who had deliberately violated U.S. immigration laws, and had managed to continue to violate the laws since 1982 without getting caught, would be given the right to seek permanent residency. No such dispensation was given to those who had unsuccessfully sought legal entry during this period. Sanctions against employers of illegal aliens were imposed, however. In 1992, immigration limits were raised for certain favored countries with population problems (such as Ireland, which still forbade abortion).

As a result of these changes in the laws, immigration soon skyrocketed, exceeding 7 million people during the 1980s. In 1992 alone over a million people immigrated to the United States. Of these, 227,000 were legally admitted based on claims of “asylum.” Not surprisingly, in light of such U.S. laws as the Amnesty Program, which made many legal applicants for immigration feel like “suckers,” over 200,000 people entered illegally.

The impact of these numbers on the growth of the U.S. population is significant. Although the population impacts vary from region to region, the example of California is indicative of a trend. A recent study reveals that the population of that state is now growing at a rate faster than “India, Indonesia . . . and Bangladesh.” The report states that immi-
migration "account[s] for about half of the state's growth and contribute[s] to the other half with high birth rates." 24

It is interesting to speculate as to what policies the countries exporting undesirables might have adopted had the Malthusian escape valve of emigration not been available. Would authoritarian and corrupt regimes have had to adapt their laws and social policies to accommodate their starving millions? Would countries like Ireland have had to consider family planning programs, or even abortion? In any case, it is difficult to imagine that these governments would not, had they had no choice, have found more humane alternatives for their people than mass starvation. Despite the claims of Simon and others, "technological innovation" and "better farming methods" could not save the teeming millions of Irish who in the 1840s were faced with potato rot. Without emigration, millions of Irish and other Europeans would have starved, in a process of population "self-correction" by the cruel means that Malthus had predicted. (One wonders how Malthus' writings would have been viewed at that time had there been such a catastrophe.) Very simply emigration saved European governments from having to adopt policies of reform that a starving population would have demanded. It also bought time until other means could be found to defer the spectre of Malthusian consequences.

CURRENT POLICIES

The policies of emigration and immigration are much the same today as they were 100 years ago. "Exporting" governments still rely on emigration as a means of ridding themselves of undesirables; and some governments still seek to get rid of those whom they fear might destabilize the existing power structure, or exert pressure for reforms. "Importing" governments rely on immigration as a means of reaping economic benefits and profits by taking advantage of the poverty and desperation of many of the immigrants.

Perhaps the most dramatic example in recent years of a country using emigration as a means of getting rid of undesirables was that of Cuba, which in 1980 decided to put American immigration laws to the test by emptying prisons and mental hospitals and allowing the inmates to sail directly to America. Within 5 months, over 125,000 "Mariels" had entered the United States. The Mariel Entrant Tracking System later estimated that at least 40,000–80,000 of the immigrants were convicted criminals. 25 A report issued by the head of the System recounted interviews with four Mariel criminals who were asked "how many of these characters who came with you were out of Cuban prisons" responded that everybody was. 26 Although an embarrassed U.S. government later
claimed that the number of criminals among the Mariels was not that high, 27 psychological profiles of the first two thousand Mariels (who ended up in an Atlanta penitentiary) revealed that "only 50 were considered normal, were sane." 28 In any case, shortly after the boatlift, arrests of Cubans in New York City jumped to between 2000 and 3000 a year, compared to 214 the year before the boatlift. 29 Twelve percent of the homicides in Las Vegas were attributed to Mariels. 30

More common is the practice of a human-exporting country to rely on emigration as a means of relieving itself of an excess population for whom it cannot provide opportunities for earning a decent standard of living. Already noted in Chapter 5 has been the failure of many third world and developing countries to provide women with adequate access to family planning methods and contraceptive devices. In many countries women are denied the legal right to an abortion. This failure is sometimes explained by cultural traditions or religious teachings. Reforming these laws and policies might have some unpleasant and awkward political ramifications. It is not surprising that most leaders of such countries would prefer not to deal with issues, or even to bring them into the open for purposes of discussion. The bitter experience and example of the United States in dealing with these issues (see Chapters 5 and 6) would itself give pause to third world leaders contemplating reforms in the area of family planning and abortion.

