ALL THE PRESIDENT’S CONSERVATIVES: RICHARD NIXON AND THE AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT.

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation examines the relationship between the American conservative movement and Richard Nixon between the late 1940s and the Watergate scandal, with a particular emphasis on the latter’s presidency. It complements the sizeable bodies of literature about both Nixon himself and American conservatism, shedding new light on the former’s role in the collapse of the post-1945 liberal consensus. This thesis emphasises the part played by Nixon in the slow march of American conservatism from the political margins in the immediate post-war years to the centre of national politics by the late 1960s. The American conservative movement is treated as a diverse epistemic community made up of six distinct sub-groupings – National Review conservatives, Southern conservatives, classical liberals, neoconservatives, American Enterprise Institute conservatives and the ‘Young Turks’ of the New Right – which, although philosophically and behaviourally autonomous, remained intimately associated under the overall leadership of the intellectuals who operated from the National Review. Although for nearly three decades Richard Nixon and American conservatives endured each other in a mutually frustrating and yet seemingly unbreakable relationship, Nixon never became a fully-fledged member of the movement. Yet, from the days of Alger Hiss to those of the ‘Silent Majority’, he remained the political actor best able to articulate and manipulate the conservative canon into a populist, electorally successful message. During his presidency, the administration’s behaviour played a crucial role – even if not always deliberately – in the momentous transformation of the conservative movement into a more diverse, better-organised, modernised and more efficient political force. In the process, conservatives consciously and successfully used Nixon in their quest to gain acceptance as the legitimate sparring partners of the liberalism that had hitherto dominated post-1945 American politics.
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INTRODUCTION

The history of post-1945 conservatism and the political career of Richard Nixon are surely two of the most dramatic tales of defeat and triumph delivered by the politics of the United States in the last three-quarters of a century. During a period of over two decades, both the conservative movement and Nixon himself ascended from a position at the margins of national politics towards the very centre of executive power, an ascent that was punctuated by what proved to be premature obituaries on the political 'deaths' of both parties: in Nixon's case, after the fracas of his 1962 California gubernatorial race, and in conservatism's, during the aftermath of Barry Goldwater's ill-fated presidential campaign two years later. This doctoral dissertation evaluates the relationship between Nixon and the American conservative movement, and examines how the bonds that tied both actors between the Californian's entree into national politics in the late 1940s and his accession to the presidency determined the character of the relations between the president and conservatism during Nixon's term in office. The following pages also demonstrate that the developments that took place during the Nixon administration helped to bring about the greatest transformation of the post-war conservative movement's make-up and behaviour since its inception during the 1950s, and were therefore instrumental in the ascendancy of the modern conservatism that has dominated American politics since the 1980s.

1. THE POST-WAR CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT...

The American conservative movement has always been a fractious and diverse epistemic community, one which plays host to a number of conservative sub-communities and which has evolved significantly over time. As with its constituent elements, the movement at large, was (and remains) made up of politicians, intellectuals and political activists with very different backgrounds and interests, but who are nevertheless bound
together by shared ideas and experiences as well as personal relationships. As this thesis focuses on the conservative movement during the 1960s and early 1970s, no less than seven distinct sub-groups are particularly relevant. Three of these right-wing sub-communities were already present as Richard Nixon’s public persona emerged in the immediate post-war years: the National Review or ‘hard core’ group, though the eponymous journal around which they gathered actually began to be published in 1955; neoliberals or libertarians; and the ‘organisational’ conservatives, who run the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). Such was the importance of these groupings within American conservatism that throughout Richard Nixon’s career, the latter was compelled to build up a relationship, even if distant, with each one of them. Two other subgroups – the ‘New Right’ or ‘Young Turk’ conservatives and the neoconservatives – emerged during the Californian’s tenure in the White House, and his trajectory as president was determinant in shaping the form in which they did so. A seventh and final group, Southern conservatives, had also been part of the movement since the time Nixon entered politics. As a consequence of the 1964 presidential election, they also became a force of political nature within the GOP in 1968, and it was thanks to the travails of the Republican conservative South that Richard Nixon ever became the Republican nominee for president.

This view of conservatism as constituted by these distinct groupings is embedded within a well-established academic consensus, but of course conservatism does not necessarily need to be understood or approached in these terms. If anything, each one of these groups emerged at a different time, was driven by particular interests, possessed different behavioural patterns and built a distinct relationship with the other conservative sub-families,

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as well as with political actors beyond the conservative community such as the Nixon administration itself. On the other hand, the American 'right' was an even larger, even more diverse entity encompassing not only the groups included in this analysis, but also others of a more moderate quality such as the 'Eastern' Republicans of Nelson Rockefeller, Dwight Eisenhower and the Ripon Society, as well as groupings on the extremist fringes ranging from the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi party to the John Birch Society and Alabama's demagogic governor George Corley Wallace. Some scholars have contemplated the entire right-wing as a single unit. For instance, Sara Diamond's helpful, all-inclusive *Roads to Dominion* does offer a highly informative account, and one rich in detail. Yet such an all-encompassing narrative tends to lump together groupings – such as the *National Review* types and the Klan – which actually actively opposed each other and/or never had any sort of relationship. The resulting narrative therefore, even if illuminating from a descriptive viewpoint, tends to be confusing and thus loses explicative power.

Works focusing on particular sub-groups are considerably more abundant and suffer from a different shortcoming: being autonomous social, ideological and political entities, each one of the conservative families had a distinct development. Focusing only or mostly on one of them can lead the historian to establish as general characteristics phenomena that are actually quite particular to only one conservative sub-family. A case in point is that of the *National Review* conservatives. Led by the colourful William F. Buckley Jr. (hence sometimes also dubbed 'Buckleyites'), the self-styled 'hard core' conservatives were the dominant group within the entire American right throughout the third quarter of the twentieth century, and have therefore received considerable attention. George Nash's towering *The Conservative Intellectual Conservative Movement in America since 1945* traced the origins

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and history of the Buckleyites up to the 1970s, while Sarah Katherine Mergel's more recent *Conservative Intellectuals and Richard Nixon* has examined their specific relationship with the Nixon White House. 3 Nash's analysis accorded considerable stock to the value of anticommunism as a vital element holding the conservative movement itself together, as well as cementing the movement's attachment to Richard Nixon, while Mergel's study concluded that these conservative intellectuals held little final influence over the Nixon administration. Both of these theses are difficult to dispute as long as one focuses narrowly on the *National Review* - or NR as it was referred to by its editors - segment of the right. A broader perspective suggests the need to qualify these positions, however.

Anticommunism did indeed become a crucial element in the articulation of the hard core conservatives' philosophical outlook and worldview, which had in turn been constructed upon the basis of two diverging traditions of thought: classical liberalism and traditionalist conservatism. Nevertheless an examination beyond the *National Review* circle reveals that severe clashes between libertarians and traditionalists continued, as often as not worsened by diverging views about precisely the kind of Cold War developments that their shared anticommunism was supposed to have created common cause on. 4 In these pages it is assumed that the different strands which formed the conservative movement were actually held together - to each other and to Richard Nixon - by a rather more complex set of shared adversaries and commonly-held philosophical and behavioural mores. Following a reasoning centred on the anticommunist passion of *National Review* conservatives, the strength of that feeling should also have dominated the hard core's relationship with and views about the

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Nixon administration, and should also have been central to the seemingly irresistible pull attracting the movement and Richard Nixon to one another. Yet both Nixon and the Buckleyites were considerably more concerned about what they perceived to be the iniquities of liberalism than by the military threat of Communism. It is safe to say that, even if anticommunism laid the foundations of the Nixon-Buckleyite rapport, it was the mutual interest in blasting liberalism and the shared contempt for liberals that kept the relationship between the Californian and the movement at large – including those conservatives for whom the Cold War was always a rather secondary matter – going for well over two decades. Similarly, once the man from Yorba Linda was installed in the White House, conservatives ultimately swallowed the Nixon-Kissinger overtures to China and Détente, even if amid much protestation, and went on to support the president's re-election in 1972. Of course, as historians such as Mergel and Sandra Scanlon note (and as a good many conservatives noticed at the time), for the *National Review* conservatives Richard Nixon in the White House continued to be the intensely frustrating, manipulative partner that he had been ever since the early 1950s. However, if the Buckleyites failed to bring the administration to heel, other groups such as the organisational AEI conservatives and the conservative Southern Republicans were very much nurtured by the president and achieved notable advances under the aegis of the Nixon White House. Others, such as the neoliberals and the neoconservatives, were the first members of the conservative movement to be given serious chances of implementing policy initiatives since 1945. The conservative picture, it seems, is a little more complex than the perspective of the *National Review* intellectuals.

This dissertation therefore evaluates the characteristics and the legacy Nixon’s relationship with the American conservative movement from a historical, dynamic perspective based on examining his bonds with the movement as a whole. The underlying premise of this analysis is that a comprehensive evaluation of certain disparate groups as belonging to the same entity can offer a picture of conservatism, its evolution and its impact

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upon the American polity quite at variance from those analyses focused only or mostly on any of its constituent parts or those which take a larger, more diffuse approach. The focus in these pages is restricted to those conservative families or sub-groups which self-identified and were recognised by their counterparts (and, incidentally, by Richard Nixon) as belonging to the broader conservative movement, and which either fully shared or at the very least tolerated—even if selectively or mostly rhetorically—certain common ideological assumptions: American national pride; a vigorous foreign policy; a strong sense of religiosity; attachment to traditional values and to free markets. It should be emphasised that basic ideological agreement was by no means exempt from flexibility—some may say plain cynicism—as in the simultaneous Southern protestations on behalf of free markets and support for protectionism for Southern-based textiles; classical liberal pursuit of small government and acquiescence in a large Cold War military establishment; and the neoconservative interventionist impulse married with lip-service to free markets.

Matching those common ‘pull’ factors, all members of the conservative movement also shared with each other (and Nixon) rather strong prejudices against secularly-minded state-interventionist socialism in all its forms as well as, crucially, the Democratic party, liberalism, and the perceived leaders of liberal opinion. Yet most of these general shared issues were also part and parcel of the far right. The aspects of the conservative movement’s behaviour and worldview which more clearly separated its members from other right-wing groupings were certainly its long-term political behaviour and strategy. However wavering and frustratingly, conservatives always gravitated around the Republican party. It is no accident that certain conservative sub-families such as the Southerners and most neoconservatives effectively abandoned the Democratic fold as they became part and parcel of the conservative movement. Occasional (and certainly heartfelt) anti-Republican rhetorical outbursts notwithstanding, the movement always aspired to employ its influence within the GOP in order to convert itself into a player in mainstream national politics. In turn,

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6 The most cogent and elaborated plan for the conservative movement to ditch its links with the Republican party is doubtlessly William Rusher, The Making of a New Majority Party (New York: Sheed & Ward Inc., 1975).
Republican-centred political ambition and plain power-seeking were certainly among the strongest pulls attracting these conservatives to Richard Nixon. During the more than two decades that spanned from the emergence of a recognisable American conservative movement in the early 1950s and the Watergate debacle, conservatives – as did Richard Nixon in his own fashion – trod a very careful path between expressing dissent (and sometimes radical dissent) from the established liberal consensus, and pursuing acceptance as legitimate political contenders from the opinion-makers of that very same liberal consensus. Right-wingers – such as George Wallace and John Birch Society leader Robert Welch – who eschewed Republicanism and threatened to become politically embarrassments, were, sooner or later, expelled from the ranks of the movement.

