

be that one lone vote to keep the thing from happening.

Ladies and gentlemen, managers of the Senate: I salute you.
— Stephen Cox

What war is good for — Both the Senate and the House votes on the war on Iraq, perhaps the most important issue of the day, were instigated as a way to gain partisan advantage and dominated by shallow partisan talking points rather than anything remotely resembling substantive debate. Really restores your faith in the ability of these august deliberative bodies to make wise policy, doesn't it?

— Alan W. Bock

Boomers, Latinos, and Islamofascists

— The current debate over illegal immigration has become very emotional and heated, I suspect in part because nobody has coherently addressed the issue. In my view, there are three main strands to the opposition, three arguments against allowing the free flow of immigrants into our country: the national security argument, the cultural argument, and the economic argument.

The security argument seems to me to have merit. We are a target for Islamofascist terrorism. Allowing any illegal immigration in the face of that aggression is foolish, so to the degree that more border agents and even a wall can mitigate the problem, well and good. That seems to me a bare minimum to protect ourselves, and no threat to our liberties. But this argument can extend only to stopping illegal immigration, not copious legal immigration, while allowing those who are here illegally now to apply for green cards.

The cultural argument, driven by the fact that the current wave of immigration is predominantly Latino (and to a lesser degree, Asian), seems to me without merit. It is quite frankly neo-nativism. Now, I will confess my bias here: I am the son and grandson of Central European immigrants, and the same arguments were used in the 1920s to end immigration by people like my forebears. The nativists halted immigration by Central and Southern Europeans and Jews, arguing that they were not of the right religion, didn't speak English, formed gangs, etc. Well, all those immigrants assimilated just fine, and contributed to this country enormously. I think the Latinos and Asians are assimilating as well.

The trickiest argument is the economic one. The classical liberal position is that there should be free flow of people, as there should be of capital and trade. But the wrinkle is that immigrants have access to our welfare state programs, so with them the country incurs costs it didn't with earlier immigrants. This is a tricky issue, with economists coming down on both sides, and with protectionism always lurking in the shadows. But let me point out a wrinkle not much noticed: the coming

Boomer demographic disaster.

Our current population is about 300 million, of which 79 million or so are baby boomers. Boomers, something like 27% of our population, will be retiring *en masse* over the next decade, and croaking *en masse* not long after. Boomers bore fewer children than earlier generations. This raises a number of questions: Who will be replacing that huge drop in the workforce? Who will take care of all those geezers who didn't have children? And — given that geriatrics make crummy soldiers — who will serve in the armed forces?

Those who feel that we don't really need a large, continuing flow of immigrants ought to think through those questions.

— Gary Jason

Nasty as she wants to be — Ann Coulter is all over TV promoting her book about "godless liberals." The other night she was on "Scarborough Country" bragging that her

book has ended the political participation of the 9/11 widows whom she calls the "Jersey Girls," and who she says have enriched themselves over their husbands' corpses. These "broads," as she terms them, are enjoying their husbands' deaths. Then, godly woman that she purports to be, Coulter asks rhetorically, "How do we know their husbands weren't planning to divorce these harpies?"

Asked by a Pittsburgh newspaper editor which of her book quotes she'd prefer to have spotlighted now that everyone's heard her attacks on the

9/11 widows, Coulter replied that she'd like people to see the following: "Our book is Genesis and [the liberals'] book is Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring,' the original environmental hoax. Carson brainwashed an entire generation into imagining a world without birds, killed by DDT. Nazi concentration camp victims were bathed in DDT when they were rescued to save their lives."

What's her point? When we're finished pondering the images of Jews being bathed in DDT, are we supposed to clamor for its return?

No one ever said, as Coulter claims, that the 9/11 widows or Gold Star Mothers were above the political fray, but war widows and Gold Star moms have always been honored as a matter of personal conscience. I remember the special honor and respect given to Gold Star Mothers by both sides during the Vietnam War. No one in the pro- or anti-war movement would have savaged them the way Coulter does.

Coulter serves as a green light for GOP political operatives who want no standards of civil behavior or restraints on their own viciousness in the upcoming political season. Crashing through the lines of civil discourse, Coulter has once more coarsened the culture and made a run for the bottom. She is not attacking the "Jersey Girls" ideas or arguments, but their

