

## **Immigration and identification: Interviews with Alan Simpson**

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6178 words

1 January 2001

Migration World Magazine

MWM

30-36

Volume 29, Issue 3; ISSN: 1058-5095

English

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This article develops from three conversations about immigration and identification issues with former Senator Alan Simpson (R-WY), in May 1997 and July 1998 at the Kennedy School of Government. It covers the history and impact of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. It focuses on the laws potential discriminatory effects and its impact on American citizens. It explores the politics of immigration legislation, alternative policies for immigration reform, and issues about a worker or national identity card. This transcript was edited for length and to bring similar topics together.

### INVOLVEMENT IN IMMIGRATION ISSUES

Sobel: After reading your book, *Right in the Old Gazoo: A Lifetime of Scrapping\_ with the Press*, and attending the immigration session in your Kennedy School course on the legislative process, I thought it would be interesting to explore some of these issues with you.

I'd like to start with how you got involved with the immigration issue, and in particular, what was the motivation behind what was originally called the Simpson-Mazzoli Act [ 1982]. Simpson: I came to the Senate in 1979, and immigration was a terribly troubling issue, as were refugee issues. There was congressional [representation] on the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy. I can't remember the exact composition, but Charlie Mathias was there, and Ted Kennedy (D-MA), Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ) and myself. And from the House, [Hamilton] Fish (R-NY), Peter Rodino (D-NJ), Romano Mazzoli (D-- KY).

I went to Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker (R-TN), and said, 'I'm not interested in doing this. I've legislated for 13 years, never been involved in it. How did I get stuck on this?' He said, 'You're the junior member of the Judiciary Committee and you're it. I'd like you to serve. It's a presidential nomination! And so I did.

I went on the commission and I knew nothing on the issue. I had a staff person who had a doctorate from Berkeley and one from Harvard. He knew the issues, but he came at it with kind of a harder edge than I had. So I just had to go to work, to learn. Ruben Askew (D-FL), the former governor of Florida, was the chairman originally. He dropped out and appointed Father Ted Hesburgh (President Emeritus of Notre Dame from 1952-

1987) as chairman.

We went around the country, had hearings, put in a lot of time. Out came a report on what to do with legal and illegal immigration. I'll bet it's the first time in the nation or since in Washington, D.C., where a report came off the shelf and actually became law. Hesburgh was a great supporter. Mazzoli was a Notre Dame grad [ 1954]. Hesburgh got me an honorary degree in Notre Dame when I finished my work in 1987. We went to work, and got our product into a basic bill. We had hearings and decided not to do double hearings - it's just nuts bringing separate witnesses, a waste of time. We had to get joint hearings. We had to work like hell to get that done. We were new and eager and dumb.

Sobel: What were the political factors pushing for immigration reform at that time?

Simpson: Such ugly things like the Bracero Program and Operation Wetback. Back in the 1960s, any time there was a downturn, they'd try to throw out anybody here illegally or guest workers. Ray Marshall was on the commission; he was the Secretary of Labor. Things were not good. The Refugee Act [ 1980] had been passed by Ted Kennedy. This was before the Mariel boatlifts from Cuba [April 1, 1980 -- Sept. 25, 1980]. This was a continuing thing where nothing was done because Jim Eastland (D-MS) was chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and he had a lot of cotton fields and a lot of people working on them. We didn't know where they came from, but they were sure good workers.

The real issue was the most stupefying law in the history of man, which was on the books. The law said it was legal to hire an illegal, but illegal for the illegal to work.

Sobel: The Texas Proviso.

Simpson: That's right, the Texas Proviso. It's not a loophole, just a gaping, sucking chest wound. So you were living a lie all over America. People were being used, and they were in the dark. They were illegal, they were here and expendable and exploited.

Sobel: How do you look at the trade-offs, the benefits and the costs of both the amnesty and the employer sanctions in that law?

