

Right Web

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Profile



Federation for American Immigration Reform

Right Web connections:

- **John Tanton**

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

- **Fred Ikle**

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

Overview

The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) has two major goals: (1) "to end illegal immigration," and (2) "to set legal immigration at the lowest feasible levels consistent with the demographic, economic, social, and environmental realities."

FAIR's policy advocacy and public education work are guided by the following beliefs:

- that our immigration laws must be fairly and effectively enforced; there should be no favoritism toward or discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, or national origin;
- that three criteria should guide selection of immigrants: (1) our fair share of refugees, with ultimate resettlement a key part of the program, (2) our national manpower policy, and (3) concerns for reunification of nuclear families;
- that the United States should not contribute to a brain drain that entices away the skilled and talented who are desperately needed in their homelands; we should meet our need for skilled professionals by training and retraining our own;

- that the United States should make greater efforts to encourage population stabilization, economic development, and alleviation of poverty worldwide and especially in countries of great migration;

- that the era of mass international migration as a solution to national problems has come to an end; problems of poverty and overpopulation must be vigorously confronted where people live, rather than postponing their solution by either the exportation or the importation of masses of people; and

- that determining its own immigration and population policy is the sovereign right and responsibility of every nation. (1)

According to FAIR, the organization has 70,000 members, some of whom are liberals and others conservatives. FAIR boasts that it has testified before Congress more than any other American organization. (2)

FAIR has a Law Enforcement Advisory Council (LEAC) made up "of former immigration agents, Border Patrol officers, and other law enforcement experts." LEAC representatives contact legislators and use their experience to influence legislators and other policymakers. (3) The Census Advisory Committee of FAIR advises the U.S. Census Bureau on the collection and distribution of national census data, and has advocated that there be better information collection on immigrant children. (3)

FAIR's government relations program has representatives that work on a daily basis with Congress and provide information, hold regular meetings, and handle information requests on the impact of new legislation. As part of FAIR's advocacy and education work, its staff in

2002 met with such congressional caucuses as the Border Caucus, Coalition on Population and Development, Farmland Protection Caucus, Rural Caucus, Conservative Opportunity Society, Republican Israel Caucus, Law Enforcement Caucus, New Democrat Coalition, Northeast Agriculture Caucus, Northern Border Caucus, Republican Study Committee, and the Congressional Bluedog Caucus. (3)

FAIR also intervenes in legal cases that relate to immigration issues, such as the Commercial Cleaning vs. Colin Systems case in which the court ruled that fines imposed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and other enforcement actions were not sufficient to deter unlawful competition by companies that hire undocumented workers as a strategy to cut labor costs and increase profits. (4)

FAIR's board members include Nancy S. Anthony (Chairman), Sharon Barnes, Henry M. Buhl, Major General Douglas E. Caton, Donald A. Collins, Sarah G. Epstein, Peter Gadiel, Stephen B. Swensrud, John Tanton, Alan Weeden, and John Rohe. (5) Dan Stein is FAIR's executive director. Among those board members who are affiliated with population control, immigration policy, or family planning organizations are Sharon Barnes, FAIR co-founder and longtime population control activist; Donald Collins, who serves on the board of directors of the Population Institute, Family Health International, and International Projects Assistance Services; Sarah Epstein, who sits on the boards of Pathfinder International, Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, Center for Development and Population Activities, and Population Institute, and John Tanton, who founded FAIR and is a principal in several anti-immigration groups, including Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) and Numbers-USA. In its educational and advocacy work, FAIR works closely with the above groups as well as other anti-immigrant organizations such as ProjectUSA and Coalition for the Future of the American Worker. (5)(6)

FAIR lists the following individuals on their national board of advisers: Richard Lamm (Chairman), Duke Austin, Anthony Beilenson, Gwat Bhattacharjie, Gerda Bikales, Brian Bilbray, Dorothy R. Blair, Edith Blodgett, John Brock, Frances Burke, Cleveland Chandler, William W. Chip, Pat Choate, William Collard, Clifford Colwell, Dino Drudi, Bonnie Erbe, Don Feder, Robert Gillespie, Otis Graham, Lawrence E. Harrison, Edward H. Harte, Bonnie Hawley, Walter D. Huddleston, Diana Hull, Fred C. Ikle, Glenn Jackson, T. N. Jordan, Carol Joyal, Alan

Kuper, Yeh Ling Ling, Henry Luce III, Donald Mann, Henry Mayer, Eugene McCarthy, Joel McCleary, Scott McConnell, James G. McDonald, Helen Milliken, Peter Nunez, Robert D. Park, Fred Pinkham, Thor Ransing, Bruce S. Reid, Teela Roche, Charles T. Roth, Monica Bell Steensma, Joyce Tarnow, Max Thelen Jr., and Curtis Winsor Jr. (5)

