Americans cheated by 'virtual' laws

by Phyllis Schlafly

It was a bad week for advocates of amnesty and a guest-worker program.

On Dec. 12, the Bush administration finally cracked down, 20 years late, on a few thousand of the hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants who are illegally employed in the United States. This crackdown on employers was promised by the Reagan amnesty of 1986 and now, 20 years later, the government is getting around to enforcing the law.

The feds arrested thousands of illegal immigrants who were working at Swift & Co. meat-processing plants under false Social Security numbers. Swift announced that it might have to shut down for lack of workers.

The media immediately opened TV channels to pro-immigration activists who claimed that these arrests "prove" the need for "comprehensive" immigration legislation with a guest-worker plan. Au contraire. The news on Dec. 13 proved just the opposite.

Within hours of the news that 261 illegal immigrants had been removed from the Swift plant in Greeley, Colo., U.S. citizens lined up to fill the vacated jobs. The county employment agency received 230 job applications, of which 157 were specifically for Swift.

That blows the argument for the need of a guest-worker program to fill unpleasant jobs that Americans allegedly don't want to perform. Let's also take the example of Wal-Mart, the store that the liberals love to hate, because it pays lower wages and benefits.

In January 2006, a new Wal-Mart store in suburban Chicago announced the availability of 325 positions for which the average pay would be $10.99 an hour. Wal-Mart received an astonishing 25,000 applications.

Another Wal-Mart in Oakland, Calif., received 11,000 applications in 2005 when it made known it had several hundred jobs open.

In response to complaints about the dislocations caused by the action against Swift & Co., U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency chief Julie Myers explained that most of the arrests involved identity theft in addition to illegal employment. Many of those arrested were working under Social Security numbers that had been stolen from real U.S. citizens and, in some cases, this caused significant credit damage to the legitimate owners of the stolen numbers.

Then on Dec. 14, the Government Accountability Office lowered the boom on the Bush administration by releasing a report stating that the government has given up on plans to implement a system to track the entry and exit of foreign visitors. Congress ordered the creation of an entry-exit system called US-VISIT (excluding Canadians and Mexicans) back in 1996, and the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, made this system imperative.

Some of the Sept. 11 hijackers entered the United States legally on visas but never departed when their visas expired. It's now 2006, and we are told that an entry-exit system doesn't exist and the government has abandoned plans to create it.

The government had $1.7 billion to develop this program, but now tells us that is not nearly enough money, so all plans are being scrapped. There's no such thing as border security without an entry-exit system because at least 30 percent of illegal immigrants in the United States entered the country as legal visitors and then disappeared into our population.

Student visas, many of which are given to Third World applicants, are a major source of fraud. We know that Sept. 11 Pentagon pilot Hani Hanjour came in on a student visa. About 1 million foreign students are in the U.S. at any given time.

In August 2006, 17 Egyptian students entered the U.S. on legal visas supposedly to study at Montana State University, but 11 of them had no intention of doing that and disappeared when they arrived in the U.S. After a national manhunt, two were arrested in Richmond, Va., one in Minneapolis, two in Manville, N.J., two in Dundalk, Md., one at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, and three in Des Moines, Iowa.

Tracking people who come into the United States and requiring them to leave when their visas expire is an essential component of national security. Failure to implement such a system means our government doesn't care about protecting our borders.

The same week as the Swift & Co. arrests and the sensational GAO report came the revelation, now widely reported, that the Bush administration has no intention whatsoever of constructing an actual fence on the U.S.-Mexico border. This is in spite of the fact that the Secure Fence Act was passed in the fall by the Senate 80-17 and by the House 283-138, and President Bush starred in a photo-op just before the November election so we could all witness him signing it into law.

Now we hear it's all a sham. We hear vague rumbles that we might get a "virtual" fence, but what we really got is a virtual law.

Border fencing is not a total solution any more than employee verification or entry-exit tracking, but they are all necessities. President Bush must carry out his constitutional duty to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed."

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