

Immigration

By Don Lein

When immigration is mentioned people of my generation immediately think of Ellis Island. From January 1, 1892 when Annie Moore, 15, Ireland, passed through its gates until it closed in 1954, 12 million immigrants entered into the United States. Fully 40 percent of present day Americans can trace their roots back to their ancestors who came through that island.

Indeed, my grandfather at age 22 in 1904 came through the Isle of Hope and Isle of Tears. He left his native Bavaria, after having served his compulsory military service, in the hope of a better life for his family and himself. He had left the Germany created by Otto Von Bismarck replete with universal health care, workman's compensation, disability insurance and old age retirement benefits. My grandfather was intelligent enough to understand the economic consequences to the country and superficiality of these programs, especially, as an example, when the old age benefits became available at age 70 when the average life span was 45 years old.

What was the immigration experience? Why was Ellis Island called Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears? What of these huddled masses yearning to breathe free? Actually, if you were a first or second class passenger on one of the vessels filled with immigrants, your questioning prior to coming to Ellis Island was perfunctory and performed aboard ship and unless there was something amiss you speedily were processed on Ellis Island. The rationale was that if you could afford first or second class passage, you were not likely to become a public charge. Thus, the only danger you might represent was one of health, since no one believed to be contagious or a threat to public health was allowed to enter — after a two minute or less examination.

However, if the immigrant were third class/steerage, they would, in fact, have undergone two weeks of crowded, unsanitary conditions en route. Upon docking they would be herded onto a barge or ferry for Ellis Island where they would undergo a medical and legal inspection which lasted 3-5 hours, if one's immigration papers were in order. If there were any questions, however the inspection was protracted and oftentimes families were split since some members passed and others didn't. This is where Ellis Island earned it label as Isle of Tears. In truth only about 2 percent were rejected, but these were the ones most remembered, but for the 98 percent it still remained the Isle of Hope.

Fast forward until today and we hear of immigrants coming in and not undergoing the rigors that our ancestors had to go through and that seems immediately unfair. Plus, if they come in by breaking the law, that is a double affront to the legal hassles our forbears had to undergo.

Let's take a look at the record. Since the amnesty for illegal immigrants

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Seize the moment for immigration reform

By Julian Sereno

It's time to find that silver lining in the dark cloud of the Great Recession and once again tackle immigration reform. An opportunity has been created by the sad fact that the United States is broke. This has relieved pressure on our southern borders and sent many who came here seeking greener pastures moving on to seek them elsewhere.

Immigrants who remain — no matter whether they entered the country legally or not — are here for the long haul. It's time to find a way to offer a path to citizenship to those who entered without documents and have gone on to become otherwise law-abiding productive citizens.

The partisan gridlock that grips the U.S. Congress certainly presents obstacles. The Democratic majority is too busy self-destructing over health care reform at the moment (more on that next month) to do anything other than scurry about like the chickens they so closely resemble.

The Tea Party movement, which seems to be providing the ideology driving the well-drilled rats of the Republican minority, has not issued any policy statements about immigration, and there have been no Town Meetings on the subject at which they can shout down their elected representatives, should they so choose.

But let's presume that the arguments — in extremis in these starkly ideological times — are the same as they were when reform efforts failed a few years ago, before the economic bubble burst.

From the Left we will hear that the United States should exercise no sovereignty over our borders. Those who cross and get away with it should be home free, and privy to the full benefits of American society. They hold the U.S. Government responsible for those who perish trying.

Protecting our borders is one of government's most fundamental responsibilities. Disgracefully, it had been abdicated for more than 20 years, by Republican and Democratic administrations alike. That is the reason that the immigration reform of a generation ago failed. Thankfully, efforts are underway to make border

enforcement more stringent, particularly important during these days of narco-terrorism immediately across the border in question.

From the Right we will hear that the law is the law — if anyone crossed the border illegally they need to be rounded up and thrown out. No matter if they arrived as an infant and are now 35, married and supporting a family. No matter that you are demanding the arrest of 10 million fellow human beings, shipping them to camps and deporting them. It seems to me we bombed Serbia not that long ago for doing exactly that.

Do we really want to spend \$40 billion that we don't have to arrest, jail and expel the most productive workers in our society? Are we willing to raise taxes or add to the deficit to grow an enormous federal bureaucracy with law enforcement powers? What say, Tea Partiers?

If good people put ideological boogey-men to the side, it shouldn't be too difficult to compromise.

First lets close and secure the border. Then lets make it possible for undocumented immigrants already

here to become citizens without being forced to leave the country. They would need to have been here for a certain amount of time during which they worked and kept their noses clean. If their applications are accepted, they would be fined for entering the country illegally.

Fines should be stiff, not nominal, with the option they be paid over time. I suspect that folks who were willing to cross the Arizona desert to get here would be willing for fork over some bucks to be able to live here openly and legally.

All immigrants in this country, regardless of legal status, have paid their dues to become citizens. For the people who entered the U.S. without permission, it would be the last dues on the path to citizenship. They would help their new country as our treasury desperately needs the money.

Now is the time to act. Not for a while will many risking life and limb to cross illegally northward in search of work and a better life.

Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line.



Political correctness trumps free speech

Freedom of speech? Freedom of the press? They are not as free as you think.

More and more important subjects are not reported in full apparently because of political correctness. We are no longer allowed to write about what appears to be obvious. I am almost sure this column will raise many objections.

Recently the NEA awarded the Durham school system over a million bucks, yet again, to aid black male students. The NEA is the teacher's union.

These grants have been coming in for the last 40 years. The grants go all the way back to the 1970's and apparently black male students need help more than ever.

The grants obviously don't seem to be working.

What the press should be doing when they announce more such grant money is discuss the disarray of many black families and the chaotic home environment of these children. Over 70 per cent of all black children are born out of wedlock, with fathers frequently absent.

Because such a story might upset some members of black community, newspapers no longer mention it for fear of being branded as racists. The liberal political

correctness bunch has skillfully used the word "racist" like a club.

This same political correctness crowd is also always calling for a discussion on race. That's hard when their rules make it so fearsome that some whites will not openly discuss blacks, fearing any mention of black or color or race will be turned against them. Jobs and careers have been destroyed by misunderstood innocent words.

There, the circle is complete. We start over with yet another grant, with no mention of why the grants are needed. The lead paragraph of the News and Observer article about the grant is about a student from Africa who only spoke French when he arrived here a year ago — entirely avoiding mention of troubled black youth born and raised in Durham. That is as far as I got in the article because it bore no relation to the issue at hand.

They should be reporting instead that the problem is not with the schools but with students who have no functioning families.

R.L. Taylor is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. He has been a newspaperman for more than 50 years, working as a reporter, editor and publisher.

Media Meditations

by R.L. Taylor