It is not surprising, therefore, that human-exporting countries have preferred to rely on emigration to solve their population problems, and to take advantage of the developed nations' indulgent immigration policies, rather than tackle the politically daunting task of internal reform. Certainly it is more politically popular and rewarding for third world leaders to express "outrage" at any efforts by importing countries to enact more restrictive immigration policies, or worse yet, actually enforce existing ones. But reliance on emigration as an escape valve for Malthusian population pressures in human-exporting countries would not be possible were it not for the silent but effective connivance of special economic interests in the human-importing countries.

Immigration policies in the United States are often criticized because of the social and economic impact that such policies have. While there is currently fierce debate over the extent of these alleged impacts, the debate itself is fundamentally misdirected when viewed in the context of evaluating the effects of population on the environment.

Resolution of the debate between Ehrlich and Simon over when the limits of population growth will be reached has thus far been avoided by concluding that limits to growth, whenever reached, cannot ultimately be avoided. It has further been concluded that the risks of slowing population growth too soon are outweighed by slowing the growth too late. Moreover, the effects of an expanding population on the environment
have been noted, not the least being the elimination of one living species per day to make room for more humans. Slowing that rate of growth in the most humane ways possible is essential to the goal of avoiding Malthusian consequences. It was seen in Chapter 5 that population could be stabilized today through purely voluntary means if family planning methods were available to all who desired to use them.

The tragedy of present immigration policies is not so much the relatively short-term economic and social consequences of those policies. Of greater concern is that emigration, encouraged by the lax immigration policies of the human-importing countries, has come to be relied on as the alternative to the more difficult process of internal reform of family planning policies. As long as this situation persists, there will be little incentive for human-exporting countries to deal with their population problems. If immigration laws were tightened, however, population issues would have to be dealt with directly. Family planning policies, if reformed, would stabilize population, and eliminate the need to export humans in the first place. This in turn would lay the foundations for the improvement of living conditions, as well as relieve the environment from the pressures of population growth.

Unfortunately, however, environmental factors are rarely considered in immigration policy. However, the motivations behind immigration policy, as well as the factors considered in formulating policy, including the social and economic effects of immigration, must be understood in order to pursue immigration reforms that would serve the cause of environmental preservation.

THE EFFECTS OF IMMIGRATION POLICY

The effects of American immigration policy are currently the subject of fierce debate. Effects are best understood, however, in the context of the goals and objectives of those who enact the immigration laws. The effects of immigration on labor are a case in point.

After the American Civil War, the abolition of slavery released a vast pool of unskilled workers into the labor market. Propitiously, however, the industrial revolution then taking place required millions of unskilled laborers to man the factories and assembly lines. There loomed the prospect of a labor shortage. The opportunities for the unskilled appeared to bode well for the economic prospects of America's African-Americans. Release from bondage, by itself, would be insufficient to enable African-Americans to assimilate into American society and reap the benefits of economic prosperity. Without economic opportunity, the advantages of education and training would also be denied. It was essential that African-Americans be permitted to take advantage of the opportunities provided by America's industrial revolution.
But it was not to happen. The prospect of a labor shortage was viewed with alarm by the privileged classes, and particularly by America's robber barons and titans of industry. A labor shortage meant that the working class would have increased bargaining power—the power to demand higher wages and humane working conditions. It meant also that corporations and employers, when faced with worker resistance to low wages and abysmal working conditions, would not have the luxury of firing workers or hiring strike-breakers. Moreover, racial prejudice inhibited the hiring of African-Americans.

