

**Questions and Answers for Panel 4:  
Win-win Reform: Maximizing the Benefits of Immigration Policy on Both Sides of the Border**

MR. MACDONALD: Kathleen, you want to come join us here at the panel?

Thank you very much to our presenters. While they're coming up, I heard two very different views about the likelihood of significant and positive reform of U.S. migration policy. I don't know if other people took that away. I don't know; is Ali Norrani still here? He's not here. You know, basically, it's a done deal. Everybody wants what's best and it's going to happen. And then I heard Kathleen Newland at the end of the day with a dose of reality; nothing like migration reform lights up the switchboards, and nobody is calling in favor of anything that remotely looks like liberalization.

MS. NEWLAND: No, no. That looks like development policy.

MR. MACDONALD: That looks like development policy.

MS. NEWLAND: No. I think lots of people –

MR. MACDONALD: Lots of people want liberalization. Okay. That's an important clarification. On the other hand, I felt – and I wasn't able to be here all day – but I heard a remarkable, seemed to me, consensus among the scholars, among the academicians that more liberalized migration, and perhaps one of the more politically feasible things being temporary worker program, improved and expanded, is good for development; and that we would like to see that happen, and a lot of variation around that theme. But it seemed to me that there was large consensus.

One of the challenges that I would then pose to the scholars here is how are you going to communicate that? Is it possible, indeed, to affect U.S. political debate around that issue? And to cross sectors, my colleague, Ruth Levine and her terrific collection of case studies of global health programs that were successful, found that one of the key ingredients of success was that the technical people needed to agree. If they didn't agree on what could and should be done, nothing happened. So maybe we have one of the agreements, which is broad technical agreement. Unfortunately it was necessary but not sufficient.

In exchange for a given bit of his time, Edward did not talk about media. And before I open it to the audience, I want to ask him, maybe just for 90 seconds on the role of media in the debate; because I'm struck at the incredible shrillness of Lou Dobbs and others, especially on the anti-migrant side. Who do they represent? How much do they shape opinion? Is it in fact possible to do anything positive while we have such a shrill debate? And I don't know if that's what you were going to discuss in terms of the media, but that was the question at the top of my mind.

So if you could give us the benefit of that, I'll then give anybody on the panel who wants to add a quick comment, and then I'll open it to comments and questions.

Edward?

MR. SCHUMACHER-MATOS: Yeah. I think several things are happening on the media that are crucial, and it's what's happening to the media itself first. That, the media's been trying to frame – has been framing the debate in a sort of – a failure of the media just in general – it's an inherent failure that it's bad at this kind of a story, that oozes as opposed to just a breaking story. And so it's been – it's framed the story and it has for decades as issues of illegality, crisis, controversy, government failure, and so the public is conditioned to see things through that lens when they talk about think about immigration.

At the same time, there's been tremendous fragmentation in the media; what you see now at the blogosphere, what you see with cable television, what you see with the radio; now, slowly happening to newspapers folding. Everything is becoming more and more opinionated, and we're returning to a 19th-century model of journalism in this country. And that's where the Lou Dobbs' of the world come in. There's no place in the media where America comes together any more. There's no Walter Cronkite. Everything's so finely sliced and diced, so highly competitive, and so thus more prone to jump on subjects and to produce things with both a surge in coverage and pushing things to the extreme as they go for their slice of the market that they try to dominate.

So the combined effect is to promote stalemate. It's a polarization of distrust on an issue that is inherently difficult to resolve. The media and what it's doing has pushed public opinion so that it can block something that can't really push something positive through over a difficult issue. So what that may actually say is there's no hope. But I don't want to come to that conclusion. But it is to say that the media is a tremendous – what's happening in the media – and there is no one media – but what's happening in the media overall is a tremendous obstacle to the country being able to resolve an issue like this and other sorts of issues.

MR. MACDONALD: Thanks very much. Among the very knowledgeable people we have in the audience is Doris Meissner, former commissioner at the INS. Doris, do you want to say anything about this question of whether reform is possible; try and bring together the academic and scholarly arguments we've heard today as to why we should have a more liberalized system, and whether indeed that's possible?