Simpson: We had a three-legged stool: increased enforcement, amnesty, and large sanctions. Couldn't have one without the other. People said, you can have more enforcement. We could do that. Because we don't know how many people in this country are here illegally, now we're going to have to declare legalization, or amnesty to those people. We set a date.

We needed to do all that, and got hell for it. I never knew how many would come forward, but 2.9 million people were legalized.

Sanctions were something that the Democrats worked on in the early '70s. [House Judiciary Chairman Peter] Rodino (D-NJ) had tried to do that, at the behest of the labor movement. That later became not a partisan issue, but now it tends to be a bit of one. Sobel: You're suggesting that the Democrats were behind the employer sanction provisions?

Simpson: No, the original employer sanctions bill was a solely a labor issue in the early '70s when Rodino was pushing it.

Sobel: And what was the motivation?

Simpson: That, by God, American employees were getting screwed. And you had to penalize the employer who would knowingly hire an illegal, undocumented person, then screw good old U.S. American citizens who couldn't get the job.

Sobel: And under the Texas Proviso, it was still legal.

Simpson: That was their out.

"WIDESPREAD" DISCRIMINATION?

Sobel: What's your evaluation of the impact of IRCA in terms of causing discrimination? The GAO report in 1990 found "a pattern of widespread discrimination" under IRCA, that approximately 20% of employers were discriminating. What would you have had to see in order to conclude that there was widespread discrimination?

Simpson: You would have heard the American people offended. You would have heard outrage in the land if there had been widespread discrimination. You really would have seen the Councils of La Raza, Lulac and Maldef, all of them frothing at the mouth, if it had been as bad as that.

Sobel: So you were basically looking for a stronger political reaction, as opposed to statistical evidence? The GAO claimed it was almost 20%. Do you have any particular figure?

Simpson: No, except you read your mail, and you gauge outrage in the American public. And then you know what is "widespread," I guess. All I know is I didn't get a lot of that.

But if you read [the GAO report], you'll find out that [discrimination] wasn't that widespread when it had to do with what these things trigger. Any time you're dealing with this issue, you're dealing with emotion, fear, guilt or racism, the attempt is always to go to those issues instead of fact.

Sobel: The GAO still stands behind its description of "widespread discrimination." That finding in itself had the possibility of triggering a repeal of employer sanctions in the 1986 law. What were the politics of Congress' decision not to go ahead with the repeal in the face of the finding of widespread discrimination?

Simpson: It's very simple. Democrats and Republicans alike who understood the issue knew that the lynchpin was employer sanctions. Repeal of employer sanctions was something they love to talk about and love to sponsor bills on. But it never got to first base and never will because then you're just releasing employers to go with impunity and hire anybody they want and pay them dirt. And that's why the 1986 bill [included] penalties against employers who knowingly hire illegal undocumented persons.

Every year Kennedy and Hatch would sponsor a bill to repeal employer sanctions. And I'd go to them and say, 'Are you guys having fun?' And they'd say, 'We had to put it in. The Hispanic community wanted us to put it in.' And I said, 'Well, you know where it's going; nowhere.' And it never did. It wasn't me. I mean, I'm just one of a hundred. So any thoughtful liberal Democrats or any thoughtful archconservative Republicans knew that the removal of employer sanctions was just a license for exploitation of human feelings.

Sobel: There was another provision in the 1986 law to repeal the anti-discrimination provisions if there was evidence that the law was not itself creating discrimination. Was there any attempt to repeal this? And did you

feel that there was enough discrimination to keep the anti-discrimination provisions, but not enough to be called "widespread"?

Simpson: I didn't feel that there was any widespread discrimination, even based on the GAO reports.

Sobel: Why was the provision that if widespread discrimination was found -- put in the law if the politics and practicality of it was that, if I understand you correctly, it wasn't going to trigger repeal even if it was discovered?

