THE REPORT OF THE U.S. SELECT COMMISSION ON IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Edited by Ricardo Anzaldúa Montoya and Wayne A. Cornelius

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PREFACE

On April 18, 1981, the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies of the University of California, San Diego hosted a roundtable discussion of the substance and the implications of the final report of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy. The panel of experts assembled for this forum included specialists on Mexican immigration, immigration law and law enforcement, and the Chicano community. Each participant focused on a particular set of issues raised by the Select Commission; this volume comprises edited versions of their presentations for public dissemination.

The initiative for creating the Select Commission in 1978 came from both Congress and the Carter administration, as a means of circumventing the impasse on immigration policy which had resulted from the demise in 1977 of the Carter administration's immigration policy recommendations. The creation of this body also provided a convenient way for Congress, the President, and the various aspirants to the Presidency to avoid having to take hard positions on these issues during the 1980 election campaign. Nevertheless, for the Congress to address these issues through a specially appointed commission has much historical significance, and the Commission's work has had repercussions far beyond the expectations of most experts in the field.

The Commission ultimately produced a 453-page final report, accompanied by nine volumes of appendices which ran to several thousand pages. Their final document reveals deep divisions about many of the issues that they addressed, but they did make many recommendations — very imprecise ones, in some instances — after achieving consensus in certain areas. Much to the surprise of most observers, those recommendations almost immediately prompted Congress to formulate a legislative package called the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill, which included the

Commission's proposals and gained the support of the Reagan Administration. It very nearly won Congressional approval during 1982.

As this report goes to press, the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill is again before Congress, and most observers of Capitol Hill expect passage of the bill during 1983. However, most experts on the issue of immigration would agree that the bill contains serious flaws, many of which can be traced back to shortcomings in the work of the Select Commission. This critical evaluation of the Select Commission's report should therefore cause us to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the Commission's recommendations, before measures based upon them become law.

We would like to thank the many individuals who contributed in one way or another to the production of this report, but to name them all would be impossible. We cannot, however, neglect to mention the staff of the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, especially Graciela Platero and Rosalía Godínez, who organized the forum; Sandra del Castillo, who assisted in the editing of this volume; and Gwen Bargsten, whose prowess at the computer terminal makes possible the production of timely yet well-designed policy-oriented reports of this type.

Ricardo A. Anzaldúa Montoya
Wayne A. Cornelius

September 15, 1983