If you want to reserve and comment later, that's fine. I didn't tell you I was going to put you on the spot, but I'd be very happy to hear from you.

DORIS MEISSNER: Well, actually I was going to raise my hand and ask a question and make a comment, and it wasn't going to be on that.

(Laughter.)

MR. MACDONALD: Whatever you'd like to speak about would be fine. Absolutely.

MS. MEISSNER: So if I'm allowed to do that, I can quickly answer your question first.

Well, I think that – I think immigration reform will be very difficult. I think that this administration is committed to doing it. Certainly, the polling data that Ali mentioned is absolutely correct. Americans want a different situation. But whether we can actually get there politically is extremely difficult. And it's difficult for reasons that Edward outlined, it's difficult for the reasons that Kathleen outlined. I mean, I think we'll have the debate and we're – we will try again to have the debate. But whether we will actually be able to resolve these issues is very much to be seen. And there are many, many other issues on the agenda right now that are crowding what it is that the Congress can do. So we will certainly have something in this administration. But whether it will be this year or even next year, I think it remains to be seen.

Now that said, let me go to a point it I might that was raised by Edward and a little bit also by Kathleen. I really appreciate the final two speakers in terms of trying to root this discussion today into the question that you're raising: what can we expect out of policy and what would policy look like?

On the point of temporary workers and guest workers, and assuming that those two are synonymous terms, I was really struck, Edward, by the way in which you did the critique of the Bracero program, which I think is a fair critique. And then – and particularly the point that what failed was the failure of implementation and regulation of that program to the point that it then became so fraught with abuse that it ultimately, for political reasons, was killed and led to illegal immigration, which I think is analytically correct.

But then you go to say, and what we need to do in the future in terms of meeting our future labor force needs is have a guest worker program. I mean, what is to lead to any better kinds of implementation and regulation of that program than what it is that we experienced in the past? And then you talked about guest workers and policy solutions as, well, we need to have a future labor supply, and it needs to be a mixture of temporary – of the ability to stay temporarily – which one could then talk about circularity and the importance of circularity, which is terribly important – and also include the ability to become lawful permanent residents and stay permanently. That is not a guest worker program.

So that kind of – what shall I say? I mean, that sort of – we can't engage in that kind of slippery ease of terminology because they make all the difference in the world. And I would argue that – I agree with you. We absolutely need flexibility. We must find ways of underscoring the possibility of temporariness. But I believe that only programs that can, at least for some people, ultimately result in permanent immigration, only there are you really going to get the kind of protection against abuses that we insist on, or, I would argue, need to insist on, given our other values as a society.

So the question is, what's so wrong with permanent immigration? I mean, we are a country that is demographically aging. We need younger workers in order to be competitive. It's important to have growth. Why are we so fixated on only having temporary programs and guest workers? What is the matter with permanent immigration as one of the answers and solutions to the issue of immigration reform and labor market needs?

MR. MACDONALD: That's a terrific question. Do you want a real quick clarification or shall we get some more ideas on the table here?

MR. SCHUMACHER-MATOS: As you wish.

MR. MACDONALD: Kathleen, you want to say something about that. Okay.

(Cross talk.)

MR. SCHUMACHER-MATOS: Just two things. I think it's a semantic thing about whether or not you want to call it guest worker or not. I mean, I totally agree with you that you have to have the permanent – I mean, I think that's what I said, and you said that's what I said. But we wanted to give people the option. It wasn't like, if you immediately signed up for an H-1B or whatever it's going to be called in the future, that meant you were committed to stay. A lot of people don't want to stay.

So it's – I think the movement is towards giving people the option. I think you yourself have written that; that it should be structured in a way that you have an option. So maybe you don't want to call that a guest worker program. That's fine. You want to call it a temporary worker, you want to call it – whatever phrase you want to come up with, with something that leads to permanent residency. But you also have the option of not taking permanent residency. I mean, I know people who haven't – my own father, on the one hand.