Simpson: In a Conference Committee somebody said, 'Is this going to be discriminatory?' And so the language of widespread discrimination. Then the other side would say, 'Wait a minute. If there isn't any, we should do this.' And so you put that in there. You cobble stuff together. Lots of times it doesn't make a damn bit of sense. But it then gets a vote out of the House Conference. So Rodino would go round up his troops, or Mazzoli. And I would do mine. And that's the way it worked. There's no way an academic or anyone would ever understand that. That was a cobble job. In other words, 'If you're going to do this, we'll do this. Okay, then we'll both put it there and we'll both vote for the Conference Committee.' That's what that was.

Sobel: The sausage nature of legislation.

Simpson: Sure.

Sobel: Did you feel that there was any discrimination caused by the law?

Simpson: Obviously if there was, it was not widespread. And that was what I was hanging on. There are people who are going to discriminate against their fellow human beings regardless of what the law says. So I said, 'Sure, there will be discrimination. What the hell? Let's wake up. But it won't be widespread! And we thought we proved very well that it wasn't widespread. But if a person in their hard guts wants to discriminate, they will, whether we had a law or not. Discrimination before the law was rampant. So it didn't make a [bit of difference] to me what happened as long as we corrected what was happening before - the Texas Proviso, discrimination, exploitation, Bracero Programs, Operation Wetback, and things like that.

Sobel: Was this law, from your perspective, creating any level of either national origin or citizenship discrimination?

Simpson: Nothing had been done for 30 years, nothing. Employers were just getting away with murder. So all I knew is that whatever I was doing was a hell of a lot better for human beings, exploited human beings. And not only that, but 2.9 million people came forward out of the dark, because of my bill came into the system without being fearful subculture human beings.

Sobel: That's a very important contribution.

Simpson: Sure as hell was for me.

## THE GAO REPORT

Sobel: What would you need to see, what would your definition of widespread discrimination have had to be for you to have felt that the law was creating discrimination?

Simpson: It would have been something from the GAO that wouldn't have been an internal document, saying

they had researched it carefully, and had not found widespread discrimination. And then to find that some of the Hispanic activist groups had gone to the GAO and said, 'What are you finding?' Then they didn't use the raw material of the principal researcher. I called (Charles) Bowsher (Comptroller General) in and said, 'What is this?' He said, 'I feel very uncomfortable. We don't like to do this!' I said, 'I don't doubt it. You've got somebody who's written a report, and I have a copy of it.' He said, 'How did you get that?' I said, 'Well, if you're going to screw me, I get to screw you.'

Sobel: I think the GAO stands behind the report.

Simpson: My staff went to work on that report and called Bowsher in. He said, 'I don't want to come! We said, 'You're getting paid by the U.S.A., and we want you to show up.' So Dick Day and Chip Wood, my chief counsel and staff director, brought him in. We were leaked the memo from the woman who was the principal resource for this report and she said, 'it's going to be difficult to find discrimination here. I'm not finding it.' She signed that.

Then I blew the cover of the GAO that hired the woman, because she said she really couldn't find the widespread discrimination she was looking at. The figure was 6%. If that's widespread, I'm stunned.

When we asked him (Bowsher) to come in and went over it, he was embarrassed. He said, 'Well, what are you going to do with this? This would be very embarrassing to us.' I said, 'Well, pal, think of what it does for us.' So he said, 'I hope you'll protect her.' I said, 'I'm not trying to unprotect anyone.' But I've learned the game in Washington enough to know that when somebody sticks it in my ear, I don't have to take that. And so, 'Here is this report from this woman on your staff, and how then do you come out with this report?' I said, 'Who got to her? Was it the National Council of La Raza? Lulac? Maldef? Who got to her and got it done?' He said, 'I can't share these things with you.'

