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Our national laboratory for bad government

Molly Ivins, Creators Syndicate

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AUSTIN, Texas -- Last week, President Bush visited Yuma, Ariz., to tour a portion of the U.S.-Mexico Border by Border Patrol buggy. Maybe Jorge was doing a little measuring for the \$3.2 million-a-mile fence the Senate approved, which I guarantee will be really helpful. Are they insane? As Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano observes, "Show me a 50-foot wall, and I'll show you a 51-foot ladder."

Meanwhile, Republicans in the Senate have constructively declared English the national language. That'll fix everything. Every foreigner at our borders will stop and say: "Good thing to know. I'll begin speaking it immediately."

Yes sir, you want a solution, call a Republican.

Of course, I am enchanted to discover that the entire project will be turned over to Raytheon, General Dynamics and other military contractors--think Halliburton with non-competitive bids, anyone? Because this outsourcing stuff is just working like a charm. Another Republican solution.

Ted Koppel suggests in the New York Times that we outsource war: "Blackwater and other leading security companies are seriously proposing to officials at very high levels of the government that their private forces could relieve a number of the burdens now being shouldered [or not] by American troops. ... The Pentagon ... is nonetheless struggling to come to terms with what it now calls 'the long war.' There is every expectation that the fight against global terrorism and the most extreme forms of Islamic fundamentalism will last for many years. This is a war that will not necessarily require aircraft carriers, strategic bombers, fighter jets or heavily armored tanks. It will certainly not enable the United States to exploit its advantages in nuclear weapons. It is a war, indeed, that favors the highly mobile and adaptive fighting skills of the former Special Forces soldiers and other ex-commandos ..."

"Will"? Hell! Did and does. This is a war that is being fought with the wrong tools--and, in Iraq, at the wrong time, in the wrong place and against the wrong enemy.

It never did call for tanks, jets or carriers--just a combination of good detectives and good intelligence. In other words, smart, clever people with language skills. All of which we have fully available to us because of ... immigration. Lebanese, Iraqis, Iranians, Syrians, Pakistanis and Indonesians have all become Americans, and in so many cases we got the bravest of the brave--those who saw their country torn apart by religious factions. These are Americans who know the culture and language of the Middle East and other Islamic countries and who care deeply about how it all comes out.

By all means, reform immigration with this deep obeisance to the Republican right-wing nut faction and their open contempt for "foreigners." But do not pretend for one minute that it is not a craven political bow to racism (Yes,

racism--I am actually calling them racists, although they pretend it hurts their feelings. Try reading their Web sites and see for yourself), and to nativism, to xenophobia and to Know-Nothingism. Just don't forget what you are throwing away in the process.

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