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Department of Justice

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ADDRESS

BY

THE HONORABLE WILLIAM B. SAXBE
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE

CAMERON COUNTY AND HIDALGO COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATIONS

8:00 P.M.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1974

VALLEY COUNTRY CLUB

BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS

I appreciate the opportunity to be here. And I would like to discuss with you a matter symbolized by something quite near to us tonight--our nation's border.

Across these borders--east and west, north and south--one of the great migrations of our time is underway.

It is an illegal migration, made up of millions seeking at the least relatively brief employment and at the most a new and permanent life in this country.

Some come openly and legally, as short-term tourists and students--only then to go underground and vanish when their visits officially expire.

Others enter with forged documents that give them a head-start in setting up new identities that may never be uncovered.

Some are smuggled in for high prices by rings that then distribute them throughout the country like sides of beef.

But the vast majority of these illegal immigrants enter by much simpler means: They merely walk over the border--some from Canada but most from Mexico.

Illegal immigrants do not constitute a trickle or a stream. They form a torrent that could inundate us unless effective action is taken soon.

There is no way to precisely pin-point the number of illegal aliens. Estimates usually range from four to seven million--but the Immigration and Naturalization Service says it could be as high as 12 million.

What is known for certain is that some 800,000 illegal aliens--equal to the population of Washington, D.C.--were apprehended last year.

The Immigration Service--a part of the Department of Justice--has long been handicapped by chronic shortages of funds and personnel. I know from my discussions with Immigration Service officials--and by such things as my visit today to the Border Patrol Academy--that the Patrolmen and other Service personnel are motivated by a spirit of service and self-sacrifice. We owe them, and the capable new Commissioner of the Service, Leonard Chapman, a vote of thanks.

But under present circumstances, because of personnel shortages, the Service can handle only a small percentage of the illegal immigrants. What remains is overwhelming.

If the seven million figure is correct, that is comparable to the population of New York City; If 12 million is accurate, that's about equal to Pennsylvania--with Wyoming thrown in.

The impact of the illegal aliens is sobering: They hold millions of jobs; They receive social services ranging from schools to welfare; Large amounts of money they send out of the country drain funds from our troubled economy; And they mock our system of legal immigration.

The massive number of illegal aliens constitutes a severe national crisis--one that affects the lives of all Americans.

The number apprehended by the Immigration Service has increased 10-fold in the past decade, without a comparable growth in its personnel or funds. Now, for modest expenditures great benefits could be obtained.

The Immigration Service has estimated to me that it could open up one million new jobs during the next year--simply by removing illegal aliens holding those jobs--if it received additional resources amounting to about \$50 million and 2,200 new employees. And passage of a bill now pending in Congress is also essential.

This first phase of the new enforcement effort would remove from the country illegal aliens who now hold at least 364,000 jobs in industry, nearly that many in agriculture, and some 300,000 in service trades.

I have recommended to the President that he seriously consider this added enforcement effort as a high priority among the many budget requests he must consider. This

also would be a valuable supplement to proposals now being considered for multi-billion dollar Federal efforts to ease growing unemployment among U.S. citizens.

One statistic long cited by both the Mexican and U.S. governments is that a large percentage of illegal immigrants are from Mexico--including about 90 percent of those apprehended last year.

So there is no misunderstanding by anyone, let me stress that we are all sympathetic to the plight of the poor who seek work, just as we are saddened by conditions that cause poverty.

And though it is outside my area of responsibility, I am convinced that this country must do more to help Mexico improve its economy. In one sense, it would be a prudent investment for our own future. But at the same time, it is the decent and necessary thing to do. Neighbors cannot ignore the plight of neighbors.

I also want to strongly emphasize that no prejudice of any kind exists in efforts to stop the flow of illegal immigrants from Mexico.

Citizens of Mexican descent--and legal aliens from Mexico--contribute greatly to every part of our national life: The professions, the arts, commerce and industry, a variety of trades.

