

**COMPARING PRIMARY SOURCES**

## On Immigration Policy

In the 1990s, some critics urged government to rethink long-standing policies on immigration. Others called for leaving the basic programs in place.

*As you read the following passages, determine which one recommends the most drastic changes in immigration policy.*

**FOR RESTRICTING IMMIGRATION**

*Scot Lehigh, staff writer, an essay in The Boston Globe, June 23, 1996*

Can the United States afford to admit 800,000 to one million new legal immigrants every year? That question is directly linked to, but rarely discussed in conjunction with, the transcendent [overriding] economic issues of the last few years: eroding wages, a growing gap between the rich and the poor, and the plight of the American worker in an era of economic anxiety. . . .

Logically, immigration levels should be determined not by history or myth, but rather by the needs of a nation's economy. Although there remains sharp disagreement about the overall economic impact of immigration, a growing body of research suggests high immigration depresses wages for unskilled workers. The dynamic [system] is as simple as supply and demand. With America experiencing only moderate economic growth, the nation's immigration policies have contributed to an excess of labor. Loose labor markets, which see workers vying for jobs rather than employers competing for wages, always spell lower relative wages.

In tight labor markets, where employers must pay decent wages to keep workers, economic competition means more training and greater investment in equipment to increase productivity. Mistreated or underpaid workers have plenty of opportunities elsewhere, a reality that acts as a check on corporate behavior.

**FOR RESTRICTING IMMIGRATION**

*Peter Brimelow, author of Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster, an essay in Commentary, November 1995*

The 1965 Immigration Act triggered an influx of historically high proportions. . . . If present trends continue, the U.S. population will reach 390 million by 2050. More than 130 million will be post-1970 immigrants and their descendants. Because the 1965 Act arbitrarily choked off immigration from Europe, this influx has been almost all from the third world. . . .

Unless there is another pause for assimilation, as there have been many times in the past, immigration will add to America's latent [underlying] sectionalism and ultimately break the country up like the late Roman empire—a crisis as utterly unexpected as World War I by the American political elite, both Left and Right.

Illegal immigration should be ended with a second Operation Wetback, as the Eisenhower administration ended the similar illegal-immigration crisis of the 1950s: seal the borders, deport the illegals already here. Legal immigration should be halted with a five- or ten-year moratorium [break]: no net immigration, with admissions for hardship cases or needed skills balancing the 200,000 legal residents who leave each year. During the moratorium, there should be a debate in which Americans would be asked what they want—as they have not yet been. Immigration might then be resumed, at moderate levels, with an emphasis on [workers with] skills, and on evidence of cultural compatibility such as speaking English.