

ARROGANT, ELITIST FRIENDS OF AMNESTY AT IT AGAIN

By Don Feder

It's been a month since the Senate amnesty bill went down in glorious (red, white and blue) flames, but its outraged and bitter proponents are still engaged in character assassination -- calling those of us who opposed the monumental fraud bigots and racists.

You would expect such contemptible tactics from the left. But in this struggle to preserve a remnant of American identity, those playing the race card with the greatest gusto are ostensibly on the right.

Among the revanchists is Gerard Baker, a Brit neo-con and U.S. editor of the *London Times*. Baker's July 15 *New York Post* column was a case study in name-calling.

The bill "that would have regularized the status of 12 million illegal immigrants, mostly Latinos, as well as enforcing border security more effectively" (How? by sending a message to millions of potential illegals, "Hey, amigos, c'mon in, the amnesty's fine!") was defeated by a "roar of nativist and, at times, thinly disguised racist hysteria from the great American heartland," Baker pronounced. "Little Napoleons on TV and talk radio strutted and howled." Which would you say we did more of, Gerard old chap, strutting or howling?

After informing us that the move to protect our national sovereignty was "as ugly as it was absurd" and based on "right-wing paranoia," Baker actually got around to trying to propound an argument, to wit: "America has absorbed waves and waves of immigrants through its history."

That would be waves and waves of *legal* immigrants -- those whose American journey didn't begin with a felony. It should be noted that immigrants of the past (all four of my grandparents included) came here legally at a time when America needed sweat-labor and our population was a sixth of what it is today. They arrived willing to learn English (you didn't have to "press 1" for the language of the Constitution) and identify with their adopted land.

They did not come expecting the country to adapt to them -- with bi-lingual education, bi-lingual ballots, court interpreters, racial quotas, etc. They did not come bearing ethnic grudges, believing that a large part of our country belongs to their native land (as is the case with many Mexicans).

Maybe that's why amnesty advocates are so quick to resort to ad hominem -- there are no rational arguments for what they call immigration reform.

Whatever the reason, the champions of illegal immigrants did little but screech and sneer -- especially establishment Republicans. "We're gonna tell the bigots to shut up," squawked South Carolina "Republican" Senator Lindsey Graham.

Opponents of the bill suffer from "anti-immigrant rage" and "national chauvinism," according to former Bush speechwriter Michael Gerson. Calling those who oppose illegal immigration "anti-immigrant" is like saying that if you're against drunk-driving you're anti-motorist.

No one screeched longer or louder, no one was more hysterical, no one was downright nastier than HINO (Hispanic In Name Only) Linda Chavez, who doesn't even speak Spanish and whose people have lived here longer than the average DAR member.

In a May 25 column (“Latino Fear and Loathing”), the one-time Bush cabinet nominee began by thoughtfully observing, “Some people just don’t like Mexicans – or anyone else from south of the border.”

Chavez claims we think Latinos are “dirty, diseased, indolent and more prone to criminal behavior.” It’s true that those with a 6th . grade education (the average illegal from points south) are less productive than the typical American. It’s equally true that without a screening process (how do you do background checks on illegals?) you’ll get a fair number of killers, rapists, thieves and child-molesters.

Opposition to amnesty is driven by “fear of the other,” Chavez discloses. Once us “xenophobes” advocated “forced sterilization and eugenics coupled with virtually shutting off legal immigration from ‘undesirable’ countries.” Today, we must content ourselves with building border fences and “rounding up aliens on the job,” while our white sheets are hidden away in the closet and our crosses go unburned.

Finally, Chavez drives deep into the territory of seriously-in-need-of-therapy: “We need to quit pretending that the ‘No Amnesty’ crowd is anything other than what it is: a tiny group of angry, frightened and prejudiced loudmouths backed by political opportunists who exploit them.” Linda Chavez could give Gerard Baker a few lessons in smearing the opposition.

Those frightened, prejudiced loudmouths managed to turn around 17 Senate votes in 48 hours, by melting down phone lines into the Capitol – quite an achievement for an insignificant minority.

I assume Chavez has never looked at an immigration poll, for fear it would intrude on her carefully constructed reality. The tiny group of angry, frightened, prejudiced loudmouths she scornfully dismisses includes:

- The 93% of Americans who think illegal immigration is a serious problem (April 12-15 McLaughlin Associates survey)
- The 74% of all Americans, and 63% of Latinos, who believe we need to “stop the flow of illegals before we address what to do about those who are already here” (survey cited above).
- The 61% of Americans who say there are no conditions in which they would support “giving legal, green-card status to millions of illegal immigrants.” (McLaughlin Associates)
- The 69% of the American people who would support an immigration bill “that focuses exclusively on reducing illegal immigration and enforcing the borders.” (Rasmussen Reports Poll, taken June 11-12)
- The 84% who believed that the Senate amnesty bill would not succeed at reducing illegal immigration and enforcing border security (Rasmussen)
- And the 56% who opposed the Senate bill, versus the 38% who supported it (late June Zogby Interactive poll)

The 67% of Latinos who would repeal sanctuary-city policies, the 53% who would deny citizenship to anchor babies and the 67% who favor a tamper-proof national identity card – are they motivated by the belief that Mexicans are “dirty, diseased, indolent and more prone to criminal behavior”?

