

Movement's Dark Origins Exposed

Few issues elicit such vehement and vitriolic responses from the Catholic faithful like those dealing with immigration. Such was the case recently when our Maryland Catholic Conference pledged the support of the Catholic Church in Maryland for a bill that will allow immigrant students to attend Maryland's state institutions of higher learning at the same tuition rate as other resident students of Maryland.

Concerns about the vast extent of illegal immigration in our country are completely legitimate, and as we have said in the past, the Church does not condone breaking the law. But we also recognize that our country's immigration system is impossibly broken, and that practical and humane solutions to this issue must come from the federal government. In the meantime, as a Church, and as Marylanders, we are called to recognize that all of our neighbors, including those who look and speak differently than we do, are deserving of our welcome and compassion.

The bill to provide in-state tuition rates to immigrant students in fact is fashioned to clearly balance many of these concerns. To counter claims that immigrant students would take highly coveted spots at Maryland's colleges and universities, the bill will only allow these students to apply at first to community colleges, which have open enrollments. After two years students are then eligible – if they qualify academically – to apply to state universities at the in-state tuition rate. If they are accepted, their seats may not be counted among the seats the University of Maryland system is required to reserve for resident students. They are not eligible to receive scholarship assistance. They must provide documentation that they or their parents have and will continue to pay income taxes.

Most importantly, we must remember that this legislation affects children who are here through no choice of their own, and who do not deserve to be held responsible for the fact that their parents may have brought them here illegally. These are our students who often have spent most of their lives in classrooms with all children in Maryland, and who at a minimum must have attended Maryland high schools for at least three years. They are also students who *want* to further their education, and who are making the right choices in order to lead productive lives. If we are to face the reality honestly, that these students are likely to remain in our country, isn't it in

the best interests of all that they be encouraged to contribute positively to our society?

Both the Archdiocese and the Maryland Catholic Conference have received a number of complaints about the Church's support for the bill, and some opponents are even pursuing efforts to overturn the law by petitioning it to a statewide referendum. Given the emotional, and sadly, sometimes uncharitable, reactions we have witnessed on the issue of immigration, we hope the referendum efforts will not go forward and further divide our state on this issue.

Voices of opposition regarding this issue have also been expressed in other parts of the country, many of which have been amplified by powerful grassroots organizations that have emerged to lead the charge against immigration, legal or illegal.

The New York Times highlighted the relatively unknown founder of the three most prominent such groups, Dr. John Tanton.

Some 30 years ago, as he viewed the impact of increased immigration rates from his home in rural northern Michigan, Dr. Tanton, "a beekeeper and amateur naturalist" who spent 20 years "planting trees, cleaning creeks and suing developers," sought allies - including Planned Parenthood and the Sierra Club - to curb the source of unwanted population growth.

In the years that followed, he would create three organizations aimed at reducing immigration, legal and illegal, that would yield immense influence in Washington, D.C., and throughout the country:

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