There was, of course, a way to avoid both the labor shortage and the necessity of hiring African-Americans. That way, of course, was to import teeming throngs of impoverished workers from overpopulated Europe. That such a policy could be implemented under the guise of promoting the "American dream" as set forth on the Statue of Liberty made it all the more attractive as a policy; but, more important, it made it possible to persuade the policymakers in Congress to pass the legislation that made it possible.

Not everyone in America failed to see what was happening, however. Booker T. Washington, the great African-American educator, tried valiantly to alter the course of this policy, which he knew was so disastrous to the aspirations of millions of African-Americans. He was invited to speak at the Atlanta International Exposition on September 18, 1895, and the President of the United States was scheduled to appear. Washington was determined to set forth his views on immigration policy.

That he was invited to speak was considered remarkable at the time. In his autobiography, Washington explained how the invitation came about:

As the day for the opening of the exposition drew near, the board of directors began preparing the program for the opening exercises. In the discussion from day to day of the various features of this program, the question came up as to the advisability of putting a member of the Negro race on for one of the opening addresses. It was argued that such recognition would mark the good feeling prevailing between the two races. Of course there were those who were opposed to any such recognition of the rights of the Negro, but the board of directors had their way, and voted to invite a black man to speak on opening day.32

Washington was apprehensive about giving the address. "I knew," he later recalled, "that this was the first time in the entire history of the Negro that a member of my race had been asked to speak on the same platform with white southern men and women on any important national occasion. I was asked now to speak to an audience composed of the wealth and culture of the white south, yet there would be present a large number of northern whites."32
That he was not asked to speak on any particular topic only increased his apprehension. "I was determined" he later said,

to say nothing that I did not feel from the bottom of my heart to be true and right. I felt that the board of directors had paid a tribute to me. They knew that by one sentence I could have blasted, in a large degree the success of the exposition. The papers, North and South, had taken up the discussion of my coming speech, and as the time for it drew near this discussion became more and more widespread. Not a few of the Southern white papers were unfriendly to the idea of my speaking. From my own race, I received many suggestions as to what I ought to say. I prepared myself as best as I could for the address, but as the 18th of September drew nearer, the heavier my heart became, and the more I feared that my effort would prove a failure and a disappointment.\(^{34}\)

His apprehensions were increased by predictions that his speech would be a failure.

I had been told that while many white people were going to be present to hear me speak, simply out of curiosity, and that others who would be present would be in full sympathy with me, there was a still larger element of the audience which would consist of those who were going to be present for the purpose of hearing me make a fool of myself, or, at least, of hearing me say some foolish thing, so that they could say to the officials who had invited me to speak, "I told you so."

"As I remember it now," says Washington in his autobiography, "the thing that was uppermost in my mind was the desire to say something that would cement the friendship of the races and bring about hearty cooperation between them. So far as any outward surroundings were concerned, the only thing that I recall distinctly now is that when I got up, I saw thousands of eyes looking intently into my face."\(^{36}\)

To those black members of the audience who had been contemplating emigration as a way of improving their lives, Washington told the story of a ship lost at sea. Suddenly, the ship

sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, "water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "cast down your bucket where you are." A second time the "water, water; send us water" ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered "cast down your bucket where you are." The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon river. To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land, I would say "cast down your bucket where you are." Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce.\(^{37}\)
Then Washington looked to the white members of his audience, those powerful titans of industry, employers who needed labor to keep their factories running and producing goods. “To those [of you],” he said, “who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth, cast down your bucket where you are.” If they but did so, Washington eloquently promised that “we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to interlace[e] our industrial, commercial, civil and religious life with yours.”

The speech was well received. The editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* wrote “I do not exaggerate when I say that Professor Booker T. Washington’s address yesterday was one of the most notable speeches. The whole speech is a platform upon which blacks and whites can stand with full justice to each other.” The *Boston Transcript* said “The speech dwarfed all the other proceedings and the Exposition itself. The sensation that it has caused in the press has never been equalled.” Washington met the President, and was later offered $50,000 from a lecture bureau, which he politely refused on grounds that he could not enter into “arrangements that seemed to place a mere commercial value upon my services.”

