

## Getting the GOP Back to Reagan On Immigration

Who says the last election changed nothing in Washington? Try telling that to the conservatives now denouncing fellow conservative Spence Abraham for daring to rescue Republicans from themselves on immigration.

Mr. Abraham, an upstart first-termer from Michigan, has committed the sin of becoming chairman of the Senate's immigration subcommittee. This is more dangerous than it sounds. He replaces Alan Simpson, now retired, in what could be the biggest policy shift since Madonna became a mother. Mr. Abraham is court-ing the wrath of the anti-immigration lobby, which thought it had captured the GOP.

And at least in the last Congress, it had—to the great joy of Democrats. With the help of Texas Rep. Lamar Smith and a boost from Pitchfork Pat Buchanan, Mr. Simpson succeeded in persuading the country that Republicans had become the anti-immigration party. Harass businesses, issue identity cards, bar education to alien six-year-olds: This became the optimistic message of what was once Ronald Reagan's party. Hispanic- and Asian-Americans rewarded the GOP by voting for Democrats in historic proportions last November.

Enter Mr. Abraham, who wants to restore some Ellis Island perspective to the immigration fight. "The debate over the last few years has been about what's wrong with immigration," says this grandson of Lebanese immigrants. "We shouldn't do anything more about legal immigration until we have a fuller debate on the benefits of immigration."

The senator got a taste of the politics of this message, pro and con, when he took it to Silicon Valley last week. At Cypress

### Potomac Watch

By Paul A. Gigot

Semiconductor, he met high-tech entrepreneurs—from Sun Microsystems, 3Com, Cisco—who told him they need immigrants in America to compete around the world. Cypress chief T.J. Rodgers, who said 40% of his top management is foreign born, hailed the senator as "a hero of freedom."

Outside, however, Mr. Abraham was denounced in a demonstration promoted by the Federation for American Immigration Reform. FAIR's idea of "reform" is to stop immigration just about cold. Its 90 or so picketers carried such inspirational signs as "Close the Border," "Drug Cartel" and "Immigrants Smuggle Drugs," as if Mexico is responsible for more American kids using marijuana.

FAIR might be ignorable, except that its arguments are beginning to echo in the mainstream conservative media. National Review magazine now writes as if Mr. Abraham is a greater threat to its principles than is Ted Kennedy. Its latest broad-side advertises a threat by John Tanton, a Michigan ophthalmologist who is FAIR's chairman, that the senator will "face a single-issue anti-immigration candidate" when he runs for re-election in 2000.

This is bizarre, because Dr. Tanton is the kind of zero-population-growth zealot that conservatives used to mock. His views have their roots in the limits-to-growth environmental left. A friend who's seen him on National Empowerment Television, a conservative TV network, says Dr. Tanton



Spence Abraham

takes out a metronome to illustrate the frightening thought that more people are born every day than are dying. Dr. Tanton adds that Thomas Malthus, whose name now defines human pessimism, was "much misunderstood."

National Review's editors seem to believe that it's better politics to be allied with neo-Malthusians instead of fast-growing businesses and their workers. As Journal Editor Robert Bartley once quipped, NR wants Republicans to ban immigrants but legalize drugs.

The good news is that this advice is so bad that even Republicans won't take it. November's election results have hurt the anti-immigration crowd in GOP councils. House and Senate leaders have put any further attempts to shrink legal immigration on indefinite hold. This may explain why restrictionist Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl turned down the immigration chair despite his greater seniority. This opened the slot for Mr. Abraham, whose GOP Senate allies on the subject include Ohio's Mike DeWine and Phil Gramm of Texas.

"I'm not trying to badmouth the other side," says Mr. Abraham, "but they've had the chance to make their case." He wants the public to understand that 12% of the Inc. magazine list of 500 fast-growing companies were started by immigrants; that more than 40% of U.S. engineering Ph.D.s are foreign born, filling a great need; and that parts of cities such as New York have been revitalized by immigrants.

This doesn't mean he's a libertarian on the subject. He opposes illegals, as well as foreigners who arrive with the main purpose of getting on the dole. "Immigration yes, welfare no," he says. This jives with scholar Peter Salins's argument, in the January issue of *Commentary*, that the country's problem isn't the number of immigrants but the fact that we haven't focused enough on their assimilation. Welfare makes it harder to assimilate into the working, English-speaking American mainstream.

But Mr. Abraham's broader political point is that the GOP's anti-immigrationists have sent voters a cramped, pessimistic message better suited to the declining nations of Europe. Ronald Reagan celebrated immigration because he knew it resonated with the American sense of possibility. As usual, the Gipper had it right.



***Adiós  
Au revoir  
Sayonara  
Auf Wiedersehen  
Till we meet again***

To my patients:

After long and careful consideration, my wife, Mary Lou, and I have decided that the time has come for both of us to retire: I from the practice of ophthalmology and Mary Lou from the low vision work that she has done for the Department of Ophthalmology for more than a decade. Our target date is June 30, 1998.