Beyond the political and ideological realms, members of the conservative movement also developed a rich and dense network of personal relationships – even if not always of a loving variety – which did as much to consolidate the movement as abstract philosophical considerations or political interests did. In this light its emergence cannot be properly understood without an account of the sometimes rather mundane motivations that coloured changing social networks of affection (and disaffection). The importance of the personal links built by men such as William F. Buckley, National Review publisher William Rusher, free market champion Milton Friedman or long-term AEI director William J. Baroody Sr. cannot possibly be exaggerated. In this sense, the Goldwater presidential campaign of 1964 became the rite of passage that consolidated the conservative movement in the form that Richard Nixon – himself a skilful player in ’64 – encountered in 1968. Except for the neoconservatives, ever latecomers who had peculiar relationship with the rest of the movement, all the conservative sub-families and most individual conservatives examined in these pages played a significant role in the Goldwater campaign, had frequently met one another as a result of their participation, and bore similar scars as a consequence of Goldwater’s doomed presidential race.7

7 Interview with Lee Edwards, August 15, 2005, Washington D.C.; Interview with Morton Blackwell, August 29, 2005, Washington DC; Interview with David Keene, August 24, 2005, Washington DC (tapes and transcripts of all interviews conducted by the author are in his possession and can be made available for consultation); J. William
Somewhat peculiarly given Richard Nixon's long association with the populist Republican right, his main biographers have devoted precious little space to his actual relationship and links with organised conservatism. Both the literature on the conservative movement and the various Nixon biographies touch on the pre-1968 relationship between the two, but usually only with regards to the latter's participation in the 1960 and 1964 presidential elections and, rather fleetingly, in the 1962 California gubernatorial race. A remarkable exception is David Reinhard's _The Republican Right Since 1945_, which intelligently describes the evolution of the GOP's conservative wing, including the trajectory conservative 'sacred cows' such as Robert Taft and William Knowland, as well as the fratricidal struggle between Republican conservatives and the Eastern liberal faction. Although scholars such as Herbert Parmet began to recognise the importance of Nixon's early links with conservatism and of the role of his presidency for the conservative resurgence of the 1970s, since the early 1990s, those earlier contacts with the right - including his most severe clash with right-wing republicans in 1962 - have seldom been seriously evaluated in the academic literature about Nixon, conservatism or even the Republican party. Yet, since his early days of vigorous anticommunism, Nixon had developed strong and durable links with prominent conservatives such as the writer Whittaker Chambers and journalists Raymond Moley and Ralph de Toledano, which would in turn trigger considerable tension between these men and a significant number of their fellow

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conservatives who always remained hostile to Nixon.\textsuperscript{11} Most importantly, if the Californian was a divisive figure within the conservative leadership, he also became a hero for the right-leaning electorate from which \textit{National Review} obtained most of its readership. Therefore the hard core intellectuals always had to contend with Nixon’s considerable emotional appeal to their own foot soldiers. It was no accident that when New York state Buckleyite activists set up their very own conservative party, they did so upon the basis of the 1960 Nixon-Lodge campaign organisation, or that after 1964 conservatives of all the other sub-families spontaneously, independently of each other, and to the alarm of the \textit{NR} conservatives, drifted towards the Nixon bandwagon.

Nixon’s understanding of conservatism’s electoral importance was formed between his 1962 California gubernatorial campaign and Barry Goldwater’s 1964 presidential race. In 1962 he came to realise that the backing of the Republican right was essential to his electoral success, while two years later, the ill-fated presidential campaign taught him that pure and unadulterated conservatism was a sure-fire recipe for electoral disaster.\textsuperscript{12} During his presidency, Nixon would apply both lessons in order to retain conservative support without alienating moderate voters. Moreover, his quest was enormously facilitated by that fact that most conservatives had also accepted the lessons of 1964: they were therefore prepared to support a non-member of the conservative movement, a relatively moderate candidate. Throughout his career, Nixon was almost always the sole Republican politician who combined electability with considerable appeal to both conservative grassroots activists and at least some elements of the conservative movement’s leadership. This was perhaps Nixon’s most important characteristic. Unlike Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, the two grand political champions of the right that preceded and followed Nixon’s presidency, the Californian was never a political creature of the conservative movement. Unlike the cases of most politicians identified with conservatism – a list of whom would include such various

\textsuperscript{11} William Rusher to William F. Buckley, January 24, 1959, f. Interoffice Memos, box 8, WFB papers; Buckley to James Burnham, September, 2, 1959, ibid.; Rusher to Buckley, March 11, 1969, f. IOM (Jan-July 1969), box 61, ibid.  
figures as congressmen John Rousselot and John Ashcroft, as well as Senators Strom Thurmond and John Tower – Richard Nixon always saw the conservative movement as an instrument at the service of his ruthless ambition, and a constituency to be tendered to according to his short-term political needs.

Aside from Nixon’s evidently calculating approach to ideological commitments, his public career and the trajectory of the conservative leadership bore striking resemblances that helped to consolidate an intensely frustrating, but seemingly unbreakable relationship. Nixon and the conservatives initiated their hard uphill struggle from the political and cultural margins towards the inner circles of national political power as the heirs of Franklin D. Roosevelt reasserted their dominance over the American polity. In 1945 Richard Nixon was such an outsider that he entered politics by enduring a pageant-like contest to gain the Republican nomination for what was then seen as a safe Democratic district. At around the same time modern intellectual conservatism on its part produced Friedrich Hayek’s 1944 tract *The Road to Serfdom*, the first of its foundational philosophical works. Although surprisingly popular with the general public, Hayek’s views were at the time generally regarded in the economics profession as a quaint relic of the past. From this moment onwards, in political terms Nixon appealed to the same voters that *National Review* and the other conservative factions tendered to, and his political fortunes eerily mirrored the challenges confronted by the conservative movement at large. Thus in the 1940s and 50s, Nixon’s populist blasts against supposedly communist-friendly, foreign-policy weakling liberal Democrats that have been conservatism’s stock-in-trade ever since, actually antedated the consolidation of the conservative movement. It was then that Nixon developed firm – even if, Nixon being Nixon, slightly distant – personal links with a handful of crucial conservatives. For over a generation of political activity, the *leitmotif* of both Nixon and the conservative leadership was a peculiar mix of visceral dislike, envy, and a powerful sense of victimisation towards those

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whom they regarded as the leaders of liberal opinion, together with an equally powerful desire to gain acceptance and respectability from that very same liberal establishment.

The following pages examine how for three decades the National Review-led conservative movement and Richard Nixon recurrently gravitated towards each other as a consequence of the negative forces propelling them against the liberal consensus. To these must be added a number of genuine philosophical and behavioural coincidences, such as relative sympathy for free markets and a deep attachment to traditional values and codes of conduct. This dissertation also contends that a major shared element between the men of the 'respectable' right and the future president was their intense desire to achieve acceptance as legitimate sparring partners from those otherwise despised political and cultural actors setting the tone of the zeitgeist in mid-century America. It was that fundamental coincidence that explains why Nixon and the National Review conservatives had to recurrently (although reluctantly) try to support and manipulate each other. That shared aim also explains why both alternated judicious flirtations with, and firm rejections of, those deemed to belong to the 'radical' right. From the viewpoint of the conservative movement, Nixon was always the only senior politician that, if imperfect, could be deemed 'acceptable' and was also credible as a national candidate. In the end, as most conservatives fully realised after the 1964 Goldwater campaign, Nixon's ideological flexibility became an essential element for the movement to actually gain access to executive power. Nixon never became the leader of the right-wing constituency in the way Goldwater and Reagan did but still, the conservative electorate always remained the core of his electoral support. However fraught and mutually frustrating as it may have been, the seemingly unbreakable bond that united the destinies of

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Richard Nixon and the early conservative movement remained unbroken and bore its ultimate consequences during the Nixon years in the White House.

3. ...AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN POLITICS

The difficult relationship between Nixon and the conservative movement certainly mattered. It was during Nixon’s years in the White House that conservative rhetoric was first broadcast from the highest office of the land since the days of Franklin Roosevelt, and that conservatives first gained direct access to policy-making power. To be sure, in keeping with their behaviour of the previous three decades, neither Nixon nor the conservatives sought to destroy utterly the status quo that they opposed. Instead, they sought to achieve incremental change through relatively modest policy innovations, accompanied by a vigorous rhetorical and political re-adjustment of the public discourse. Their enterprise in the realm of public policy management was only partially successful – and that with quite considerable assistance from developments entirely outside their control in the form of the first symptoms of the severe economic crisis of the 1970s. In the realm of language, culture and, more generally, of the accepted forms of government action, their success was however quite considerable – and was greatly enhanced by Nixon’s much-publicised anointment by the Southern conservatives in the 1968 Republican primaries – even if also aided by external developments such as the radicalisation of the anti-war and civil rights movements, and the general exhaustion with the cultural changes unleashed during the second half of the 1960s.

Nixon’s pre-1972 caution was, as might be expected, much derided by the less accommodating elements of the conservative movement. Yet, such conservative blasts should not be taken at face value. As a close examination of conservative behaviour reveals, the movement’s leadership fully realised that Nixonian moderation – or wavering, according to the most committed right-wingers – was a crucial stepping stone necessary for the transformation of American politics witnessed during the 1970s and 1980s. As his
unwillingness to lead the conservative constituency clearly indicates, Richard Nixon was not a politically brave man. Yet, he was certainly the ultimate political survivor and a master manipulator of existing dissatisfaction with the regnant status quo. As David Greenberg’s excellent Nixon’s Shadow amply demonstrates, his impact upon the evolution of American politics rested upon his capacity to anticipate and adjust to the various forms of right-wing sentiment that ensued between the fall of Alger Hiss and the rise of George Wallace, while staying squarely within the limits of the politically acceptable. Historians such as Greenberg, Robert Mason, and Herbert Parmet, and journalist Rick Perlstein, have re-assessed and acknowledged Richard Nixon’s significant contribution to the rise of the right, focusing on his harnessing of the anti-liberal backlashes of the late 1940s and late 1960s. Still, given Nixon’s obvious lack of ideological commitment, in-depth analyses of these developments, much like the particulars of the Californian’s difficult association with the conservative movement itself, remain relatively scarce. Yet, as Nixon’s contemporaries, liberal and conservative alike, sensed during his term in office, Nixon’s presidency laid the groundwork for the unravelling of the liberal cultural consensus and the violent conservative reaction during the culture wars of the following decades, very much like his 1940s electioneering had helped to unleash post-war dissatisfaction with liberalism dressed up as anticommunist populism.

Nevertheless revisionist historians have posited an alternate view in which Nixon is presented as an heir of FDR, rather than as the first post-liberal president and mid-wife of conservative ascendancy. This position has gained reinforcement from many senior conservatives who, reacting to Nixon’s downfall, have fully reciprocated what they regarded

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19 The most perceptive contemporary account of Nixon’s rhetorical swing to the right and deliberate manipulation of the ‘backlash’ may be found in Wills’s Nixon Agonistes. Although a veteran of conservative circles, Wills penned the books as a liberal. For an equally interesting (and hostile) account of Nixon’s 1968 campaign written from a new left perspective see Joe McGinniss, The Selling of the President 1968 (New York: Pocket Books, 1970).
as the latter's blatant disloyalty. Never comfortable with Nixon, once the catastrophic effects of Watergate began to be discernible, most leading right-wingers proceeded to reproduce the behaviour they had displayed in previous instances of Nixonian wavering. When Nixon had moderated his language as vice-president and when he reached an agreement with the moderate Rockefeller-led wing the GOP in 1960, conservatives had loudly denounced Nixon's lack of ideological fibre.²⁰ After 1973, most prominent conservatives proceeded to put as much distance between themselves and the disgraced president as they possibly could - harried, as may be expected, by those members of the movement who, like William Rusher, had all along been hostile to Nixon.²¹ The effect of this was to reinforce the revisionist impetus of the historical profession, and to fortify the historiographical view of Nixon as the last grand, liberal-progressive president best and first put forward by Joan Hoff's seminal *Nixon Reconsidered*.²² Yet, the fact remains that for about thirty years Nixon stayed more or less firmly attached to the conservative movement, and he did so for much the same reasons that kept conservatives stuck to one another. Equally importantly - even if perhaps forgotten by revisionist historians - Richard Nixon's contemporaries in the press, liberal circles, and even very many conservatives, did not hesitate to identify the Californian as a populist, right-wing politician and a conservative president.²³


Beyond public perception, the conservative movement performed two other fundamental leaps forward under Nixon’s watch: firstly, the hitherto underestimated, but nevertheless crucial strengthening of an embryonic policy-oriented conservative organisational network that Sydney Blumenthal correctly labelled as a ‘counter-establishment’, and which would articulate the explosive expansion of conservative strength that followed Watergate.24 The Nixon White House-backed injection of resources and presidential gravitas into the previously dormant American Enterprise Institute is perhaps the most clear-cut example of this development; but the onrush of conservative appointees to junior, middle and senior level offices should also be seen in this light, even if conservatives themselves chose to noisily ignore or were unaware of these events.25 Secondly, the definitive switch to the right of presidential rhetoric enthusiastically adopted by Nixon served to infuse legitimacy to a number of conservative mores previously regarded as at best quaint oddities or, at worst, as belonging squarely outside of mainstream respectable politics. Richard Nixon’s words – and words, in politics, matter – and deeds helped Southern conservatives to finally adjust to the realities of post-Civil Rights act politics by helping to legitimate lawful resistance against federally-imposed measures to end de facto segregation generally and school integration in particular. Similarly, Nixon’s language also helped the nation to re-evaluate the up-until-then rejected notions of classical liberal economics – which provided sustenance for Nixon’s first two years of fiscal and monetary policy and to the momentous breaking of the gold window – even if his policy actions were less than ideologically pure. Nixon also used the bully-pulpit of the presidency to articulate and, again, to legitimise the simmering resentment against cultural changes regarding matters such as the recreational use

24 Blumenthal, Rise of the Counter-Establishment, especially pp. 2–3.
of drugs, sexual behaviour and abortion, brought about during the second half of the 1960s by the counter-culture and the New Left.