Despite the acclaim over Washington’s performance, however, his words were not heeded. The profit motive for the industrialists was too great, as was the danger of a labor shortage altering the balance of economic power between the privileged and working classes. Racial prejudice continued to be a major factor in the denial of economic opportunity to African-Americans. Immigrants continued to pour into America, eliminating almost entirely the labor shortage that had so alarmed the robber barons.

But were the fears of Washington justified? One recent study has tracked the average American unemployment rate against levels of immigration for the period 1946–1989. Immigration for the period 1941–1951 was scarcely one million. As immigration levels increased to 2.5 million in the 1960s, 4.5 million in the 1970s, and 7.3 million in the 1980s, unemployment levels rose commensurately. Under Truman the average unemployment rate was 4.6%, under Eisenhower and Kennedy the rate was 4.9%, under Nixon 5.8%, Carter 6.5%, and under Reagan 8.9%. Unemployment rates more recently may underestimate the extent of unemployment as large segments of the population of unskilled workers have given up attempting to enter the labor market.

Such aggregate figures do not, in themselves, prove cause and effect. Yet many statistics and events appear incongruous. In 1987, at a time when the unemployment rate of African-American teenagers approached 80%, “the garment makers in Los Angeles were pleading with the Immigration and Naturalization Service to allow them to import workers,” on grounds that there was a “labor shortage” of unskilled workers.
During the 1970s, most large office buildings in Los Angeles hired union workers as janitors, paying $9 an hour plus benefits. Almost all the employees were African-American. Then the building managers learned that they could do exactly what the robber barons did during the industrial revolution. They hired independent contractors, who in turn hired immigrants willing to work for the minimum wage with no benefits. Thousands of African-Americans lost their jobs, and wages remained depressed.\(^4^4\)

The taking of American jobs by illegal immigrants is sometimes justified on grounds that they are taking jobs no American will take. In fact, it is not the dirty nature of the work that keeps Americans from taking such jobs, but the depressed wages. For example, unionized jobs in garbage disposal are sought after by Americans if the wages and benefits are sufficient to feed a family, despite the dirty nature of the work.

The tide of immigrants permits racial discrimination to flourish. A Chicago Tribune survey of employers who hired illegal immigrants revealed the following reasons for not hiring Americans: "I don't think black people want to work in Chicago"; "The blacks are the most unreliable help you can get, whereas the illegal immigrants are reliable"; "the black people we've got here are uneducated and unskilled"; "black workers have high absenteeism and poor work habits."\(^4^5\) In light of such expressions of blatant racial prejudice, the question must be asked as to what these employers would do if the illegal immigrants were not available to perform jobs at low wages. Would they just go out of business, or would they turn to African-Americans, offering work-training programs and other opportunities?

The American Congress can pass civil rights laws. But no law can prevent employers from paying minimum wages that only desperate immigrants can afford to take. Had Washington's plea in 1895 been heeded, African-Americans today would be the beneficiaries of their fair share of economic prosperity. But similar pleas today still go unheeded.

In 1965, just when the hopes of African-Americans were being raised by the Civil Rights Act, Congress acted to nullify the economic hopes of millions of African-Americans by allowing in additional millions of immigrants.\(^4^6\) Over 25 million immigrants were added to the U.S. population between 1970 and 1990, dashing the hopes of millions of African-Americans.\(^4^7\)

A 1992 Study for Immigration Studies has concluded:

When blacks ask why their economic plight has not improved since the Civil Rights Act took effect in 1965, one answer is that the Immigration Act passed the same year. Since then, the importation of millions of foreign workers into U.S. inner cities has done two things: It has provided an alternative supply of labor so that urban employers have not had to hire available black jobseekers,
and the foreign workers have oversupplied labor to low-skill markets. That has kept the jobs in a seemingly perpetual state of declining real wages which are incapable of lifting unskilled black workers out of poverty. Whether intended or not, the present immigration policy is a revived instrument of institutional racism.48

Despite a 1992 Harris Poll that revealed that 63% of African-Americans feel that immigrants were taking jobs from them,49 their pleas have not been acknowledged any more than those of Booker T. Washington were in 1895.

