

Garrett Hardin

continues to stir up strong emotions in response to his "Lifeboat Ethics," first postulated in CQ in 1975. He is an economic biologist principally interested in taboo subjects.

I used to look on the Statue of Liberty as a sweet gesture to the rest of the world; but for years now I have viewed it as pornography of the most reprehensible sort.

Not the statue itself; after all, the lady is modestly draped and the original title was "Liberty Enlightening the World." No harm there.

But 17 years after the statue was erected some busybodies managed to get Emma Lazarus's appalling poem inscribed at its base: "Give me your tired, your poor/Your huddled masses, yearning to be free/ The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,/ Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me:/ I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

It is both natural and commendable to want to help others. As a matter of policy we assume that other people are as good as we are. If taking in an immigrant helps him, we would like to do it. But notice: I said *an* immigrant, that is, *one* immigrant. Singular need, singular ethics.

But there isn't just one would-be immigrant out there: there are millions. About 2,000 millions, to be exact, all of whom are poorer than our poorest Americans. And the world's poor are increasing by some 40 million a year.

Our hearts may be willing, but our resources can't be stretched that far. Such vast numbers tell our heads to bid our hearts to sing another tune.

The jobs immigrants take are foreclosed to residents. Of course masses of immigrants create some jobs too, but not as many as they fill. Some slick economists say otherwise; they can afford to be indifferent to the plight of workers because there are no economists in the swarm of immigrants.

Unfortunately for society many business operators stand to benefit in the short run from more immigration. As they see it, more people equals more customers, more demand equals higher prices. With more laborers on tap, the bargaining position of the unions is made worse. So don't expect businessmen to oppose immigration.

You might think that union bosses would be against immigration. Some of them are. But many of them actually seek immigrants, figuring the newcomers will one day join the union, thus increasing the bosses' power.

Employers often complain of a "labor shortage." But so long as there are unemployed there is no real labor shortage. Pay enough — make the conditions of work right, and the jobs will be filled.

Take nursing. Hospitals are always complaining about the nursing shortage. But in every big city registered nurses by the hundreds fill other jobs because they got fed up with nursing conditions. Increase the pay, improve the working



conditions, give nurses a higher status, and the "shortage" will disappear.

Instead, the medicos import more subservient women from poor regions like Southeast Asia. This technique enables employers of all sorts to avoid improving the work conditions. When the first wave of immigrants becomes independent enough to take other jobs, a new wave of immigration brings in more subservient people. Thus does the immigrant-siphon make our population grow.

Population growth was fine when we were a young country with a wealth of unused resources. But now, more population means more unemployed, more homeless, more violence and traffic gridlock. Technology never catches up with traffic.

Many highly prized things cannot be increased as population grows: for instance, spacious beaches, wilderness, quiet redwood forests. The more people the worse off we are for these amenities. Technology can't help.

What should we do? First we have to produce a revolution in thinking. Over and over we must say to ourselves, "Bigger is NOT better; MORE POPULATION IS WORSE." Then we need to blast Lazarus's pornography off the Statue of Liberty. Maybe we can run a prize contest to find a new Lazarus to write a wiser poem for the 21st century: a poem that praises other people for staying home and solving their problems on their own turf.

With more breathing space we will have a better chance to solve our problems here. ■

**SPECIAL INAUGURAL REPRINT ISSUE: INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT TOOLS
AND IDEAS Whole Earth Review Dedicated to the Incoming Administration 20 January
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