As for the internal evolution of the conservative movement, an examination of the behaviour of the main conservative factions as well as that of the National Review group reveals that the movement underwent dramatic changes during Nixon’s tenure in the White House. Although few realised it at the time, during these years the American conservative movement engaged in a transformation comparable to that which it had experienced during the 1950s. This metamorphosis would subsequently render the movement stronger, certainly larger and more diverse, as well as more self-confident and politically radicalised. Since the mid-1950s respectable conservatism had been largely dominated by the relatively small number of thinkers and politicians who gravitated around National Review. Yet, these conservatives’ frustrations during the Nixon years may be better understood in terms of their slow loss of dominance over the movement as much as in reaction to Nixon’s presumed liberal-leaning policies: as Richard Nixon left office, conservative activists beyond the NR circle moved to ensure that none of the movement’s constituent factions would subsequently be in a position to control the activities of the others. A significant group, very many of them — such as OEO head Howard Phillips, vice-presidential assistant David Keene and economist Martin Anderson — serving as mid-ranking Nixon officials, was made up of young conservatives who had not endured the long, dark years of marginalisation that followed the triumph of the New Deal. Consequently, this new cohort of conservative activists displayed few of the inferiority complexes that had plagued the older generation. These ‘Young Turks’ were considerably less tolerant of Nixon’s philosophical pragmatism than the established conservative leadership and, accordingly, suffered greater frustration than their predecessors. Simultaneously, more than a few veterans of the movement, including those around the American Enterprise Institute, the Southern Republicans and the relatively small band of libertarian economists also developed the capacity to act independently from, and occasionally against, the hard core Buckleyites and, incidentally, each other. Earlier symptoms of those multiple fractures were the serious infighting among neoconservatives
and libertarians in the White House during 1969 and 1971, and the willingness of AEI conservatives to shield the Nixon White House from the blasts of NR conservatives who had less patience with presidential double-talk.26

This dissertation examines the position of each of these sub-groups with regards to both the conservative movement's intellectual leadership and Richard Nixon before and during the latter's presidency. Chapters are organised in a broadly chronological fashion, and focus on the particular areas of influence of each of these sub-families, as well as analysing the peculiar relationship between every one of these factions and their counterparts before, during and after the Nixon presidency. At the outset of this period, Buckleyite conservatives were the most influential and indeed dominant group within American conservatism, and therefore they receive extended attention in the form of two chapters. Chapter 1 examines their early history and relationship with Richard Nixon up the aftermath of the 1964 election. This chapter focuses on the roots of the peculiar entente hostile that bound Nixon and the hard core together under the Republican umbrella, as well as on their parallel efforts to disavow the more extreme elements of the radical right in order to position themselves at the far right end of respectable politics. In the second chapter the evolution of Southern Republican conservatism is evaluated, including its growing strength within the GOP and its role in elevating Richard Nixon to the presidency between 1966 and 1968. This chapter emphasises the willingness of the Southern Republicans to abandon their previous uncompromising racist populism in favour of pragmatic approach to presidential politics. The following chapter focuses on the race issue as an example of the shift to the right of presidential rhetoric and, to some extent, policy implementation. It also examines the role of race within the conservative movement and evaluates how Richard Nixon's use of racially-loaded rhetoric, combined with conservative shibboleths about the limits of federal action, helped to buttress the return of the conservative South to the political mainstream, and to

legitimate growing resistance to further civil rights initiatives. In Chapter 4 the analysis returns again to the conservative hard core and their relations with both the president and the wider conservative movement during Nixon’s years in the White House. It focuses on how during those years the Buckleyites reproduced the same patterns of behaviour already displayed during the previous two decades. Most importantly, it also emphasises the disorientation and lack of foresight displayed by both Nixon and the hard core towards new, emerging issues of contention and their impact upon the emergence of the conservative Young Turks. The following chapter appraises the history of the American Enterprise Institute within the cluster of organisations that emerged from the conservative movement. This chapter discusses the Nixon White House’s efforts to transform the AEI into the embryo of a conservative ‘counter- establish ment’ which connected conservative intellectuals and donors with right-wing politicians and federal officials, and which was meant to act as a counter-balance to, and perhaps even replace, existing institutions such as the Brookings Institutions, RAND and the Ivy League universities that both Nixon and the conservatives identified as their ‘enemies’. Finally, chapter six explores the rise of the neoconservative and neoliberal groups, which shared a similarly distinctive outlook with one another. In contrast to the National Review conservatives, both of these sub-families went beyond the realm of ideas and engaged in policy-making: they were thus the first within the movement to actually engage in experiments aimed at modifying the policy assumptions and practices of the liberal consensus.

Richard Nixon has been memorably described as a ‘neurotic tangle of conservative instincts and liberal aspirations, wrapped in cynical political calculation’. What is perhaps less commonly understood is that Nixon’s ‘tangle’ was essential to the introduction of conservative principles into the mainstream of American national politics, and that the

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conservative movement, to a remarkable extent, fully shared in Nixon's 'neurosis', caught as it was between conservative principle, thirst for liberal approval and, it cannot be emphasised enough, cold hard political calculation. The following pages aim at exploring these conjunctions.
CHAPTER 1
NATIONAL REVIEW CONSERVATIVES AND RICHARD NIXON
PRIOR TO 1966

In early January 1968, William Rusher – publisher of the conservative National Review – observed in a memorandum to the magazine’s editors that Richard Nixon was the youngest serious Republican candidate and yet, ‘to the American people it will seem, by 1968, that he has been around since God was a child’. Regardless of what the electorate thought, it certainly must have seemed to be so for conservatives: by National Review’s inception in 1955, Richard Nixon was already vice-president of the United States. Even prior to that, when a youthful William F. Buckley, the Review’s editor and main stock-holder, published his first tract in 1951, the Californian was already a national household name. This chapter evaluates the earlier phase of what was undoubtedly a strained relationship between Nixon and that peculiar group within the conservative movement which gathered around National Review (or ‘NR’ as they often referred to it), and which constituted for all practical purposes the intellectual, organisational and sometimes even political leadership of post-war conservatism in the United States.

More specifically, this analysis of conservative behaviour focuses on the views and actions of one particular man: National Review’s publisher William A. Rusher, perhaps the most often overlooked and certainly the least well-known member of the conservative leadership. Rusher lacked the intellectual depth of Review editor James Burnham, the thirst for philosophical coherence of his colleague Frank Meyer or the flamboyance of William F.

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2 For an insightful, enormously informative and delightfully tender account from within the National Review inner circle see Garry Wills, Confessions of a Conservative (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1979). The term ‘editor’ is employed in a rather loose sense to include those authors and regular contributors who actually had influence on the editorial line of the magazine. The list of those who were effectively senior editors includes William F. Buckley Jr., James Burnham, Frank Meyer, Willmoore Kendall, and Russell Kirk. Wills, for instance, should be listed among those rather influential characters that were never given the official ‘rank’. It is worth noting that, in the end, Buckley retained the power to have the last word in the (frequent) case that disputes between editors reached an impasse. The best account of the evolution of intellectual conservatism – particularly of those related with NR – is George H. Nash, The Intellectual Conservative Movement in America Since 1945 (Wilmington DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998).
Buckley. And yet his interests, activities and influence made him virtually unique within what he himself labelled the ‘hard core’ of the conservative movement. Like most of his fellow Buckleyites, Rusher’s outlook was marked by an Ivy League education, a manifestly internationalist, vigorously anticommunist and pro-free market (at any rate, as free as the Cold War would allow) world-view, combined with ample intellectual curiosity. However, unlike most of the journal’s senior staff, Rusher could claim abundant experience in professional Republican politicking at national, state and local levels. Rusher, it cannot be overemphasised, knew people. What is more, he always retained an astonishingly sharp capacity to analyse the evolution of day-to-day politics and its potential impact upon the conservative movement. Consequently, he also became the most important conduit linking the intellectual sharp-shooters at *National Review* with purely political operatives, such as Barry Goldwater’s primary campaign architect F. Clifton White, who would eventually turn conservatism into an organisational force of nature within the GOP.3 Ironically, and to Rusher’s frustration, his colleagues at the magazine tended to dismiss their publisher’s views on the growth of the movement as wishful thinking, and to ignore his reiterative warnings against Nixon as plain zealotry. They did so, as it transpired, at their own expense.

Despite Rusher’s misgivings, for almost a generation the conservative intellectual leadership engaged in a protracted ritual of courtship with Richard Nixon: one punctuated by frequent shrieks of outrage and occasional scandalised slaps, none of which ultimately proved sufficient to bring to a close the seemingly never-ending game. Thus, in 1955 the first number of *National Review* included a glowing portrait of Nixon, penned by veteran conservative journalist John Chamberlain, describing the vice-president as a ‘rather open young man with decent impulses’, and ‘Taftian’, no less, instincts. At the end of Nixon’s political life in 1978 Jeffrey Hart, another veteran and respected conservative author, wrote the journal’s review of Nixon’s memoirs, ‘confessing’ that after reading them, he had ‘come

3 Despite a stubborn determination to remain out of the limelight, Rusher has penned a number of quite informative works of which *The Making of the New Majority Party* (New York: Sheed & Ward, Inc., 1975), and his highly autobiographical *The Rise of the Right* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985) deserve special attention.
to like Richard Nixon'. This was, he wrote, in spite of the fact that 'for at least two years following his resignation I was in a rage about how Nixon had aborted... the domestic counter-revolution' that, according Hart, had swept the nation after the 1968 elections. In between, conservatives decried Nixon as a traitor when in 1960 he deliberately accommodated the demands of Nelson Rockefeller, conservative Republicans' bête noire; then proceeded to hail him as 'The One' in 1968; subsequently accused the–then president of being a turn-coat in 1971; and finally went back to support his re-election, almost as enthusiastically as ever, in November 1972. Clearly, Richard Nixon represented, as far as conservatives were concerned, both a promise and a problem. Rather representatively, men like the immensely respected Whittaker Chambers and the veteran journalist Ralph de Toledano fell out, or threatened to break with the Review's senior group as a consequence of rows about how to deal with the latest Nixon disappointment. Beyond internal struggles, most conservatives recognised Nixon as the pure-bred political animal that he was, and felt threatened by a man who combined considerable ideological flexibility with the command of highly-emotional right-wing popular support. It is therefore not surprising that shortly after Nixon's offensive overtures to Rockefeller during the 1960 presidential elections, National Review senior editor James Burnham would write in an internal memorandum that he had 'so little personal enthusiasm for Nixon that I many not be able to endure voting for him'. And yet, he also hurriedly stressed that he was at the same time 'more than ever convinced that the public, objective, conservative position in this election is, and must be, Vote Nixon'.

