

There are, indeed, many victims of the realities of Mexican politics. The failure to democratize has caused just as much suffering as the loss of economic opportunity. Suffering which forces thousands of Mexicans to migrate or live with the downward spiral of the Mexican economy.

In 1996, Amnesty International's annual report accused Mexican security forces of outright human rights abuses including the murder and torture of leftist rebels. They also uncovered the use of torture, and the many disappearances which have occurred throughout the areas of conflict. The Mexican media are no less a target. Journalists have been intimidated, abducted, and even killed, with cases as late as 1995 still unresolved.

Public financing of the media, the corruption of journalists, and the monopoly of government power still distorts the view of the Mexican people about their own country and its problems, with predictable results. The Mexican people are unable to express themselves equally through the media, and are unable to gain control of their own lives through the electoral system. They face a declining standard of living because of the monopoly of government power in the economy, and are tragically, but predictably, now involved in guerrilla operations in fully eight of Mexico's states.

Third and finally, Mr. President, is the truth about narcotrafficking in Mexico. Not only is it true that the Mexican people are paying an extraordinary price for the failure to develop a genuine market economy, and democratic institutions, but they, together with the American people, are paying an enormous price for the failure to control or even cooperate in controlling illegal drugs.

The administration has been asked a simple question: Is, or is not Mexico an ally in the fight against narcotrafficking? The administration has answered by explaining that we have to consider the past difficulties in Mexican-American history. They have responded that Mexico is an increasing source of American investment. Those, Mr. President, were not the questions.

The question is this: Is, or is not Mexico cooperating? The simple truth is that the highest levels of the Mexican Government have been corrupted and are, at a minimum, working at cross-purposes with the U.S. Government in controlling the flow of narcotics.

Indeed, the administration's own reports conclude that fully two-thirds of all of the cocaine entering the United States is being transhipped through Mexico. The State Department has concluded that Mexico is now the most important location in the Western Hemisphere for the laundering of narcotics funds.

On March 1, we learned that General Gutierrez, the drug czar of Mexico, was himself arrested for complicity and conspiracy with drug traffickers.

Mr. President, the decision to certify Mexico as an ally in the war against narcotics was a decision to protect the Mexican Government from criticism. It was the wrong decision. The simple truth is that every day, in every way, Mexican officials are permitting the transshipment of narcotics to our country. New laws to stop the laundering of funds in Mexican banks have not been enforced. Not a single Mexican bank has had to alter its operations to comply with new legislation.

Of the 1,250 police officers dismissed for corruption because of narcotics in Mexico, not a single officer has been prosecuted.

Despite 52 outstanding extradition requests to send corrupt officials to the United States, not one has been complied with. Indeed, not a single Mexican national has been extradited to the United States because of drug-related charges.

Most discouraging of all, the head of the DEA, Thomas Constantine, concluded before this Congress:

There is not one single law enforcement institution in Mexico with whom the DEA has an entirely trusting relationship.

Mr. President, there were times during the cold war, indeed times during moments of national peril when the United States needed to compromise an honest look at the world because of issues of national security. The end of the cold war has ended that time.

We need to honestly assess our relationship with Mexico. We need to tell the American people the truth about the state of Mexican democracy, its economy, and its fight against narcotrafficking. Change will never come without the truth. Ending the certification process will begin that national debate in this Chamber.

I urge the Senate to reject the administration's conclusion, which cannot be borne out by the facts. Let us tell the truth about Mexico.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

ELDERLY IMMIGRANTS AT RISK OF LOSING SSI

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, we have received early reports from the Social Security Administration large numbers of elderly legal immigrants who will lose their SSI benefits under the new welfare law unless Congress acts to help them.

In Social Security field offices across the country, the same reports are being heard. Elderly immigrants come into the field offices after receiving a notice that their SSI benefits will be terminated unless the immigrants can prove U.S. citizenship. Many of these immigrants are citizens, but they cannot remember where they stored their naturalization certificate. Most are very old and often infirm. Sometimes they are too infirm to remember whether they were naturalized or not.

For example, two elderly women, both over 90 years old, were senile, and

confined to a convalescent home. They sought help from SSA after receiving the notice that their SSI payments would be terminated. Both women say they were born in the United States, but they cannot prove their citizenship.