We oppose the entry of all illegal immigrants--
regardless of their race or country of origin. And they
do come from nearly every country in the world.

Illegal immigrants pose a direct threat to those
in the lowest economic groups--often poor blacks, often the
poor of Mexican descent, the poor generally.

In many instances, illegal immigrants hold jobs that
legal immigrants from Mexico or the citizens of Mexican
descent could otherwise have.

I am sympathetic to the poor from any land, but the
United States has an abiding obligation to care for its own
first. That will be hard to do if the flow of illegal
immigrants continues unchecked.

The problem is growing more complex. Not long ago,
most illegal immigrants stayed fairly close to the border,
often in rural areas. But now a great many go inland, and
substantial numbers are scattered throughout the nation--
including thousands in such cities as Boston, New York,
Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Detroit, Kansas
City, Denver, Los Angeles, Dallas, San Francisco, and Helena.

One reason these illegal immigrants elude us is that we
do not have the manpower to stop them all at the borders
or to find them all once they are inside.

Most find it relatively easy to blend into the society. Some purchase false identification--and I have initiated the creation of an advisory committee on false identification that would aid in the solution of this and related problems. Other illegal aliens easily obtain real driver's licenses or Social Security cards. Some list fictitious Social Security numbers while others falsely claim so many dependents they pay scant taxes. If ever caught, the only penalty normally is being sent home--since it is not practical to prosecute such vast numbers of persons.

Many employers contribute greatly to the problem by knowingly hiring illegal aliens--happy to impose low pay and bad working conditions at little risk. The illegal immigrants not only take jobs from citizens--but in the process tend to depress pay scales and undermine labor unions.

For those who want to stay permanently, each passing month enhances their chances of eluding detection.

They acquire new identities, new lives, and insulate themselves from authorities. They settle into jobs and become a routine part of the community.

If single, they may marry a United States citizen--and thus acquire special advantage in obtaining legal resident status. A child born here to an illegal immigrant is automatically a U.S. citizen. By virtue of being a citizen's parent, the illegal alien also acquires

preference in obtaining legal resident status--and ultimately citizenship.

A new element is thus added to the immigration problem--illegalities may result eventually in citizenship.

One Immigration file shows that 14 persons became legal residents because one illegal alien had a child here. One parent and then the other was admitted because their child was a citizen; they then petitioned to have other children admitted; and then to have the children of their children admitted, plus the parents of their children's spouses; and finally their own parents.

In a recent case on the West Coast, seven illegal immigrants were picked up on a single block in 20 minutes. One was a woman whose two illegitimate children were born here--and agents feel there is scant chance she will ever have to leave the country. She is, by the way, drawing \$108 a month in welfare--plus food stamps. We do not begrudge care for her and her children--but we have millions of citizens to also care for. And why should we needlessly add to our burdens by foolishly permitting these kinds of situations to occur in the first place?

Another facet of the problem is revealed by a Los Angeles Police Department study that shows, I am told, that last June some 36 percent of those arrested in one police district on felony charges were illegal immigrants. This matter deserves much closer study nationally, for if illegal immigrants are a substantial factor in our growing crime rates, this gives even more impetus to the need for prompt action.

The problems are virtually everywhere. Not long ago, four illegal aliens were found working as janitors in the Immigration Service offices in Washington--all employees of a firm under contract to the General Services Administration.

Many persons ask why such vast numbers of illegal immigrants go undetected. The Immigration Service knows where a great many of them are--but simply lacks the resources to get them.

Of the mere 1,600 persons in the Border Patrol, 1,350 serve on the Mexican border that runs 2,000 miles from San Diego to Brownsville. The force is stretched so thin that they are able to respond to only one-third of the alarms set off by illegal aliens going past our electronic sensors.

Though the Immigration Service has 900 investigators throughout the Nation, no more than one-fourth can be assigned to catching illegal immigrants. On top of everything else, we are short of funds to send the illegal aliens back to their native country.

