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Some Challenging Thoughts About Immigration Policy

Our country is engaging in an animated consideration of U.S. immigration policy.

As one who has a small file drawer of articles carefully read and highlighted on the topic of globalization, I ponder points in our current immigration discussion. Some are offered for the reader's consideration.

Patricia Zapor has helpfully noted in her op-ed article published in the March 30 edition of *The Record* that "Until well into the 20th century, pretty much anyone who showed up at a port of entry or walked across a border got to stay in the United States.... Until fairly recently there was no distinction made about whether someone arrived legally or not." This contextualizes for me the current loud call for law and order. (Her whole article is worthy of much reflection and filing: <http://www.archlou.org/therecord/editorial>).

This is not to say there is no need to regulate our borders and to carefully tend security. It was St Thomas More who championed adherence to law, noting that without it we would not be able to endure the ensuing chaos.

In tracking the North American Free Trade Agreement and its unfolding consequences for Canada, the U.S. and Mexico I was startled to find that money and goods, but not people, can flow freely across our borders. But people—all of us sisters and brothers in God's great creation—are much more precious than things, and the economy is supposed to serve the wellbeing of persons.

Another surprise from NAFTA: this treaty allows U.S. subsidies on corn, rice and beans (and a few other agricultural products), but Mexico does not (cannot?) have similar farm subsidies. Thus people in Mexico can buy U.S. corn, rice and beans (major staples in Mexican diet) far cheaper than it can be grown in Mexico. Con-

sequently, Mexico's agricultural sector has been heavily challenged and whole farming communities have died. Mexico's median age is less than that of the U.S. So their younger people go north seeking a job where money can be sent home to family members.

Thus, given this farm subsidy situation, it seems to me uncommonly cruel for us U.S. people to try to tell certain immigrants, especially Mexicans, that they should go home when a big reason why many are here is a result of a trade treaty driven largely by the agreement's U.S. party to the benefit of our U.S. people. This provides more context for our concerns about legality. Laws and treaties need to be fair and be perceived as being fair.

An aside, but another item on the "legal" issue. So many of us say we do not want global government. From all I can see we are backing into it through the interlocking set of international trade agreements conducted behind closed doors with only some of the major stakeholders present and held from public review until the latest moment and pushed through Congress with parliamentary procedures that prohibit amendment.

When I go to our local ethnic restaurants and see the staff working so hard, thoughts that come to me include: "Young man [almost always the case], where were you born? How is your family? Where are you staying now? I hope your employer and current neighbors are being decent with you. When did you decide to leave home and come here? How old were you? What are your intermediate plans for your life? Thank you for helping provide my meal this evening. You are mighty brave...."

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The Catholic Conference of KY (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops, established in 1983. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. There are 388,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK's Board of Directors.