During and beyond the near two decades that elapsed between the inception of National Review in

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5 During the course of a paper delivered during the British Association of American Studies Annual Conference of 2006, in which the author remarked in passing about the difficult relation between Nixon and the conservative movement, an American fellow panel member, half-confused half-sceptical, exclaimed, 'I don't understand, if Nixon was not a conservative, then, what was he?' Asked this question, conservatives universally define Nixon as 'a politician', since he was not, according to conservatives, primarily motivated by conservative ideals: his sole motivation, conservatives claim, was the career of Richard Nixon. Needless to say, the long shadow of Watergate does not contribute to conservative willingness to include Nixon amongst the heroes of the right à la Ronald Reagan, Interview with Jeffrey Bell, August 29, 2005, Washington DC; Interview with Morton Blackwell, August 29, 2005, Washington DC; Interview with William F. Buckley, July 25, 2005, New York City; Interview with David Keene, August 24, 2005, Washington DC; Interview with Milton Friedman, May 25, 2004, San Francisco (tapes and transcripts of all interviews conducted by the author are in his possession and can be made available for consultation).
6 James Burnham to William F. Buckley, October 9, 1960, F. IOM, box 10, WFB papers.
7 Ibid.
1955 and the Watergate cataclysm Nixon and the intellectuals who led the conservative movement were never comfortable with each other. Yet they also seemed to be incapable of extricating themselves from a frayed and mutually frustrating relationship.

What follows below is an analysis of the factors that propelled Nixon and the conservative leadership towards each other, as well as the consequences that this relationship had for its participants. In the first place, Richard Nixon and the leaders of the Conservative movement subscribed to the same sincerely-held perception of themselves as victimised, positively heroic outsiders pitted against an all-powerful, entrenched ‘establishment’, with the latter variously described as well-meaning but mistaken, plainly corrupt, or both depending on the circumstances. Such a peculiar coincidence was partly based on purely negative forces acting upon both camps. From Nixon’s first campaign against the well-liked, liberal Democrat Jerry Voorhis in 1946 onwards, the Californian and the men who would end up around National Review believed themselves to be opposed to (or under attack from, according to our protagonists) the same political and ideological foes. James Burnham, for instance, explained his apparently contradictory views on the 1960 election because ‘in support of Kennedy’ – and hence pitted against Nixon – were ‘virtually all the forces, groups, tendencies and individuals that NR is not merely against, but recognizes as its primary targets’. Secondly, Richard Nixon and the National Review conservatives also held shared political assumptions and strategies: from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, they found themselves broadly aligned with regards to how to deal with the fringe elements of the right as well as with the vicious sectarian infighting between liberals and the less colourful conservatives within the GOP.

How conservatives around National Review dealt with Richard Nixon and vice-versa mattered. Until very recently the academic literature about the conservative movement has tended to downplay Richard Nixon’s role in ascent of conservatism, yet the entente hostile between Nixon and the conservative hard core reveals, at the very least, some crucial aspects.

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8 James Burnham to William F. Buckley, October 9, 1960, f. IOM, box 10, WFB papers.
of the latter's political strategy. Thus, for two decades the National Review circle was rocked by recurrent infighting regarding what to do and how to respond to the latest Nixon-related development. Such debates invariably reflected the state and evolution of American conservatism. Perhaps even more crucially, Richard Nixon became an instrumental element for the eventual success of conservative strategy. Since its very origins, National Review positioned itself at the forefront of a 'war of ideas' over, according to its editors, the very soul and even the survival of the American polity. For all the shortcomings with which conservatives faulted him, sometimes because of them, Nixon became the political agent best able to translate those views into a politically-successful message. In the process, he was the first to transform the conservative message from the product of a merely reactive, oppositional redoubt circumscribed to legislative and grassroots reaction into an aggressively proactive force capable of shaping executive action. Sometimes willingly, sometimes by sheer force or happenstance, Richard Nixon helped communicate, sometimes formulate, to the nation a new conservative consensus that would eventually rival that built by the Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. In the context of unparalleled, continuous economic prosperity and the Cold War, Nixon and the conservatives put together a new model for the ideal, all-American citizen upon the basis of a rebranded form of conservatism; they also attempted to construct a new Republican Party to serve as political vehicle for their ambitions. Ultimately, the career of Richard Nixon was a measure of conservatism's successes and failures as much as it was of the candidate's.

1. SETTING THE FOUNDATIONS: THE GOOD AMERICAN

It was not until late December 1957 that the first direct encounter between Richard Nixon and William F. Buckley took place. In a follow up letter Buckley noted his comment to Whittaker Chambers that ‘it was not likely that I would fail to be impressed by someone who had impressed him; and the unlikely did not happen’. He also agreed with Nixon about the need to ‘hang together’.10 Perhaps the most notable aspect of that meeting is that it would take place so late, at a time when Nixon had been a major political figure for a decade, two years after the inception of National Review and three since the first encounter between Buckley and Chambers. In 1957 the then vice-president was almost universally regarded as the Republican leader best positioned to appeal to the mass of right-of-centre voters. And yet he remained very much at a distance from the intellectuals who were doing their best to fire up that same constituency through the pages of National Review. Less surprisingly however, Buckley’s letter reminds us that Chambers, the scourge of Alger Hiss, remained close to Nixon at the same time that he became an intimate friend of Buckley’s, as well as a respected figure within the fledging conservative movement of the late 1940s and early 1950s.11

Chambers’ relevance within the conservative movement was part and parcel, as was anticommunism, of the transformation of conservatism from its pre-war, isolationist, market-royalist form to its post-war, internationalist, rebelliously anti-liberal incarnation. That Chambers brought Nixon and Buckley together also reflected the equally crucial role that anticommunism played as a magnet attracting Nixon and men like Buckley. By 1950 (and throughout his subsequent political career), Nixon believed he had ‘proved beyond any reasonable doubt the existence of Soviet-directed Communist subversion at the highest levels of American government’. Buckley, in turn, devoted his second book to lambasting Joe

11 Buckley later edited Chamber’s letters in Odyssey of a Friend (New York: National Review, 1969), and provided an emotive recollection of his friendship at a White House special ceremony held in 2001. The latter was printed as a foreword to the 50th anniversary edition of Witness. See Whittaker Chambers, Witness, (Washington DC: Regnery, 2001), pp. v-xii.
McCarthy's 'enemies', and would later threaten to 'dye the Potomac red' as a greeting to visiting Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev.\textsuperscript{12} This shared anticommunism justified Buckley's desire to 'hang together' and helps to explain the persistent \textit{public} support that conservatives were willing to lend Nixon, despite the recurrent rifts that \textit{privately} opened up within the conservative community with regards to the Californian. In 1959 Buckley himself, for instance, noted that Chamber's 'thraldom of Nixon' had rendered the former 'virtually incoherent on the issue' of Khrushchev's visit to the United States. A little earlier that same year, Frank Meyer complained about what he saw as his colleague James Burnham's 'overt sympathies towards Nixon'.\textsuperscript{13} Around the same time L. Brent Bozell, Buckley's brother-in-law, \textit{NR} senior editor and co-author with Buckley of \textit{McCarthy and His Enemies}, concluded that Nixon was part of the GOP's slide 'towards liberalism' under Eisenhower. Yet Bozell also thought the vice-president might be redeemable, and suggested a meeting between Nixon and the \textit{Review}'s editors. Ten years later, the conservative community's increasing criticism of the Nixon presidency would contribute to Ralph de Toledano's acrimonious resignation from the board of the American Conservative Union.\textsuperscript{14}

The existence of so much bitterness points towards the need to subject the role of anticommunism for both conservatism and Nixon's career to a closer and more nuanced analysis. The literature on post-war conservatism has tended to view the issue as the 'cement holding the movement together', and shared anticommunism certainly consolidated highly emotional loyalties towards Nixon among some conservatives, and rather enduring hatred on the part of very many non-conservatives.\textsuperscript{15} Yet beyond the realm of emotion – even more so as the overcharged atmosphere of the 1950s faded – anticommunism in itself always


\textsuperscript{13} William Rusher to William F. Buckley, January 24, 1959, f. IOM, box 8, WFB papers; Buckley to James Burnham, September, 2, 1959, ibid.; Rusher to Buckley, March 11, 1969, f. IOM (Jan-July 1969), box 61, ibid.

\textsuperscript{14} L. Brent Bozell to William F. Buckley, January 5, 1959, f. IOM, box 8, WFB papers; William Rusher to Buckley, March 11, 1969, f. IOM, box 61, ibid.

\textsuperscript{15} Very many conservatives, as well as Nixon himself, saw the origins of their association in the Hiss case. According to Buckley, Whittaker Chambers, for one, resisted joining the \textit{National Review} staff because the magazine had voiced doubts about Nixon's fitness to succeed Dwight Eisenhower, see Buckley, \textit{Odyssey of a Friend}, pp. 103-4. David Greenberg and Stephen Ambrose have noted that in fact, much of that relationship was built ex-post facto and that the press's treatment of Nixon during the case was reasonably even-balanced and its effect, if anything, positive for
remained a purely negative and surprisingly weak ingredient of the glue that tied together the fortunes of conservatism with those of Richard Nixon. In reality, the anticommunist blanket served as a cover for the reconstruction of the aloof, isolationist, small-government, free-marketer set of ideas that had dominated the pre-war right. In practical terms anticommunism *sensu stricto*, defined as the need to check, confront (perhaps roll back when safely possible) the advances of the Soviet Union overseas and of communism at home was even less than a purely negative matter for conservatives: it was effectively a non-issue. Conservatives in the United States – as reflected in the America First platform, the writings of *National Review*'s early collaborators and Buckley’s early acquaintances such as libertarians Frank Chodorov and Albert Jay Nock, not to mention conservative Republicans such as Robert Taft – were latecomers struggling to adjust to Cold War realities and ultimately harking the initiatives of successive Democratic administrations. Ironically enough, in its adoption of anticommunism the new post-war conservatism espoused by *National Review* was effectively embracing one of the main tenets of the regnant post-1945 political consensus. From that viewpoint, it should come as no surprise that conservatives would publicly threaten to abandon the GOP in support of Lyndon Johnson in the event that the Republicans nominated a dove in the 1968 election. Privately, William Rusher was quite clear on the matter: ‘if the


Republicans were to nominate a dove (unlikely as it is) I personally would support Johnson.\textsuperscript{19}

While part of the post-war consensus against which conservatism was supposed to be arrayed, anticommunism did become a useful issue because it was efficiently employed at three distinct levels. Firstly, in the short run it was a rather inglorious instance of low partisan politics aimed at dislodging Democrats from the White House. In the context of the late forties and early fifties, the conservative movement was firmly aligned with Republicanism and the evident weakness of the Truman administration, added to nearly two decades in opposition, fuelled Republicans’ appetite for plain, rather undignified demagoguery.\textsuperscript{20} Left at this level, the issue would probably have been as enduring as other outpourings of Washington political vitriol such as the financial scandals of the Truman administration, Eisenhower’s troubles with Sherman Adams, John Kennedy’s colourful sentimental life or Lyndon Johnson’s travails with Abe Fortas. As it was, Richard Nixon, a man so bereft of political connexions he only became a Republican candidate in 1946 for a race ‘dubbed hopeless by wheelhorse republicans’, and only then after a beauty contest-cum-candidate-casting involving half a dozen hopefuls, was able to use anticommunism to turn himself into a Republican national star.\textsuperscript{21} Secondly, anticommunist positions helped to facilitate conservatism’s shift towards a new-found internationalism, and in the case of National Review, to an astonishingly cosmopolitan brand of internationalism. NR, after all, was co-founded by Austrian Willie Schlamm, and all its senior editors had undergone academic training in Europe.\textsuperscript{22} Nixon who – like most of the NR staff – lacked any serious connexion with pre-war Republican politics, was also entirely innocent of Taftian isolationism, and naturally became a fervent cold-warrior on a par with any self-respecting Truman Democrat.

\textsuperscript{19} William Rusher to William F. Buckley, March 26, 1968, f. IOM (Jan-Mar 1968), box 50, WFB papers. Rusher’s letter agrees with Buckley’s dwelling on ‘talk... among anticommunist conservatives of a mass movement to support Johnson in the event the Republicans nominated a dove’ in his NR column of March 28, 1968.