Aside from the effects of immigration on wage levels and the direct economic impact on American minorities, what are the net benefits and burdens of immigration on the American economy? Although this is currently the subject of fierce debate, no one denies that immigrants make a contribution. Corporations benefit immensely from low wages, as they have ever since the Civil War.

A study by Gary Inhoff has concluded that benefits of immigration are reaped primarily by the rich. He notes that "if an influx of illegal professionals could lower the wages of the overpaid, of doctors and lawyers, rather than the wages of the poor, then there might be some economic benefit to their coming to this country. But doctors and lawyers would not allow that to happen. Instead, it is low-wage labor markets, the wages at the bottom that are being depressed."50 The Study concludes that immigration "widens the differences between classes in the United States; it keeps down the price of hiring a maid or a gardener for the rich while it makes things worse for the poor."51

Supporters of increased immigration argue that the United States does benefit from the influx of some highly educated immigrants in high-tech industries. They point to the "brain-drain" as an example of how the United States benefits by luring such people away from their impoverished native lands. Business Week recently gloated that "the U.S. is reaping a bonanza of highly educated foreigners."52 Although the percentage of highly skilled immigrants is small compared to unskilled immigrants, the fact that other countries, many of them poor, have spent scarce funds educating the privileged few who then immigrate to the United States taking their skills with them, hardly seems an admirable justification for America's lax immigration laws.

Other arguments in favor of immigration hardly merit discussion. Social historian Thomas Nichols, for example, has argued in his essay "America Should Welcome Immigration," that "vast sums have fallen to immigrants and their descendants by inheritance, for every few days we read in the papers of some poor foreigner becoming the heir of a princely fortune, which in most cases, is added to the wealth of his adopted country."53
It has more reasonably been suggested that even though immigration benefits the rich, some of the benefits may trickle down to the middle class. For example, not all of the cost savings of low wages are retained by the wealthy; a portion of the cost savings may be passed on in the form of lower prices for some products. While many Americans might indeed benefit from lower prices of some goods the same might be said of prices of goods produced by the slave labor of political prisoners in China. Many, if not most Americans, however, would be willing to pay a little higher price for goods not made by exploiting the poor and wretched. They might also be willing to pay slightly higher prices if it meant new job opportunities for unemployed African-Americans—opportunities that all the Civil Rights laws have failed to provide. In New York City, a torrent of hundreds of thousands of illegal Chinese immigrants has caused fancy restaurant prices to fall. However, the influx of illegals has caused the dish-washing wages of all illegals to fall to $700/month from $1200/month just 4 years ago.

In any case, however, any benefits must be weighed against the costs. In California, Los Angeles County estimates that 23% of its school budget goes to educate recent immigrants. Over 12,500 illegal immigrants are in California state prisons alone, at a cost of $20,000 each—or a total that approaches half a billion dollars. Santa Clara County estimates that 40% of its welfare recipients are recent immigrants. The San Diego Union-Tribune cited the case of the daughter of a Mexican millionaire who obtained $130,000 in Medi-Cal payments after crossing the border to obtain care at the San Diego Medical Center.

It has been argued that, at the federal level, immigrants may now be contributing more in social security premiums than they now receive in benefits. Even if this is true, however, “federal costs for the citizen children of ineligible children of alien parents, including Medicaid and Aid to Families With Dependent Children, ha[s] risen from approximately $57.7 million in 1988–89 to $140.5 million in 1990–91, and could reach $533 million by the year 2000.” Public assistance and education costs of immigrants cost $2.2 billion in 1990. At the state and local level costs are also spiraling. Governor Wilson of California recently demanded $1.5 billion from the federal government to help defer the costs of state and local services to immigrants.

