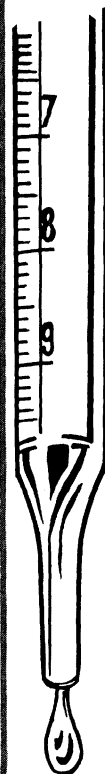


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rive from genetically engineered organisms, they almost certainly represent new combinations of DNA and underscore the authors' contention that "The forces that actually control a species in nature are, however, frequently elusive and can only be detected through intensive field manipulation." It would seem that only by using new and "sophisticated" techniques of field manipulation available only recently in "experimental community ecology" can we gather the risk assessment data needed "to provide sufficient quantitative information about the potential for negative effect."

If one were to accept at face value the premises and the statements made in this letter, then the only rational response would be to call for a moratorium on the introduction of organisms with new combinations of DNA. Since every human baby contains a unique combination of DNA never before seen on the planet, we clearly could not permit the introduction of these ecological time bombs into polite society until the experimental community ecologists have given us a risk assessment in quantitative terms to ensure that no new Hitlers are in the offing. Immigration must be stopped immediately (the deliberate introduction of new combinations of DNA cannot be permitted). The nefarious activities of plant and animal breeders must come to a halt (that new variety of carrot might take over the planet). Regulations must be written to prevent mutation, unnatural exchanges of DNA in nature, and indeed evolution itself (enforcement admittedly will be a problem).

Does anyone else detect the musty aroma of the Luddites?

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Restricting Immigrant Labor

In their article "The agricultural mechanization controversy" (8 Feb., p. 601), Philip L. Martin and Alan L. Olmstead state that a "rational strategy might be to phase out dependence on foreign workers" by taxing their employers and using the proceeds to fund mechanization research. However, they do not explain the normative assumptions of their proposal, which disregards the interests of those foreign workers whose unemployment they are promoting.

In general, schemes to restrict immigrant labor are subject to economic as well as moral objections (1). By inhibiting the free flow of labor, they encourage

inefficient allocation of capital and impede the efficient use and development of labor resources. From the moral standpoint, the problems are apparent as soon as one casts aside the blinders of chauvinism and considers the welfare of workers worldwide. Martin and Olmstead's allusion to "harvest-of-shame" wages is inadequate, given that the millions of illegal aliens who have eagerly sought work in this country would clearly be worse off if they lost their jobs. The logic of Martin and Olmstead's proposal might aptly be compared to that of taxing the employment of ghetto youths or other minorities hired at less than the minimum wage by an amount equal to the wage differential, and then using the proceeds to fund automation research to eliminate their jobs.

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References

1. D. Collard, *Economic Issues in Immigration* (Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1970), pp. 65-87; W. H. Hutt, in *ibid.*, pp. 17-44.

In a world without economic or political imperfections, Gieringer's criticism of our proposal to tax the wages earned by temporary alien farm workers in order to accelerate laborsaving mechanization might be appropriate. However, his criticism is misdirected in the real world for economic and political reasons.

A practically unlimited supply of temporary alien farm workers is available at the federal minimum wage of \$3.35 hourly. When the supply of labor is perfectly elastic a wage tax will be paid by employers and not workers, so the tax will not lower workers' wages.

Nation-states are exclusionary—one of their purposes is to establish borders and separate "us" from "them." Nation-states have a universally recognized right to limit the access of temporary foreign workers to their labor markets. We recognize that one can build an argument showing that economic efficiency is maximized with no international barriers to the movement of capital or labor, but we also seriously doubt that an open border is a realistic policy option in the United States today.

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