

They Won't Go Away

The issues raised by Pat Buchanan will not fade

by Scott McConnell

The Great Fear set off by Pat Buchanan's victory in New Hampshire has now expired. Buchanan's loss in Arizona, followed by Dole victories in South Carolina and then everywhere else, made it clear that the Buchanan campaign would be a neo-populist protest vehicle, not a serious bid for power.

The Republican sense of relief is palpable; even if — as remains possible — Bob Dole loses badly in November and takes the GOP majorities in the House and Senate down with him, the business interests which form the GOP's backbone will face no frontal challenge.

No candidate will be pointing out that mass immigration undermines the wage levels of less-educated American workers — and none will raise delicate questions about the corrosive impact of economic globalization on American communities.

Buchanan's flameout was a more closely run thing than Dole's landslide delegate totals now suggest. In a way it serves as a backhanded compliment to the much-maligned profession

Scott McConnell is a syndi-cated columnist. This article is reprinted by permission from the New York Post, March 13, 1996.

of political consultants, who have no role in the pitchfork pundit's campaign.

Had there been a politically savvy grownup with the candidate's ear during the crucial 72 hours following the New Hampshire win, Buchanan might have been told that he had all the Arizona gun-nut voters in his pocket anyway, and that the time was right to present himself in a Catholic-run homeless shelter — there to speak quietly about what Americans owe to one another as part of the social contract.

Better that, certainly, than to gallivant with rifle and a black hat around the OK Coral. Apparently, however, there was no one in the campaign with a sufficiently mainstream sensibility to say so — a fact which, by itself, speaks volumes about Buchanan's weakness as a candidate.

But though Buchanan will not win anything this year, the themes animating his candidacy are not going to vanish. Mainstream commentators like to dismiss Buchanan's message as "preaching fear" (to quote *Newsweek's* cover). The subtext of such claims is that there is really nothing to fear — and if there were, Buchanan is offering only chimerical solutions.

But what if the illnesses diagnosed by Buchanan are real? And what if the cures he is offering are as plausible as those tendered by anyone else?

Edward Luttwak, a renowned political writer analyst and historian, recently described the Buchanan campaign as part of world-wide populist reaction against the "turbo-capitalism" of free trade and domestic deregulation.

Luttwak points to last autumn's widespread strikes in France and the wave of neo-communist electoral victories in Eastern Europe as other instances where the populations of relatively advanced countries are shouting an emphatic "No" to the new imperatives of the global marketplace.

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And they are not deluded for doing so. Luttwak notes that while Buchanan's remedies would likely reduce America's overall GNP, they would also produce a more prosperous middle and working class.

Tariffs would limit the ability of well-off Americans to pick and choose goods from the global marketplace; American consumers would be, in effect, forced to buy inferior American-made

products. But people who make these products—U.S. industrial workers—would be far better off.

Mightn't the country be more content that way? Any babyboomer can likely remember when Americans loved their cars so much that Top 40 radio was full of people singing songs about them: "409" and "Little Deuce Coup," "Hey, Little Cobra" and "Mustang Sally." They may have been inferior to today's Honda Accords and BMWs — but they were *ours* in a way that German and Japanese cars will never be, and the nation reveled in them.

Buchanan's proposals to limit immigration also meet wide-spread elite dismissal, though it is the only position that remotely approaches what Americans regularly tell pollsters they want.

As Luttwak points out, a cut-off in the unending supply of Mexican and Central American gardeners, maids and manual laborers would have only positive economic consequences on the job prospects of the least-skilled Americans, who are now maintained in urban housing projects and often do no useful work at all.

Immigration restrictions — like trade protectionism — would benefit working-class Americans at the expense of the bourgeoisie. But they would also address a larger anxiety about the nation's ethnic and cultural transformation — an anxiety that constitutes a major reason why Americans of all classes believe their country is headed in the wrong direction.

In fact there are two major demographic movements in the

U.S. right now: Third World people coming into the United States and settling in seaboard cities — and older American ethnic groups trying to run away from them by moving to the hinterland.

Urban scholar Joel Kotkin recently described this phenomenon as "white flight to the fringes." In the last four years more than a million people have moved from cities to rural areas, reversing an urbanization trend centuries old; many more flee to new and whiter "edge cities" and their suburbs.

Escapees from the New York City region are leading the exodus: nearly a million people — mostly better educated whites — left the area in the past four years for such "white enclaves" as central Florida and towns around Research Triangle in North Carolina.

In short, many Americans

are looking at a global marketplace which undermines their job security, and at a multicultural future which threatens their sense of nationhood, and are saying, "Wait a minute."

They are, for the moment, saying this without any notable animosity toward either recent immigrants or toward foreign nations which penetrate the American market. But the trend toward the global village is moving too fast — exacting too high a price in lost national cohesion.

Not only members of a displaced and fearful working class are sensitive to these themes; many quite comfortable people worry about losing their country and their culture. The Buchanan campaign has tried to speak for all of them; their numbers are unlikely to diminish once this election season is past. □

Eighty Percent Say English Should Be the Official Language

Many Americans probably don't realize that English is not the official language of the United States.

As the organization English Language Advocates states, "English is our common language by custom, not by law." The group says 19 states recognize English as the official language and several other states are considering similar legislation.

Several members of Congress have also introduced legislation to institute English as the official language of the federal government.

America On Line decided to survey its members to see if they thought English should be declared the official language of the U.S.

RESULTS: Of the 21,589 responses received, over 80 percent said that English should be declared the official language of the United States. Of the remaining responses, 15 percent were against any law declaring English the official language, and about 3 percent did not care about the issue.

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