Simpson: Then, when I visited with [Bowsher], and I said, '...I have this internal memo. How do you let this stuff go on?' He said, 'Well, we have, you know,' and he went on and gave his explanation. I wrote a very serious memo and I hope you have that some-- where about why [the percentage] was skewed and how [discrimination] wasn't widespread if you were using this percentage against the whole. Dick Day and the staff prepared it. Kennedy looked at it and said, 'Well, I can understand this.' Ted was the ranking member of the Committee. Ted Kennedy came to me and said, 'Here's all the evidence that this doesn't work! I said, 'What are you going to do with it, get rid of the law?' He said, 'Hell, no.'

Sobel: I was able to get some of your testimony and also some of your comments in the Congressional Record, including the memo you mentioned. Your critique of the GAO report, and the memo [3/12/90] which was done within the GAO, is now in the Congressional Record, and I think it raises some very valid questions about the methods of the report.

## INEFFECTIVENESS OF IRCA

Sobel: How effective do you think the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 has been in terms of its goals?

Simpson: Not at all as effective as it could have been because of our inability to have a more secure verification system. We had a cottage industry in fraudulent documents. We still do. We said this would happen, unless we could have a more secure identifier, some kind of run-your-card-- through-the slot, like you do with the VISA

[card], or some kind of call-in system, or document, maybe with a fingerprint. We talked about the birth certificate, trying to nail that down. Couldn't get that done in your lifetime. But I suggest people go to California, a bastion of civil liberties, and find out what they're doing with the driver's license. Then you won't have any problem with what we were doing.

Sobel: I think a lot of people have problems with their California driver's license using a fingerprint. The use of the driver's license to show that somebody can drive competently and has not had a serious chain of accidents is a very different question from using it as an identifier.

Simpson: But it is used as an identifier. And of course, every time we would suggest that, the editorials would flutter down like pieces of paper about the "national ID," "tattoos," "Nazi Germany." So, I said, 'Well, great, but you don't even hear what the hell we're saying. The bill says right in it that there is nothing like a national ID.' And the bill also says in clear English that whatever we do for increased verification, if it were a document, would not be carried on the person, would not be used for law enforcement. It would be used twice in the life of the bearer: at the time of new hire employment and at the time they received any benefits from the state or federal government. And it would be presented not just by people who look foreign, but by all people, including emaciated, bald headed Anglos. But the media never, ever would get that right, because it's too emotional to stick to the other case.

## IMPACT ON AMERICAN CITIZENS

Sobel: How do you evaluate the impact of various immigration bills on American citizens who have to make changes in their lives because of immigration laws?

Simpson: I wish I could share with you the stacks of mail that we used to keep for a while. In the 1980s, '84,'85, maybe up to '86, people would write, and say, 'I don't know my country anymore. I live in such and such a place, and they're slaughtering a goat out there this afternoon, and they've got all these relatives,'-stuff that's real to them. They're being racist or whatever, but they're also people who are fed up. And those people are out there, in Florida, in California. 'I [am a] third generation Hispanic, and I can't get my mother on SSI because I can't get into the office.' 'We pay taxes, and how come while you're taking care of all the foreigners, you're not taking care of me?' There's a lot of that out there. Then when you bring that up, you immediately open yourself to racism.

Sobel: I was asking about the impact on American citizens. Take for instance, requiring employers to validate people' documents. Some people think that that's an administrative burden on business that the INS ought to be taking on.

Simpson: That's right. So is withholding taxes for the IRS. That's kind of a burden on an employer. And they can decide to do it or not. But employers are going to pay the bill if things aren't being done. Employers are going to be penalized for knowingly hiring an illegal, undocumented person. That's one thing that ought to stick in any employer's head. So if they don't want to have any identifier or anything that tells that, then fine, just get stuck. Fine them.

## CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

Sobel: How do you evaluate the claims that people make that as citizens they shouldn't have to prove their citizenship?

Simpson: I say, 'Great. If you don't want to do that, then we should have an open border, and you can help pay for the guys that come.' We're a great country and we should be a magnet for the oppressed and the downtrodden. So you have an open border. Six percent of the American people believe that. That's one way.