Another woman, born in Ireland over 80 years ago, came to the US when she was 2. Her parents were naturalized, but she has no proof that she was. She has never left the United States, and believes she is a citizen, but she has no way to prove it.

The Social Security office in New York City reports that a woman's 85-year-old daughter came to inquire about her 105-year-old mother's termination notice. She stated that her mother was born in New York City, but has no birth certificate. Her mother has been receiving SSI benefits since 1976. The only way to find a record of her birth is to search the New York City birth records from 105 years ago. No one knows if the birth was even recorded.

These are just a few stories of the hundreds coming into Social Security offices since the termination notices were mailed a few weeks ago. Several recent news articles have reported stories of legal immigrants about to lose their benefits. I ask unanimous consent that these stories may be placed in the RECORD following my statement. Unless Congress intervenes, the consequences of the welfare bill will be too harsh.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Des Moines Register, Mar. 3, 1997]

OVERWHELMED BY OVERHAUL

(By Shirley Salemy)

Israel and Faina Staroselsky are snared in the intricacies of the new welfare overhaul law.

The couple, both 68, fled anti-Semitism in Ukraine five years ago. They applied to become naturalized U.S. citizens seven months ago. They're still waiting, they say.

And if they don't get citizenship soon, they'll lose their Supplementary Security Income.

"We got this letter," said Israel Staroselsky, pointing to a memo from the Social Security Administration. "If we are not able to prove our American citizenship by May, we will lose all sources of life."

If the federal welfare overhaul is a gigantic jigsaw puzzle, the pieces that shape assistance to poor, elderly and disabled legal immigrants may be the most intricate—the ones that remain on the card table the longest.

The rules are complicated, and people like the Staroselskys aren't the only ones confused. Lawmakers are, too.

A DRAMATIC CHANGE

"Generally, I think the Legislature is real confused" about the ins and outs of the law, said Sen. Maggie Tinsman, R-Bettendorf and co-chairwoman of the joint human services appropriations subcommittee.

"It's always confusing when the law changes," Tinsman said. "This is a dramatic change. And people always think the worst."

Generally, the new law prohibits non-citizens who are not new refugees, U.S. military veterans or have not worked and paid taxes

in America for at least 10 years from getting most forms of public assistance—that is, Supplemental Security Income, food stamps, Medicaid and cash assistance for families.

It also bars new arrivals—immigrants who came to the United States after Aug. 22, 1996, the day President Clinton signed the bill—from receiving most public benefits during the first five years in the country.

But the states have some options to provide more help. Iowa officials say that's what they will try to do.

The Department of Human Services is proposing to continue benefits for some of the immigrants who would be cut off. State welfare officials are holding community forums around the state to explain the new law.

For immigrants who were already here when Clinton signed the law, DHS intends to continue providing cash assistance in its core program, called the Family Investment Program, and Medicaid.

"We felt it was a humanitarian thing to do," said Ann Wiebers, DHS welfare reform coordinator.

APPROPRIATION NEEDED

But it's up to the Iowa Legislature to appropriate money for the program. Tinsman thinks lawmakers will concur with the department's decision.

The department would need to use a pool of state funds to help new arrivals in those programs. For the Family Investment Program alone, the estimated cost over the next two years would be an additional \$702,237.

Tinsman said lawmakers are concerned about legal immigrants who haven't become citizens.

"We suspect most of them are elderly and in nursing homes," she said. "We have money in the budget to take care of that."

She said new arrivals must have sponsors to come to the United States. Sponsors must now sign binding affidavits of support—which means they're held financially liable for immigrants who fall into distress.

"I think they're going to be covered, just not by government," she said.

Sen. Johnie Hammond, D-Ames, who also serves on the subcommittee, said the panel hasn't talked about the way the new law affects legal immigrants.

"We need to look at who's falling through the cracks and do we really want them to fall through the cracks," Hammond said.

EFFECTS AREN'T KNOWN

Advocates, meanwhile, say the way the new law will play out in Iowa is still unclear.

"The law is still so new," said Ta-Yu Yang, a Des Moines attorney who specializes in immigration law. "We are still talking on the macro stage of what to do here in Iowa, whether to continue some of the benefits or not."

