

Principle VI dictates that "[e]ach nation should arrange to do its own drudgery work...." But Tanton offers no clue as to what type of work falls into the latter category. I would find gardening, clerical work, or painting drudgery. Others would similarly hold idiosyncratic views of drudge work. Principle VI thus pivots on an intellectually empty concept.

Even if drudge work could be defined, Tanton offers no reason to confine the labor market to the indigenous population, other than a desire to lose economic efficiencies by artificially inflating wages and working conditions.

He economizes on the truth by likening drudgery to slavery. In any event, a nation is economically handicapped when it channels its indigenous workers into low-skill employment that can be more efficiently performed by immigrants. Tanton needs reminding of Adam Smith's sardonic scorn in *The Wealth of Nations* of those who would intrude on free markets: "The statesman who should attempt to direct private people in what manner they ought to employ their capitals [or labor] would not only load himself with a most unnecessary attention, but assume an authority which could safely be trusted not only to no single person, but to no council or senate whatever, and which would nowhere be so dangerous as in the hands of a man who had folly and presumption enough to fancy himself fit to exercise it."

Tanton's conclusion betrays a cruel heart. He pontificates that millions of would-be immigrants fleeing from genocide, persecution or hellacious conditions abroad must accept martyrdom and shun asylum: "They will have to work to change conditions they don't like rather than just move away from them."

In other words, the Kurds and Shiites in Iraq, the survivors of the Tienanmen Square massacre in the PRC, Bosnian Moslems confronting ethnic cleansing and worse, the countless victims of sanguinary civil strife in Cambodia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and Liberia, and the women consigned to be virtual sex objects in Saudi Arabia should all stay and fight in their homelands in lieu of working for political change from asylum abroad. That flinty attitude was displayed towards Jews fleeing Nazi Germany and earned a stinging reproach from history. Tanton thus seems to need the lecture of George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

[For more on Mr. Fein's views see **THE SOCIAL CONTRACT**, Summer 1994, Vol. IV, No. 4, p.297.]

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## **We've Just Begun to Migrate!**

by David Finkel

[An editor of the journal *Against the Current*, David Finkel invites any reader of **THE SOCIAL CONTRACT** who wants to see what the far left thinks to order a free sample copy by writing to him at ATC, 7012 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, MI 48210.]

Let's get it clear at the outset: The basic issues in the debate posed by Dr. John H. Tanton's essay, "End of the Migration Epoch?" aren't fundamentally matters of population pressure or demographics, but rather of *values* — what kind of society we want for ourselves, our children and grandchildren.

It's a debate also about what are the crucial obstacles to achieving such a society, and how to confront them. While these issues are sometimes veiled in Dr. Tanton's argument, in what follows I will try to be as explicit as possible.

Briefly, the society I want to be part of would have the maximum imaginable multicultural, multi-racial diversity and cohabitation, as well as a high consciousness and commitment to environmental preservation both within and beyond the boundaries of the "nation-state." Obviously, this predisposes me to welcome and advocate immigration. It's also my undisguised belief that a high degree of democratic economic planning is essential.

But wait: Aren't these ideals in conflict? Doesn't the pressure of immigration promote economic chaos, political turmoil and environmental degradation? It's necessary therefore to review this and a couple of other commonplace myths about the immigration menace.

### **Myth #1: Immigration pressure degrades our environment.**

In fact, if we look at Tanton's and my state of Michigan — where immigration is not a large-scale issue — an official government study recently told us what is obvious to the unaided eye: the chief environmental problem in the state is suburban sprawl with the attendant consequences of automobile air pollution and destruction of wetlands and farmland. We may add the results of the Greenpeace study, showing a massive threat to the Great Lakes caused

by dumping of industrial organochlorines.

Or look at two states which *do* have large-scale immigration: Florida and California. Florida's wetlands are catastrophically drying up — not, however, because of immigration but because of insane overdevelopment. Similarly, the destruction of California's desert results not from Latino or Asian immigration but from construction of suburban yuppievilles, while southern California's notorious water scarcity is caused by the huge subsidy of agribusiness.

**Myth #2: Immigration takes away jobs.**

Actually, in most circumstances immigration is both an effect and a cause of economic health (in fact one way to eliminate immigration would be to have a really massive economic depression, though I haven't seen this advocated in **THE SOCIAL CONTRACT**). As Tanton seems to recognize (he'd like to change it) in his Principle VI, immigrants do a lot of the work (e.g. in agricultural and domestic labor) that native workers won't take. They also buy things and pay taxes from what they earn.

**Myth #3: Immigration puts pressure on strained social services, notably education.**

This one is at least partly true, particularly in states like Texas and California. This, however, points to a much broader issue of state and local governments going bankrupt, quite independent of immigration, due to the massive "offloading" of responsibilities by the Reagan-Bush federal government during the 1980s. Halt immigration tomorrow and the crises of public health, functional illiteracy, violence in the schools and physical infrastructure collapse will still be acute, and still require a fundamental shift in government priorities in order to have any chance of solution.