\textsuperscript{21} Even after he captured the nomination, Republican heavyweights stayed away from a man they thought to be a loser, see Ambrose, \textit{Education of a Politician}, p.125–27; Nixon, \textit{RN}, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{22} Russell Kirk took his PhD at St. Andrews, Rusher and Burnham attended Oxford, Meyer the LSE, Buckley did a significant part of his schooling in British boarding schools and Bozell would later take his PhD in Spain, Interview with William F. Buckley.
or National Review editor. Finally, and most crucially, anticommunism helped to ease conservatism, and hence right-wing Republicanism, into a new brand of populist anti-elitism. In a remarkably short period, the right adopted the kind of discourse previously espoused by radical left-tinged populism, except that the enemy, rather than being big capital, the robber barons or Wall Street, was now the federal government; the faceless bureaucrat; and the kind of politicians, journalists and academics that conservatives have ever since identified with Georgetown cocktails, Ivy League institutions and, above all, the most important organs of mass-communication. Anticommunism, to a very great extent, served as an efficient proxy for attacks on the 'liberal establishment'. William F. Buckley's ferocious 1951 critique of his alma mater in God and Man at Yale was one early example of what would become a standard conservative shibboleth. In the 'Magazine's Credenda' which opened National Review's first number, liberal politicians and liberal intellectuals were lambasted on four separate occasions, whereas communists were mentioned only once. In its 'Publisher's Statement' NR defiantly set itself at war not merely against 'the liberals who run this country', but also against the whole of 'literate America'. Ten years later, the crudeness of the 1964 presidential campaign convinced conservatives of the fact that, in Frank Meyer's words, for practical purposes there was one single 'mass communication network, solidly in liberal hands' which was an 'even more formidable an opponent than conservatives [had previously] thought'.23 Richard Nixon moved in that direction faster, earlier, probably more convincingly and certainly more efficiently than conservatives did. Beginning with his less-than-pure campaigns for the House and Senate through the unfolding of the Hiss case, the Californian was the first public spokesman to articulate coherently what would become both the conventional conservative definition of the Good American, and the orthodox conservative critique of American society. As in the case of National Review, anticommunism was from the start deliberately muddled with attacks on the Democratic party and American liberalism in general.

23 William F. Buckley, God and Man at Yale (Chicago: Regnery, 1951); 'The Magazine's Credenda', NR, November 19, 1955, p. 6; 'Publisher's Statement', ibid., p. 9; Frank Meyer, 'What Next for Conservatism?', ibid., December 1, 1964, p. 1057.
Nixon came to political life through the midwifery of the Group of 100, a local outfit run by the kind of well-to-do businessmen who combined district-level Republican politicking with Rotary Club membership.\textsuperscript{24} His political discourse was immediately successful locally because it was addressed to the sort of person placed at the less comfortable end of New Deal-Fair Deal regulation and wartime controls. It later gained broader appeal because by the late 1940s and early 1950s the Democratic message as formulated by Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Depression appeared a lot less persuasive in the context of a near-full employment economy — although, as Eisenhower’s moderate economic policies clearly indicated, not to nearly enough voters to guarantee either a Republican victory or, much less so, anything resembling an abrupt break away from the New Deal status quo. Both Richard Nixon and the conservative leadership sensed that since the end of the war voters’ concerns had shifted away from unemployment and big business’ depredations towards taxes, government regulation and Democratic venality after two decades in power. In the speech Nixon gave to persuade those Republican businessmen to accept him as their candidate, he distinguished between the New Deal as ‘government control in regulating our lives’ and his own ‘call’ for ‘individual freedom and all that initiative can provide’.\textsuperscript{25}

Nixon pronounced that discourse in November 1945, not very long after Americans had been told much the same by Friedrich von Hayek, who was then touring the nation promoting \textit{The Road to Serfdom}. Hayek believed that the main challenge facing western democracies was not so much the threat of Soviet communism, as the threat of collectivisation by stealth on the part of social democratic governments.\textsuperscript{26} Nixon, more subtly, was aiming in the same direction. In his memoirs, Nixon claimed that New Deal exhaustion, rather than anticommunism per se, was the ‘central issue’ of the 1946 election, and he also explained his


success in terms of the fact that ‘Voorhis, the former socialist, believed in large-scale
government intervention and I did not’. Along similar lines, in 1949 he warmed up towards
his senatorial campaign by charging that ‘the Democratic Party today... has been captured
and is completely controlled by a group of ruthless, cynical seekers-after-power who have
committed that party to policies and principles which are completely foreign to those of its
founders’. 27 Nixon, whose campaign motto defined him as ‘One of Us’, left the audience to
figure out by itself what, exactly, were those principles defended by former socialists. In
1952 however, he spelled it out when he campaigned to ‘drive the crooks and the
communists... out of Washington’. 28 Even Nixon’s life story worked to reinforce his stance.
The son of a grocer could and did present himself as the average American, out of a middling
university, who had built a successful career out of plain perseverance and hard work. On the
other hand, his opponents from Jerry Voorhis to John Kennedy through Nelson Rockefeller
had a habit of possessing glamour, an Ivy League education and a wealthy family or, as often
as not, all three combined. According to Nixon this sort of politician, particularly when
associated with the Democratic party, had grown out of touch with his own class of American
to a degree that made them arrogantly unresponsive to the will of great majority of the nation
and, in at least a few instances, positively dangerous for the survival of the United States. It is
in that context that Nixon contemptuously described Voorhis as a ‘Quixote’, lambasted
Hollywood actress Helen Gahagan as ‘pink down to her underwear’, and later included
among Alger Hiss’s shortcomings his being ‘rather insolent’, as well as ‘too suave, too
smooth and too self-confident’. 29

The brand of anti-New Deal populism spiced up with strident anticommunism espoused
by Richard Nixon was, with very few exceptions, identical to that being put forth by
conservatives. 30 As late as 2007 National Review veteran M .Stanton Evans devoted a full-
length monograph to denouncing the conduct of the press, academia and government towards

27 Nixon, RN, p. 41, 73 (my emphasis); Perlstein, Nixonland p. 28.
29 Tom Wicker firstly pointed to ‘latent class hostility’ as a major Nixonian leitmotif in One of Us, pp. 46–47, 57. The
argument is also reproduced throughout Perlstein, Nixonland.
30 Greenberg, Nixon’s Shadow, pp. 15–17.
Senator Joseph McCarthy in particular, and anticommunism in general. A generation before, William Buckley devoted his second book to an examination of the same issue, coming to the same conclusion that Whittaker Chambers had arrived at in his dictum about the Hiss case:

No feature of the Hiss Case is more obvious, or more troubling as history, than the jagged fissure, which it did not so much open as reveal, between the plain men and women of the nation, and those who affected to act, think and speak for them. It was not invariably, but in general the ‘best people’ who were for Alger Hiss and who were prepared to go to almost any length to protect and defend him. It was the enlightened and the powerful, the clamorous proponents of the open mind and the common man, who snapped their minds shut in a pro-Hiss psychosis of a kind which... in a nation is a warning of the end.

Nixon, Chambers and the other National Review conservatives were certainly onto something. From a broader perspective, the gap between New Deal supporters and the electorate at large grew as economic prosperity consolidated itself; from a more parochial viewpoint, the Truman administration desperately tried to cover up the issue and used the Justice Department for strictly partisan reasons, hoping it could protect itself by protecting Hiss. Of course, as Nixon himself later acknowledged, that was Truman’s low political answer to Republican low political pressure. For conservatives, however, these developments were symptoms of fundamental corruption within the highest circles of American society. Richard Nixon, together with the bulk of the Republican party, skillfully exploited and propagated that perception to a degree that would later move Nixon to put some distance between himself and the worst Republican excesses of that time. In his memoirs Nixon confided his inner conviction that ‘many socialists were dedicated anticommunists’, and doubted Robert Taft’s ‘grasp of the whole international situation’ for failing to notice that fact. At the time however, Nixon, who might have indeed grasped the difference, failed to communicate such a distinction between communists and socialists (or for that matter Democrats) to either Taft or anybody else.

32 Chambers, Witness, p. 793.
34 Greenberg, Nixon’s Shadow, p. 44–45; Ambrose, Education of a Politician, p. 195.
35 Nixon, RN, p. 83.
The scars of the 1950s marked and hurt Nixon more than any other single politician of his time bar Joseph McCarthy, and also helped to position him as the conservative popular champion of later years. In spite of Nixon’s adaptability to the political environment, those early years set the grounds upon which his career-long relationship with the right would develop. At least in part, it was all thanks to the Democrats. Firstly, the Truman administration chose to support Alger Hiss to the bitter end, and subsequently descended into vicious smearing during the 1952 campaign. Up to that point – and contrary to his own self-perception in latter years – Nixon’s relationship with the press had varied from the flattery of the conservative Californian press to fairly even-balanced coverage by the national media. To be sure the media criticised Nixon for his knuckle-style campaigning but then, Nixon was an aggressive campaigner. Until 1952 Nixon’s poor image and personal resentments remained within the usual partisan limits.36 That year the New York Post ran a sensationalist story which, under the headline ‘SECRET NIXON FUND!’ falsely accused the Californian of receiving cash for personal use from wealthy donors. The story, fuelled by the Democratic campaign, picked up to the point of threatening both Nixon’s position as vice-presidential candidate and his very political survival. Virtually abandoned by Eisenhower, Nixon opted to expose his personal finances in a television address. Thanks to the famous ‘Checkers speech’, Nixon kept his place on the ticket by falling back on the standard discourse he had been peddling since 1946: he aligned himself with the average American. His wife, he said, did not ‘have a mink coat’, dressing instead in a ‘respectable Republican cloth coat’. He further sugared the pill by quoting Lincoln’s aphorism that ‘that Lord must have loved the common people because he made so many of them’. Including, he clearly thought, Richard Nixon.37 In the process, however, the whole affair contributed to affix Nixon, his haters and his admirers more firmly and even further apart in their respective positions. Nixon gained even greater contempt from his Democratic opponents, who thought his performance a show of self-humiliating cynicism. His admirers thought the whole experience further proof of the

36 Greenberg, Nixon’s Shadow, p. 44.
establishment's rabid anti-Nixonism, and by association anti-conservative arrogance and callousness. More importantly the experience, which was indeed humiliating, sent Richard Nixon down the path of near-universal resentment against the press and the Eastern Republican establishment. The former had picked on an evidently false story as a consequence, he and many of his supporters believed, of his involvement in the Hiss case. The latter, led by Dwight Eisenhower and the New York Herald Tribune, had failed to support him. Resentment degenerated into fully fledged paranoia after the admittedly lopsided coverage of the 1960 campaign, which had for Nixon similar effects to that which the 1964 campaign would later have for the conservatives. The devastating consequences of Nixon's intense resentment against the press first surfaced with the catastrophic 'last press conference' that followed his defeat in the 1962 campaign for the governorship of California.

While Nixon became the Republican grassroots' champion and a prominent hate-figure for many Democratic progressives during the 1950s, conservative intellectuals attracted little beyond condescension. In part, the divergent public impact of Nixon and the National Review types was the result of clear differences in their respective aims and means. The conservatives around National Review aspired to no less than the regeneration of 'the United States and Western Civilisation' and, as Frank Meyer graphically described it, saw their objectives as achievable within 'fifteen or twenty years'. The magazine's circulation never went above 50,000 copies, and its public was the relatively narrow sector of the population with an active, continuous interest in politics, a flair for quality writing and an inclination to contemplate the conservative viewpoint. The magazine featured regular contributions from rather arcane writers from all over Europe, ranging from central Europeans such as Erik Von E. v. Kuehnelt-Leidhin and Archduke Otto Habsburg, to Britons such as Arnold Lunn or

38 Greenberg, Nixon's Shadow, p. 50.
39 Ambrose, Education of a Politician, p. 295.
40 Ibid., pp. 668-72; Perlestein, Nixonland, pp. 60-61; Nixon, RN, pp. 244-46.
41 Micklethwait and Wooldridge, Right Nation, p. 43.
Evelyn Vaughn through Franco-friendly Spaniards such as professor Rafael Calvo-Serer.\textsuperscript{43} Gaining a mass following was clearly not the immediate priority while, until 1964, practical politics remained a near-pointless exercise.