Sobel: The Quakers, the American Friends Service Committee, challenged the constitutionality of this law when it first came out.

Simpson: I think everybody in the United States challenged the law. I had the ACLU watching me like a hawk. Groups all over America for one reason or another objected to the law. I'm sure that there would be people who would say that it is a constitutional infringement. But if there are, they never carried much weight that I ever heard. And boy, I heard from everybody. I heard about people who said it was discriminatory. I heard about people who said it was evil, racist, bigoted, foul, evil, crappy. But I never heard anybody that said it was a constitutional infringement.

Sobel: What do you think was motivating people wanting to get rid of or modify the I-9 requirement?

Simpson: Just that, by God, it was unAmerican and no American should have to go in front of some jerk and tell them they were an American. I just said, 'if there are enough of you that feel like that, I guess it will get repealed! And there was about 1/2 of one percent who wanted to repeal the I-9. Employers saw it as a protection. Anybody else saw it as a non-intrusive thing to sign. I mean we have our Social Security, we sell our soul all over the marketplace of commerce all day long signing things.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other sensible employers were ready for something to lessen that burden of fines, or whatever was going to happen to them. And if it took an I-9 to put in front of them, or what documents can you show me that are work authorization versus identifiers and identification, what have you got?

The only ones I heard challenge [the I-9] are the people that never liked an immigration bill. They say I don't like this because... It's not American to fill out an I-9, to ask for an ID, because whatever, whatever, whatever.

Sobel: How do you evaluate people's claims that in some way the I-9 is offensive to what they consider American?

Simpson: I would suppose some worthy soul would have wandered into the LLS. Senate or the Congress to repeal the I-9 and get rid of it, and gain a lot of cosponsors to get the son of a bitch done. Nobody came within a sparrow of doing that.

Sobel: There were several bills to repeal employer sanctions.

Simpson: The employer sanctions bill was cosponsored by Orrin Hatch (R-- UT) and Ted Kennedy. Orrin was doing it because he was head of the Republican Hispanic Caucus. And Kennedy said, '[Hatch] talked me into it. I just had to do it because Orrin had helped me on another bill! Ted Kennedy would never vote to repeal employer sanctions. He voted in 1972 to put it on the books. So it is called politics..a lot of those unholy alliances which all of us have been in, that the poor old layman never understands.

Sobel: When you first introduced the bill back in 1982, you said that the "secure identifier" would be used solely for work authorization. Later it was changed so that it would be used "twice in the life of the bearer." How do you feel about moving from one use to a second use, and possibly on to additional uses?

Simpson: Well, we limited it. We had it in the law that it would not be a national ID. And then because of the

abuses within the Social Security system and the fraud that was rampant within the use of documents, we simply said that it would be used at the time of new hire, employment, or at the time of receiving any benefits from any state, local or national government. But that whenever it was used -- and this was consistent throughout - it would not be carried on the person, not be used for law enforcement and not be a national ID.

There was so much gimmickry with any kind of identifier, and it's going to continue. Spencer Abraham (former R-MI) can do anything he wants with it, or Ted Kennedy, and until they get that corrected it won't make much difference what they do. The bill will never be effective without a more secure identifier.

Sobel: What is the difference in your mind between a secure identifier and a national identity card?

Simpson: It's in the statute. It says a national ID is not what we're talking about. The distinction is the fact that a national ID card is something out of Adolph Hitler. You have this thing in your hand and you show it when you buy groceries, you show it when you go across a border. That's not what we have. We said, 'Whatever identifier we have will not be carried on the person, will not be used for law enforcement and will be presented' - that was the third part - at the time by people who look foreign and by bald Anglos like me too. So that there would not be this discrimination of asking someone who looked foreign whether they had a national ID.

Sobel: What do you think are the honest concerns about a national identity card?