Although FAIR professes to support a just and fair immigration policy, its policy rhetoric is often inflammatory, clearly anti-immigrant, and partisan. An article in the June 2004 issue of its monthly publication Immigration Report is titled "Democrats offer 'No Illegal Immigrant Left Behind' Act." Typical of FAIR, the article cites exaggerated numbers to bolster anti-immigrant fervor. For example, FAIR writes that the number of people who would receive amnesty under the this proposed bill, called the SOLVE Act, would "likely run into the tens of millions," adding that "untold millions" would be able to procure fraudulent documents which would result in an "incalculable" number of family members entering the United States legally. (7) FAIR joined the Protect Arizona Now (PAN) initiative to limit state services to immigrants through a state referendum, using such terms as "native-born Arizonans" to stir up nationalist resentment. PAN, in addition to receiving FAIR funding, relies on a FAIR study that determines that Arizona taxpayers pay \$1.3 billion to cover health, education, and incarceration costs of illegal immigrants. The benefit to the state and its residents provided by the low-paid and often skilled labor of immigrants was not calculated. (8)

FAIR rejects criticism that it is racist, xenophobic, and anti-immigrant. Such criticisms are leveled not only by liberal and pro-immigrant groups, but also by many conservatives and such business-oriented publications as the Wall Street Journal. (9) According to FAIR, "We have a clear and consistent record of discussing immigration policy and how it should be reformed to serve the interests of this nation. FAIR has very clearly and consistently drawn the distinction between immigration policy and immigrants." (10) With respect to charges that the immigration policies it advocates and its educational activities are racist, FAIR responds: "There are always people who support the right idea for the wrong reasons—but that doesn't make the idea itself wrong. None of this changes the fact that bringing a million additional people from other countries into this one is disruptive to our economy, our society, and our environment. We condemn racism. But we also condemn the use of terms such as 'anti-immigrant,' 'racist,' or 'xenophobe' as they are used

to try to stifle open, honest discussion of how our immigration policy is impacting the country.” (11)

Origins, History, and Impact

FAIR was created following a factional split in Zero Population Growth led by John Tanton. Along with Sidney Swensrud and Sharon Barnes, Tanton founded FAIR in 1979. FAIR’s links to other local and national organizations that are stridently anti-immigrant, anti-Latino, and supremacist have undermined FAIR’s own credibility and led to questions about the underlying agenda of its restrictionist approach to immigration. Referring to FAIR and associated groups, the Southern Poverty Law Center concluded an article on immigrant hate groups stating: “Opinion polls consistently show that a majority of Americans believe that immigration needs to be cut below current levels, although that does not imply that they support the ideas of white supremacists or other bigots.... The danger is not that immigration levels are debated by Americans, but that the debate is controlled by bigots and extremists whose views are anathema to the ideals on which this country was founded.” (12)(21)

According to FAIR, the media mentioned FAIR 5,300 times during 2003, representatives wrote op-eds that appeared in top newspapers around the country, and together with the organization 9-11 Families for a Secure America it sponsored newspaper ads in the Washington, DC area calling for restrictionist immigration policy. Also in 2003, FAIR representatives spoke to the FBI’s advisory policy board, testified before state legislatures, lobbied Congress for immigration reform along with 9-11 Families for a Secure America, met with the House and Senate Immigration Subcommittee chairmen, spoke at the Fraternal Order of Police national conference, and joined with representatives of AFL-CIO and Organization for the Rights of American Workers to highlight H-1B visa abuses and to release the Deleting American Workers report in a standing-room only briefing in Congress. Throughout the year, FAIR says it worked educating lawmakers about the problems of guest-worker and amnesty programs while at the same time organizing grassroots initiatives around the nation to inform the public about and organize against particular community, state, and federal legislation. (13)

John Tanton set up several other anti-immigrant organizations after FAIR was created. He founded U.S. Inc. (1982), U.S. English (1983), Center for Immigration Studies (1985), Social Contract Press (1990), Pro English (1994), and Numbers USA (1996). (14) Tanton, who is the

editor and publisher of The Social Contract, was the national president of Zero Population Growth from 1975 to 1977, serving as chairman of its Immigration Study Committee from 1973 to 1975. Tanton has also served as president of the Northern Michigan Planned Parenthood and chairman of Sierra Club National Population Committee. (6)

