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The Editor
Maclean's Magazine Letters to the Editor
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Re: Peter Newman article 'A treaty that threatens...' Aug. 10, 1998

It is difficult to believe that this indulgence in vituperative journalism was written by way of fair comment on an important public issue by a well-informed commentator. It seems rather to be an application of the dictum 'There are none so blind as those who will not see.'

Newman is plainly wrong in describing the Nisga'a treaty as restitution for past wrongs. It is certainly wrong for BC and Canada to have grossly neglected for so long their constitutional and legal obligations to negotiate treaties in the Province; but Newman's ill-conceived notions, if applied to other constitutional and legal redress, would make a mockery of Canada's political and legal systems. The Constitution authorizes governments to enter into treaties and no constitutional amendment is involved every time a treaty is agreed. His assertion that 'First Nations are taking over the national agenda' is so bizarre in face of the facts, it invites ridicule.

Most worthy of condemnation perhaps is Newman's disparaging and insulting reference to First Nations' spiritual symbols (... and peg the Canadian dollar to the going rate for eagle feathers...) This disrespectful attitude is characteristic of racist hate literature, which is usually directed at relatively powerless groups. Newman would not dare make similar remarks about Christians or Jews while arguing in effect that 'they are preparing to take over the country'.

Newman is wrong. Shamefully wrong.

