Does Tom Ridge Believe in the Rule of Law?

by Phyllis Schlafly Jan. 7, 2004

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Were Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge's Miami meanderings (a) a gaffe, (b) a trial balloon, (c) an announcement of his department's policy, or (d) an announcement of Bush Administration policy? We are entitled to know the answer to that question.

His shocking words were a broadside attack on current law: "We have to come to grips with the presence of 8 to 12 million illegals, afford them some kind of legal status some way." He pointedly did not say we have to come to grips with 8 to 12 million persons who have violated our laws by entering our country illegally, and further violated our laws by using fraudulent documents to get a job and remain here.

Nor did he say we have to come to grips with the thousands of employers who are violating our laws by hiring illegal aliens, and violating additional laws by paying the illegals in the underground economy in order to avoid our laws about minimum wage, overtime, worker's compensation, unemployment compensation, family leave, Americans with disabilities, payroll taxes, etc., etc.

Ridge didn't elaborate on how he would award "some kind of legal status," nor explain how giving legal status is any different from granting amnesty. What part of illegal doesn't the Homeland Security chief understand?

Continuing, Ridge said his plan is to "legalize their presence, then, as a country, you make a decision that from this day forward, this is the process of entry, and if you violate that process of entry we have the resources to cope with it."

But we've "been there, done that": in 1986 the United States granted what was promised to be a one-time-only legalization (then honestly called amnesty). That sent a message to others to enter illegally and wait for the next amnesty.

The Bush I, Clinton, and Bush II Administrations flagrantly failed to use our resources "to cope with" those who afterwards violated the "process of entry." And so the illegal-alien problem quadrupled.

Not only did the 1986 amnesty transform millions of illegal aliens into Lawful Permanent Residents, but after they became U.S. citizens they could import their relatives. Congress never investigated how many additional millions entered the United States or the massive document fraud that was involved in the whole process.

President Bush was then asked to clarify his policy. He responded: "I have constantly said that we need to have an immigration policy that helps match any willing employer with any willing employee. It makes sense that that policy go forward. And we're in the process of working that through now."

No, that does not make sense. First, it's an all-out repudiation of current law, and second, up to 5 billion people in the world might want to be "willing employees" in the United States.

Bush didn't limit the number of "willing employees." An estimated 300,000 to 400,000 Mexicans every year cross illegally into the United States looking for work.

Thousands of these have died from thirst and dehydration in the desert or in locked vans, or from drowning, or from crimes committed by their smugglers. The Bush's Administration's failure to close the border makes the pay-off of getting into the U.S. worth the risk of death.

White House spokeswoman Claire Buchan repeated Bush's exact words and added, "Migration should be safe, orderly and humane." But Congress and the American people never authorized "migration." We only authorized immigration under certain laws.

Bush claims he is "against blanket amnesty," but "blanket" is his weasel word. He apparently is for amnesty for the 8 to 12 million illegals already in this country.

Amnesty for illegal aliens comes disguised under various euphemisms. These include guest worker program, Mexican I.D. cards, the DREAM Act (to give in-state college tuition), driver's licenses, 245(i) visas, H-1B and L-1 visas, free hospital care, anchor babies, and "totalization" (to give Social Security benefits).

Ridge says that illegal aliens in the United States should be given "some kind of legal status" because most are not a threat to national security. That's an irrelevancy. Most passengers who boarded those four fatal planes on 9/11 were not hijackers, but 19 of them were, and Ridge has no plan to separate the terrorists from the 300,000+ who cross our borders illegally every year.

According to the Washington Post, the White House plan is being designed by Karl Rove, and Bush will present his proposal the second week of January, shortly before his upcoming trip to Monterrey, Mexico.

Asa Hutchinson, Homeland Security's undersecretary for border and transportation security, says the Bush and Ridge remarks simply reflect the ongoing debate in Congress over the immigration issue. If that's so, then it's time for Members of Congress to hear loud and clear from the two-thirds of Americans (according to the Zogby poll) who believe that foreigners residing illegally in the United States should not be allowed to stay.