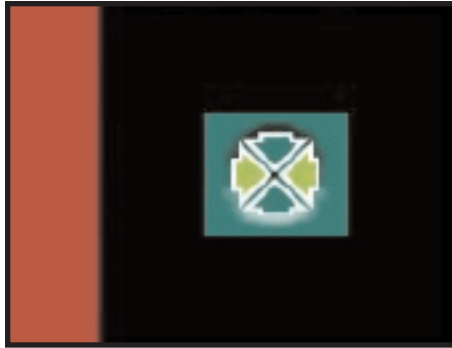


Right Web

Exposing the architecture of power that's changing our world

Profile



Center for Immigration Studies

Contact Information:

Center for Immigration Studies

1522 K Street N.W., Suite 820

Washington, DC 20005-1202

Phone: (202) 466-8185

Email: center@cis.org

Website: www.cis.org

Right Web connections:

- **John Tanton**
<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/ind/tanton/tanton.php>
- **Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)**
<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/org/fair.php>

Overview

The Center for Immigration Studies describes itself as “the nation’s only think tank devoted exclusively to research and policy analysis of the economic, social, demographic, fiscal, and other impacts of immigration on the United States.” Founded in 1985 as a think tank to support the more activist work of the anti-immigrant Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), CIS is dedicated “to expand the base of public knowledge and understanding of the need for an immigration policy that gives first concern to the broad national interest. The Center is animated by a pro-immigrant, low-immigration vision which seeks fewer immigrants but a warmer welcome for those admitted.”

CIS describes itself as “independent” and “nonpartisan,” but its studies, reports, and media releases consistently support its restrictionist agenda and works closely on Capitol Hill with Republican Party immigration restriction-

ists. However, CIS has achieved credibility with the media and in think tank circles because of its lack of the kind of strident anti-immigrant rhetoric associated with many restrictionist groups, its willingness to invite pro-immigrant voices to its forums, and the scholarly format of its reports.

Members of its board of directors are: Patrick Burns, Thomas C.T. Brokaw, George Grayson, David Simoz (chair and president), Carol Iannone, Otis Graham (co-chair), Peter Nuñez, Frank Morris, William Chip, Jacquelye Jackson, Vernon Briggs, Scott McConnell, and Willard Fair. Steven Camarota is director of research, and Mark Kirkorian (formerly a policy expert with FAIR) is executive director. Annual revenues in 2002 were \$898,810. (1)

Origins, History, and Impact

The Center for Immigration Studies was founded in 1985 as a spin-off of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). Another FAIR spin-off is the Immigration Reform Law Institute, which functions as the litigation arm of FAIR, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. (3)

CIS publishes books, reports, papers, and monthly back-grounders. Its analysis on such issues as immigrant voting and electoral redistricting, impacts on low-wage and high-skilled workers, and tax impacts are closely followed by immigration experts of all persuasions. In the mid-1990s, immigration restrictionists, boosted by findings of congressional commissions, seemed to be on the verge of passing legislation to turn the legislative tide that had favored immigration flows since the 1986 amnesty. But largely because of lobbying by a right-left, corporate-pro-immigrant coalition in which high-tech industries played a leading role, immigration restrictionist groups like CIS and

FAIR saw their restrictionist agenda die in Congress. Lately, as concerns about the plight of low-wage labor, outsourcing, and national security merge, CIS and restrictionism in general are once again gaining a new hearing in Congress.

“Let’s be clear,” wrote Frank Sharry of the National Immigration Forum, “CIS was birthed by FAIR, the militant anti-immigration group. The CIS executive director moved from FAIR to CIS to head up the organization. Although now independent, the two organizations share the same basic agenda: an American version of what in Europe is called ‘zero immigration.’” According to Sharry, CIS masquerades as an objective, “squeaky clean” think tank, but CIS is “simply churning out high-sounding, low-credibility grist for the high-pitch, low-road anti-immigration forces in the United States.” This assessment of CIS is widely shared among pro-immigrant groups, but CIS studies are not only frequently cited by the “low-road” nativist forces but also by major news media. (4)

CIS has also been critiqued as being part of a network of anti-immigrant groups that cater to a white supremacist constituency by right-wing economic libertarians who believe in the benefits of mass and unfettered immigration. A Wall Street Journal op-ed (June 15, 2004), that was widely praised and circulated by pro-immigrant groups, reported that despite the fact that CIS “may strike right-wing poses in the press,” it and other like-minded groups “support big government, mock federalism, deride free markets, and push a cultural agenda abhorrent to any self-respecting social conservative.” A follow-up article in the Wall Street Journal titled “Borderline Republicans” described the anti-immigration network this way: “CIS, FAIR, NumbersUSA, ProjectUSA—and more than a half-dozen similar groups that Republicans have become disturbingly comfortable with—were founded or funded (or both) by John Tanton. In addition to trying to stop immigra-

tion to the U.S., appropriate population control measures for Dr. Tanton and his network include promoting China’s one-child policy, sterilizing Third World women, and wider use of RU-486.” (5) Replying to this charge, Krikorian wrote in National Review Online that CIS does not take a “position on anything that does not involve U.S. immigration policy.” (6)

Rep. Chris Cannon (R-Utah) has come under sharp criticism by CIS and other immigration restrictionist groups for his pro-immigration positions. According to Cannon, “Tanton set up groups like CIS and FAIR to take an analytical approach to immigration from a Republican point of view so that they can give cover to Republicans who oppose immigration for other reasons.” (5)

Executive director Krikorian, who appears regularly before congressional committees discussing immigration policy, describes himself and CIS as being “conservative” but as not belonging to the “high-immigration Right” as represented by the Wall Street Journal. According to Krikorian, “The high-immigration Right works hand-in-glove with the anti-American Left.” Like many anti-immigrant groups, CIS believes that Corporate America and leftists share a common agenda of open borders, albeit for different reasons. (6)

Funding

Early funding for CIS was channeled through U.S. Inc, a nonprofit established and still directed by John Tanton, who was one of the cofounders of the Federation of American Immigration Reform (FAIR). (3) Among the right-wing foundations that fund CIS are Sarah Scaife Foundation, John M. Olin Foundation, Jaqueline Hume Foundation, Carthage Foundation, and Scaife Family Foundation. (2)

Published by the Right Web of the International Relations Center (IRC, online at www.irc-online.org). ©2005. All rights reserved.

The Right Web

“Exposing the architecture of power that’s changing our world”

Founded in 1979, the IRC is a nonprofit policy studies center whose overarching goal is to help forge a new global affairs agenda for the U.S. government and people—one that makes the United States a more responsible global leader and partner. For more information, visit rightweb.irc-online.org or email rightweb@irc-online.org.

Recommended citation:

“Center for Immigration Studies,” Right Web Profiles (Silver City, NM: International Relations Center, November 2004).

Web location:

<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/org/cis.php>

Production Information:

Editor: Tom Barry, IRC

Layout: Chellee Chase-Saiz, IRC