

Mark Wegierski reviews two books about Canada, *The Patriot Game* by Peter Brimelow and *Constitutional Crack-Up* by William Gairdner. Mr. Wegierski, a previous contributor, is a Toronto-based writer, historian and permanent associate of the Canadian-Polish Research Institute.

# Canada Dissolving?

Books Reviewed by Mark Wegierski

## THE PATRIOT GAME: CANADA AND THE CANADIAN QUESTION REVISITED

By Peter Brimelow  
Toronto: Key Porter Books  
310 pages, \$17.95 paper

## CONSTITUTIONAL CRACK-UP: CANADA AND THE COMING SHOWDOWN WITH QUEBEC

By William Gairdner  
Toronto: Stoddard Publishing  
122 pages, \$9.95 paper

Peter Brimelow, a Senior Editor at *National Review* and *Forbes*, a high-level journalist, political and economic writer, who had previously lived in Canada, has now lived in the United States for many years. This might tell us something about the configuration of Canadian public life in regard to those who are professedly right-of-center. The book's original edition came out in 1986, and the updated edition being reviewed here (which differs very little from the first) in 1988. It is high time for a third edition — now that the Quebec separatist party has won the election in Quebec by almost double the number of seats over its main rivals, the Liberals (although, because of the vagaries of the "first-past-the-post" riding system, the Parti Québécois actually received only half-a-percentage more of the popular vote). It will now be working assiduously along with the Bloc Québécois, which won 54 seats in the federal House of Commons in the October 1993 election, to win the referendum on sovereignty for Quebec, expected in eight to ten months.

In "A Note from the Author" (p. 1-2), Brimelow states his objective to "present a sort of General Theory of Canada." Brimelow's explicit model is Goldwin Smith's 1891 book, *Canada and the Canadian Question*. Brimelow has imbibed from his mentor a pro-American, "unity of the English-speaking world" approach. He disparages what is called Canadian Nationalism today, while remaining supportive of English-Canadian identity, but also recognizing the virtual inevitability of the emergence of a French-speaking, Québécois state in North America.

Brimelow's main complaint appears to be Canada's economic underperformance. This is followed by his central points: Canada is a state, not a nation; "Quebec is emerging as a genuine nation-state"; "all of

Anglophone Canada is essentially part of a greater English-speaking North American nation"; "Canada's political system is badly designed ... [this has] facilitated the growth of an unusually large and powerful political class ... [which] has developed ... a 'dominant ideology' rationalizing and justifying its power ... imposing it as the Canadian conventional wisdom ... an important radical mutation of the Liberal Ideology is Canadian Nationalism, 'the patriot game'; and finally, that "Canadian politics are surprisingly volatile."

The rest of the book is divided into three parts. The first part "Canada and the Canadian Question Revisited," begins with "The Canadian Question," where English-Canadian identity is defended: "English Canada's British heritage has been systematically subverted ... in Canada today, it is the Anglophones and not the Francophones who are the colonized group" (p. 16). The vehicle for this destruction is what Brimelow calls "Canadian Nationalism" — which, to the reviewer, however, is an incorrectly-conceived villain, arising out of Brimelow's Americanophilia. The next chapter "A Hybrid, Bicultural Monstrosity" (actually a quote from René Lévesque, the prominent Quebec separatist leader), begins Brimelow's ongoing criticism of the current Canadian State, and one of its cardinal policies, bilingualism. The following chapter, "The World the Liberals Made", explains how, in the Twentieth Century, the Liberal Party of Canada, by combining, in the federal House of Commons, a minority of English-Canadian seats, and virtually all the seats from Quebec, has generally been "the party of government" — and has used this power in the direction of the deconstruction of traditional English Canada. Most emblematic of this was the replacement in 1965 of Canada's traditional flag, the Red Ensign (a flag, like the Australian, with the Union Jack in the upper corner), with Canada's present Maple Leaf flag — which many at that time felt was just a Liberal Party banner. In "Trudeauism: The Highest Form of Liberalism," Brimelow dissects Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who was Canada's Prime Minister for sixteen years (1968-1984). "Bilingualism: The Essence of Trudeauism," describes Trudeau's answer to the Canadian conundrum of two founding peoples warring in the bosom of a single state. This was essentially to placate French-Canadians by offering them the notion that they were guiding and seriously influencing a bilingual, continent-wide polity. Trudeau's policy could best be summed up by the phrase: for French Quebec (as a collectivity) — *nothing*; for French-

Canadians (as individuals) — *everything*. The following chapter deals with "U.S.-Canadian Diplomacy: or, the Longest Undefended Special Relationship in the World." In criticizing the influence of Canada's liberal civil-service mandarins at External Affairs, who sought to sever Canada's links with Britain, Brimelow glosses over the fact they did so in order to bring Canada closer to America — as he himself is pro-American.

