

How WALLS WORK - a historical/scientific approach, and a quiz

Some Questions for you: Remember the Great Wall of China, Hadrian's Wall, the Berlin Wall, McNamara's wall separating North and South Vietnam..

Q1. Which of these walls worked? **Q2.** How much did each of them cost?

The correct answers: **A1.** None **A2.** (A la Monty Python) A LOT.

One wall that seems to work and costs very little is the 3000 (or so) mile border between Canada and the United States. Not many Canadians seem to want to come to the United States (lack of culture?), and few Americans seem to want to go to Canada (too cold?).

But how about this new wall between the USA and Mexico?

"A 28-mile pilot project for a high-tech "virtual fence" south of Tucson, which cost \$100M, is now acknowledged to be a failure. Securing the (*whole length of the*) 2,000 mile border was expected to cost \$7.6B; the estimate will now go up." [*What's New*" (in physics), *Bob Parks' weekly newsletter*, Feb 29, 2008]

In addition, an interstate highway direct from the Mexican-Texan border to Canada, complete with windowless, Guantanamo-type lockups and Gestapo-like guards at each rest-stop is under construction. [*The New Yorker*, Mar 3, 2008]

So -**Q3.** - what is the rationale for overcoming such lessons from history? **A3** (possible answers) Has technology made us arrogant? Can desperate people always find a way? Who gets the money to make the failing wall? (Friends or Romans or Countrymen?).

I do not have to ask you to answer the 4th question **Q4** - Will it succeed?

We can suggest **an alternative solution:** a principal reason for the 200,000 Mexicans crossing or attempting to cross the border each year is money \$\$\$\$\$. Why not build a specialized ATM machine at each border crossing, and hand out the equivalent amount of money to each would-be immigrant, asking them politely to return to Mexico and use that money to build their own life there? - which is what most of them want to do anyway...

Assuming the cost goes up to about \$10B (a round-number), that would give each immigrant in each year \$10,000, and would be enough for 5-years - less time than it would take to build "the wall". I think we have sufficient technology to verify that each person only receives the money once (or once per year).

Drawbacks to this solution:

- no money for administration friends (in construction or operation of wall or trans-USA highway)
- no loopholes for cheap labor in the United States - a consequence would be a labor shortage making minimum labor wages go up (bad for employers - in construction and otherwise)
- no agreement with the Mexican Government to pay for the reverse process, once Americans see all the money trees in Mexico...

Q5. Do these sound like Republican drawbacks? **Q6.** Does it look like a Democratic solution?

Just questions... some answers lie in our spirit of *community* and our *Christian, Moslem, Atheist* and *Buddhist* principles of "loving our fellow men" and helping the "not-so-fortunate"..

Gordon - *South Bend, March 3, 2008 (after a visit to Texas)*