

La Raza's Lapdogs

Why the elite press won't report seriously on immigration

By Steve Sailer

DESPITE ITS TRADITION of editorializing in favor of openness and public participation, the prestige press offered virtually no complaints when the Senate recently voted to skip holding hearings on the convoluted "comprehensive immigration reform" package worked out behind closed doors by Sens. Ted Kennedy and John Kyl with Bush administration support. Nor did the mainstream media object when Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid announced his intention to ram this vast concoction of highly debatable effect through the Senate in one week, a ploy that even Reid soon admitted was wrong.

You might think that our nation's elites would find immigration the single most fascinating domestic policy issue to explore. After all, besides ourselves, nothing is more interesting to us than other human beings. And few political questions would seem more compelling than which of the 6 billion foreigners we want to become our fellow citizens, neighbors, and, eventually, the ancestors of our descendants. Immigration policy directly affects nearly every other question of our day, from education and crime to economic inequality and healthcare costs.

Yet the national newspapers cover immigration with no more enthusiasm than they muster for local zoning board meetings. When they deign to discuss immigration at all, their approach is superficial and sentimental. Debate is routinely denounced as "divisive," as if democracy is the opposite of division. The palpable contempt the mainstream media radiates toward anyone well-

informed about immigration contributes to the vapidness of its coverage.

An insightful economist, writing under the protection of anonymity, recently pointed out: "Power today very largely consists of being able to define what criticisms are off the wall, over the top, and out to lunch. ... Those who wield it do not 'run the world.' Rather they can block significant changes that reduce their power."

There may be no better example of this than how the powerful treat informed analysis of illegal immigration.

For example, recall the Amnesty Baby Boom. What, you haven't heard of it? According to a 2002 study by demographers Laura E. Hill and Hans P. Johnson of the Public Policy Institute of California, due to the 1986 amnesty (another "comprehensive" compromise, combining legalization with enforcement provisions that were never enforced), "Between 1987 and 1991, total fertility rates for foreign-born Hispanics [in California] increased from 3.2 to 4.4" expected babies per woman over her lifetime. Why? "Many of those granted amnesty were joined later by spouses and relatives in the United States." This fertility explosion among former illegal aliens choked California's public schools, leading to the expenditure of over \$20 billion for construction of new school buildings by the Los Angeles school district alone.

It's not quite accurate to say that the PPIC study was tossed down the memory hole because it was never allowed out in the first place.

Why is respectable immigration reporting so one-sided, inane, and downright dull? Just as immigration is

tied into every domestic issue, the failure to examine immigration intelligently illuminates much that is wrong with American intellectual discourse in general. Here are some reasons for this sorry state of affairs:

1. An aversion to working with numbers is common among intellectuals and media types. For instance, it's of some relevance to crafting immigration policy to know that 5 billion people live in countries with lower average per capita GDPs than Mexico. About a fifth of the 135 million people in the world of Mexican descent now reside in America, and another 40 million Mexicans tell pollsters they'd like to immigrate here. That suggests that if the *Wall Street Journal* editorial board had its way, and there were a constitutional amendment declaring, "There shall be open borders," at least a billion foreigners would try to move here. At a minimum, this quick estimate suggests that the *WSJ*'s immigration views are mad. Yet these numbers are not at all well-known because few in public life have bothered to do the simple calculations required.

2. Views on illegal immigration may be the surest status symbol. A blithe attitude toward illegal immigration conveys your self-confidence that you don't have to worry about competition from Latin American peasants and that you can afford to insulate your children from their children. Moreover, your desire to keep down the wages of nannies, housekeepers, and pool boys by importing more cheap labor advertises that you are a member of the servant-employing upper-middle class.

3. While libertarians enjoy displaying their feelings of economic superiority—their Randian confidence that they can claw their way to the top of the heap no matter how overcrowded it gets—liberals feel that laxity on illegal immigration shows off their moral superiority. Celebrating diversity has been promoted for a generation now as the highest imaginable ethical value, so the ambitious compete to be seen espousing most fervently the reigning civic religion and damning most loudly any heretics who dare to speak up.

4. It is unfashionable to admit the existence of group statistical differences. The endless campaign in American society against stereotypes has reached the point that simple acts of pattern recognition demand reflexive debunking by citation of whatever contrary example is available. “Any exception disproves the tendency” appears to be the rule.

5. The media’s dislike of reporting on averages is exacerbated by its love for man-bites-dog stories. The illegal immigrant who graduates from Cal Tech is news because it doesn’t happen very often. In contrast, the consistently dismal performance of Latino students on average—by 12th grade, immigrants are five to six grade levels behind Anglo whites, while even American-born Hispanics trail by three to four grade levels—isn’t news because it’s boring and depressing.

6. Among the privileged, if a tree falls in the forest but it’s not reported in the *New York Times*, it never happened. For example, the best estimate is that the Latino crime rate is roughly triple the Anglo white rate, which would not come as much of a surprise to anybody who doesn’t live in a cave. Yet because the major media won’t note differences in mean crime rates by ethnicity, this fact is considered outside the limits of acceptable discussion of immigration.

7. Another class marker of elite discourse is not letting the dreary realities of daily life sully discussions of affairs of

state. Both average and elite Americans observe that the children and grandchildren of illegal immigrants are more likely to become disruptive students and to join street gangs, so they both try to find schools for their children far from them. While the typical citizen draws the additional lesson from this that our government should therefore work harder to enforce the laws against illegal immigration, inside the Beltway anyone noticing a connection between the personal and the political is looked down upon as a pathetic loser who needs help from his government.

