

WHERE HAVE YOU GONE, HARRY REID?

An NPG Footnote

by Lindsey Grant

I recently ran across the following OpEd by Senator Harry Reid, the current Senate Majority Leader, in the *Los Angeles Times*. It is of particular interest in light of the current Senate consideration of S744, a proposal to rewrite the immigration laws to legalize illegal immigrants and increase the flow of immigration.

Cut Legal Admissions by Two-Thirds

■ Immigration: A senator offers a 'stabilization' bill.

By HARRY REID

The federal government has been grossly irresponsible in its neglect of mounting immigration problems, even as these problems place unbearable burdens on states like California. It is regrettable that states have reached a point where the only avenue they have for justice is the courts. It is even more regrettable that this Administration and this Congress stand by and allow the federal courts to decide the nation's immigration policies.

Taxpayers simply cannot continue to sustain new populations the size of San Diego or the state of Nevada every year. California is sending up the red flag that Washington should heed. Unprecedented demands are being placed on job markets, schools, hospitals, police, social safety nets, infrastructure and natural resources. Unlimited new arrivals pressuring these systems threaten to overwhelm them.

In the West, we have a real appreciation for dwindling natural resources. We fight for water from the Colorado River,

the Truckee River and other scarce sources. We endlessly debate policies governing public lands, mining and livestock grazing. But rarely do we consider the burdens that millions of new people place every year on our water supplies, air quality, parks, lakes, recreation areas and public lands.

Our doors should remain open, but only wide enough to admit those to whom we can realistically offer opportunity and security. To leave the door unguarded is to create an environment in which no one can live securely and peacefully. And so I am sponsoring a bill in the Senate to reduce immigration—legal and illegal.

Most politicians agree that illegal immigration should end. My legislation would double border patrols and accelerate the deportation process for criminals and illegal entrants. But many lawmakers feel that lowering legal immigration is too dicey. This is a cop-out.

My legislation calls for a reduction of legal immigrants from the current level of about 1 million admissions a year to approximately 325,000. Even that more realistic level means 25,000 newcomers entering every month, looking for jobs, housing and education.

When I sat down with the Rev. Jesse

Jackson not long ago to discuss immigration, he advised me to look at the moral implications of what I proposed. I did, and I found the moral imperative on Congress and the President to enact change, quickly. Americans have sat freely around a bountiful dinner table. Now, the table is becoming overcrowded. People are squeezing in and elbowing each other to get what they want. Unless changes are made, our dinner table eventually will collapse, and no one will have security and opportunity.

Opponents of immigration reform cry racism or point toward our historic role as a nation of immigrants. Charges of racial bias are unfounded. Unlike anything proposed before, my Immigration Stabilization Act explicitly prohibits discrimination in refugee admissions.

The real injustice to future Americans would be to do nothing. America is proud of its immigrant tradition. This tradition should be reconciled with our responsibility to create a better country in which to live. If we do not take responsible steps today, we will be forced to take radical and sadly preventable action only a decade from now.

Harry Reid is a Democratic U.S. senator from Nevada.

That says everything about immigration that needs to be said. I would be proud to have written it myself. He even proposes an annual gross immigration limit, 325,000, which is close to the net immigration of 200,000 that I proposed as part of a way to reverse U.S. population growth (NPG FORUM "The Two Child Family", May 1994).

The only problem: that OpEd was dated August 10, 1994.

What is he saying now? "... we are all the better for having hardworking new immigrants as contributing members of our communities – shopping as customers in our stores, paying payroll taxes,

and giving to local churches and charities.” (from his website) or: “For me, this issue is personal. The stories I often hear in Nevada’s communities are heartbreaking. Our broken system tears families apart every day; it leaves our country vulnerable and it is not good for our economy. I will continue working closely with the community to get this bill over the finish line.” (4-10-2013 press release)

What has changed Harry’s mind? Certainly, not the numbers. Since 1994, U.S. population — driven by immigration — has risen 55 million, or 21%. The problems he described have all gotten worse. Unemployment has soared, and the proportion of the population with jobs has gone 'way down. Environmental degradation and the pressures on resources have gotten worse. Climate warming has turned from an hypothesis to a reality.

Why did Harry change his mind? Politics. He is intimidated by the very force that led to that long-ago OpEd. He wants to please the growing Hispanic minority, which has risen from 10% to 17% of the U.S. population — 54 million — since 1994. I think perhaps he misreads their feelings. Polls can prove what the pollster wants to prove, but there is a long history of polls showing that a majority of U.S. Hispanics, like other groups, opposes high immigration. Correctly so, in terms of their own interests. He is listening to self-appointed immigration advocates.

If Harry is interested in the future of the country, and not just in his own job, he will read his own old OpEd, and act on it.

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His books include: *VALEDICTORY: The Age Of Overshoot*, *The Collapsing Bubble: Growth and Fossil Energy*, *The Case for Fewer People: The NPG Forum Papers* (editor), *Too Many People: The Case for Reversing Growth*, *Juggernaut: Growth on a Finite Planet*, *How Many Americans?*, *Elephants in the Volkswagen*, and *Foresight and National Decisions: the Horseman and the Bureaucrat*.

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