The situation is bad but it will deteriorate even more unless steps are taken promptly. Worsening economic conditions and rising population around the world will spur many more to enter the United States illegally. To cite only Mexico, projections show that its 1970 work force of 16 million persons is expected to grow to 28 million in 1985 and 40 million in 1995.

Though we face a grave crisis, it can be solved through a series of carefully-planned programs carried out promptly and with great resolve. And we are now seeing, in a series of steps taken by President Ford, the prelude to a promising beginning.

The President and I discussed the illegal immigrant problem in mid-August, and last month I sent to him a series of recommendations. Two encouraging things have happened since then.

First, the President told me earlier this month that he has directed the Domestic Council and the Office of Management and Budget to begin work with the Department of Justice on a program for action.

And as you know, he discussed the problem at length with President Echeverria of Mexico last week, and there was a consensus that joint study and planning be undertaken between the two nations.

For my part, I believe that a number of steps are essential to the success of the overall, coordinated effort.

With the new fiscal and personnel resources I mentioned earlier, the Immigration Service would be able to carry out two priority tasks.

One would be removal during the next year of one million persons now holding jobs--and then find those who have burrowed more deeply into our society. And I stress that all illegal aliens taken into custody will be given fair and decent treatment--as they are now.

The second priority would be to stem the flow of illegal immigrants into the nation.

They now enter everywhere and in every conceivable fashion. To cite an example close to home, some 40,000 illegal immigrants apprehended last year claimed to have entered through the Brownsville area.

But even the best enforcement effort will be hampered unless the nation shuts off the magnet that draws illegal immigrants--easily-available jobs.

For that reason, I am hopeful Congress will complete action soon on H.R. 982, a bill making it a crime for employers to knowingly hire illegal aliens.

By placing new responsibilities upon all employers, the lure of easily-obtained jobs would in large part vanish. Without the bill, an alien removed from the country is often back within a month--and sometimes on the same job.

At the same time, we need greater voluntary cooperation from every employer--from the factory seeking assembly-line workers to the affluent housewife seeking domestic help. They should help us enforce the law and insist upon proof of legal status from aliens. Since they often complain the loudest about crime, here is a chance for them to show exactly where they stand.

In addition, funds are needed to implement a new type of identification card--issued to legal aliens and visitors--that cannot be counterfeited or forged successfully.

Some 4.5 million alien cards are now outstanding, another 500,000 are issued each year--and we find about 20,000 illegal immigrants a year in possession of phony cards. We estimate we find less than one in 10 forgeries.

But the Immigration Service has developed a foolproof system--a card that is electronically coded and read by computer. It would be a valuable new tool. And for only \$13.5 million over a three-year period, we could buy the computers and software, make the new cards, and replace all of those now in use.

Finally, there must be complete confidence in the integrity of the Immigration Service--and confidence based on fact.

As you know, the Department began Operation Clean Sweep some time ago to investigate allegations of corruption within the Service. Earlier this year, I ordered a review of Clean Sweep as well as an intensification of all investigations--including a priority study of any possible cover-ups.

These matters are proceeding toward a conclusion--and one that I believe will be satisfactory.

The vast bulk of the Immigration Service personnel are honest and dedicated--and do an outstanding job against incredible odds. It is essential they be given more tools to carry out tasks vital to the well-being of every citizen.

With the manifold problems the nation faces--energy shortages, inflation, scarcity of some foodstuffs, rising unemployment--it is apparent that we are not a limitless horn of plenty.

While we must help other nations all we can, we cannot let our own people suffer in the bargain.

The enormous number of illegal immigrants does impose suffering on our citizens and legal aliens, particularly the poor among them.

We cannot take care of the world. We can help--but we have to take care of our own country first.

If this nation cannot protect itself from the problems posed by the illegal immigrants--a relatively easy task if only we will take some initiative--then I wonder what hope we have for dealing with even more complex problems that will require a much greater sense of dedication.

I hope I know what the answer will be--that we can cope with this crisis and others. But on the basis of the past track record, I am not certain that will be the case.

Thank you.