*Moratoriums are time-honored instruments in American political life. We have had them for topics ranging from the underground testing of nuclear weapons to the suspension of basketball at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas while its ethical problems were sorted out. The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) is calling for a moratorium on immigration to give the United States a 'breather' and enable it to put the immigration-policy house in order. Executive director Dan Stein presents the case.*

# Why America Needs A Moratorium On Immigration

By Dan Stein

Recent public opinion polls show that Americans are becoming more concerned about immigration. According to a recent Roper poll, fifty-five percent of the respondents support a temporary moratorium on all legal immigration, except for spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens.

A moratorium — a temporary freeze in immigration — may sound like a radical proposal. Given their support for the idea, most Americans apparently accept the concept. Many ideas that seemed radical just a few years ago are suddenly finding new acceptance at a time when many Americans believe the political process is spinning out of control. From the concept of a balanced budget amendment, to term limitations for members of Congress, to possibly electing a third party candidate for president, Americans are voicing their dissatisfaction with a political process that has lost touch with the people.

New census data from 1990 reveal that immigration is a major contributor to U.S. population growth, reshaping the culture and character of our nation, and is a partial factor in the growing gap between rich and poor. As a result of an unprecedented wave of immigration over the last 30 years, the United States now has the greatest foreign-born population in our history. And there is no end in sight. Changes made in the immigration laws in 1990 mean that today's foreign-born population of 20 million will grow to at least 30 million by the year 2000.

The stress of this unending influx is beginning to take its toll. The riots in Los Angeles, and growth projections for California as a whole, present a compelling case that, right now, America is unprepared for more people. Our schools, housing, employment, living standards and deteriorating infrastructure demand a short pause in immigration.

The idea is not new. In the 18th and 19th centuries, immigration waves were short and modest. They often corresponded to acute, short-term situations. But in the 20th century, the situation is different. The huge wave that began in 1890 started with cheap steamer fares and recruitment by labor contractors. It ended in 1921 only because Congress finally imposed limits that curtailed immigration substantially.

As noted immigration historian John Higham, and Sloan Foundation expert Michael Teitelbaum have recently observed, the lull in immigration beginning with 1920 and continuing through the mid-1960s provided the breathing space that enabled the newcomers in that large wave to assimilate and prosper.

***"As a result of an unprecedented wave of immigration over the last 30 years, the United States now has the greatest foreign-born population in our history."***

An immigration moratorium now would provide an opportunity to examine what has happened to this society in the past three decades of massive, unprecedented legal and illegal immigration. We must then move toward establishing immigration policies which will allow us to stabilize our population, halt the decline in American living

standards, and reduce the increasingly divisive cultural fragmentation and ethnic tension.

Immigration to the United States in all forms now surpasses one million annually. Nearly 3 million are on waiting lists abroad for visas to enter permanently. A recent study by the Census Bureau found that there are 20 million immediate relatives of American citizens and resident aliens who are potentially eligible for entry with an immigration preference. A 1989 *Los Angeles Times* poll in Mexico found that 4.7 million Mexicans — about 6 percent of their population of 85 million — intended to emigrate to the United States.

***"Ultimately, we need to answer this question: what should be the purpose of immigration, now and in the future?"***

All indicators show that the U.S. migrant intake system is overloaded, and is easily manipulated by fraud and deceit. Using phony documents and false claims, immigrants routinely are able to create delays and outwit overburdened hearing examiners. False claims of U.S. citizenship are nearly impossible to detect, while those who overstay visas can easily remain in the U.S. indefinitely.

Worldwide demand for settlement in the United States will escalate in the 1990s. The Third World's labor force will expand by half-a-billion job seekers in the next decade, and will look beyond the borders of their economically underdeveloped countries for economic hope. Millions of earlier immigrants will bring in family members, and political and social unrest abroad will generate millions more refugees worldwide. Like a chain letter, an initial trickle turns into a stream that becomes a river and then a flood. Like shoveling snow in a blizzard, the more rapidly immigrants are admitted by a beleaguered INS, the faster grows the backlog of relatives waiting to enter.