Richard Nixon's interest, on the other hand, was centred on gaining and maintaining office. Changing American civilisation remained understandably marginal until his second presidential term. As with any professional politician, his position was always dominated by the immediacy of politics, and his agenda was driven by the electoral calendar rather than decades. But he reached millions from the bully-pulpit of public office. During his first and crucial years in politics, Richard Nixon helped to communicate to the electorate a new ideal of the good American and identified a new set of bad Americans. Predictably, Nixon presented himself as the incarnation of an ideal which was essentially coincidental with the self-image of his prospective voters: the hard working, painfully honest, self-reliant, patriotic citizen. In Garry Wills' mocking but cruelly accurate terms, Nixon put himself across as nothing less than the modern political incarnation of Horatio Alger. As it happened, the 'mystique of the self-made man' was deeply ingrained in the collective identity of America's middling classes, and it was also very close to the views of the nascent Conservative movement.\textsuperscript{44} Honesty and attachment to traditional values was certainly a useful political asset in the 1950s. In the 1960s, Nixon was able to use those very same arguments, without the need for the cover that anticommunism provided in the 1950s, as the foundations of a conservative counterrevolution aimed directly and openly against those 'bad' Americans in the press, the universities and the federal bureaucracy.

2. DEVELOPMENT: THE GOOD REPUBLICAN...

\textsuperscript{43} Except Serer, they all had regular columns or appeared frequently in the pages of the Review. The Spanish position was taken by a variety of ad-hoc collaborations and, most frequently, by the regular senior editors, see Rafael Calvo-Serer, 'They Spoke for Christian Europe', NR, July 27, 1957, p. 107.

\textsuperscript{44} Ambrose, \textit{Education of a Politician}, p. 271–72; Wills, \textit{Nixon Agonistes}, p. 156.
Richard Nixon’s early political career had established his image as a man of the common folk (at least of the right-wing common folk), and to generate the kind of adversaries that would endear him to conservatives. Connected with that strategy, he had also endeavoured to build an image as an upstanding party man. Since the GOP’s main characteristic throughout the 1950s and 1960s was the deepening and widening divide between its liberal-leaning (‘eastern’ in conservative lingo) and conservative wings, Nixon’s enterprise became a remarkable and rather transparent exercise in political funambulism – and one that would satisfy neither conservatives nor liberals within the party. On the other hand, this conciliatory strategy succeeded, at least in part, because the actual differences between ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ Republicans were widely exaggerated, not least by the main protagonists. In general terms – bar exceptions such as Mayor John Lindsay of New York (who eventually switched parties) – until the explosion of antiwar feelings in the later years of the Johnson administration, intra-party disputes were very much circumscribed to domestic matters, and even then tended to be more a matter of degree than one of actual substance. The matter was well captured, after the bruising 1964 presidential campaign, when the party professional John Davies Lodge noted that ‘the division between Senator Goldwater and Governor Rockefeller would appear small’ if compared, for instance, to that separating southern and northern Democrats.\(^\text{45}\) To be sure, Rockefeller had reacted to the Rusher-White orchestrated conservative take-over of the Young Republicans by publicly warning that the GOP was ‘in real danger of subversion by a radical, well financed and highly disciplined minority’ of ‘vociferous and well-drilled extremist elements’, one that had ‘engineered’ the ‘disgraceful subversion of a great and responsible auxiliary of the Republican party’. Worse still, according to Rockefeller, these were ‘the same people who are now [1963] moving to subvert the Republican party itself’.\(^\text{46}\) And yet, even an evangelical conservative such as William Rusher, not known for his patience with Republican politicking and what he saw as the party’s lack of ideological backbone, acknowledged that ‘to be fair, Rockefeller, though


indisputably liberal in many of his policies, was no left winger’. The problem with Rocky, according to Rusher, was that ‘his attitude on the general subject of welfare was “compassionate.”’ Following a similar reasoning, James Burnham even suggested, to the horror of his fellow editors, that the NR conservatives actually support Rockefeller’s presidential ambitions both in 1960 and 1968 (in the latter case with Ronald Reagan as the running mate, in both instances as a last resort to stop Nixon), because on foreign affairs the Rock was ‘harder than any rival of either party’. As for the 1960 primary season, National Review labelled the governor of New York’s frustrated campaign a ‘slick, big moneyed, high-liberal operation’ and offered its reluctant, back handed support for Vice-President Nixon, but it also noted that Rockefeller’s objections to the Eisenhower administration ‘were not all from the left’, and praised his take on trade with the Soviet Union (because ‘he knows its not trade but economic warfare’) and support for resumed nuclear tests (hence ‘against pacifist sentimentalities’). Of course Rockefeller knew this, which is why during the 1968 primaries he complained to a number of conservatives: ‘I’m hard on defence and fiscal policy and soft on welfare. You’ve got two-thirds of me – what more do you want?’ At bottom, the fact that relatively small, although significant, differences became a veritable civil war was to a considerable degree a consequence of power-struggles between distinct social networks-cum-ideological factions. Rusher could have answered Rockefeller that they wanted Reagan, among other things because they happened to be personal friends. It is no accident that Nixon, the party centrist, was as isolated from conservative social circles as he was from eastern establishment socialites.

The first issue the Buckleyites had to confront in order to guarantee conservatism’s survival in the future, as well as to maximise their immediate capacity to influence politics, was the intricacy of internal Republican politicking. Conservatives concerned themselves with two issues in particular after the presidential election of 1952: the consolidation of a

47 Rusher, Rise of the Right, p. 96.
50 Rusher, Rise of the Right, p.96; Bush, ‘Republican Party and the Conservative Movement’.
coherent conservative leadership within GOP senior ranks, and the perceived drift towards 'the liberal left' of the party as a whole. Before the 1960 presidential campaign, the main force provoking conservative chagrin and propelling Richard Nixon's political advance was the absence of serious senior conservative politicians within the GOP. Initially, conservatives had rallied around Senator Robert Taft, whose old-guard conservative credentials, combining isolationism with market royalism, had made Republicans unelectable for two decades. Yet, as far as conservatives were concerned, the obvious political limits of a Taft presidential candidacy (his cantankerous character, lack of telegenia and occasional slips towards compromise with the forces of liberalism) were decidedly overshadowed by the aura of lost cause that his defeats at the hands of eastern Republicans in the 1944, 1948 and 1952 presidential primaries provided. Until his death in 1953, Taft remained to the Republican conservative grassroots (the leadership's assessment was then more nuanced) what Robert E. Lee was to southern Diehards. After his death his status expanded to include virtually all conservatives, not least because for about a decade there was no Republican available to take his place. The death in 1961 of former party chairman Caroll B. Reece finally marked the fading away of the old Taft apparatus as a force within the GOP.51

Two years earlier, Reece had celebrated the efforts of Senator William Knowland in support of 'Right to Work' legislation during the latter's bid for the governorship of California as a replay of Taft's 1950 Ohio re-election campaign. Reece was not the only hopeful, for Knowland had been close to National Review since at least 1955, when its first number included a piece under his name. From then on Knowland was hailed in the magazine's pages as the 'standard-bearer' of the Republican right, while outside conservative circles he became known as the 'Senator from Formosa' for his staunch support of Taiwan and opposition to communist China.52 However, Knowland's star fell even faster than it had risen when he was wiped out by Pat Brown in the 1958 California gubernatorial race, and

51 Reinhard, Republican Right, p. 76–77. Reinhard's assessment is fully backed up by a lengthy and detailed letter of Rusher to Bozell (then in Spain) in which he carefully explained the political situation of conservatism, see William Rusher to L. Brent Bozell, September 28, 1961, f. IOM, box 10, WFB papers.

subsequently retired from front-line politics. During those turbulent months two other developments also took place that would significantly alter the conservative political starsystem. First, in 1957 the Young Republicans elected as their chairman a young Ohioan named John Ashbrook. Ashbrook’s candidacy had been organised by F. Clifton White, a political plumber virtually unknown outside the YR and then culminating a long trip away from Thomas E. Dewey’s eastern Republicanism towards conservatism. Also in 1958, as Knowland initiated his own descent into oblivion, Barry Goldwater won, by a landslide, the senatorial race in Arizona. White would go on to mastermind Goldwater’s 1964 successful primary campaign, while Ashbrook became the active politician closest to the Buckleyites, spent a long tenure as chairman of the American Conservative Union, and would culminate his career with a symbolic run against President Nixon during the 1972 primaries. But during the late 1950s and early 1960s all this remained in the future and, as a perceptive observer noted at the time, the reality then was that ‘conservatives find themselves homeless in the Republican Party. And they will remain so as long as the GOP continues to be dominated by liberals’. Taft, he reminded the reader, ‘was dead’, Knowland ‘didn’t go anywhere’ and Goldwater, ‘just can’t win’. As late as 1960, National Review itself had to acknowledge that ‘conservative sentiment has no organizational or even personal vehicle around which to build’.

Alas, there was one hope left, however: Nixon who, after all, ‘may have been conservative at heart’, and whose only problem was that ‘he lacked the political courage to don the conservative cloak in public’. Of course, a man’s courage can be another man’s political death wish, and Richard Nixon, vice-president at the age of 39, was already too much of a senior political figure to maintain a profile akin to that of John Ashbrook. Association with the Republican right had been useful prior to 1952 but also, he knew, could easily lead him down the same unhappy path of a Taft, nevermind a Knowland. Throughout

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53 Reinhard, Republican Right, pp. 142–43.
56 ‘Goldwater Here, There, Everywhere’, NR, April 9, 1960, p. 221.
57 Patterson, ‘Conservatives for Kennedy?’
the Eisenhower years, Nixon willingly employed his solid image among the party’s conservative rank-and-file to protect the administration. Predictably, in the process he also alienated those sectors who had never been all that comfortable with Ike. Among those unhappy Republicans the sages at *National Review* constituted the noisiest group, growing increasingly agitated by what they saw (correctly) as the general’s ‘awesome philosophical emptiness’ and (incorrectly) as his doing ‘nothing whatever’ for the advance of the Republican party.\(^58\)

By mid-1960 all of the magazine’s senior editors agreed that Richard Nixon was hardly a conservative champion. James Burnham, Frank Meyer, William Rusher, Priscilla Buckley (William’s sister and the magazine’s managing editor) all privately threatened to sit the election out. While Meyer deplored the fact that ‘leading political figures [read Nixon and Kennedy] can be distinguished one from the other mainly by their haircuts’, Rusher summed up the general feeling when he lamented that ‘when the candidates are as similar as Nixon and Kennedy, how can it possibly be contended that a serious conservative is effectively registering his opinion?’. He went on to add that there was ‘not a single reason for endorsing [Nixon] that will not apply equally well to every Republican candidate who runs against a Democrat between now and the dissolution of the Republic’.\(^59\) Nixon, for his part, managed to sink to his lowest point in conservative estimation when he decided to strengthen his electoral hopes by striking a last minute deal with Nelson Rockefeller. Known as the ‘Compact of Fifth Avenue’ by political watchers, it was also labelled as a ‘domestic Munich’ by Barry Goldwater. Most conservatives agreed. William Rusher captured the conservative perspective on the affair when he denounced it as an instance of Nixonian lack of principle. After all, Nixon had the nomination virtually assured and still ‘crawled all the way to New York and licked the polish off Rockefeller’s shoes’.\(^60\) And yet, eventually conservatives behaved in 1960 as they always did with Nixon. Munich notwithstanding, Barry Goldwater

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quashed the last minute (and weak) attempts to propel him in a symbolic stop Nixon movement and famously told the Republican right to ‘grow up’ and work for Nixon. He was also quite willing to use the pages of the conservative monthly *Human Events* to tell the faithful why ‘conservatives should support Nixon’ (because ‘no more dedicated anticommunist works on President Eisenhower’s team’, and the alternative was ‘an immature, well-heeled young man’), and to urge ‘conservatives, don’t stay home!’ As for *National Review*, its editors opted, after much agony, for a convoluted editorial which simultaneously proclaimed its dislike of ‘Nixon’s Republicanism’; gently reminded its readers of how in 1956 ‘we had to go out in shifts to leave one editor firing the machine gun at Ike, while another dashed out and voted for him’; and concluded, implausibly enough, by stating that ‘we do not intend to exhort our readers in a particular line of political action’. In effect, the magazine recommended its readers to vote for Nixon, with regret perhaps, but without much of a bad conscience. After all, as Brent Bozell publicly acknowledged as early as January of that year, ‘most’ conservative voters ‘will not abandon Nixon’. Raymond Moley, the former New Deal Brains Truster who was now a well known right-of-centre journalist agreed, noting that ‘Nixon’s appeal’ to ‘conservative voters’ in the South would be ‘very strong’ and, hopefully, ‘apparent in the election’. Even a conservative former congressman for New York, less than enthusiastic about Nixon’s domestic policies, explained that as ‘a staunch conservative’, he would ‘support Richard Nixon for President’ because abstention, he contended, was equivalent ‘to cast half a vote for Kennedy’ who, he stated, was Khrushchev’s favoured candidate. If 1960 showed something to Richard Nixon, it was that bar some rather extraordinary event, he could count on conservative support, however reluctant, as long as he ran against a progressive Democrat. In that scenario, conservatives quite simply had nowhere else to go.