In short, the fact that our society is undergoing an absolutely fundamental and profound crisis has nothing to do with immigration. The underlying crisis, however, is no doubt the reason why immigration can be painted as a menace by intellectual authors such as Dr. Tanton, and by actual racist *movements* like the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>1</sup>

Immigration could actively help solve some of our problems. I find it tragic that highly educated Russian scientists, who'd like to come to America, are stuck sweeping streets in Israel because political

manipulations made it impossible to emigrate anywhere else. (Few of these were motivated by ideological Zionism, and by no means are they all Jewish; some are practicing Orthodox Christians who claimed to be Jewish to get their exit visas!) Imagine the difference thousands of people like this could make, with a year's acclimatization and training, as science and math teachers in our public high schools!

More broadly, from my own perspective, *immigrants in many cases bring with them precisely the values our society has been losing.*

I'm referring here to a certain culture of social and, yes, class solidarity that are desperately needed here. I don't mean to romanticize immigrants or anyone else, individually or collectively, but here are a few recent examples.

As this is written, Chinese immigrant workers in New York — many of whom are smuggled in by unscrupulous agents under the most horrible conditions and then subjected to a form of indentured servitude — have confronted and defeated an anti-union lockout by one of Chinatown's biggest restaurants, the Silver Palace. Salvadoran janitors in Los Angeles two years ago, bringing with them the experiences of union organizing under death-squad conditions in their homeland, spearheaded a "Justice for Janitors" campaign that won union rights in several major hotels. In several midwestern states, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee has built a successful union among largely Latino migrant workers in an industry the traditional official U.S. labor movement could never touch.

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***"Dr. Tanton's essay ... leaves aside what I suggest is a crucial point: ...the development of the uniquely innovative economic system of capitalism."***

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People like this, contrary to the mythologies of arrogant nativist professors like Samuel Huntington who think they need to be "assimilated" to our "political democracy," already understand the value of democratic rights better than most — having been deprived of them and having had to fight for them, both in their homelands and here. In many cases they

also understand the value of community — much better than many affluent white Americans in privately guarded suburban subdivisions — without which the prospects for reviving our society are bleak indeed. It would not be the first time in United States history that immigrants reinvigorated a democratic political culture.<sup>2</sup>

Let's pass briefly to the theoretical content of Dr. Tanton's essay. His synopsis of the breathtaking technological transformations, especially since 1600, that have constructed our present society is instructive. He leaves aside what I suggest is a crucial point: The technological-scientific transformations of industry, transportation, medicine, communications, agriculture etc. are not autonomous but are closely bound up with, and incalculably accelerated by, the development of the uniquely innovative economic system of *capitalism*.

Once this connection is made, we confront a set of multiple contradictions that simply cannot be reduced, much as Dr. Tanton might wish, to a simplistic "migration epoch," which is but one of an entire complex of effects of the present world system.

Capitalism has, at one and the same time, created the possibility — and for at least a significant fortunate minority of us, including Tanton, myself and the readers of this journal — the reality of unprecedented human freedom and comfort, along with the most ghastly forms of human exploitation, mass murder and ecological destruction. Examples of the latter run from the African slave trade and extermination of whole peoples in the New World, to the factory conditions of the Industrial Revolution in Europe and today's maquiladoras, to the Nazi holocaust.

There is no point wringing our hands over any of this; rather we must grasp the reality we face and move forward (in my opinion, to a democratic socialist society, but we can debate the details of that another time). Mass migration of the recent past and present is an inescapable part of the dual reality of world capitalism: the technological means of travel, and the necessity imposed on peoples fleeing from shattered societies. Like it or not, this process *cannot* be stopped by barbed wire and legal codes, which is why I'm not spending much time here on Dr. Tanton's "New Decalogue" of immigration-control principles.

Instead I'd like to focus on a concluding point

that flows from the theoretical analysis. Dr. Tanton is obviously correct — even if migration were perfectly unregulated — that "the proper focus is on the 99.9 percent of people who remain at home." Inasmuch as the bulk of immigration (especially that with which Dr. Tanton and **THE SOCIAL CONTRACT** seem most concerned)<sup>3</sup> comes from the capitalist periphery or "Third World," it becomes urgently necessary to say what conditions will make it possible for that 99.9 percent to develop and survive.