I will be 64 next February, and Mary Lou is a year-and-half younger, so in a conventional sense, it is about time to retire. Other reasons for deciding to leave are the tremendous social, political, and economic changes that are coming to the practice of medicine these days — I won't be more specific than that on paper. Taken together, these leave me uncomfortable; retiring seems the best choice. And, of course, like an aging ballplayer, one wants to leave before others start suggesting it — before the cheers change to jeers!!

The Burns Clinic is the only place that I have practiced, and of the approximately 125 physicians now associated with the Clinic, only Dr. Kutcipal in Gynecology has been here longer. I am now the longest-serving surgeon at Northern Michigan Hospital, where I have done nearly 4,000 operations over the years. Beginning with my internship at Denver General Hospital in 1960-61, and including my ophthalmology residency at Ann Arbor from 1961-64, I have been in practice for 37 years. I have the common lament: "where did the time go?!"

It has been a rare privilege to practice ophthalmology during these years given the tremendous advances that have come along. For instance, in cataract surgery during the 1960s, patients were hospitalized for a whole week for one operation; today it is an outpatient procedure. Back then, patients ended up with thick glasses that distorted vision, and were so heavy that they were hard to keep up on the nose and in adjustment; today, lens implants can often restore vision to pre-cataract levels. We have seen the development of vastly improved machines for doing visual fields and better drugs for glaucoma and infections — fortunately, we see very few of the latter.

The thing that I will miss the most about retiring is meeting patients. In medicine, we encounter people from all walks of life — many folks that I would otherwise never get to know. In ophthalmology in particular, we see both the young and the old (in contrast to pediatricians and internists, who see one or the other); our patients are both male and female (compared to ob-gyn and urology); we serve as both internist and surgeon to our patients, and so get to follow them through their whole course (unlike internists, who must refer their patients needing surgery, and the surgeons, who refer them back after their ministrations). We see emergencies as well as chronic problems. Especially with cataract surgery, we are privileged sometimes to make quite dramatic changes in people's lives — a prospect which can be quite gratifying to both the patient and doctor.

The work that Mary Lou and I did on low vision was particularly satisfying. We were able to help about 1000 patients over the years, most of whom appreciated Mary Lou's patient and tender care, even in those occasional situations where we were not able to improve things much, due to the severity of the condition. (She also had to be patient and caring to put up with me for the 39 years we've been married!)

As some of our patients will know, Mary Lou and I have had active lives outside of medicine. She has served on the Emmet County Planning Commission for more than twenty years, and will continue (if reappointed!). She is currently president of a group called Scenic Michigan, the state-level affiliate of Scenic America, and is working to control the proliferation of billboards across the state. This involves a monthly trip to Lansing. If you'd like to help with such a project, contact her.

I have worked for years on a series of environmental (or conservation, as we used to call them) problems, including the establishment twenty-five years ago of the Little Traverse Conservancy, a land-preservation group that works in the northern lower and eastern upper peninsulas of Michigan. The Conservancy is one of the most successful such organizations in the United States. It has helped protect over 10,000 acres, valued at about \$40 million. This has been a very satisfying association.

Together, Mary Lou and I helped found Northern Michigan Planned Parenthood, which is still going strong, and is closely tied to another of our concerns: human population growth (now coming on strong in our part of the state.) In the 1970s, I served as national population chairman of the Sierra Club, and then as national president of Zero Population Growth. I then went on to found the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), to work on the immigration component of our population growth, now looming very large. That work brought me in contact with the drift toward multilingualism in government, which led me to organize U.S.ENGLISH, and more recently English Language Advocates, to work on this problem. I now run a small foundation called simply "U.S.," headquartered in downtown Petoskey. It publishes a quarterly journal called *The Social Contract* (available on subscription), of which I have been the editor and publisher for the last seven years. It reports on all these related topics.

Mary Lou and I both plan to continue working on these projects, and will have no problem of excess time on our hands. We also want to do a lot of hiking while we are still able. And, of course, there is still gardening and beekeeping, and a huge backlog of reading and writing that will easily fill any spare time. A bit of just sitting in the sun and doing nothing would also be nice!

We both thank you for your confidence in us, and hope that it has seldom been misplaced. The ophthalmologists who are continuing our department at Burns Clinic are a fine group — they take care of our eyes! Doubtless a new young person just out of training will be hired to replace me, just as I took over from Dr. William S. Conway more than thirty years ago. I will be glad to help you select another doctor to continue your care. Time marches on!!

If perchance you would like to keep track of our doings and projects, we would be glad to mail you a copy of the year-end letter we print nearly every year. Just let us know.

Sincerely,



2957 Atkins Road  
Petoskey, Mich 49770-9531  
(616) 347-4511