62 ‘National Review and the 1960 Election’, *ibid.*, box 10, WFB papers.


Yet two years after his 1960 near-miss Richard Nixon discovered that, to his own confessed astonishment, Bozell's assessment of his hold over the conservative vote had been overly optimistic. In 1962 Nixon decided to run for the governorship of California, and in the process he ran up against – for the first time and to his considerable surprise – a wall of active and at times vicious political opposition. Nixon's first miscalculation in 1962 was to dismiss the momentum propelling the candidacy of Joe Shell, the conservative Republican minority leader in Sacramento. He found out soon enough when he began to travel through the state before the June primary, and 'met with a lot of heckling'. To be sure Nixon was more than accustomed to public hostility, but to his horror this time it was 'different'. Before, he acknowledged thirty years later, 'I had been heckled by the far left; now [in 1962] I was being heckled by the far right'. In the end Nixon won the primaries, but the most conservative elements of the California GOP refused to either support or vote for him.

The particulars of the 1962 election would mark Nixon's future strategy because they signalled a number of changes within the Golden State’s GOP, which in turn announced an impending transformation of the party’s internal balance-of-power. For a start, Nixon’s return and defeat neither generated nor ended the bitter division between moderates and conservatives. California Republicans’ appetite for self-destruction had actually started four years earlier: then it had been the conservative William Knowland’s turn to get clobbered by Pat Brown in the general election as a consequence of vicious internecine disputes – in 1962 he did all he could to take his revenge on Nixon. In 1966, it was Ronald Reagan’s turn to suffer a similar ordeal this time, like Knowland before him, at the hands of moderate Republicans. California's lively Republican politics roughly reflected the evolution of conservative strength within the party both there and at a national level. In the 1950s, as Knowland found out to his own expense, conservatives had been a relatively influential and

certainly noisy faction within the party, but ultimately could not wrestle control from the moderate-eastern bloc. In 1962 they remained unable to propel their acknowledged leaders over a relatively moderate Nixon, but having retained 30 per cent of the most active Republican voters, they could efficiently torpedo the former vice-president’s chances of victory in the general election by both withdrawing their support and engaging in a exhausting primary contest. In 1966, California’s conservatives managed to capture the Republican nomination for governor, even if their candidate was a former B-list actor whose known politics placed him slightly to the right of no less then Barry Goldwater.70 Even before Reagan turned the tables, a lesson was learned, and one that would stay with Richard Nixon for the rest of his political career: as Taft, Knowland and later Goldwater clearly experienced, conservative support by itself might not be sufficient to ensure victory but, as Nixon learned, to irritate the right was also a ‘no win proposition’ for, with a few exceptions, no Republican candidate could hope to achieve success without at least the acquiescence of the party’s right.71

While Richard Nixon coped with upheavals among the Republican grassroots, conservatives at National Review were facing a few problems of their own with the GOP’s senior ranks. One of the most remarkable aspects of the clear conservative ascent within the Republican party during the late 1950s and early 1960s was that almost nobody – not even conservatives themselves – appeared to fully realise what was happening. Yet, if men like Richard Nixon grossly underestimated the growing strength of conservative sentiment, others did sense some of the powerful political undertow that would erupt during the second half of the 1960s. One of these rather solitary figures was National Review publisher William Rusher. Closely involved in Republican state politics in New York, Rusher also retained a number of friendships within the Young Republicans organisation. While Nixon licked his 1960 wounds and considered whether to run in California in 1962, Rusher realised that his

old conservative cronies in the YR had graduated into the main party, and that the group included enough senior elected officials to become the ‘4th or 5th largest influence in the senior GOP’. Moreover, Rusher also noted with horror that ‘the vast majority of Republican voters (around 60 per cent) would choose Nixon as their 1964 candidate’. A sharp political observer, Rusher fully detected the earlier stirrings of conservative re-organisation within the Republican party, and realised that these men would eventually start ‘developing their own political leaders... and those leaders are not necessarily going to save a place for National Review at, or even necessarily near, the head of the parade’. If the Buckleyites wanted ‘to lead the Conservative movement’, Rusher urged them ‘to get over the idea that it can be done solely by the means of well-phrased editorials’. Rusher, together with a number of graduates from the YR such as F. Clifton White, John Ashbrook, and California representative John Rousselot decided instead to form a group which would ‘paddle its own canoe’ towards the 1964 Republican primaries. And ‘the only relatively empty canoe’ available in the bleak Republican landscape of 1961 was, they decided, ‘Senator Goldwater’s’. 

Three years later these same men first celebrated the resounding victory of Barry Goldwater in the Republican presidential primaries and then charged forward, Light Brigade-like, into the biggest Republican electoral defeat since 1936: Lyndon Johnson carried all states except the Deep South and Goldwater’s native Arizona. With hindsight, it is widely acknowledged that Goldwater’s triumph and subsequent catastrophe turned conservatives into the dominant force within the Republican party. At the time, however, conservatives became ‘pariahs’ and conservatism was proclaimed dead as a political force. Of course, in the hectic months that followed Johnson’s landslide, the eastern bloc of the party moved in to

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72 William Rusher to L. Brent Bozell, September 28, 1961, f. IOM, box 10, WFB papers
clean the Republican house of Goldwater appointees and to consolidate its grip over the leadership of the party. In 1965 the roster of Republican potential presidential candidates was made up in its entirety of liberal Republicans: Michigan governor George Romney, the attractive newly-elected mayor of New York City John Lindsay, New York Senator Jacob Javits, Pennsylvania governor William Scranton and, above anybody else, that force of nature and old conservative nemesis, New York state governor Nelson Rockefeller. Worse still than being liberal Republicans, according to conservatives all of these men had betrayed the party by either withdrawing their support or outright opposing the candidacy of Goldwater during the main campaign against Johnson. Gerhard Niemeyer, scholar and member of the Goldwater ‘brain-trust’ squarely blamed defeat on Republican ‘liberals’ who ‘deserted, either into Johnson’s camp, or into separatism, or into inactivity. In precinct after precinct’, and thereby concluded that ‘defeat for the Republican party resulted from the sulking of Republican liberals’. Ronald Reagan was also quite clear on the matter in the immediate aftermath of the election: ‘I do not think’ he declared ‘we should turn the high command over to the leaders who were traitors during the battle just ended’. George Bush Sr., then close to conservative circles, also announced that he had ‘no respect for the Republican who quits his Party this year because he didn’t get it all his way’, and even dared to mention Rockefeller by name.

Unsurprisingly, some conservatives were close to exhausted with Republican politicking and Republican politicians. Chief among them was William Rusher, who despaired even of Goldwater who, according to the old political warhorse, ‘for all the passionate sincerity of his conservative convictions, [was] from first to last a thoroughly orthodox party regular’. A few years later, Rusher’s partisanship had weakened to the point that he even threatened to support Johnson in the event that the Republicans nominated a Vietnam dove, and wrote of a potential ‘mass movement’ towards the Democratic

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75 Bush, ‘The Republican Party and the Conservative Movement’.

incumbent. Rusher's views could be dismissed as wishful thinking: after all, this was a man who had already in 1960 openly 'hoped' for 'a new and more highly ideologized [sic] political party; a third party'. But this time, Rusher was not alone. Along similarly depressed lines, James Burnham noted, in the aftermath of the 1964 debacle, that the GOP was historically the party of 'radicalism', 'progressivism' and 'civil rights' and went on the emphasise that 'the party's make up' could 'no longer be relied on as a conservative anchor'. He even mused about how the 'Democratic party may become an arena even more promising than the Republican party for a spectacular conservative advance'. The depressing electoral results coupled with the – according to conservatives – manifest disloyalty of the Republican progressive wing had such an effect that George Bush Sr. felt the need to go straight to the point and tell the faithful that dastardly liberals or no dastardly liberals 'the GOP must remain the conservatives' hope. A third party movement will never work. It will simply further divide'.

But then again, both conservatives and moderates within the GOP knew all there was to be known about division. At a national level, every single presidential contest since 1948 (except that of 1956) had been marked by such a division – the 1964 affair had simply been more vitriolic – and similar violent fistfights had erupted within satellite organisations such as the YR and the Women Republicans, while at state level California might have been a particularly bloody battlefield, by no means was it an exception. Incapable of wresting control of the GOP from moderate Republicans, conservatives opted for generating their very own smattering of conservative political organisations. In 1960, at the Buckley estate in Sharon, Connecticut, the National Review circle employed the good offices of Marvin Liebman – the single most important figure in the emergence of an organisationally significant early conservative movement – to act as midwife to the birth of Young Americans

78 William Rusher to William F. Buckley, October 10, 1960, F. IOM, box 10, ibid.
79 James Burnham, 'Must Conservatives be Republicans?', NR, December 1, 1964, p. 1052.
80 Ibid.
82 The absolutely crucial role of the conservatives capacity to articulate their emerging influence through an organisational network has been much emphasised in Hijiya, 'The Conservative 1960s', pp. 202-205.
for Freedom, an organisation designed to harness the same conservative energies in the campuses which had coalesced behind Goldwater in the 1964 Republican National Convention.\(^3\) Although technically non-partisan, YAF became a fixture of Republican youth politics, rivalling for influence with the YR organisation and, at least in terms of noise, even surpassing it.\(^4\) Observing YAF’s success after the Nixon debacle of 1960, Liebman believed – like many other conservatives – that Nixon’s error in such a narrow election had been his failure to appeal more explicitly to conservatives whom he realised, as had Rusher, lacked a coherent organisation capable of articulating their influence over that of Nelson Rockefeller who, of course, had the full backing of at least the New York Republican organisation.\(^5\)

Post-Goldwater frustration with party politicking (and pragmatism), coupled with the unleashing of considerable conservative energy during the campaign combined to make the project of a grown up version of YAF a reality in the early months of 1965. As had been the case with the youth organisation, the ubiquitous Marvin Liebman successfully managed harness growing grass-roots energy into a political organisation: the American Conservative Union. With time, and once the immediate chaotic aftermath of the 1964 presidential election had passed, ACU became the stronger and longer-lasting conservative political organisation. Beginning in 1967, it acquired its own weekly newspaper – *The Republican Battle Line* – through which it kept the faithful abreast of the latest perceived atrocities perpetrated by moderate Republicans, as well as of the activities of conservative champions, be they established, as in the cases of Reagan and Goldwater, or up-and-coming new stars such as James Buckley in the early 1970s. Later on, *Battle Line* even helped channel funds to conservative hopefuls in local and state elections. Peculiarly enough, it had actually been the old publication of the Republican National Committee, which had dropped it in 1965 in favour of *The Republican*, as ACU’s conservatives specified in the front page of its first number – the four column headline of which was devoted to presidential prospects and

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\(^3\) As may be expected, Liebman’s memoirs are a valuable (and reliable) first-hand account of that process, see Marvin Liebman, *Coming Out Conservative* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1992), pp.145–48, 150–55.

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 148–52.

illustrated with a smiling portrait of Ronald Reagan and Barry Goldwater.\textsuperscript{86} The American Conservative Union, like YAF, was nominally non-partisan and had no qualms about praising conservative Democrats, but it was designed to be and effectively became another satellite Republican organisation.

