

*Letter from the editor*

# Straight Thinking on Immigration

One of the consolations of working on the immigration question is the up-close exposure it gives to the many foibles of what passes for human reasoning. But hearing pompous politicians opine that “we are a nation of immigrants” can wear after a while. So, the editorial staff of THE SOCIAL CONTRACT decided to undertake a study of logical fallacies in the immigration debate. Our lead-off section is the result.

Part of the impetus for this venture lies with your editor’s having taken a course in logic at our community college — too late in life, some have said! My instructor (and the main writer for this section) was David Payne. Dave worked on these materials about immigration reform over the summer of 1995 and then they were vetted at the fall 1995 Writers Workshop. (THE SOCIAL CONTRACT sponsors a workshop for writers each October in Washington, D.C.) With additional polishing since then, we are pleased to present this “guide to straight thinking” on immigration matters.

After Dr. Payne’s opening essay you will find two articles analyzed, and another for you to try your hand on. Then we present a checklist of logical fallacies that you can copy and take to discussions to help organize your response (if you are in a debate) or your questions (if you are a member of an audience.) Scip Garling expands, as well, on the topic of logical fallacies and the immigration debate. We hope you will find this novel approach useful and that you will want to pursue the subject further through the suggested readings.

Our second important feature is Brent Nelson’s extended review of Henry Pratt Fairchild’s 1926 book, *The Melting-Pot Mistake*, done in conjunction with a review of *Beyond the Melting Pot* by Nathan Glazer and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1963). Nelson also cites a good many other well known and sometimes contemporary works on the general topics of group formation and conflict, assimilation and the nation-state (and its cohesion).

This topic is highly important in today’s world, and is further fleshed out with articles by syndicated columnist Scott McConnell, novelist John Zmirak, Canadian reporter Mark Wegierski, and visitor to France Gerda Bikales.

If all this is not enough to keep you awake at night, our third substantive and original section re-examines the Chinese exclusion acts of the late 19th century, as seen by the activists of the time. You will find here a different interpretation than that which we usually encounter today: that those actions were motivated by “racism” — a word that had not even been coined at the time. This section is part of an effort headed by associate editor Wayne Lutton to revisit some of the main works from the turn of the century that advocated immigration restriction. We do not wish to be found in violation of Santayana’s famous dictum about not knowing our history.

We round out this issue with an excerpt from our Washington editor Roy Beck’s new book *The Case Against Immigration* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1996). We are delighted that the thesis of Beck’s book has found reception in major publishing circles such as his op-ed in *The Christian Science Monitor* (March 25), *The Washington Post* (April 21), and a review of his book in *Business Week* (their April 22 issue). Beck has also analyzed the voting records of members of the House of Representatives in the recent debate about immigration reform. Many of our readers will want to know how their representative acted.

Capped off with several reviews of books you will want to know about, this is an issue of THE SOCIAL CONTRACT you may not be able to put down until you have read every word!

*John H. Tanton*

Editor and Publisher