

## **C.V. Starr Lecture**

### **Borders Beyond Control: Thoughts on Immigration Policy for the 21st Century**

**October 23, 2003**

“International migration lies close to the center of global problems that now seize the attention of politicians and intellectuals around the world,” said Professor Jagdish Bhagwati during his lecture at New York Law School on the problems of global migration and some of the ways in which governments should re-orient their current immigration practices to address what is expected to be an increasing tide of migration in the future.

A world-renowned economist and political scientist who is currently University Professor at Columbia University and a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, Professor Bhagwati spoke to an audience of more than 140 people during a C.V. Starr lecture on October 23, 2003, sponsored by the Law School’s Center for International Law whose Director is Professor Sydney M. Cone, III.

Recent statistics from the United Nations reveal that around 175 million people currently reside outside the country of their birth, and that almost 10 percent of people living in more developed countries are migrants. Professor Bhagwati highlighted several facets of migration, including highly-skilled workers who leave developing countries to seek better opportunities in wealthier nations such as the United States, unskilled migrants who continue to enter illegally developed countries to look for work, and those migrants who cross borders seeking, in many cases, false asylum claims.

Although governments in the developed world have tried to address migration through various measures such as granting more special work visas, implementing stiffer border-control measures, and imposing harsher sanctions on employers who hire illegal immigrants, Professor Bhagwati said that these attempts have been largely ineffective. He pointed out that ethnic politics and influential groups in civil society (such as human rights organizations and civil libertarians) have helped to blunt the effectiveness of or even rolled back some these measures. “The reality is that borders are beyond control and little can be done to really cut down on immigration,” he said. Instead, Professor Bhagwati proposed that these migration flows should be “creatively accommodated.”

Professor Bhagwati said that governments must “turn to policies that will integrate migrants into their new homes in ways that will minimize the social costs and maximize the economic benefits” of migration. For example, he suggested that governments should continue to allow the children of immigrants to attend public schools and also advocated government programs which will assist immigrants in settling throughout a country so that no one geographic regions will experience depressed wages. Professor Bhagwati also said that more prosperous countries should extend greater economic aid to migrants’ countries of origin to alleviate poor economic conditions that force people to migrate.

He advocated greater international cooperation in addressing global migration. Noting that there is no one international organization that oversees and monitor’s each nation’s migration policies, he proposed the creation of a world migration organization. Rather than dictating a rigid set of rules concerning migration, such an organization could consolidate different protocols and best practices governing migration and then, over time, begin to carry out impartial reviews of the migration policies of member countries.