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"Freedom of the Press belongs to those who own one."

A. J. Liebling of the New Yorker

September 4, 2001



Wall Street Journal Hits a Clinker

Paul Gigot, the new Editorial page editor of the Wall Street Journal and longtime columnist for that newspaper has hit a clinker.

An otherwise brilliant journalist, Paul has come out in favor of complete and automatic amnesty for illegal Mexican aliens, a Bush proposal that even Bush has backed away from.

First, my background on the subject. For many years I was the "Mexican Connection" in the Green Valley area of North Poway. I am bilingual, and I openly used Mexican labor who worked and lived on my property. I acted as their unpaid agent when Gringos refused to pay laborers for the work, and I never failed to collect their wages for them. The INS once told me that they knew what I was doing and drove miles from me so they would not see. I have some great tales to tell on the broadmindedness of the California Highway patrol and the INS, but that is for another day.

When the WSJ came to California in the early 70s to do a front page series on illegal Mexican workers, they interviewed the Assistant Attorney General for the California. At the end of the interview they asked him, "Who can we interview to take the other side?" The Assistant Attorney General laughed and gave the WSJ my phone number.

In 1986 I stood in line, the only Gringo in a line of hundreds of Mexican workers seeking amnesty that was to be a "one-time" grant. I obtained



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citizenship for three particularly sterling men and their families.

It cannot logically be argued that I am prejudiced against Mexicans, but I do oppose the blanket amnesty being proposed by the Bush administration. It is a stupid proposal and almost guarantees the immediate operation of the Law of Unintended Consequence.

Blanket and automatic amnesty punishes those who have waited, in some cases decades, to legally immigrate into the United States and it rewards lawbreakers. Since such an amnesty will come just 15 short years after the last amnesty, it sends the message to people of all countries that if you can cross the border for a short period of time you can expect still another amnesty, thereby offering an incentive to further break the law for many millions more.

America has an unskilled stoop-labor shortage, and Mexico has a poverty problem, but blanket and automatic amnesty is the wrong solution. Many years ago I was a panelist on a cable talk show called "On Edge." Former Democratic Congressman Lionel Van Deerlin, whom I have debated on several public occasions, was on the show. During a break in the taping the Congressman admitted to me that the biggest mistake of his decades in Congress was to lead the fight against the Bracero program.

The reinstatement of a Bracero program, permitting hundreds of thousands of Mexican and other nationalities to work a three-year period and then return to their home countries, would solve the problems of all of the participating countries without exacerbating an already-difficult legal problem.

Yes, the labor unions will oppose the institution of a Bracero program, because they are short time employees and cannot easily be unionized. Too bad, but granting amnesty every 15 years just acts as a magnet for those who can keep their heads down until the next amnesty - assuring the need for more amnesties.

Bad idea.

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"Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter."
(a 1786 letter to Edward Carrington by Thomas Jefferson)

