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Hemphill: My problems with illegal immigration

My problems with illegal immigration are economic and educational.

The Civil Rights Project of Harvard University has sued the state of California because its studies show that the dropout rate of minorities in California exceeds 50 percent.

It just appears to me that California does not need to import millions of illiterates – we have a sufficient number! In fact, too many!

The Immigration and Naturalization Service has Green Cards available for investors who are willing to, for example, invest \$500,000 in an industry with high unemployment. It has Green Cards available for people willing to hire x-number of extra people to a company that employs the applicant for the Green Card. It offers Green Cards to investors who start companies in the United States and hire a certain number of people.

Immigrants? There are some people we need and some people for whom we already have a surplus – and illiterates are in the second category. We can logically expect investors to pay taxes — lots of taxes — and we can expect them to pay for their medical costs and have, statistically, few children in violent gangs.

Overall, as a society we want more investors and few illiterates. What we have is just the opposite – we have more people in the wagon and fewer people pulling the wagon.

I am not making a value judgment as to the “worthiness” of people in either category. When I describe “class” I usually offer Jose, an elderly yard worker I employed in the ‘70s. When he walked into a crowd he commanded attention — you knew he was “somebody,” as Jesse Jackson says. He was “El Jefe” in Green Valley, and all of the illegal workers came from Jose’s town, or were banned from coming by him, depending on their behavior.

If it were left to me, I would give him a permanent Green Card, and give him 100 more to distribute!

But as a national policy, immune to personal information and dependent upon cold, hard statistics, we need a better balance than we have between producers and consumers...between taxpayers and tax consumers.

We can have our cake and eat it too. We need guest workers – we do not need “guest families.” It is the families who join gangs, clog our schools and retard our education system, and cost us the closure of emergency rooms across the state because of the lack of payment. It is not the illegal workers who cause our problems, it is their families and we need an unaccompanied guest worker program.

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Our military personnel make unaccompanied deployments every day, and if it is good enough for our military it is good enough for guest workers.

After several decades as "The Mexican Connection" in Green Valley, I have great empathy for illegal immigrants, but not for illegal immigration. I have fed them, clothed them, housed them, collected their debts from unscrupulous Anglos who refused to pay them with a threat to call "La Migra" – and accompanied them personally through the 1986 Reagan Amnesty.

There are humane solutions to what is a major national problem...and this column will offers those solutions in due course.

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