A COALITION OF INTERESTS

A 1992 Roper Poll revealed that the vast majority of Americans, including African-Americans and Hispanics, want stricter immigration laws and enforcement. Of those polled in California 63% believed that there were too many immigrants in the state. A 1992 Louis and Harris Poll revealed that a majority of African-Americans believe immigration
is bad for the country. Other polls, including one conducted by Hispanic Opinion and Preference Research Inc., revealed that “70% of Hispanics did not want Latin Americans to be given preferential treatment in immigration.” An Immigration and Naturalization poll revealed that only 11% of Hispanics would like to see more visas granted for people from Mexico.

Why then, in a democratic society, are present immigration policies continued? The answer lies in a coalition of interests. The Mexican government, under pressure to provide for an exploding population, sees emigration as a politically more popular policy than confronting the population problem directly by advocating family planning programs, dealing with the issue of abortion, or taking on the Catholic Church. Wealthy American industrialists and employers do not wish to lose access to an easily exploitable pool of cheap labor, or be forced to turn to the large pool of currently unemployed African-Americans. The result is the passage of immigration laws that reflect both greed and hypocrisy. Caught in the middle is the hapless immigrant whom the American Border Patrol cannot even protect from robberies and beatings along the border.

Perhaps the most cynical aspect of American immigration laws is that there is only the barest pretense of enforcing them. In the 1980s the number of border patrol agents patrolling both the Mexican and Canadian borders was “smaller than the number of transit police of New York City’s buses and subways.” The assignment of only a few hundred agents to enforce employer sanctions across the entire United States has made a mockery of the employer sanctions bill. Needless to say, a powerful business community has not pushed for more resources to be allocated for such enforcement. Thus, the 1986 Amnesty program, billed as a “compromise” by rewarding long-term violators of immigration laws with residency in exchange for prosecuting employers who hire illegal aliens, has turned out not to have been a compromise at all, but rather a cynical ploy to avoid the inconvenience of having to enforce the immigration laws against the most blatant violators of U.S. laws.

Thus, despite the rising tide of public opinion in favor of reform, there is unlikely to be meaningful reform as long as powerful business interests can continue to exploit the misfortunes of the Third World’s underclass, and as long as countries such as Mexico can relieve their population pressures by condoning and even encouraging the exploitation of their citizens by American business interests.

Even the legal entry of 800,000 people in 1992 was not enough to satisfy those who seek to exploit immigrants; they also wanted to make sure that the annual flow of 200,000 illegal immigrants was not disrupted. A proposal to impose a one dollar tax on immigrants to fund a modest increase in the number of border patrol agents was met with cries of outrage. Proposals to build a high-tech laser fence across the border to
enable agents to efficiently intercept smugglers have also met with outrage. The arguments against such a fence are twofold: the first is that it would not work, and would therefore be a waste of money; the second is that it would work, in which case it is compared to the “Berlin Wall” (as if a wall built to keep people in can be compared to a wall to keep illegals out). The Mexican government has also let it be known that they would consider any such effective methods of controlling immigration to be an “affront”—although the Mexican government’s strict enforcement of its own immigration laws on its southern border with central America apparently does not qualify as an affront.

Similar proposals to issue tamperproof I.D. cards, or to install a computerized network that could instantaneously verify electronically the social security numbers of job applicants, have been met with protests as well, despite the fact that such a system would be no more burdensome than existing credit-card verification systems. Most exploiters of immigrants are perfectly happy with a system that allows an illegal immigrant’s use of cheap counterfeit documents to insulate the employer from meaningful sanctions.

Some who have resisted meaningful reform have suggested that the immigration problem (if there even is one) could be solved simply by “enforcing the labor laws.” While all laws should certainly be enforced, the notion that a government unable to muster enough border patrol agents to intercept even a small percentage of illegal border crossings could somehow patrol the thousands of back-alley sweatshops around the nation and monitor their employment practices is not easily comprehended. Even if a small handful of such enterprises could be shut down through extended legal action, they would doubtless reappear in a matter of hours or days in some other nameless alley. In any case, the dismal record of enforcing employer sanctions provides little grounds to believe that “enforcing the labor laws” would be any more successful in preventing the exploitation of illegal immigrants.