Part Two, "The Two Solitudes," deals with the two founding peoples of Canada. "From Failing Hands: The Eclipse of English Canada" is a quite proper lament for the cultural destruction of a people. However, the criticism of the latter-day "Canadian Nationalism" is somewhat maladroit. "We Shall Not Sleep: English Canada Rediscovered," in its criticism of the parliamentary system, and its desire to see the hope for English-Canadian restoration in America is, according to the reviewer, seriously misconceived.

The two following chapters on Quebec — "Quebec: Our Master, the Past," and "Quebec: We Shall Have Our French State" straightforwardly describes the distinct "otherness" of French Quebec vis-à-vis English Canada, and of its long march towards self-determination.

Part Three, ironically titled "The Maple Leaf Forever", discusses "The Other Fault Lines" — English Canada's regional cleavages (British Columbia, the Prairie provinces, and the Maritimes vs. Ontario) and the rising issue of aboriginal self-government. The next chapter looks at "Canada and the Mulroney Answer." Brian Mulroney, Canada's Prime Minister from 1984 to 1993, although elected as a Progressive Conservative (or Tory), was a bicultural Quebecker like Trudeau, and in some ways even more liberal. While immigration was precipitously raised to a quarter-million a year in Mulroney's third year in office (where it has remained ever since) from about 50,000 in Trudeau's last year in power — Mulroney's great "right-wing" successes were the carrying out of the Canada-US Free Trade deal, and the establishment of a value-added tax (the hated GST). Brimelow's main concerns in the chapter are economic, so he heartily approves of Mulroney's steps (at that time) towards Free Trade.

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The work concludes with "The Other Half-Sheet of Notepaper: A Prognosis". Most of the predictions are now quite passé. Brimelow ends with a call for "an English Canada that remembers its past and

understands its North American future." This is an oxymoron: it is precisely American liberal, capitalist, and individualist culture that has undermined the English-Canadian identity that Brimelow esteems. Brimelow's desire to meld with America is predicated on a highly-questionable view — perhaps more tenable to him in the Eighties — of America as some kind of right-wing, Reaganite, utopia. The fact is that any serious defense of English-Canadian identity must be anti-American. No real English-Canadian conservative could advocate the absorption of Canada into a society like America's today. Indeed, they might well look to an alliance with some of the "Canadian Nationalists" that Brimelow despises.

While Brimelow's work, despite its flaws, is important and incisive, Gairdner's book on the *Constitutional Crack-Up* in Canada is barely worth reading. If someone can seriously accept Gairdner's convoluted notion that an individualist, American-style Charter of Rights and Freedoms (enacted in Canada in 1982) is an artefact of French centralism and incipient government fascism, then the book will appeal to such a person. Gairdner is a doctrinaire anti-statist. This is the reviewer's response. The key to all international and internal political relations, is the *fait accompli*. The notion that "history is written by the victors" is impossible to challenge, except to note that different nations and groupings are objectively winning at any given time. Part of the cultural, social, and political power of regnant groups is projected by the indirect approach of portraying themselves as under severe attack. The vehicle for creating *fait accompli*, throughout history, is the State. Any ideology which confines itself to managing the economy, or posits the goal of a minimal state, is doomed to failure — its opponents will largely concede the economic argument, devoting themselves to cultural issues and the harnessing of the state-bureaucracy to their own ends. Then, the former ideology is simply crushed, as it lacks the wherewithal in the state-structures to defend itself. As Gairdner's work espouses the individualist, anti-statist, politically incoherent, sociologically ridiculous, Lockean-derived position, it can hardly be recommended as offering any prescription for Canada's ills. Furthermore, its explicit refusal to recognize "the two nations" thesis of Canada — which Brimelow fully acknowledged — discredits it entirely as a serious piece of analysis.

The best book available on Canada and the Canadian question is still probably George Parkin Grant's *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*, originally published in 1965. A new work in the spirit of Grant, covering the events of the subsequent three decades in Canada, is now sorely needed. ■

[Copies of *The Patriot Game* are available from APEC (Association for the Preservation of English in Canada), 3080 Yonge Street, Suite 5068, Toronto, Ontario M4N 3N1, Canada.]