

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Immigration bandwagon slows down

The Simpson-Mazzoli bill, once a sure shot, is now in trouble—a hopeful sign for U.S.-Mexico relations.

There is suddenly hope here and among sane forces in Washington that the Simpson-Mazzoli immigration bill, once thought to be assured of passage in this U.S. Congress, may yet fail.

The bill is a violent Malthusian assault on American growth potential and relations with Mexico. It only gained support in Congress based on careful seeding of anti-Mexican hysteria in the media, and because the economic depression allowed Malthusian labor honchos like Lane Kirkland to sell such an anti-labor bill as "protection of jobs."

The bill sailed through the Senate in late August. But the fall election recess caught it before it got through the House, although it squeaked by a crucial Judiciary Committee vote of 15-12.

This has only left the three-week special session of the Congress, convening Nov. 29, to act on the bill from the House side. The powerful head of the Judiciary Committee, Peter Rodino (D-N.J.), is committed to bringing it to the floor. But my Washington office informs me that House majority leader Jim Wright is firmly opposed to its coming to a vote, as is the chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Tony Coelho (D-Calif.).

According to lobbyists for the bill, administration support is ebbing as well. "You couldn't say they have a full-court press on," said one.

Eyes are on Sen. Kennedy, who until now has put up a front of public

opposition to the bill, while refraining from exercising the power he has to stop it. Will he finally stop play-acting? Kennedy has a lot of say-so over his Massachusetts drinking companion, Tip O'Neill, who ultimately puts the bill on the floor or doesn't.

The factor which may come to bear most in these countdown days is Mexico. The bill mandates a cut in legal immigration by half, sharp increase in border interception, and an amnesty program which leaves up to 2 million people subject to deportation—the overwhelming majority, Mexicans. This is a prescription for major unrest in Mexico, of proportions which overshadow anything the proponents of the bill advance on its behalf.

The Mexican debt crisis, which intervened between the Senate consideration of the bill and its arrival in the House, intensifies concern in responsible layers.

One signal of this is a Sept. 8 study prepared by the U.S. embassy in Mexico City, which has circulated privately, but in unclassified form, since then. The study carries John Gavin's signature on the cover letter. As summarized in a Nov. 21 New York Times article, the study warns that "business and political leaders in Mexico have told the U.S. that passage of a comprehensive immigration bill now . . . would seriously harm relations between the two countries and 'foster political unrest' if it was effectively enforced." "With the Mexican economy in distress, the peso in turmoil, and a new President set to take office

on Dec. 1," Mr. Gavin said, "many Mexicans believe this would be a particularly inauspicious time for the U.S. to tighten its immigration law."

The Gavin report further notes Mexico's view that "effective enforcement of this measure is seen to require authoritarian measures amounting to a militarization of the border." Furthermore, "lower remittance incomes [from Mexican workers in the United States] would deplete the Bank of Mexico's dollar reserves and aggravate mounting debt payment difficulties."

The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), a pro-genocide lobbying arm in Washington, has become sufficiently alarmed that the bill may not pass, to plan full-page anti-immigrant scare ads in several major newspapers for Nov. 29.

FAIR was founded in 1979 by William Paddock, the State Department-linked agronomist who has stated that the best way to deal with Mexico is to "seal the border and watch them scream." He insists thirty million Mexicans will have to fall to "pestilence, famine and war" to return the country to a population level he finds satisfactory.

Now the Richard Viguerie apparatus, the reigning mass-mail scam operation in the New Right, has begun a hate-mail campaign to defend Simpson-Mazzoli. This has its sponsors very nervous. "It could break the whole aura of bi-partisan consensus we have nurtured," said one.

The real weight behind the bill has now been reduced to Lane Kirkland and his coterie at the top of the AFL-CIO. FAIR reports it has the signature of the UAW's Doug Fraser on its national newspaper ad, along with other labor leaders—a scandal of major proportions for those familiar with Paddock's background.