

U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY: REFORM MEASURES NEEDED TO PRODUCE EQUITY AND GENERATE MUTUAL BENEFITS

William L. Casey, Jr., Babson College, U.S.A.

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ABSTRACT

An historical review of U.S. immigration policy reveals clearly the lack of consistency, coherence, and equity. Reforms would require, among other factors, the need to reach a compromise in the U.S. Government on divergent opinions relating to key issues and principles. Although changes in the U.S. and global economies may mandate changes in policy at times, particularly at the implementation stage, core principles should be identified for the purpose of creating more equity and fairness in the policy as well as to capture mutual benefits to be shared by immigrants and U.S. economic interests.

Keywords: *Immigration Policy, Mercantilism, Quota Systems, Border Control, Rules of Naturalization, Immigrant Vetting*

1. INTRODUCTION

Few political issues generate more disagreements and controversy in Washington, D.C. and beyond than national immigration policy. One would expect that after generations of data gathering and data analysis, officials in public office would be able to reform existing policy to promote consistency, equity, and common sense in both the structure of policy and in its implementation.

It is the purpose of this article to recommend reform measures in U.S. immigration policy that would promote consistency, equity, and mutual advantages that would accrue to both the immigrants and the U.S. economy. The article begins with a review of U.S. official policy, pointing out weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. The main body of the article presents a rationale for the reform measures so recommended. An attempt is made to access the degree of difficulty of reform implementation considering the political and economic implications.

2. EARLY U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY: THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Prior to the War of Independence, immigration policy was essentially British policy. As in the cases of other European powers at the time, British policy was based on the principle of mercantilism. The essential factor governing the movement of goods overseas, as well as immigration, emigration, and naturalization was the goal of promoting a favorable balance of payments effect. (Kramer, 2021).

In addition, British policy endorsed the forced immigration of undesirables to the U.S. colonies, including criminals. British authorities sponsored the emigration of unproductive members of their labor sector, but not the productive.

It will be argued later in the paper that one of the primary qualities of an effective, just immigration policy must include the principle of "mutual benefits" that accrue to all parties. During the U.S. colonial period, British policy achieved this in part but not in total. First, the British benefited from the deposal of criminals and other undesirables, but the colonies did not benefit in this regard. The U.S. colonies did receive a source of cheap labor through the importation of slaves and indentured servants, but immigrants of this type hardly benefited from this morally unsound practice of slavery or the exploited system of indentured servants.