And then the second thing was – oh, one – maybe it's my Catholic upbringing that says that man is not perfectable but might get things a little bit better and can clean up some of the abuses in the future.

MR. MACDONALD: Kathleen.

MS. NEWLAND: I think there are two main attractions of temporary migration. One of them is sort of a fate, and that's the political attraction. I think a lot of the reason that governments support the idea of temporary migration is because they believe their publics will not accept greater permanent migration. So it may be a sort of compromise – a political compromise. And I think that's particularly true in a lot of European countries, perhaps more true than it is here.

But the other attraction of it is – as Edward said, not everyone wants to stay, and mobility is a reality. People do live their lives in more than one place at a time. And as Doris knows very well, we've done – my colleagues and I have done a lot of work on circular migration at NPI, and those papers are on our Web site – so I think the thing about a temporary program is that it should facilitate mobility rather than a lot of the circular programs get sort of fixated on how you enforce return. And in my view, that's not the right question. The question is how you facilitate mobility; how you facilitate circularity.

I mean, Spain has run until very recently one of the more successful circular migration programs for seasonal workers and has some things in common with the New Zealand one we heard about. But it includes a path to permanent residence for migrants who follow the rules and repeat four cycles of seasonal work, returning home between cycles and being employed sort of four times on this temporary. Now, if you've done it for four times then you're obviously, at least to the Spanish, developing a stake in Spain. And that seems to me a reasonable kind of thing, if you continue. The Swedes – well, no, I won't go into that. But that seems to me a reasonable kind of model.

Now, Spain is now trying to – as you know – probably know, it's one of the countries that is trying to create incentives for immigrants to go home. It offers a rather generous lump sum payment for people to return to their countries of origin and not return to Spain for three years. Which, you might think in a recession would be a pretty attractive offer, but only a tiny proportion – like less than 1 percent of the eligible migrants – have taken it up. And the reason appears to be that because they're not confident that they'll be able to return to Spain when things improve.

So that's consistent with every observation that I can come up with about temporary migration programs; that the ability to return is the most powerful incentive to go home.

MR. MACDONALD: Terrific. Thanks very much. Michael, did you want to say something?

MR. KREMER: Yeah. I wanted to come back on the issue you raised of the technical consensus in the room about the desirability of more migration. I think there may be an exaggerated sense of the degree to which there's technical consensus by the selection of people in the room. (Laughter, cross talk.) I think there's – even within the room – I think within the room there's agreement that more low-skilled migration would be good for developing countries and good for development agenda. But I think even within the room there's probably a range of opinion on high-skilled migration. I'm still worried about brain drain issues, for what it's worth, and I think some others are as well.

But more importantly, to link to the discussion here. I think if you look – if you had economists who are concerned with U.S. poverty and U.S. inequality, you'd have a lot of disagreement. There's certainly a lot of specialists on that who are quite concerned about migration issues. And I think what would tend to come out of that debate would be if there's

also concern for immigrants and immigrant welfare, it would be, let's legalize the stock of migration; let's have a permanent migration rather than temporary migration. That's great if you're concerned about the people who are already here and you're concerned about U.S. poverty. But it's probably bad for development.

As you said, development doesn't get any weight at all in these discussions. So I see no reason to think that we would get – to get a solution that would be good for developing countries. There's just, I think, fundamentally a conflict of interest between the needs of U.S. – some conflicts of interest between what would be good for U.S. and development policy and what's good for the developing world. And what I think we tried to do is think about other ways to – other ways to try and find areas where that conflict of interest is not stark.

That's partly – that was – my talk, I talked about one way. Let me suggest one other way that's an even crazier idea, which is – you know, when we closed – people are concerned about immigration to U.S. soil. They're not necessarily as concerned about immigration to places that are controlled by the U.S. and maybe have U.S. law and U.S. institutions and might create productivity but aren't on U.S. soil.

Q: Guantanamo?

MR. KREMER: Exactly. (Laughter, cross talk.) Exactly. When we close down Guantanamo as a prison, we can re-open it as the new Hong Kong for the Caribbean.

