

## **American Nativism Has 19th-Century Roots**

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### **Body**

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To the Editor:

Anthony Lewis notes that the **American** "strain of **nativism**" dates back to "at least the 1850's" (column, Oct. 3). It is **rooted** even deeper in the psyche and practice of **American** politics.

One should note the Naturalization Act of 1798, which increased the residency requirement for citizenship to 14 years from 5, and the Alien and Sedition Acts of the same year, which authorized the deportation of those immigrants who were deemed dangerous to the safety of the country. These acts were subject to the discretion of the executive branch and could be loosely interpreted in the time before a strong judicial branch.

Mr. Lewis urges a less ambivalent system for immigration, one separated from party and bureaucracy. But history shows that an **American** immigration policy devoid of political ambiguities and nativist attitudes is a fond hope unfounded in reality.

TIMOTHY M. ROOD

East Hampton, N.Y., Oct. 3, 1997

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