Here’s something to consider regarding the charge that the overwhelming majority of Americans are racist-bigot-hate-

mongers for opposing the Big A. In a paper for the National Bureau of Economic Research, Harvard economist George Borjas and his associates estimated that between 1980 and 2000, the immigrant influx (mostly illegal) generally accounted for 20 to 60% of the decline in wages, 25 percent of the decline in employment and 10% of the increase in incarceration rates among African-Americans with a high-school education or less.

A decade ago, I was in Los Angeles talking to a group of folks Baker would call “nativists” who could barely hide their “racist hysteria.”

One of the night-riders was a blue-collar, middle-aged black man, who complained: “I’ve lived in South Central all of my life. But my kids can’t get a job at McDonald’s unless they speak Spanish.”

He fumed about illegals in his neighborhood living 16 to a house and keeping chickens and goats in the backyard. Unlike Chavez, his perspective wasn’t tinged with nostalgia. Unlike Baker, his knowledge of the crisis was more than theoretical. (Like leftist advocates of affirmative action, Chavez and Baker are more than willing to sacrifice others to their utopian agenda.)

He told me of another black man, a friend of his working as a welder for \$20 an hour. One day, his boss came to him and said: “Sorry, but I can hire two Mexican brothers (*undocumented workers as they say*) for \$10 an hour” -- so another American dream bites the dust so elitists can get that warm glow of moral superiority.

As I mentioned earlier, I’m two generations away from Ellis Island. (Most Americans who opposed the Senate bill can recall immigrant ancestors.) I can assure you that the native Americans

of their day did not greet my grandparents at the dock with confetti and a brass band.

Nevertheless, they came here legally, learned English (in the case of my maternal grandfather, even though he worked 12-hour days in a tailor shop), obeyed our laws and were loyal Americans.

It's almost demeaning to have to say it, but I could care less if an immigrant is brown, black, yellow or fuchsia. I've been to Mexico -- the last time, 3 years ago. I found the people warm and gracious. I have Mexican friends. I do not believe the average Mexican is dirty, diseased, indolent and more prone to criminal behavior.

On the other hand, I would not want to see the tragic history of that lovely land repeated here.

That Mexican wages are far below those of the average day-laborer in the United States (meaning the average Mexican can substantially improve his standard of living just by moving across our porous border) is a problem.

That polls show a majority of Mexicans would like to live here is a problem.

That Mexicans are taught that America stole Texas, California and the Southwest from them and justice requires the re-annexation of that territory, is a problem. (During pro-amnesty demonstrations last year, protestors carried signs that read: "If you think I'm an 'illegal' because I'm a Mexican, learn the true history, because I'm in my homeland.")

Other small problems:

The Amnesty bill would have cost the American taxpayer \$2.4 trillion, according to the Heritage Foundation's Robert Rector (a long-term net cost based on benefits received less taxes paid).

Close to 30% of all federal inmates are illegal aliens, as are more than 30,000 gang members in 33 states. The Senate bill would have required the government to provide a temporary visa to applicants after a pro-forma 24-hour background check. Gang members could have been amnestied just by signing a "gang renunciation form."

If it passed, the Senate amnesty bill would have set off a mad dash for the border. Those applying to have their "status" "regularized" would only have needed to prove they lived here since January 1 of this year. (Documents attesting to this could easily have been obtained on the streets of L.A.)

Is it right-wing paranoia to suppose that Al Qaeda would have used the opportunity to insert its own agents in the stampede for the border? His support for amnesty undercuts the president's argument for staying in Iraq, as the public wonders why Americans should die to defend Iraq's borders when Washington refuses to secure our own, and we send brave Border Patrol agents to jail for shooting drug smugglers.

Newt Gingrich, not my idea of a wild-eyed reactionary, had it right when he observed in a May 21st column ("An Immigration Shipwreck in Sight"): "The announcement last week that the White House and a group of senators have reached an agreement on 'comprehensive immigration reform' should have the same effect that the word 'iceberg' had on the passengers and crew of the Titanic. The proposed agreement is a disaster of the first order, and it will severely cripple America for the foreseeable future."

Finally, we need to quit pretending that the arguments for amnesty amount to anything other than political opportunism (on

the part of Democrats), political pandering (on the part of Republicans), corporate greed, racial resentment and another opportunity for elitists to sneer at the ignorant bigotry of the average American.