There is hope, however, that if Americans begin to see that such reform might lead to the kind of social and economic justice so long denied to its most deprived citizens, and for which Booker T. Washington was such an eloquent advocate, the interests of all citizens may ultimately be served. True immigration reform would also lead to third world countries facing their own population problems and finding solutions that would serve the interests of all their citizens.

**IMMIGRATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

The economic and social problems associated with immigration have thus far dominated the current debate over policy. But it is now clear that global population problems around the world will never be solved if
countries are permitted to use emigration as a means of deferring Malthusian consequences. For one thing, a day of reckoning must come. At some point the receiving country too will be filled to capacity.

Only recently have environmental groups come to recognize the relationship of immigration policies to the environment. Nevertheless, groups such as the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society, while considering the issue, have thus far hesitated to take an active role. The Federation for American Immigration Reform, which was formed by board members of population-control groups, has expressed its view that groups such as the Sierra Club are "avoiding immigration out of fear of being labeled racist or xenophobes." 68

In California, a group calling itself Californians for Population Stabilization, noting that "all ethnic groups—blacks, whites, Latinos—favor lower levels of immigration," claims that "environmental arguments are crucial to the political debate over immigration because they are persuading more and more liberals to join the anti-immigrant base." 69

Meanwhile, in 1993, the Sierra Club was only conducting "internal discussions," but the head of the Club’s population committee has acknowledged that "there are already too many of us. Short of wars or plagues, reducing immigration and fertility levels are the only ways of meeting the goal of stabilizing or reducing population." 70

While acknowledging an environmental component to the immigration issue, however, no major environmental group has made any major policy statements in this area. Nor have any major family planning or population control groups taken a clear stand on immigration issues. Even the limited discussions taking place have acknowledged only the NIMBYism aspect of immigration, the notion that immigration harms a nearby environment because additional people make demands on resources. 71 Thus, the Californians for Population Stabilization emphasize that "urban areas compete with farms and wildlife for water. New subdivisions put pressure on fragile ecosystems such as the Sierra and raise the demand for timber. Already overcrowded Yosemite becomes even more so." 72

In fact, the major threat to the environment comes not from the fact that humans already living move from point A to point B. The true threat comes from the failure to initiate family planning programs—a failure made possible and convenient by the lax immigration policies of human-importing nations. As an expanding human population expands its habitat and demand for resources, there is less room, and fewer resources left for the rest of the world’s creatures. The current immigration policies of the human-importing countries accelerate this process.

The citizens of Kisii must be reminded. There will not always be someplace else to move to.
NOTES

4. See Chapters 1 and 2.
6. Id.
7. Id.
8. Id.
9. Id., p. 28.
11. Id.
12. Id.
14. Id.
15. Id.
16. Id.
17. Id.
18. Id.
20. Id.
21. Id.
22. Id.
25. Id.
26. Id.
27. Id.
28. Id.
29. Id.
30. Id.
33. Id.
34. Id., p. 22.
35. Id., p. 24.
36. Id.
37. Id., p. 25. Ellipses indicating deletions are omitted.
38. Id.
39. Id.
40. Id., p. 28.
41. Id.
42. Lamm, supra.
44. Id.
45. Lamm, supra, p. 154.
48. Id.
50. Lamm, supra, p. 156.
51. Id.
52. The Immigrants, supra, p. 118.
55. Id.
56. Id.
57. Id.
59. Id.
60. Id.
62. Id.
63. The Immigrants, supra, p. 119.
64. Lamm, supra, p. 204.
65. Id.
66. Lamm, supra, pp. 30–33.
67. Lamm, supra, p. 206.
69. Id.
70. Id.
71. Id.
72. Id.