

## Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Re: Brimelow's article on the nation-state [**THE SOCIAL CONTRACT**, Vol.III, No.4, Summer 1993], I am not fully informed on the subject and did appreciate his reflections. There is a point where, as a French Québécois or French Canadian, I disagree with the author and would like to see him elaborate on some rather grave accusations left unexplained in his text. On page 231, at the end of the first paragraph, he wrote: "[t]he two language communities in Canada are continuing to separate themselves, the Anglophones being helped out of Quebec by twenty years of *ethnic cleansing* legis-lation passed by both the separatist and nominally provincial governments" [my emphasis].

I feel this is going a bit too far in calling legislation aimed at protecting one's majority language "ethnic cleansing." What then would Brimelow have to say about the Francophone majority of Manitoba who were reduced to an insignificant minority in less than a century thanks to immigration from English-speaking European countries. Mr. Brimelow has probably never experienced being asked in his own town to "speak white" because one's usage of French was discouraged and spat at. In my eyes, Mr. Brimelow discredits his argument with such an unjustified low blow to a very natural reflex. As he himself points out on page 233: "...the nation-state is a product of modernization, there's a corollary: *modernization puts a premium on linguistic unity.*"

So it comes as no big surprise to have the author use the famous 1972 novel, *Two Solitudes*, in depicting the country's dual cultural and linguistic condition. (This [reading] was probably the only chance he had to get in touch with our side of reality.) This is typical for a generation of public figures who are still caught in the '60s and '70s frame of reference and can't get a clear picture of the changing world. They can't understand why we should start to realize that though we have loved to hate each other for years, we are reaching a point in history where our differences are part of our own respective personalities as groups, and that these differences are very benign compared to the culture-gaps that are now building up thanks to indiscriminating mass-immigration policies put in place in the mid-sixties.

Anytime Mr. Brimelow wishes to visit Quebec I will open my door to him and show him why the *Two Solitudes* is a *vue de l'esprit* of the intellectual — an interesting way to look at the world, but nevertheless not to be confused with reality.

Pierre Deschênes  
Montréal, Quebec

Peter Brimelow responds:

M. Deschênes' letter is a fine example of why separate political cultures need to be expressed in

separate nation-states. The entire logic of my speech was supportive of Quebec's official unilingualism and, indeed, its separation from Canada. Nevertheless, M. Deschênes is upset by the relatively minor detail of my describing repeated legislation aimed at making the Anglo-Quebec minority assimilate or leave as "ethnic cleansing." His position seems to be that (a) this didn't happen, and (b) it was justified anyway.

Since the Québécois have not actually killed people, at least not since the 1970 FLQ kidnappings, I suppose we can see why the term stings. But the fact remains that what they have done lawfully to their English-speaking minority is not pretty — any more than what Americans must do to regain control of their polity will be pretty. So, were I in M. Deschênes' position, I would have shrugged it off, in my phlegmatic Anglo-Saxon way.

Or, as his countryman Sir Wilfred Laurier put it in 1902: "For us, sons of France, politics is a passion; while, for the Englishman, politics are a question of business."

We are in agreement on immigration and on Hugh McLennan, whom I quoted — not on Quebec society (he's against separatism) — but we have one key difference between Anglophone and Franco-phone folkways. It illustrated, I believe, the hopelessness of the *Two Solitudes*' relationship, as well as its fundamental humanity.

(Incidentally, *The Two Solitudes* was published in 1945. The edition I cited was a 1972 paperback.)

Peter Brimelow  
New York City

Editor:

The free trade agreement with Mexico (NAFTA) has passed, and America is now part of a corrupt third-world oligarchy, much of whose economy is based on child labor, and whose population will soon exceed our own. As much as I feel that this is a disaster, the nature of the public "debate" bothers me even more.

Not only did the media present ten pro-NAFTA articles for every one against, but certain points were simply not allowed in the discussion. You didn't hear about Mexico's enduring poverty. You didn't hear about child labor, or the potential for Mexican companies to import unlimited numbers of "guest" workers. Continue to write your elected officials, but writing to the media is a waste of time, because they are not shy about filtering what they print.

We need to build new institutions that will at least allow a full discussion of the issues. We need to support publications like *The Social Contract*. To have an impact, they must grow beyond preaching to the converted. Perhaps a few articles of more general interest, a more pleasing visual format, and some color photographs, could be of long term benefit. I know

that all costs money, and can't be done tomorrow. I merely propose this as something that might be worked towards.

I am not suggesting that *The Social Contract* lose its focus and try to become another *Newsweek*. However, if the average person picking up a copy in a doctor's office finds nothing of interest, then this publication will be a largely sterile exercise. This is not a peer-reviewed journal for specialists. Writing is communication, and the clearest and most rational articles are useless if nobody reads them.

*The Social Contract* might also consider soliciting articles from or conducting interviews with some of the more interesting people who participated in the NAFTA debate, such as Jesse Jackson, Ralph Nader, Pat Buchanan, and Lane Kirkland, to name a few. They don't get a whole lot of exposure in the regular press, and the occasional article by a "big name" is a time-honored method of building circulation.

Timothy Gawne  
Silver Spring, MD

[Editor's Note: We always welcome suggestions from our readers, take them seriously and try to respond where they seem justified and we are able to do so. Please let us hear from you. As to Mr. Gawne's suggestions, we're trying to include more graphics and photographs — as a starter.]