MR. MACDONALD: I'm quite determined to give people who've been patient a chance to raise comments. So I'm going to go around the room. Please say where you're from. It can be a question or a comment. I hope it'll be less than a minute. I'll cut you off if you go more than a minute. The lady here has been very patient, then Dilip, then the man behind Dilip, then the lady behind her and we'll go until quarter of, when we'll return it to Ricardo for his closing remarks. Thank you.

Q: Thank you very much. Is this on? Yeah, okay. Jennifer Brinkerhoff from George Washington University. I also wanted to build on this idea of what you had said at the opening; that there seemed to be an emerging agreement that more immigration could be a good thing. But I want to come back to the policy and the politics, because I know that the panelists here were not necessarily the ones who developed all these fancy models that we saw throughout the day that really reinforced this idea that there could be some good things.

But one of the greatest fears about immigration is that if we open up the doors, there will be a flood; we're going to open up floodgates and all these people will come in. And nobody in these fancy models has said anything about diminishing returns on increased immigration. What are the limits? Because if we can't translate this research in a meaningful way to address that fear, then their potential impact on policy I think will be quite limited. Thanks.

MR. MACDONALD: Thanks very much. I should say, as Heather's bringing the microphone around, we may not get replies to these questions, but it is all being taped and will be transcribed. And that's why I want to get as many ideas as we can on the table. So thank you. The idea of diminishing returns. Dilip?

DILIP RATHA: I think when we are thinking about what the U.S. and other countries should do about immigration, they really have to be open about it. You cannot think about planning and preparing for and thinking about – like industrial planning policy; saying that I would go for heavy machinery or this sector or IT. That sort of policies are not going to work because the world is changing. And U.S. and other countries should be prepared to be integrated with the rest of the world and move with things.

Think about the Internet. Who could have planned for the Internet? Either the U.S. or the Indians, could they have planned for it? And look what happened and what it has done to the world. So that's point number one.

Guest worker. In many cultures, the word "guest worker" would be an oxymoron. Let the workers feel like guests and then see whether they go back or not.

(Laughter.)

MR. MACDONALD: Something lost in translation.

MR. RATHA: That leads to the point about whether guest workers are more permanent or temporary workers are more permanent; or permanent workers are more temporary.

I got a call about a year ago from Canada, that they have commissioned a project to mobilize the Canadian Diaspora for Canada's development. Who are these Diaspora? These are the newly naturalized, I guess, citizens of Canada; mostly from Hong Kong, Chinese people, and Indians who, as soon as they got the permanent residency, the permission to stay, they moved back. Now they are benefitting both worlds. Okay? So they were talking about mobilizing the Canadian diaspora for Canada's development. Me in the World Bank (got a call ?) that's interesting for a change. We're talking about real development here.

That leads me to the point that, in thinking about guest worker policies, if we are serious about it, let's call it temporary migration or whatever policy we call it – let's avoid some of the pitfalls that always come with it. And that goes to the point about making the workers feel like guests. One example is forced remittances. The idea that you will take the money from the employer, keep it yourself, and you will give them a little bit of money and deposit the other part of the money in Mexico or Jamaica or Guatemala. So that in the end, they would go back. Braceros are just being paid now; people from the Bracero program. This sort of abuses are going on all over the world. We have to be very careful about avoiding some of these pitfalls.

MR. MACDONALD: Thanks very much. I saw there was somebody behind Dilip who had her hand up. Or maybe it was the gentleman here. I'm sorry.

Q: Thanks. David Hart, George Mason University, School of Public Policy. I was very intrigued by the notion that the administration is going to try to frame this issue in terms of families. And my question is how powerful do you think that frame is going to be. And if indeed it proves to be powerful, does that not lock in the future policy to emphasize families as it has in the past; and add to that, if we have a regularization, let's say, of several million people who themselves have families, this is what we observed in 1986. Are we not simply repeating that experience?

MR. MACDONALD: Thanks very much. And there was a lady behind you?

