

Today's Immigrant - Tomorrow's Victim

February's article "AEA Action On Immigration Reform" sparked quite a few responses. Two of the letters received are published in our "Reader's Voice" column. A letter from Susan Forbes Martin, Executive Director, Commission On Immigration Reform, indicates that the "American Engineer" is reaching congress and they are interested in hearing from the engineering community. The second letter comes from a young foreign-born engineer, employed in California, who was one student who benefited from our immigration policy. He now provides other views on the Immigration Issue.

"AEA Action On Immigration Reform" covered AEA'S activity to seek the revision of the Immigration Reform Act of 1990 and reduce the number of visas available to foreign engineers and to reduce the number of foreign engineering students allowed to remain in the United States after they completed their education.

The Immigration Reform Act of 1990 increased the quota of visas for engineers and immigrants said to possess engineering skills. The Immigration Act, to increase quotas, was changed based on industry testimony which cited the National Science Foundation (a government bureaucracy) paper that projected large shortages of engineers. This Act was to compensate for NSF's false shortage projections. A Congressional Committee found the NSF paper and their projections to be false. Based on that finding, AEA is asking Congress to review the issue and take corrective action. It is said that NSF is the major beneficiary of its own shortage propaganda followed by the government funded engineering colleges. The bureaucracy grows as it feeds itself.

I believe an engineering manpower balance (unity supply, demand ratio) is required for members of the American engineering profession to continue to practice their profession. Continued practice will keep engineers proficient, increase their experience and technical excellence, and enhance their engineering skills and U.S. engineering capabilities.

Our young writer, known as J.W., has the impression that we are against immigration in general and that we hold the immigrants at fault or to blame. J.W. also finds fault with our educational system inferring that our K - 12 education can't compete and our American youth are not interested in engineering. He writes, "Foreign students dominate all the engineering classes." And, the college administration invites (recruits) foreign students to join them.

Foreign students must stay in school until they complete their education and find employment or they have to return to their country of origin. Since the undergraduate engineering degree production in the U.S. exceeds the demand and provides a surplus, the foreign student must continue his or her education to get the advanced degree. This educational path provides one with the opportunity to by-pass typical immigration channels and remain in the United States. Should congress reduce funding to our colleges, the college administration would not have to scurry offshore to invite or recruit students to fill their classrooms. College classrooms will shrink with the education budget until we no longer produce a surplus. The student, native or immigrant, is just the catalyst required to affect the transfer of funds from the taxpayer's pocket to the College Empire.

J.W. closes with the typical rhetoric gleaned directly from the college marketing strategy. They argue; if we don't import our students from offshore, America will lose its technological leadership. Donkey dust! America, during a period of its greatest manpower shortage, out produced both

fronts and saved many countries and their people from dominance by aggressors during World War II. We have continued to do so, largely due to the efforts, skill and ability of our American Engineering community.

I don't believe we fault the immigrant or hold them to blame. When the engineering manpower supply-demand ratio gets out of hand, for whatever reason, people, the economy and other factors do suffer. J.W. is one of those fortunate to have a job in the heart of U.S. technology, but there are many others that are not getting the engineering jobs for which they studied so hard. Did J.W. get his job at the expense of a U.S. citizen? Have members of the American Engineering community been displaced by immigrants? What about the U.S. taxpayer who funds our college empire only to see their sons and daughters going without jobs. We know the college engineering degree production exceeds the demand for our young graduates. Parents of our college graduates say their tax dollars subsidized foreign students' education while they and their children go unemployed.

J.W. neglects the fact that the immigration quotas, in the 1990 Immigration Reform Act, were increased because of the deceptive NSF paper. Fact! There was no shortage! There is no shortage! Defense cuts, layoffs, down sizing and the completion of engineer intensive programs have produced an engineering manpower surplus and the Immigration Act of 1990 only contributes to a greater surplus.

It is impossible to build a solid structure on a foundation of lies and fabrications such as those disseminated by the government bureaucrats at NSF and the other 'Shortage Shouters.' Increasing immigration quotas based on NSF's false projections is clearly not a solution, but a source of further problems. The taxpayer has the additional burden of funding the colleges to train students for jobs that do not exist. This waste, any waste, increases the cost of doing business in the U.S. and has a detrimental influence on our ability to compete in the global market. Unfulfilled promises!. Our students suffer when they pay for the education that, through Engineering Shortage Propaganda (ESP), originally promised them a job and a rewarding career and then does not deliver.

The irony follows in that J.W. has now become a member of the U.S. Engineering Community. Just as yesterday's immigrant engineer has become today's victim, today's immigrant engineer will be tomorrow's victim. This will continue unless the shortage shouters are put out of business and a manpower balance can be approached.

Where does this all end? Do we continue to import labor and deprive our citizens of opportunities until the poverty level in the U.S. is equivalent to the poverty level in the third world nations?

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NOTE: Members of the American Engineering Community. By definition, once you become employed in the United States and are involved in engineering you automatically become members of the American Engineering Community. It does not matter if you have been here 40 years or 40 minutes. The next imported, H1-B, engineer will replace one of you - 115,000 more will replace 115,000 more of you. The numbers have been increased to 195,000 in 2000. What will they be next year?