The *first and essential* condition is, in fact, crystal clear. Dozens of countries, from Mexico on our border to sub-Saharan Africa, are crippled by foreign debts (in almost every case incurred by highly anti-democratic, militaristic and usually Western-backed regimes) which can never be repaid. The very possibility of economic development in the interests of their populations is blocked by interest payments and by International Monetary Fund "structural adjustment programs," which promote prosperity for the already rich and austerity bordering on starvation for the poor. *To allow the 99.9 percent to remain at home, the foreign debts must be canceled and the IMF abolished.*

Finally, there are specific issues of immigration that reduce to the most basic morality. If the United States in the past decade has been "flooded" with refugee immigrants from the countries of Mexico, Central America and Haiti, they have every right to be here — because their lives have been destroyed by the actions of successive governments of this country.

El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1980s were ruled by military death-squad regimes, governing with the connivance of several U.S. administrations, which systematically exterminated tens of thousands of civilians and forced hundreds of thousands to flee for their lives.

In the Mexican case, the new North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) greatly accelerates the destruction of the protections that Mexico traditionally accorded to its agriculture and public industries.<sup>4</sup> Increasing migration pressure is the utterly predictable result.

Yet all recent atrocities seem almost trivial in comparison with the Bush-Clinton blockade of refugees from Haiti, under which thousands have literally been physically handed over to the executioners running that country today. Few

Americans, apart from those who follow specialized bulletins and information networks on Haiti, realize the degree to which the Bush administration attempted to prevent the democratic election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, sought to subvert him afterward and almost certainly had a hand in the coup that overthrew him.

One of Aristide's worst crimes, in the eyes of the United States Agency for International Development, was attempting to raise the minimum wage from 33 to 50 cents, an intolerable affront to U.S. corporate investors there. (Many Haitian workers make much less — including those who make baseballs for export to the U.S., receiving about 14 cents an hour.)

For this reason alone, every Haitian who wishes to come here should be automatically admitted. (I can assure Dr. Tanton that 99.9 percent of them, and of those Haitians living here now, wish to return to rebuild their country when it becomes possible to do so.) To compensate for any excess population pressure created thereby, and to improve the general social climate, I for one would not object if Bill Clinton, along with ex-Presidents Bush and Reagan, their retinues, Oliver North and several thousand CIA operatives were shipped off to Haiti to live under the kind of conditions that they themselves have done so much to create.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> That intellectuals can be just as racist as the Klan is well exemplified in Samuel Huntington's "America Undone" in the same issue of **THE SOCIAL CONTRACT** (Spring 1994). Space won't permit any critical dissection here of his "twin bedrocks of European culture and political democracy." I'll simply mention one of the titular pillars of both in this century: the saintly Winston Churchill who, early in his political career, shortly after World War I, approved the aerial poison-gas bombing of civilian populations in Afghanistan, a technical innovation for which Saddam Hussein has lately been given unjust credit.

<sup>2</sup> To be sure there are also conflicts within, and among, immigrant groups as well as between immigrant and native working class populations. Working these through is centrally what democracy should be about. The scene in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* where Italians, blacks, Koreans and whites spew hate epithets at each other is disturbing, but it also illustrates the importance of people being able to yell and scream at, without killing, each other. That's the real difference between Brooklyn and Bosnia (where the *actual* differences among the Serb, Croat and Muslim Slavic populations are much smaller!).

<sup>3</sup> Reading through several issues of this journal I have not seen serious concern expressed over the very significant illegal immigration from Israel and the Irish Republic, both countries which I suppose are considered "white," or European, or whatever.

<sup>4</sup> The destruction of peasant's rights to their historic collective plots is partly what the Zapatista uprising is about. This is closely related to U.S.-Mexico "free trade" under which U.S. agricultural products will flood Mexico. One Mexican economist has told me that between four and five million displaced peasant families — upwards of 20 million people all told — may be streaming northward by the end of the decade (personal communication with Manuel Aguilar Mora).

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## Australia's New Age of Migration

by John Nieuwenhuysen

[Dr. Nieuwenhuysen is Director of the Australian Federal Government's Bureau of Immigration and Population Research. Some of the material in this article also appeared in Melbourne's Sunday Age.]

"We are fast approaching the end of the Migration Epoch," says John Tanton in his concluding section headed *End of the Migration Epoch?* Dr. Tanton should recall, however, the traditional salute on a king's death: "The king is dead! Long live the king!"

True, large scale mass permanent migration and settlement has waned as a potential solution to poverty, overpopulation, and dismemberment following wars. Nonetheless, several traditional immigrant-receiving countries, such as Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia, seem likely to continue with planned intakes. (Though in Australia, the current level of this intake is at its lowest ebb for many decades, the program, serving humanitarian — refugee, family reunion, and skilled labor objectives, continues basically to be a politically bipartisan program that will persist in years to come, perhaps at levels higher than the present.)

But more important than this continued planned permanent migration is the growth of **other** types of migration. It is a fundamental omission that Dr. Tanton's article *End of the Migration Epoch?* does not foresee or recognize the replacing significance of these other forms of movement. The point may be illustrated by reference to Australia, but for these purposes Australia is not unique, and the same forces