Q: Yeah. My question is actually along similar lines, because I think actually in the upcoming debate on immigration, that the family issue is going to be really a point of debate and huge contention. Because I think a lot of more conservative members of Congress are actually going to argue against family immigration and say that chain migration is going to be my result. I think my question is for Patricia and Michael, just in terms of your research. Because I know a lot of what you've done is revolving around the individual, in terms of that individual's impact on the economy and communities. But have you ever considered doing research on the actual family as an economic unit and really considering that family and the family's economic impact in their local communities?

And I think just in terms of the comments that Doris made about the temporary worker program, I think it was a great point because I think so much of what we talk about is guest workers. But how do you really make a temporary worker program really temporary? And I think that's a challenge that's going to happen in future debates. And I think, Kathleen, your points about the focus of it not just being on having that person return, but really creating mobility I think is really helpful as we consider policy considerations.

MR. MACDONALD: And there were a couple more hands here, I believe. One there. Sonia. And then the lady in the pink blouse, and then that'll be the last one we'll take, I think.

Q: Thank you very much. Sonia Plazas (ph) here, working with Dilip on the World Bank. I have a comment and a question. I don't know; maybe Ricardo can help me. Because when we're talking about this migration and everything, Venezuela was a very good case in the '70s, where a lot of Latin American countries went there. And then when the conditions were not good, they returned to others. And then again, when Venezuela comes again, it was – all the immigrants were going back there.

So I don't – I haven't seen in the analysis, how come the economic conditions really for the United States is going to – it's playing in these things. Because for example, you were mentioning the temporary program, and you're saying the H-1B visa, they need to have a choice. The H-1B visa, if you want to go back, you go back. That's why you see a lot of

Argentineans, a lot of Brazilians, a lot of Chileans, because they have opportunity to go back. They don't stay here, even if they have H-1 visas. I have a lot of my friends going back because they have good opportunities there.

So how do you – because you're playing temporary – and there's a lot of temporary programs. Here, you have all the people who come for the swimming pools from Eastern Europe. They come on temporary visas. They come on J-1 visa, but they have to come back – they come for the summer. No. And how you're playing that – because I haven't seen in the debate, at least in the lawyers' circles right now, they see two things. Some of them, they think that it's not going to be possible that the law is going to pass, because there was more support under Bush administration; but now it's more going to be for the schools or for the students that are being – that are going to be able to legalize the ones – the children of those ones, but not the ones.

So what is your view on the legal side, on the lawyers' point of view what they're seeing on the political side? And also, how do you see people coming back?

MR. MACDONALD: And a final question or comment here. And I apologize. I'm not going to give the panel to return because I want to return this back to Ricardo. But there will be a reception and I hope that the panelists are noting the questions and will seek out those people who have asked you questions and the conversation will continue.

You're not in a hurry, Ricardo?

RICARDO HAUSMANN: (Off mike.)

MR. MACDONALD: It's okay? Okay. We'll see. Yes, ma'am?

Q: My name is Diane Hodges and I'm with Citizens for Global Solutions. And I had a couple of points that I wanted to make quickly – or questions. One is that someone in a presentation mentioned that the immigration reform acts of 2006 and 2007 were bastards because – and implied that the Republicans wanted to support them but were afraid to, if I understood correctly. But I'm curious; isn't it more beneficial for businesses to have illegal immigrants because then they can exploit them better? I mean, from a businessman's point of view, wouldn't they prefer to have illegal immigrants and to have restrictions on immigration?

And the second point is about families – am I being too cynical? You're shaking your head. (Laughter.) But the other one is about families and the debate over people being temporary or permanent. And if you're talking about illegal immigrants and lower-skilled workers, isn't – I mean, what I hear in interviews and things is that one of their main draws for coming here is they say that they want better opportunities for their children, and so they want their children to be educated here. They want the good school systems here in the U.S. So I mean, how likely is it that when they get their families here, that they are going to go back? Aren't they, pretty much all the ones who have families here are going to be permanent or

want to be permanent and not go back home, if they're lower-skilled immigrants? I understand the higher-skilled immigrants, it's a very different situation for them. They can go back home and they have many opportunities and they have access to good schools. But the lower-skilled immigrants and the ones are from rural areas don't have those same opportunities and they are not – I mean, from what I see, they are not going to want to go home ever once they come here, they have children – or if they have children, they bring them here because of the school system.