But Yang, who is president of both the Asian-American Council and the Taiwanese Association, said: "I don't think there's any question that so much of the legislation is going to have discriminatory impact. I don't know if they intended it to be that way or not."

Terry Meek, executive director of Proteus, a nonprofit group that serves migrant and seasonal farm workers, said such laborers will likely be affected by new food-stamp rules. Now, legal immigrants must work and pay taxes for 10 years before they're eligible.

But many farm workers are paid in cash or through crew leaders, Meek said. She's not sure how those workers will document their work history.

Sandra Soto, an immigrant-rights advocate at the American Friends Service Committee, thinks that the new law asks welfare workers to become specialists in immigration law and that it's creating a lot of confusion at local welfare offices.

THERE'S CONFUSION

"I'm not saying they're denying benefits for the sake of it," Soto said. "I'm saying there's confusion. Getting involved in immigration is difficult, because there are huge numbers of proofs of immigrant status."

She, too, worries about immigrants who may not have documents to prove their years of work.

She points to Blanca Vivas, 44, who came to this country illegally in 1986 from Nicaragua. Vivas, speaking Spanish translated by Soto, said she first worked in the fields of the Southwest, received amnesty and eventually came to Iowa and worked in the meatpacking industry. She earned money with a temporary work permit that was renewed last year.

Debilitating pain in her shoulders and back from the heavy lifting she did prevents her from working any more. She lacks the documents to prove her years of work. And her work permit is no longer valid.

She now lives in Des Moines with the support of her boyfriend. She'd like to get food stamps and medical help but knows she's not eligible.

"I think ignorance has led us to many bad things," she said. "It's one of the major barriers. Even if we have good work ethics, we are coming to a country where the culture, the language and many other things are different."

NEW CITIZENS

Immigration and Naturalization Service officials conservatively anticipate more than 2,000 immigrants will naturalize during fiscal 1997.

The welfare law is playing a role in the boom, said Michael Went, deputy director of the INS office in Omaha, which oversees Iowa. But he also thinks people are simply taking the final step in the immigration process.

The Staroselskys believe it's their only chance.

"If we will not become citizens according to the new law, we will lose all of this," Israel Staroselsky said, sitting at a table in the couple's one-bedroom apartment.

They left Kiev as refugees. He was a cardiologist, she was a pediatrician. They aren't certified to practice medicine in the United States, so he worked for two years as a researcher in Des Moines, then retired.

If they had known about these changes when they were still in Ukraine, their decision to come might have been different.

"We came five years before," Israel Staroselsky said. "If we had known about this law, it could be another decision."

Blanca Vivas, 44, is one of many workers hurt by new requirements that legal immigrants must work and pay taxes 10 years before they can get food stamps. She's worked in this country since 1986 but lacks documents to prove it. Now she's disabled, and her work permit is no longer valid.

[From the Raleigh (NC) News & Observer, Mar. 2, 1997]

OLDER IMMIGRANTS FACE WELFARE DILEMMA

CHARLOTTE—Immigrants in North Carolina face longer waits for naturalization than most other states, making worries about losing welfare benefits more realistic for newcomers from overseas.

The Charlotte office of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service is ranked among the nation's slowest processing offices, according to a report released Saturday by the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

North Carolinians, who apply for naturalization at the Charlotte INS office, can face between 21 and 28 months of waiting before their citizenship records are processed.

The wait might mean disabled and elderly immigrants could lose some federal benefits. Under the welfare reforms, recipients of some benefits must become citizens to keep them.

Those who aren't U.S. citizens and have lived here at least five years are receiving letters saying food stamps and Supplemental Security Income could be eliminated as soon as May. The letter, from the Social Security Administration, also says Medicaid could be eliminated by summer.

"There was no exception made for them (in the new welfare law), and that's one of our biggest sore spots," said Marlene Myers, coordinator of the N.C. Refugee Office, one of several groups that have met with INS officials to find a way to help these immigrants. "(The elderly or disabled) are kind of caught in a crack."

The Charlotte INS benefits staff processed 2,500 naturalization applications two years ago. This year, they expect to handle more than 7,000. Once the welfare law took effect, the office was swamped with applicants.

