



IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

...providing factual information about immigration and immigrants in America

POLICY BRIEF

February 1, 2002

Buchanan Misses the Mark Latest Anti-Immigrant Book Doesn't Ring True

The Death of the West, the title of Pat Buchanan's latest book, has a provocative but very misleading ring to it. Indeed, the author of Right from the Beginning should reissue this new work under the more honest rubric, Wrong From the Start.

In *The Death of the West* (St. Martin's Press, New York, 2002), Pat Buchanan, an erstwhile candidate for President of the United States, first as Republican and then as Reform Party standard-bearer, succeeds only in drawing attention to the fact that his brand of conservatism can still cause people to roll their eyes either in bemusement or disbelief.

Buchanan castigates anything and everything that fail to meet his litmus test for being a true American, i.e., white, English-speaking, and Christian; although by Buchanan standards, you also might be eligible if you are of European lineage, just as long as you don't speak a European language.

However, notwithstanding his propensity for using the words patriotic, conservative, and American interchangeably, the thrust and import of Buchanan's castigations hardly qualify as an obituary for the West. While he avers four clear and present dangers to the continuation -- let alone health -- of Western civilization, the author misses the mark on virtually every key point he tries to make.

The First "Danger" -- A Dying Population?

The author laments the declining birthrates for Caucasians in general, and Americans in particular, arguing that it is the white man's birthright of leadership and power that is diminished as a result. But Buchanan's contention that numbers alone are the bedrock of freedom is spurious at best. He omits the role played by inventiveness, technology, adaptation, and change itself. It is difficult to perceive that population numbers alone equate with greatness and accomplishment. If that were the case, China and India -- and not the United States and Russia -- would have been the superpowers of the 20th Century.

In addition, Buchanan suggests that the population loss of middle class whites in California offers striking evidence that America is ceding its privileges to a tidal wave of immigrants whose agenda is to overthrow the legitimate white government.

While it is true according to U.S. Census data that California's Anglo population has decreased during the 1990s, Buchanan fails to point out that most whites exiting California during the past

A DIVISION OF THE AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAW FOUNDATION

918 F STREET, NW, 6TH FLOOR • WASHINGTON, DC 20004 • TEL: (202) 742-5600 • FAX: (202) 742-5619

www.immigrationpolicy.org

decade did not simply die out. Instead, they moved to neighboring states, particularly Nevada and Arizona, many as retirees.

The Real Threat -- Mass Immigration?

Buchanan is at his blatant best with his commentary regarding modern-day immigrants - those people of different colors, creeds, and cultures, who are changing the character of the West forever. What bothers and scares Buchanan the most about what he labels a tidal wave of immigration is that in his mind, the numbers and diversity automatically mean an inherently fractured and totally disabled America.

But such an argument isolates Mr. Buchanan from mainstream conservatism. Republican U.S. Senator Sam Brown-back, for example, recognizes that "more than numbers, legal immigrants bring energy, vitality, and innovation." And no less of an authority than Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan states that "as we are creating an ever more complex, accelerating economy, the necessity to bring in resources and people from abroad to keep it functioning in the most effective manner strikes me as relevant policy."

Strength in Diversity

Undaunted by the views of these leading conservatives, Buchanan continues his tirade unabated and untempered by reasonable thought. Instead he argues "We are Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Shintoist, Santeria, New Age, voodoo, agnostic, atheist, humanist, Rastafarian, and Wiccan...We no longer agree on whether God exists, when life begins, and what is moral and immoral."

He evokes Arthur Schlesinger's notion of an American Creed wherein "our values are not matters of whim and happenstance, they are anchored in our national experience." Apparently, Buchanan rejects out of hand the glaring fact that our national experience has always found its strength in diversity.

Anti-Western and Anti-Christian

Somewhere along the line, Buchanan came to embrace the notion that if a person is not white, not Christian, and not possessing a European or American heritage, then that person is automatically deeply hostile to the religions, traditions, and morality of the West. If nothing else, Buchanan infers that such people are incapable of allegiance to America and do not possess the qualities needed to be a patriot.

One has to wonder how the author reconciles that belief with those firefighters and policemen with Hispanic surnames or African American heritage who died heroes on September 11, 2001. One has to wonder also about such thinking in light of those members of the US armed forces who died aboard the USS Cole -- the Asian American, the Hispanic Americans, and the African Americans -- and now those risking their lives on the battlefields of Afghanistan.

Conclusion

In the end, The Death of the West is an ingenious book of numbers -- a statistical outcry that says there are too few white Christians and far too many of those "other" kinds of people. He is arguing simply that there are more of them than us. Buchanan's book is a story based on

unreasonable fear wrapped cleverly, albeit not neatly, in America's flag, proving that the author was indeed wrong from the start.

The preceding book review was prepared by AILF contributing editor Jim Champagne (remyjec@aol.com). The views expressed are those of the author.