MR. MACDONALD: Terrific. Thank you. I asked the panel if they would each like to say just a few words. I'll cut them off if they go more than 30 seconds. They can choose one question or say anything they like in response to the comments, starting at the end of the table with Michael.

MR. KREMER: I just wanted to thank the Center for Global Development –

(Laughter, cross talk.)

MR. MACDONALD: I did not know he was going to say that. Patricia?

MS. CORTES: I just want to say something about what you mentioned, and I think it's important about these guest programs; and in particular, more familiar to the program that Michael has mentioned, of the Filipinas going to Hong Kong. And when women migrate, it might be a different thing; right? Because you can imagine a man living for seven months coming back. But if a woman has children, it's going to be difficult. And many Filipino women actually leave their kids behind. And that's another potential concern for development; what's going on with the families left behind.

MR. MACDONALD: Kathleen.

MS. NEWLAND: It's also true that some people send their kids back to the country or origin for education and so on. So it's a complicated – it's a complicated choice. It's a complicated calculation between quality of schooling here versus there or security, safety, culture, lots of things. So I don't think you can generalize about all people with kids who'd want to become permanent.

My last word on this – I'm sorry Lant isn't here but I'll leave it to Michael to convey this to him: skills spills.

(Laughter.)

MR. MACDONALD: Skills spills instead of cortex vortex, huh? Or brain drain. What about brain gain? Is that just too pedestrian; brain gain?

MS. NEWLAND: No. That's been there.

MR. MACDONALD: All right. Edward.

MR. SCHUMACHER-MATOS: I think the family issue's crucial about whether or not people want to stay or not stay. And so any real genuine guest worker program will work best if you actually don't allow families to come.

I think I'm going to stop using the phrase "guest worker." (Laughter.) The diminished returns is a fundamental question, and frankly, nobody's answered it yet; though one good thing long-term is that if you look at demographic trends in Latin America and most of the rest of the world, at least the demographic pressure if you look down the pike is going to be letting up over the course of the next couple of decades.

The people go back when – I think people go back most when the conditions at home are good; so that – the people who are going back are Eastern Europeans and Brazilians are going back. And then finally, I'm not quite so cynical about – it is true; yes, some businesses do indeed like to exploit, without a doubt. But I think business in general would rather have something that's – would rather be legal and upfront. Just – it's all the hassle that gets in the way so much. Right now in any of these things, you've got the Department of State, you've got the Department of Labor, you have the Department of Agriculture, and you have the Homeland Security – each of them involved in each individual case of an agricultural worker. Imagine what kind of paperwork and bureaucracy that is.

MR. MACDONALD: In closing, I want to enlist your help and tell you about a piece of samizdat that's on the CGD Web site. Everybody here has an interest in better migration data. The Center today has released this terrific report. Some of you were out of the room when Michael mentioned it – Migrants Count: Five Steps Toward Better Migration Data. What he did not say is that the members of the commission were quite reluctant to issue any grades as to how well countries fulfilled their – these recommendations. And the first of the recommendations, it's really quite simple. And that's that countries include in their census such basic questions as, "where were you born" with an open feel for any country response, not just the five countries where they think you might have been born; "where were you living five years ago" and "one year ago." Three simple questions. You'd be surprised at the countries that do not ask those questions. Until those questions are being asked, we will not have reliable data on movement of people.

I invite you to go to the Web site, take a quick look at the report, but then read the one page that Michael has written about how he graded the countries. And before you look at the grades, write down the grade that you think your country got and then compare it with the country that it actually got. I see we have people here from all over the world. You can hazard a guess about a couple countries that you know well. And if your country scores less well than you think it should, everybody here has some influence. Please start nudging your country to include those questions in the census.