

CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPIC OF THE WEEK

Do illegal immigrants REALLY bleed us dry?

(Excerpts of a Colorado Springs Gazette Newspaper article, 5/23/10, by Wayne Laugesen)



“Every man and woman may be regarded as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father.”
(Pope Benedict XVI)

“Much of the most recent rise in anti-illegal immigration sentiment [including the recent passage of a law in Arizona] is rooted in anger and resentment. Those emotions are fueled by silly math, regarding the costs of aliens coupled with recession anxiety. Most Americans aren’t bigots on a crusade against people with brown skin, as critics of anti-immigration hysteria too often charge. More typically, activists who fight against illegal immigration are overtaxed, overburdened and underpaid Americans, of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, who have bought [into the] false arguments that say immigrants add to their pain by costing them money. Their anxiety is easy to understand.

Jack martin, director for the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), told ABC News that illegal aliens cost each American household “in the neighborhood of a couple thousand dollars a year.” Accepted at face value, that stands to enrage working Americans who barely cover their mortgages and the costs of food and health care.

Instigators of rage are easy to find on this issue, and they deal in funny math that dismisses the value of work. Take Dean Martin, for example, who’s the Arizona state treasurer. Martin says his state loses up to \$2.5 billion a year to illegal immigrants. It’s infuriating, if true. But it’s not true.

Most conservatives would be embarrassed if they understood the truth behind the hysterical, statist money claims they react to. The numbers are based on the estimated costs to society of schooling illegal immigrants and providing their medical care, incarceration and various social benefits (i.e., food stamps and other direct welfare subsidies) that millions probably receive and should not receive. Anger toward those costs is [understandably] justified. Added to those costs are the highest possible estimates of what government isn’t collecting from illegal immigrants in taxes.

What’s never factored in are the monumental economic contributions made by illegal aliens as humans who work. ... When an [undocumented person] cleans a motel room, they create wealth by providing a service that moves society forward. When he or she nannies a child, that person

helps create wealth. Nobody could afford to pay them [farm workers, etc.] their value, so their jobs are not social gifts. The majority of illegal school children, educated at public expense, will grow to create more wealth than they consume. By producing wealth in excess of consumption, humans improve the social condition.

The funny-math claims also neglect to account for earnings undocumented people spend in the United States, paying sales taxes, promoting trade and driving the production of wealth. By some estimates, undocumented immigrants compose 5 percent of the U.S. economy.

What we need is less *illegal* immigration. That means we must secure the border and reform our national immigration laws. Reform must safely maximize ...