"No one likes to have people wait," said Donald Young, officer in charge of the INS office in Charlotte. "We go along, day in, day out, trudging along. But again, that slowdown is nationwide, not just Charlotte."

[From the Christian Science Monitor, Mar. 4, 1997]

AMID WELFARE CUTS, STATES TRY TO AID IMMIGRANTS

(By Skip Thurman)

An Iranian man living in Denver can't muster the courage to tell his elderly mother—a legal immigrant who has lived in America for almost 20 years—that her monthly checks from the federal government are about to end. His best hope now is that the state of Colorado will continue some of her subsidies.

Legal immigrants across the US are beginning to see that states as their last best hope to offset the imminent loss of all federal benefits—a cutoff required by the new national welfare-reform law.

State officials by and large seem to be sympathetic. Of 40 states that have filed spending plans, 36 report they will continue benefits to legal immigrants who fall off the federal rolls.

"In the small world of welfare, we are in pretty good shape," says Dick Powers of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance. The state has enough money to help needy legal immigrants—at least for now—because it's currently getting more money from Washington than it needs for cash assistance to a dwindling welfare caseload.

But states with large numbers of immigrants may not have the same luxury. New York Gov. George Pataki (R) anticipates spending an estimated \$240 million to cover legal immigrants who will lose federal aid.

In Texas, Gov. George W. Bush (R) argues that changing the rules for legal immigrants already in the US was unfair.

"He has no concern about prospectively saying to future immigrants, 'You will no longer be eligible,'" says Bush spokeswoman Karen Hughes. "But he is calling on the federal government to provide funding for this part of the population."

The National Governors Association says many governors, including Mr. Bush, are asking for extra help.

"We aren't talking about reopening the welfare bill. We are talking about amending a little thing on the edge of it," says Nolan Jones at the NGA.

President Clinton has put forward a plan to restore many benefits to 350,000 of the 500,000 immigrants most severely affected by

welfare reform. Benefits most at risk include Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a monthly benefit (averaging \$400 per recipient) that augments the incomes of the aged or disabled; Medicaid, which helps the same group pay medical bills; and food stamps.

But many lawmakers say revising the law to soften its impact on immigrants is unlikely.

"It's just not going to happen," says Rep. Clay Shaw Jr. (R) of Florida, who led the charge for welfare reform in the last Congress.

For one, federal budgeteers would fight such a move. About one-fourth of the savings expected from welfare cuts will come from ending benefits to legal immigrants.

While Congressman Shaw expects to feel more pressure to revise the law as welfare reform kicks into effect over the next four months, he says. "We've really got to believe in what we are going to accomplish with this, because we are going to be dogged all the way." He points out that 51 percent of SSI benefits go to elderly noncitizens, something he says was never intended by the authors of the original legislation.

Shaw and other Republicans are open to one possible compromise that would provide states with additional block-grant money for programs like food stamps. Mr. Clinton has sought to restore \$10 billion in benefits. But Republicans on Capitol Hill would approve no more than a total of \$2 billion for states.

The pending cut in benefits has prompted a large number of legal immigrants to apply for US citizenship. Almost 2 million are expected to apply this year, three times more than applied in 1995.

But for elderly immigrants, the naturalization process can be daunting. The US Immigration and Naturalization Service reports that only 9 percent of immigrants older than 65 ever naturalize. Such is the case for the elderly Iranian woman now living in Denver. Her son, who asked not to be named, explains that the entire family fled to the US after the Khomeni government took power in the late 1970s.

"She has gone through this before. She was a wealthy woman and had everything taken from her," he says. Undergoing the naturalization process, including the exams to become a citizen, would be difficult. "Her English is still not very good," he says "There is no way she could pass the test."

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, March 12, the Federal debt stood at \$5,361,482,510,992.32.

One year ago, March 12, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,017,284,000,000.

Five years ago, March 12, 1992, the Federal debt stood at \$3,854,311,000,000.

Ten years ago, March 12, 1987, the Federal debt stood at \$2,247,042,000,000.

Fifteen years ago, March 12, 1982, the Federal debt stood at \$1,048,967,000,000 which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,312,515,510,992.32—during the past 15 years.

