

# NATIONAL REVIEW

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Advertising Manager Todd Westover

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Detroit Rep. Joseph J. Colucci 248-626-9918

PUBLISHER

Edward A. Capano

## ■ LETTERS ■

### THE WEALTH OF A NATION

Alan Reynolds's "We're Number One (Percent)" (Nov. 6) is a useful reminder that income statistics can be misleading when put in the hands of politicians. However, it would be wrong to conclude that rising income inequality is an imaginary issue.

The wealthy are both growing in number and getting wealthier, and it isn't likely that it is just because they are getting more educated or working harder. Meanwhile the poor are also growing in number and getting poorer, and it is not likely due to their studying fewer years or working less hard. Edwin Rubenstein, the Hudson Institute's research director, wrote recently that workers with only high-school degrees saw their real income plummet by 15 percent between 1979 and 1997.

It should be recognized, however, that it is not necessarily the same worker in 1997 who is earning less than he did in 1979. He may be a new worker, and he may be an immigrant, working legally or illegally. Harvard economics professor George Borjas has thoroughly documented that today's disproportionate flood of poorly educated immigrants is contributing to the depression of wages for the nation's lowest-earning workers.

Reynolds's analysis suggests that income inequality is not a problem, because the poor may eventually become wealthier by pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. Rubenstein's data suggest that earnings worsening sufficiently at the bottom end of the income scale could breed social turmoil. And Borjas's analysis reminds us that immigration is a discretionary policy of the federal government that may be changed if it conflicts with the national interest.

John Martin

Federation for American  
Immigration Reform  
Washington, D.C.

### DECLARATION OF WAR

Andrew J. Bacevich makes some excellent points about the faulty American understanding of the attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* in "Do-goodism Gone Bad"

(Nov. 20). I would like to add one more.

Professor Bacevich quotes Admiral Vern Clark calling this an "act of terrorism," but it is nothing of the sort. There may be many definitions of what constitutes terrorism but every last one of them agrees on a basic fact: It involves an act against unarmed civilians, and not against the sailors of a mightily armed naval ship.

The attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* was not terrorism; it was an act of war. When will our leaders understand this and respond accordingly?

Daniel Pipes

Director, Middle East Forum  
Philadelphia, Pa.

### THE YANOMAMO

John J. Miller's article on Professor Chagnon and the Yanomamo ("The Fierce People," Nov. 20) is important. The *Homo sapiens* of prehistory were not angelic waifs whose example can lead us to nirvana. The "civilized," technological, free-market world is just that—a boon to our wealth, health, happiness, and behavior. Archeologist Lawrence H. Keeley's book, *War Before Civilization*, quantifies Chagnon's conclusions that precivilized humans were fierce and deadly in their dealings with each other. Arthur Quinn's *A New World* brings the point closer to home by reminding us there was nothing noble about the savagery of the indigenous North Americans.

Bob Chitester  
McKean, Pa.

### NO RESPECT

I am shocked that NATIONAL REVIEW would print such a disrespectful cover ("The Big Creep," Nov 20). This sends a terrible message to our young people. The office of president should be treated with respect, and so should the man occupying it. I may not agree with some of the things President Clinton has done, but I do think adults should set a good example for our young people by showing respect for our nation and its leaders.

Linda Mealer