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FOREWORD

Immigration to the United States has changed dramatically in recent years, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Immigrants are streaming to our borders in greater numbers than ever before, and the vast majority of them arrive not from Europe, but from the less developed regions of the world. This change in immigration is the result of a host of factors: mushrooming Third World populations, a vast and widening income gap between nations, the widespread image of an opulent American lifestyle depicted by radio, television and film, improvements in transportation, and, perhaps most significantly, the inability of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to adequately enforce existing legislation.

This "new immigration" will have a dramatic and permanent effect on the country. During the last century, the assimilation of European peoples carried some ugly consequences. There were social costs associated with the formation of America's melting pot. Similarly, there will be social costs in assimilating a large and diverse group of non-Europeans, particularly in an era of high unemployment and low economic growth. And even if cultural barriers can be erased, racial differences will continue to exist. Indeed, if present trends are maintained, the American population itself will lose its "Anglo" character, mimicking the demographic changes that have occurred in Miami, Houston, and Los Angeles. The new immigration will transform America from an ethnic melting pot to a racial polyglot.

Mexico, our largest source of immigrants, will increase its population some eightfold in this century alone. The devaluation of the peso in 1982 increased the relative buying power of the dollar, and consequently enhanced the attractiveness of employment in the United States. The sluggish world demand for crude oil, a staggeringly high rate of population growth, the scarcity of foreign exchange, and a massive foreign debt have slowed Mexican economic growth. The necessary effect of all these events will be to further increase migration to the United States.

Conditions in Mexico are illustrative of the problems facing America's other principal donor countries. The new immigration is just beginning, and American lawmakers have only recently become cognizant of its ramifications. America was, and will continue to be, the destination of the world's huddled masses; the time is now to decide if the door is to remain open or to close.

This symposium is an attempt to provide some new thinking on this timely

subject. The articles have been submitted by scholars and practitioners with diverse academic backgrounds and perspectives. They address many of the most important issues concerning contemporary American immigration, and were selected to represent both the “liberal” and the “conservative” viewpoints. The symposium format offers the advantage of allowing such diversity of opinion from which some badly needed clarification of the issues may emerge.

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