HERE'S WEEKLY BOX SCORE ON U.S. FOREIGN OIL CONSUMPTION

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the American Petroleum Institute reports that for the week ending March 7, the United States imported 7,510,000 barrels of oil each day, 195,000 barrels more than the 7,315,000 imported during the same week a year ago.

Americans relied on foreign oil for 53.8 percent of their needs last week, and there are no signs that the upward spiral will abate. Before the Persian Gulf war, the United States obtained approximately 45 percent of its oil supply from foreign countries. During the Arab oil embargo in the 1970's, foreign oil accounted for only 35 percent of America's oil supply.

Anybody else interested in restoring domestic production of oil—by U.S. producers using American workers? Politicians had better ponder the economic calamity sure to occur in America if and when foreign producers shut off our supply—or double the already enormous cost of imported oil flowing into the United States—now 7,510,000 barrels a day.

RATIFICATION OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it is time—long past time—for the Senate to end the embarrassing delay and ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention. The convention is the most significant nonproliferation agreement to come before the Senate since the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is a major step toward eliminating this entire class of weapons of mass destruction. U.S. ratification of the convention, before it takes effect on April 29 of this year, is vital to our national security. U.S. support for the convention will demonstrate our continued commitment to halting the spread of these weapons of mass destruction. This is far too important a subject for further delays. It is time to end the stalling and bring the convention to a vote. There is no justification for a handful of Senate opponents of the convention to bottle it up in the Foreign Relations Committee.

This treaty is clearly bipartisan. It was negotiated under President Reagan, concluded and signed by President Bush, and submitted to the Senate for advice and consent by President Clinton. It has broad bipartisan support in the Senate, and it should be voted on by the Senate, now.

The Chemical Weapons Convention deserves this broad support, because it makes sense for America's national security. We have the opportunity now to move forward and rid the world of these senseless weapons.

The United States initially led by example, by unilaterally destroying our stockpile of chemical weapons. The Chemical Weapons Convention will extend this requirement to all other nations that approve the convention.

The convention also provides for monitoring and controls to reduce the proliferation of the chemicals and technology used to make such weapons. These restrictions will make it much more difficult for terrorists and rogue nations to develop these weapons of mass destruction. The convention also contains provisions to investigate and punish violators, including short-

notice inspections of chemical manufacturing sites and other facilities.

Opponents of the convention argue that since it is not being ratified by all nations, it will not stop rogue countries from acquiring these deadly weapons. But no international treaty starts with worldwide support. Countries suspected of chemical arms violations will be subjected to broad economic and arms embargoes. In fact, the convention specifically restricts the export or transfer of controlled chemicals to nonparticipating nations, a clear deterrent to rogue countries.

American leadership is essential to halt the proliferation of these deadly weapons. It is already a serious international embarrassment that the United States, the leading country in the development of the convention, has taken over 4 years to ratify it. If not us, who? If not now, when? As of today, 71 nations have ratified the treaty, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Canada. We stand with Iraq, North Korea, Libya, and Syria as nonsigners. The Senate needs to act now to end the unconscionable delay in ratifying this urgently needed convention. The longer we delay, the greater the danger of the proliferation of these devastating weapons.

Protecting our own soldiers and civilians from chemical attack is and will continue to be a high priority. Without U.S. support for this convention, rogue nations will have a greater incentive to acquire chemical weapons, and our military and civilian populations will face greater risk of chemical attack. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, those directly responsible for the men and women who are most at risk from chemical attack, fully support this convention.

It is clearly in our national interest to ratify the convention before April 29, so that this country can be involved in the initial implementation legislation, the budget negotiations, and the verification provisions for tracking chemical weapons worldwide.

Critics of the convention say that it will impose high costs on the U.S. chemical industry. But our industry and defense representatives have been involved in the development of the convention from the beginning. They helped draft the convention's language to ensure that their interests will not be compromised. The chemical industry supports ratification, because they know that if the convention enters into force without U.S. support, they will lose hundreds of millions of dollars in annual trade. This economic burden more than offsets the marginal costs that compliance with the convention will impose on the industry.

Opponents also argue that the convention will reveal U.S. trade secrets to foreign inspectors. But the United States will always be the target of industrial espionage, with or without this agreement. Issues relating to the confidentiality of product and processes received a great deal of attention