8. For public consumption, you should act as if you believe that social construction is all powerful. We shouldn’t worry about who or how many come to America because we can mold anybody into anything. Yet at the same time that elites propound the moral superiority of con-

professional provocateurs in opinion journalism. In contrast, many reporters claim to deplore partisanship, so when those twin paragons of good judgment, Ted Kennedy and George W. Bush, team up to push a bipartisan “compromise,” the bigfoots are naturally on board.

11. Ethnic nostalgia is common among Catholic and Jewish pundits. For example, Tamar Jacoby dedicated her book *Reinventing the Melting Pot* to “Aunt Bea, who was the last living link to my family’s Ellis Island generation.” Jacoby’s support for mass immigration appears driven by resentment of those now long-dead “Anglo-Saxonists” who gave the fish eye to Aunt Bea back in Nineteen-Ought-Whatever. That American Jews today are in more danger from anti-Semitic immigrants than from WASPs is of little interest compared to re-fighting battles from the early 20th century.

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structionism over selectionism, they compete furiously to get their children into the most selective colleges.

9. That the chief supporters of “comprehensive immigration reform”—the president, corporate America, Democratic Party chieftains, the Catholic Church, race racketeers, the educartel, and big media—represent more or less what a ’60s radical would have decried as The Establishment does not raise doubts in the minds of contemporary wordsmiths. God may not always be on the side of the big battalions, but public intellectuals are these days.

10. Today, Republican vs. Democrat disputes use up most of the oxygen in the public square. The immigration debate doesn’t follow partisan lines, so it doesn’t attract much interest from the

12. Open borders enthusiasm often reflects covert hostility toward African-Americans. Hispanic illegal immigrants are slowly pushing African-Americans out of the most expensive cities, such as New York, which has been losing American-born blacks since 1979. And, let’s be frank, many affluent whites are happy to see African-Americans go. The Latino influx can create a temporary dip in the crime rate. Illegal immigrants generally arrive at too mature an age to get involved in youth street gangs—but their sons, who grow up feeling territorial about their mean streets, flock to gangs.

In summary, the influential treat immigration as another topic on which they can exhibit their superiority by being oblivious to the obvious. ■

Battling Over What's Left

Will attachment to a losing war so marginalize neoliberals that their centrist influence is lost to the Democratic Party?

By Daniel Larison

"NEOLIBERALISM is a terrible word for an important movement," Charles Peters wrote in his preface to the "Neoliberal Manifesto" in the May 1983 issue of *The Washington Monthly*. As it is often used today, neoliberalism is still a terrible word for a dwindling and increasingly unpopular movement that is now haunted by its putative successes in economic and foreign policy. If neoconservatives were, in the famous formulation of Irving Kristol, "liberals mugged by reality," neoliberals might be described as liberals who sought to be more realistic in their approach to policy—though outsiders and opponents now associate neoliberalism with interventionist foreign policy and Democratic economic centrism. It is these latter associations that have tended to tar all of neoliberalism with the failures of that foreign-policy model and the disenchantment with New Democrat promises on free trade, and they threaten to drag down all of neoliberalism into the raging sea of intense Democratic antiwar sentiment and the rising economic populism embodied in the Senate election victories of Sherrod Brown and Jim Webb.

Both "neo" ideologies emerged in response to the limits and failures of liberalism, and both sought, in the words of Peters in a recent *Washington Monthly* interview, to "make government work better." At its inception, neoliberalism meant abandoning reflexive loyalty to such Democratic interest groups as

blacks and labor unions and also leaving behind knee-jerk leftist hostility to business and the military. Neoliberalism was supposed to entail a pragmatic and reformist approach to liberal ends—emphasizing entrepreneurship and competition in economic affairs ("Risk is indeed the essence of the movement," Peters wrote) while eschewing contempt for traditional "religious, patriotic and family values."

Some of its original features—support for conscription and calls for a new patronage system—seem bizarre, if not perverse, yet originally neoliberalism was not the caricature into which liberal interventionists and Democratic centrists transformed it over the past two decades. But by now the injuries caused by neoliberalism's association with the policies of centrists and interventionists will probably prove fatal, and an aggressive progressive movement may be preparing to take its place. At stake in this seemingly academic debate is the future of American liberalism, whose internecine fights are also directly relevant to the fortunes of American conservatism.

The argument between progressives and neoliberals, which we see played out in the rivalries among the leading Democratic presidential candidates—Edwards representing the former, Clinton the latter, and Obama attempting to split the difference—was encapsulated in the reaction to a recent declaration of neoliberalism's decline and fall. On March 11, the *New York Times's* David

Brooks wrote the movement's obituary in a column entitled "The Vanishing Neoliberal." He identified the last guttering flames with the rear-guard action by *The New Republic's* Peter Beinart and Marty Peretz to defend their support for the Iraq War—prior to their magazine's weak apology for supporting the invasion—and the interventionist consensus that *TNR* helped fashion with the "National Greatness" neoconservatives of *The Weekly Standard* (among them Brooks himself).

Brooks's characterization of neoliberalism and his declaration of its death elicited howls of protest from some of the neoliberal old guard, particularly *Slate* blogger Mickey Kaus, who had once been an editor at the other early neoliberal publication, *The Washington Monthly*. Kaus sought to preserve the meaning of the label as he understood it and distinguish the entitlement and tax reformism of his sort of neoliberalism from the hawkishness that became increasingly identified with other neoliberal pundits and politicians during the 1990s. Kaus cited Gary Hart as an early bearer of the neoliberal torch and remarked in an appearance on *bloggingheads.tv* that Hart's position was to be "left on warfare and right on welfare," an intriguing contrast to Beinart's call for a "muscular liberalism" and his efforts to glorify the activist internationalism of Harry Truman.

It's possible to conclude that hawkish *New Republic*-style neoliberals and