Along with a few other FAIR board members, Tanton founded a nationalist organization called WITAN—short for the Old English term “witenagemot,” meaning “council of wise men.” In 1986 Tanton signed a memo that went to WITAN members that highlighted the supremacist bent of Tanton and FAIR. (12)(21) The memo charged that Latin American immigrants brought a culture of political corruption with them to the United States that that they were unlikely to involve themselves in civil life. He raised the alarm that they could become the majority group in U.S. society. What’s more, he asked: “Can homo contraceptivus compete with homo progenitiva?” Answering his own rhetorical question, Tanton wrote that “perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down!” According to Tanton, “In California 2030, the non-Hispanic Whites and Asians will own the property, have the good jobs and education, speak one language and be mostly Protestant and ‘other.’ The Blacks and Hispanics will have the poor jobs, will lack education, own little property, speak another language and will be mainly Catholic.” Furthermore, Tanton raised concerns about the “educability” of Hispanics. (15) In 1988 the media published this Tanton memo, and caused a number of former supporters of U.S. English to cut ties with Tanton, including Walter Cronkite and eventually Linda Chavez, a right-wing analyst with the Equal Opportunity Center. (12)(21)

FAIR faced a similar controversy when it was revealed that the Pioneer Fund provided FAIR with \$1.2 million in grants from 1985 to 1994. (12)(21) Pioneer is a nonprofit foundation that supports scientific studies in the areas of heredity, human differences, behavioral genetics, intelligence, social demography, and group differences by sex, social class, and race. (16) Some of the most controversial research funded by the Pioneer Fund has explored the IQ differences between the races. This research was published in the now widely discredited book *The Bell Curve*. In addition to its efforts to document the IQ gaps between races, the Pioneer Fund has also been deeply involved in funding eugenics research and in building political support for eugenics. Harry H. Laughlin, its first president, advocated the establishment of a uniform

sterilization law that would allow the routine sterilization of “the feeble minded, insane, criminals (including the delinquent and wayward), the epileptic, the inebriate, the diseased, the blind, the deaf, the deformed, and the dependent (including orphans, ne’er-do-wells, the homeless, tramps and paupers).” The Pioneer Fund notes that eugenics was also supported by such notables as Theodore Roosevelt, Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood, Alexander Graham Bell, and J.C. Penny. Laughlin edited *Eugenics News* during the 1920s and 1930s, which featured a 1932 article “Hitler and Race Pride.” Laughlin also was a supporter of limiting immigration to the United States. Despite the racist and elitist character of its research priorities, the Pioneer Fund claims that it holds no policy positions itself. (17) In 1988, Tanton, who was then president of FAIR’s board, said he knew nothing of Pioneer’s unsavory history. Yet his group continued to accept Pioneer grants for another six years, until 1994.” (12)(21)

The Wall Street Journal describes FAIR’s agenda as having “less to do with immigration per se and more to do with environmental extremism and population-growth concerns influenced by the discredited claims of the 19th-century British economist Thomas Malthus.” (9)

One of the republican congressmen who has come under FAIR attack is Representative Cannon. According to Rep. Chris Cannon (R., Utah), “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.” Mr. Cannon says most GOP members believe that the vast majority of aliens, documented or not, are productive and that our economy needs them. But he is concerned about a “bunch of members who are dema-

gogging the issue—some to raise money, some for attention” and “want this to become a litmus test” for Republicanism. (9)

Funding

In 2002 FAIR’s income of \$3.6 million came from the following sources: unrestricted grants (\$1,877,079), contributions (\$1,142,753), investment income (\$482,737), other income (\$25,856), and net assets released from restrictions (\$142,142). Expenditures the same year amounted to \$4 million for public education (\$598,273), membership education and services (\$515,347), field (\$296,545), research and publications (\$468,273), media (\$363,260), government relations (\$438,827), lobbying (\$265,942), litigation (\$125,740), management and general supporting services (\$482,449), and fundraising (\$452,696). (18)

FAIR receives money from the Sidney A. Swensrud Endowment Fund, Swensrud Memorial Internship Fund, Border Security Fund, Cornerstone Contributors, Seventh Generation Society, and FAIR Gift Memberships. Swensrud, who died in 1996, was one of the founders of FAIR. (19) In addition FAIR has received steady support from some of the major right-wing foundations, especially the Scaife foundation, which gave FAIR \$225,000 in 2002. In the 1996-2002 period, FAIR received more than \$1 million from Scaife. Other supporting right-wing foundations include Smith Richardson Foundation, John M. Olin Foundation, and Carthage Foundation. Carthage was a major supporter in the 1980s, but the funding they provided for FAIR ended in the mid-1990s. (20)

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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.

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