

Pickus, Noah, *True Faith and Allegiance: Immigration and American Civic Nationalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, 257 pp., £21.80 (hbk)

From France to Australia, policymakers and scholars are struggling to reconcile an increasingly large and diverse immigration flow with long-established national identities. The United States has a long history of grappling with such questions, and Noah Pickus, Associate Director of the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University, has added his name to a venerable list that includes many of the American Founding Fathers and many eminent writers like Arthur Schlesinger, Francis Fukuyama, Samuel Huntington and, most humbly, myself.

Pickus new book, *True Faith and Allegiance: Immigration and American Civic Nationalism*, tries to make the case for a centrist, civic nationalism. The 'civic' in Pickus' civic nationalism is not a set of abstract contractual ties between rational citizens, but instead a call for thicker ties of social capital between native-born and immigrant Americans. Deriding both those who seek to curtail immigration and their cosmopolite pro-immigrant adversaries, Pickus wants more connect between natives and immigrants. He asks that native-born Americans expect more of their immigrants in terms of commitment to the values of the Constitution and loyalty to the nation, but also calls on his fellow Americans to invest in the education and training of their immigrants. Like Robert Putnam, Pickus calls for a return to the civic engagement of the *fin-de-siècle* Progressive era, when the Protestant middle classes threw their support behind a number of outreach movements to Catholic and Jewish immigrants. These included the educational 'Settlements' which taught immigrants about American customs and toleration, taught them valuable skills and helped sort out their material problems. English language instruction and civics lessons were promulgated by government agencies, private businesses (notably Ford), unions, churches and voluntary associations like patriotic societies.

Pickus admits that this kind of 'bridging' social capital is much more difficult to attain in today's globalised, hyper-privatised, expressively individualised world. Nonetheless, he is at pains to point out that an engaged civic nationalism holds out the best promise for a country whose immigration and nationality politics are as polarised as ever. The book isolates four distinct schools of thought on these questions: cultural nationalist (the white nationalism of Peter Brimelow and Pat Buchanan); universal nationalist (the creedal nationalism of neoconservative writers like Michael Barone and Seymour Lipset); rights and representation approaches. The latter two can largely be subsumed under the mantra of cosmopolitanism, and are linked to writers like Matthew Jacobson or Martha Nussbaum who question the value of nations in an age of globalisation and urge the United States to offer full rights to non-citizens while asking for little commitment in return.

Pickus' book blends both empirical and normative scholarship, but in terms of chapters is six parts history and two parts advocacy. The first three chapters concern the approach taken by the Founders to naturalization and immigration - mainly in the 1790s. The second three chapters dissect the immigration/nationalization politics of the Progressive era - principally the two decades prior to 1920. Finally, the last two chapters offer a summary of recent developments and a critique of the four existing approaches to immigration and nationality in the country today. Most writers on these subjects have paid only patchy attention to the Founding period, and for good reason: non-WASP immigrants were few and the key issues were political, not cultural. Though the period does not warrant as much ink as it gets here, Pickus definitely adds to our body of knowledge by thoroughly plumbing the writings of some of the

Founders in this era. He argues that James Madison, whose views straddled the Federalist-Republican divide of the period, exercised the most sound judgment in favouring a civic nationalism of complexity over the easier answers provided by both exclusionists and cosmopolitans. Though these chapters are instructive, Pickus should have underscored the differences between the 1790s - when the key debates were over immigrants' *ideological* loyalty and the contest between the nation and *political* subgroups like factions or states - and subsequent periods, when *cultural* worries about the loss of Anglo-Protestant ethnic hegemony were paramount. The first period was less conducive to nativist response than subsequent episodes and, as a consequence, it is difficult to label people like Madison ethnic or civic nationalists.

Pickus' work does a good job of assembling the excellent secondary literature on cultural issues of the Progressive period into a coherent picture, and garnishes this with a reference to the primary writings of Jane Addams, John Dewey, Randolph Bourne, Teddy Roosevelt and others. Pickus locates a civic national tradition that stretches improbably wide to encompass both Teddy Roosevelt and Randolph Bourne. Though Roosevelt's writings traced an Anglo-Saxon and Nordic pedigree to the American nation, Pickus picks up on Gary Gerstle's observation that Roosevelt opposed some of the more exclusionary outriders of the nativist movement (like the literacy test) and managed to win the immigrant vote to the Progressive banner. He finds that Roosevelt actively believed in the immigrants' capacity to Americanize - a belief shared by liberal Americanizers like Frances Kellor or Jane Addams. Bourne, meanwhile, despite his pluralism, is grouped as a civic nationalist because of his view of a 'future America, in which all can unite'. (p. 119)

The problem here is that Pickus is too selective in his quotation and draws a line which connects dots that lie at the margins of these individuals' thoughts. Randolph Bourne was a New York WASP avant-garde radical in revolt against his own culture, which he associated with puritanism and a lack of expressive individualism. He had no concept of cultural continuity and believed in a cosmopolitanism in which the United States' only role was to launch a project through which America could ultimately dissolve itself. Any concept of unity was a mere flag of convenience. By contrast, Roosevelt was an ethnic nationalist *par excellence*, though a moderate and sophisticated one. Yes - concessions to immigrant opinion had to be made ahead of the 1912 election - but these sprang from expediency rather than conviction as any reading of Roosevelt's earlier writings will attest. At bottom, Roosevelt was concerned to protect both the Anglo-Saxon 'old stock' component of the nation, and the wider country itself. The ethnic did not preclude a concern with the civic, and vice-versa, but the Roughrider president would have been aghast at the idea of supping with Bourne, a Greenwich Village modernist who sported a cape as his trademark apparel.

All of which highlights the most serious weakness in a generally well-argued and worthwhile book: its protean, therapeutic difference-splitting. This is manifested in a tendency to stretch the notion of civic nationalism to mean all things to all people, and a related proclivity for charting a middle course between all schools of thought so as to avoid controversy. It is also unclear that civic nationalism can satisfy the desires for meaning and rootedness among either immigrants or native-born Americans, many of whom yearn for ethnicity in a time of atomisation. In this regard, a better solution might be to recognise the validity of a majority 'American' ethnicity to which newcomers can assimilate (in the strong sense) while maintaining an easygoing approach to minority ethnic retention and issues of loyalty and citizenship.

This said, there are many original aspects to Pickus' proposals. Pickus rightly exposes the contradictions in the thinking of those he labels 'rights advocates': the cosmopolitans who ask America to extend a hand to non-citizens while encouraging minorities (often against their will) to look scornfully upon American history. Pickus should also be applauded for his centrist appeal to build bridges between natives and immigrants through English instruction and civics classes. Pickus' interpretation of recent developments in American immigration politics is also impeccable and a useful update to the current literature. It will strengthen the hand of those who dissent from the prevailing multicultural ethos of the universities, but will also challenge some of the more popular quick fixes of Congressional policymakers. Put simply, this well-written book is a must-read for scholars of American national identity and immigration.