

Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Congratulations on the Winter 1992-93 issue of *The Social Contract*. It covered all aspects of the role of the Churches and religion in regard to Population Growth, Immigration and Environment with fairness and thoroughness.

I was impressed with the contributions of David Simcox, Roy Beck, and Gerda Bikales but, of course, believed that Stephen Mumford's revelation of NSSM 200 and its implication for the U.S. was the most important for the future welfare of the United States.

Best wishes,

Ambassador Adolph W. Schmidt
Ligonier, Pennsylvania

Editor:

I am concerned that the Winter 1992-93 issue of *The Social Contract* repeatedly calls for "the morality of Americans moving to protect their own ecosystems" through increased immigration restrictions, without questioning the morality of U.S. actions that help fuel immigration pressures in the first place (supposedly dismissed as "White-affluent-American guilt"). *The net flow of wealth from South to North is estimated at \$200 billion annually (Multinational Monitor, August 1992)*. Attacking the current legal and illegal immigration rate without attacking the role of our overconsumptive society in causing it is useless at best and unethical at worst. It is this sort of skewed protectionistic posturing that contributed to the breakdown of UNCED population talks and continues to impede the goal of global population stabilization.

Sustainability,

Carol Benson Holst, Director
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Editor:

Professor Charles L. King's letter (Summer 1992) on bilingual ballots is certainly valid. A rudimentary familiarity with the English language is not too much to expect of persons participating in the nation's election process. When we erode that concept by official sanction we erode our legitimate sense of nationhood.

But the current challenge to the integrity of our voting system goes further. Our concept of the voting franchise, as in every other western democracy, starts with the assumption that citizenship is a basic qualification. Today the meaning of citizenship itself is under attack.

In 1992, Congress passed legislation which would extend the franchise to people applying for drivers licenses and other public certificates, and those visiting public-funded facilities. It would establish a

national system of registration by mail. The bill was vetoed by President Bush but has been introduced again and is awaiting resolution by a House-Senate conference.

Will there be ways to preserve the assumption of citizenship as a voting requirement? Even without any attempt to confirm citizenship, the legislation would impose horrendous costs on state and local governments already in deep budgetary trouble. It would be an open invitation to fraud, stretching the capacities of election districts to maintain orderly voter records, beyond their already-substantial difficulties.

But the idea has wide support in the name of "easing voter registration." Its backers say we are "locking citizens out of the voting booth," a highly dubious assertion. In reality, it would virtually end any distinction between citizen and non-citizen for purposes of voting, and this is seen as a valid objective by many.

Growing numbers of Americans appear to be either unconcerned with, or actively opposed to, the idea that citizenship has relevance to the voting franchise, or much of anything else in the conduct of national or community affairs. Typically, these are people who regard themselves as especially enlightened and "non-judgmental." Among Western nations we are the first to have arrived at this point.

U.S. citizenship is becoming irrelevant in the minds of many Americans, native-born and others alike. We are losing the assumed concept of citizenship which lies at the heart of participatory democracy.

It seems valid to ask the question: can the nation survive this development?

Stanley G. Langland
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