Published on *Adam Smith Institute* (http://www.adamsmith.org)

The Future of Immigration [1]

Written by **Tom Clougherty** [2] | Wednesday 30 January 2008

We have an interesting event coming up tomorrow, an evening seminar on 'The Future of Immigration'. Our guest speakers will be Philippe Legrain, the UK's leading advocate of open immigration and author of *Immigrants: Your Country Needs Them*, and Damian Green MP, the Conservative Immigration spokesman.

Immigration is a difficult subject ? one I sometimes feel conflicted about myself. The free-marketeer in me thinks we should encourage the free movement of labour, just as we strongly advocate the free movement of goods, services and capital. If someone wants to come to this country to work and contribute, then surely we should welcome them. The economic benefits of immigration are pretty clear and there is no doubt that immigrants usefully fill many gaps in the UK labour market. Where would the tourist industry, for instance, be without foreign workers? In the global context, there is another important benefit to immigration: remittances. The amount of money sent back to developing countries by people working the rich world now dwarfs government aid ? and unlike aid it goes straight into the hands of individuals, where it can make a real difference.

Of course, there are serious arguments in the other direction as well, and they are hard to ignore. There is little doubt, for example, that mass immigration has heightened racial tensions in some parts of the UK, and contributed to the ghetto-ization of many big towns and cities. Furthermore, in a country where public services are government-controlled and incapable of reacting to demand, large numbers of immigrants can put them under immense strain. There are other legitimate concerns too.

These are the kinds of issues that will be discussed on Thursday, and I have no doubt the debate will be lively. The seminar, which is being held in our offices at 23 Great Smith Street, Westminster, kicks off at 6.30pm (doors open at 6), with drinks to be served at 7.30pm. If any of you would like to come, please email Steve at steve@adamsmith.org [3] or call 020 7222 4995.

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