Simpson: Adolf Hitler, I guess. Tattoos. People think that a national ID is going to enable the government to find out who the hell they are and have them in a data bank and devil them. I don't know. It got pretty heavy. Ed Roybal (D-CA), the congressman from East L.A. would get up and somebody called me. It was midnight, and we almost lost (the vote) the second time. And it was Roybal out there on the floor, giving this speech about Nazis and guards and gas chambers. And I said, 'Yes, I've heard about it, and it was a remarkable speech! And he said, 'It's killing us.' So dear old Joe Moakley [D-- MA] brought that thing back from the dead, and they threw out that provision. California right now has a fingerprinting system. I haven't heard anybody write great tomes of editorials in California. Because when the problem's big enough, you do something about it. It was always called 'the slippery slope.' And I get quite a kick out of it now, because you get to the airport, and somebody asks you for a picture ID. You don't even know who the hell he works for.

This really comes from people who don't want to do a damned thing about immigration. And if you don't want to do anything, then don't do anything with the verification system. Don't do anything with the birth certificate, which is issued by 2,700 agencies in the United States. People are going to graveyards and picking the damned dates off the stones. And with that, you can go get a Social Security card and a driver's license.

Sobel: But if somebody proposed the idea of a national identity card, would you think there was any problem with that?

Simpson: They would cremate it. I mean, everything I did was described as a national ID card. I said, 'This is bull. Absolute bull.' This comes from people who have never wanted to do anything. It was their talisman, their garlic for the curse, their stake through the heart of the vampire. I had to sit and go through that and I put it right in the bill each time. You can go look at the language of every single bill that I ever did.

## ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO IMMIGRATION REFORM

Sobel: What about alternative approaches to immigration reform other than employer sanctions? Ideas such as



increasing the amount of legal immigrants, enforcing the Fair Labor Standards Act, helping countries where people were coming from to improve their economies and politics, trying to prevent visa overstayers, and having stricter border controls and more efforts against smuggling. How do you evaluate them?

Simpson: I didn't have to. The Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy waved them off and found out that those who favored that really didn't want to do anything with legal or illegal immigration reform. And all those things were presented in that scenario, in various forms by Lulac, Maldef, La Raza, and those groups.

That was their eternal litany. We don't have to do employer sanctions. I said, 'Well, I'm going to tell you what. You either have employer sanctions, or you're not going to have amnesty.'

All those things were presented. All were considered in the Hesburgh Commission report, hundreds of pages of testimony. Gosh, you don't have to do these other things. All you have to do is enforce existing law, labor certification, enforce the border. And then we say, 'OK, I guess we are going to enforce the border. We're going to put another 5,000 [border agents] down there, and we're going to deputize county officers and state police along the border.' 'Oh, God, you don't mean that!'

Sobel: What would happen if, after employer sanctions were tried, after there was the more secure kind of documentation, and it didn't have an impact on the level of illegal immigration? What would you see as the next step?

Simpson: I have no idea. All I know is that there are enough forces out there to do something. They've always been there or we wouldn't have done anything. We wouldn't have passed anything if we weren't forced and pushed there. So I guess if you repealed employer sanctions, got rid of the I-9, then I guess we would go to further enforcement of the border. Perhaps we would continue the 14-mile fence. Hispanic groups said they didn't like that, after we said 'this is what you asked for, more enforcement.' So it doesn't matter what you bring up here. They would say that's impossible, or it's Hitler, or whatever. Or labor certification, if they really tighten the screws and set up a whole new separate Department of Labor, start putting the screws to certification and assuring that people didn't get certified to work. If the migrant workers of America, the farm workers, decided, well, wait a minute, we're suffering the grapes of wrath. I've been there. I sound like a cynic. I'm not.