Because all efforts by Congress to solve these problems have quickly collapsed under intense special interest pressure, America needs a three-year moratorium to:

- reduce illegal immigration;
- implement and improve a national documents protocol to verify work eligibility;
- revise immigration laws to reduce substantially overall numbers (to around 300,000 annually); and
- complete a comprehensive analysis of the long-term effects of future immigration and population growth on the demography, the environment, and the cultural and employment / economic resources of our country.

Ultimately, we need to answer this question: what should be the purpose of immigration, now and in the future?

Until we answer that basic question, a moratorium on immigration may be the only option we have left. ■

*In the United States, bilingual controversies are the stepchild of immigration policy. For instance, if we had the same immigration policy as Japan (we're NOT advocating this...) we would have approximately the same problem with bilingualism they have: none. Hence our interest in the issue, reported on here in an article reprinted with permission from the October 1991 issue of* The American Legion Magazine © *1991. Robert McGarvey is a free-lance journalist based in Los Angeles.*

# Double Talk:

## The Bilingual Education Controversy

By Robert McGarvey

Protesters demonstrate regularly at Glenwood Elementary School. It is a school not much different from hundreds of others in the Los Angeles Unified School District, except perhaps the students at Glenwood, drawn from the bedraggled Sun Valley neighborhood, are a bit poorer than others.

The protesters, like Glenwood's students, are predominantly Hispanic. Some carry placards proclaiming that Glenwood is "racist" or "KKK." The magnet of their ire is Glenwood's Sally Peterson, a kindergarten teacher who vocally opposes bilingual education.

Peterson, founder of the lobbying group, Learning English Advocates Drive (LEAD), said her detractors are "racists who are turning their backs on the children. Bilingual education is a total disservice to the kids."

Welcome to the ongoing debate over how to teach immigrant children who speak a language other than English. "Bilingual education has become a very controversial issue," said Rosalie Pedalino Porter, former head of bilingual education for the Newton, Mass., public schools and author of *Forked Tongue,*[1] an overview of the nation's 20-year history of bilingual education. "American educators should not be calling each other 'racist,' but that's exactly what we've come to."

That opinion is especially troubling at a time when America's schools have been flooded by 2 million children with limited English proficiency. In a number of states, including Florida, New York and Texas, nearly 25 percent of the student population are non-native non-English speakers. More than 150 languages — from Haitian Creole through Khmer — are now the primary languages spoken by children who arrived on U.S. soil during the 1980s, a decade that saw a record-breaking number of immigrants — 9 million compared to 8.8 million in the historic 1901-1910 decade. Furthermore, according to the U.S. Department of Education, Spanish-speaking homes alone account for 10 percent of the nation's students, and by 2000, that's projected to increase to 12 percent.

Aggravating the problem's severity is that today's education strategies aren't working, at least not for Hispanics. Their dropout rate is a staggering 36 percent, compared to 15 percent for blacks, and 13 percent for whites. In another measure, while 24 percent of the overall American population ages 25 to 34 have graduated from college, the Hispanic rate is just 12 percent.

In earlier decades, Germans, Poles, Chinese and others arrived on U.S. shores not being able to speak a word of English and received little if any assistance from schools in acclimating to a new language. Those were the years when "immersion" — thrusting a child into an English-speaking classroom — was the guiding doctrine.

***"'Traditional bilingual education teaches the kids a little Spanish, less English, and a lot of nothing. It's a total disservice to them.' — Sally Peterson of LEAD"***

Porter, herself an immigrant from Italy who couldn't speak English when she arrived in America, vividly recalls her tearful childhood introduction to Newark, N.J., English-only classes during the late 1930s. "No help whatever was provided. It was painful," she said. "I had to learn English fast."

Why are today's newcomers treated differently?