Sobel: The idea behind enforcement of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 is that if you require all employers to pay the minimum wage, have appropriate hours and working conditions, then they no longer have an incentive to hire people because they know they're going to have to pay well. There's no longer an incentive to try to hire people for a lesser wage. Simpson: It's my experience that prevailing wage in Denver is not the prevailing wage in Cody, Wyoming. And it's been my experience that employers won't buy that crap, because the unions have established that if the Democrats are in power, then it's a union prevailing wage, which doesn't match anything in reality, and most employers couldn't even pay [it]. And so they're going to go find it on the cheap. There is a reality that escapes most people. It's called grubby bastards trying to make a living who are going to try to get anybody to do the work if they can get them, to do the hardest work possible, whether it's skinning sheep at a packing plant or whatever. And those people are not Americans. Americans won't do that kind of work. I'm not an economist, and I'm not a sociologist. But I am a legislator. And every one of those things was discussed in detail.

Sobel: Part of the results of the current policy is that even as you tighten the requirements, there are some employers who will continue to hire illegal aliens, because they can pay them less. How do you deal with those kinds of employers?

Simpson: We've done a pretty good job in the last bill. We've tightened the screws not only with criminal but also with civil penalties, put in additional resources for the attorney general to bring civil suits, heightened the penalties for the second and third offenses. The third offense is a cease-- and-desist of your whole business. We really tightened the penalties.

If these things were as askew as one would think you could be assured that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce would be out to repeal employer sanctions. The National Federation of Independent Businesses would want to repeal employer sanctions, Lulac, and everybody else. Everybody puts in a bill, and it never goes anywhere, and never will go anywhere because they're not going to repeal employer sanctions and go back to allowing the Labor Department, which most people see as complete chaos.. it won't work.

## GUEST WORKER PROGRAMS

Sobel: What do you think of guest worker programs?

Simpson: It's bull. They come as a guest worker and end up as, in a sense, a citizen of their community. Guest workers are not guest workers. They come and they are often exploited. And [someone] says, 'We want you now to go home. Your guest privileges have expired.' And they say, 'Go home? Our children speak English and we're not going home! And the media hops in, 'Here's this poor soul. He came here as a hard workman. And he is a hard workman. Now they're trying to send him back.' That was the deal [coming as a guest worker] but he doesn't want that. There was no guest worker program that didn't turn quite permanent.

## EFFECT ON THE U.S.

Sobel: How do you evaluate the impact of immigration on the United States currently?

Simpson: People are assimilating, or as Barbara Jordan said, getting Americanized. I try to steer between Donald Hubbel of Rice University and Julian Simon [University of Maryland and Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute]. Julian thinks we should have an open border or something like that, and Hubbel feels that immigrants are sucking away the fiber of America with demands on the social system. When I was in this work, I never thought of it as a jobs bill to protect American jobs. My function was to say that if people are going to be here, they ought to be here legally. If they weren't here legally, they were going to get exploited, used, and thrown away like a husk when they were through with them. Immigration has had a very positive influence on America. But if we continue to bring in people under family reunification, people who are totally unskilled, that's going to bring us problems.

Barbara Jordan had a provision to knock off the 150,000 unskilled category, which I thought was very appropriate. In fact, I was ready to go to a point system, much like Canada or Australia. You give certain points for background, education, and language ability. If you're going to take people in, bring in the ones that can contribute the most. That didn't get anywhere, although we have stepped up the number of skilled persons that come.

Sobel: There were some very odd coalitions, both for and against immigration reform. How do you evaluate particularly the proponents of immigration reform?

Simpson: There was never any issue that cut across more lines. And never will be. There's just no way to describe it. It's certainly not a partisan issue. And that's where we waste a lot of time, because they say, 'Simpson, we want you to do a Republican immigration bill! I said, 'There is no such thing as a Republican

immigration bill!

Sobel: What would that Republican immigration bill have been?

Simpson: Something to embarrass the Democrats, whatever it was. It wouldn't make any difference what it was in substance. Something where we could say that we dear Republicans have managed to stop all illegal immigration, to get a handle on it and to ensure you a, by God, America.

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