Despite the occasional alarm of conservative Republican politicians such as George Bush Sr. and even Barry Goldwater, and for all the rumblings and periodical bouts of exasperation with the GOP, most sensible American conservatives had no intention of leaving the party. In fact, as \textit{Battle Line}'s small aside clearly reflected, they thought of themselves as the repositories of true Republicanism against the deviationism (what conservatives took to labelling as 'me too' Republicanism) of the moderate faction within the party. Much to the chagrin of respectable conservatives who, like William Rusher and Frank Meyer, seriously contemplated abandoning the GOP, even conservative initiatives towards creating third parties remained stubbornly loyal to the Republican mother-ship. Of these more serious potential threats the Conservative Party of New York State was the most enduring and successful. From its inception it was 'animated exclusively by its desire to serve certain political ideas' and remained steadfastly loyal to both the national Republican party and to those New York Republicans whom it deemed ideologically sound. The CPNYS emerged only because 'the Republican Party in this state will never reform until it is subjected to the pressure of an ideological party on its flank – a party that will do for conservative Republicans what the Liberal Party does so effectively for liberal Democrats'.\textsuperscript{87} Redemption rather than desertion remained the conservative aim. And even for such benign designs, the third party enterprise only worked in a very specific place at a very particular time.

The project for a conservative party had been floating around conservative circles since at least 1957, but it was Nixon's 1960 'Compact of Fifth Avenue', and Goldwater's

\textsuperscript{86} 'Presidential Politics Warm Up', \textit{The Republican Battle Line}, March 1967.

subsequent call for conservative restraint that sparked the fuse. Rockefeller’s large shadow also helped to explain the success of the party in New York: by early 1961, in a prequel of what would happen after 1964, conservatives were already blaming the governor of New York’s lack of enthusiasm for Nixon’s narrow defeat. To make matters worse for conservatives, since the 1930s New York State had possessed a small Liberal Party which efficiently lobbied to push state politics in a leftward direction by endorsing suitable Democratic (and later Republican) candidates, or fielding candidates aimed at derailing the candidacies of excessively right-wing hopefuls. Thus, the CPNYS emerged as an alliance of the state’s Nixon supporters and former staffers of the Nixon-Lodge campaign irritated by Rockefeller’s electoral inaction; grassroots conservative activists who were aggravated by the state’s Republican leaders including Governor Rockefeller, Mayor Lindsay and Senator Javits’s all-too-friendly attitude towards the State’s Liberal Party; and Buckleyites, including Buckley himself, Rusher and the then-ubiquitous organiser Marvin Liebman. Conservatives knew that the party originated and survived because of that set of peculiar circumstances, a view reinforced by the short and unhappy lives of the various similar enterprises that appeared in half a dozen other states. In 1962 the CPNYS released its first public statement as a fully-fledged political party. New York’s conservatives used the release to lambast ABC and its ‘spiteful “political obituary” of Richard Nixon’ – which had included Alger Hiss among the commentators. Two years later the CPNYS was healthy enough to trigger Governor Rockefeller’s wrath by supporting a hypothetical Goldwater-Nixon presidential ticket. Nixon, it would seem, was an ever-present figure in the grassroots conservative imagination.

88 Eli N. Zrake to David Fasken, July 3, 1957, f. 3rd Party, box 1, ibid. At a national level, the only known alternative was the ‘Constitution Party’ of Texas, Revilo Oliver, ‘The Conservatives Bar Compromise’, NR, October 5, 1957, pp. 301-302.
90 Mahoney, Actions Speak Louder, p. 19-20; The enthusiastic collaboration of National Review was crucial for gathering the kind of testimonial support from well-known conservatives essential to acquiring the respectability (and financial support) necessary for the success of operation. An initial list of supporters gathered from the offices of the magazine included nationally respected conservative names such as Anthony Bouscaren and Henry Hazlitt, as well as those of several NR editors and contributors, see Kieran O’Doherty to Anthony T. Bouscaren, October 24, 1961, f. CPNYS, box 13, WFB papers.
91 Rusher, Rise of the Right, pp. 96-98; Mahoney, Actions Speak Louder, p. 23-24.
92 Ibid., pp. 222, 348.
The success of the CPNYS opened a number of fascinating opportunities for enterprising conservatives. *National Review* editor William Rickenbacker noted how a number of *National Review* friends advised the journal to take a 'friendly' but 'aloof' attitude towards the CPNYS, in order to avoid the ridicule that its inevitable demise would cause. The new party, it was claimed, quite simply lacked a constituency. More optimistically, Rickenbacker himself went on to emphasise that the party could and should expand conservatism's political base by appealing to the right-wing vote generally, rather than to Republicans alone. Years before Richard Nixon transformed the silent majority into a conservative shibboleth, Rickenbacker was already noting the growing disaffection of the white ethnic vote (in particular of Irish Catholic New Yorkers) from the Democratic party. 

In more immediate terms, the party also allowed conservatives to score a number of publicity coups, not least Buckley's famous and widely reported 1965 campaign against John Lindsay for New York City's mayoralty. Buckley lost, but his remarkable 13 per cent of the vote lent some weight to, and stimulated, conservative ruminations along Rickenbacker's lines – Nixon, on his part, had spent 1965 as a 'private citizen' living, of all places, in New York City.

The mayoralty race served, at the very least, to allow Richard Nixon, then laboriously cultivating the Republican right, to publicly position himself vis-à-vis the CPNYS. In a letter sent by his then personal assistant Patrick Buchanan – a well known conservative who had volunteered to work for Nixon in January of that year – to 'the editor of National Review', Nixon reiterated that he remained 'firmly convinced that the best interests of conservatives are served by their joining and working within the framework of the Republican party'. Moreover, and just in case there was any doubt about Nixon's views on the Republican right, Buchanan also took pains to remind Buckley of the fact that 'as he [Nixon] has often emphasised, it would be a tragedy for this nation if conservatives should abandon the GOP to

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form splinter parties'. To be sure, there was very little love lost between Nixon and the New York liberal Republicans, but then again he had also been about the only non-conservative senior Republican to actually profit from the Goldwater debacle. Nixon had firmly opposed the Goldwater primary campaign – which was dutifully noted by conservatives – and was not averse to supporting liberal Republicans such as Jacob Javits, but he had also taken inordinate pains to support the national campaign against Johnson.

With that strategy, and once conservatism was firmly tied to the GOP, Nixon effectively became the bridge linking the professional party structure – still largely controlled by senior moderates – with the swathe of young conservative activists who ran the grassroots of the party. Nixon’s success was almost immediate, as can be seen in the aftermath of the 1964 debacle: in their writings the same conservatives who lambasted ‘traitors’ deliberately emphasised Nixon’s model behaviour. George Bush Sr. specifically noted that Nixon was a ‘good example’ of Republicans who had ‘fought for what they believed in the convention, lost, and then went to work of their Party swallowing their points of difference’. ‘Compare his teamwork’ he thundered on, ‘with the performance of Rockefeller’. Barry Goldwater, for one, had been doing some comparing of his own and hurriedly publicised the fact that he considered Nixon to be the man ‘who worked harder than any one person for the ticket’. Goldwater even went on to personally assure the former vice-president: ‘Dick, I will never forget it. I know that you did it in the interest of the Republican party and not for any selfish reasons. But if there comes a time I can turn those into selfish reasons, I am going to do all I can to see that it comes about’.

Meanwhile another, more optimistic line of argument advanced by conservatives was interesting for Nixon, while also contributing to stymie third party impulses. *National Review*

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95 Patrick Buchanan to the editor of NR, March 8, 1966, f. Nixon, box. 40, WFB papers.
senior editor Russell Kirk, even in the face of defeat and of the eastern impetus to clean house, nicely summed it up by stating that ‘the Republican party now has prospects of strength and success unknown to it for a generation. For, however confusedly, it is being transformed into a coherently conservative party’. Moreover, its ‘dominant figures... during the next four years – men like Mr. Nixon and Representative Gerald Ford – will have no truck with the grand design of “me too” and will be more clearly conservative in utterance and proposal than formerly’. Frank Meyer, not a party loyalist, also noted how ‘the old-style precinct workers’ had been ‘more and more replaced by motivated workers’ in both major parties. In the case of the GOP he rightly emphasised ‘the emergence of a powerful force of committed conservatives as the decisive sector of Republican campaign workers’ which meant ‘that American conservatism has moved into the actual political arena, creating an experienced political corps of a kind it has never had before’. More dramatically, he prophesised that ‘the Republican party has become a party which will in practice, outside of a few constituencies [namely New York, Pennsylvania and the other north-eastern states], function as a conservative party or not function at all’. Further down the line, and certainly below the radar of senior party officials, the operation put together by F. Clifton White had essentially left the lower echelons of the party in the hands of those ‘committed conservatives’ mentioned by Meyer. As a veteran moderate Republican would later put it, ‘in state after state, Goldwater activists took over party organizations and the machinery for nominating delegates to the Republican National Convention. By the time Rockefeller, Lodge, Romney and Scranton realised what was happening, the Republican nomination and platform were firmly in the hands of conservatives’. These were men and women who happened to be young, enthusiastic and most importantly, after 1964 both fully organised within the GOP and aware of their own strength. If those conservatives who participated in the Goldwater campaign agreed on one single point, it is in emphasising that 1964 turned out to be the dawn of a new form of conservatism in the United States because, regardless of the

100 Ibid., p. 1054.
electoral results, they met each other and did so as Republican activists as well as conservatives. Much to the benefit of Richard Nixon’s future career, as the 1968 election approached conservatives were not only managing to resist third party delusions: they were also in the process of capturing the GOP.

Another side-effect of the Goldwater campaign that contributed to weaken eastern liberals and favoured both Richard Nixon and conservative republicans was Strom Thurmond’s switch to the Republican party and Goldwater’s stubborn opposition to civil rights. In a radical reversal of a secular electoral fixture, the GOP found itself wiped out in the West and the Northeast but victorious in the Deep South. GOP internal rules established delegate strength in national gatherings according to electoral results, hence favouring, until 1964, the eastern wing of the party. Goldwater’s results and Thurmond’s defection suddenly transformed the southern wing of the party from a non-entity into the single most influential Republican bloc for the 1968 primary contest. Nixon, who could not have possibly foreseen such momentous changes in the make up of the party, had supported Goldwater during the main campaign partly out of actual partisan loyalty and partly because of thirst for what he called ‘the arena’ – but he was also aware of the divisions within the party, of his own position as a non-committed centrist, and of his potential future ability to call in a few political debts such as Goldwater’s own. At the same time, conservatives had largely renounced any serious attempt at abandoning the GOP and were determined, instead, to transform it in their own image.

3. AND THE GOOD CONSERVATIVE


Prior to the race for the 1968 nomination, both conservatives and Nixon had to resolve another nagging issue. After the 1964 Goldwater debacle the Republican party was fully open to conservative control; the conservative movement was increasingly aware of its capacity to dominate the party; and Richard Nixon was engaged in a careful and successful navigation of Republican waters to position himself as the GOP’s choice for 1968. The Goldwater campaign had also made it fairly clear, however, that conservatism could not hope to expand its influence beyond the ranks of its hard-core supporters unless it managed first to shake off the rather extensive perception of conservatives as ‘reactionary’ (Senator Everett Dirksen); ‘loony’ (William Rusher regarding certain right-wingers); more plainly, ‘morons’ (Senator William Proxmire), if not positively ‘unstable’ (that was Goldwater, according to some press reports) – perceptions that had been pervasively associated with the right since the days of Alger Hiss and Joe McCarthy, and which the Johnson campaign had ruthlessly exploited.104

Accusations of radicalism had bothered the Buckleyites since the 1950s and were, in fact, one of the reasons National Review had come into being in the first place. Back then, as Nixon was making his name as an anticommunist standard-bearer, the post-war conservative literary landscape was dominated by The Freeman, a small libertarian publication, and the more influential American Mercury. Buckley and most of the conservative intellectuals that later populated the National Review as well as very many more who did not (such as US Nazi Party leader Lincoln Rockwell), had been closely related to both publications until the former disappeared and the latter descended into open anti-Semitism, triggering its repudiation by National Review (Rockwell would subsequently receive identical treatment).105 Buckley’s brand of cosmopolitan, internationalist conservatism had as little time for such remnants of old right-wing radicalism as it had for isolationism or nativism. From its very inception


National Review was set up to turn conservatism into a respectable ideological option.\textsuperscript{106} To be sure, Buckley's youthful penchant for provocative statements and the magazine's deliberate aim of pushing the boundaries of the 'politically correct' made the enterprise difficult at best, and nearly impossible in the overcharged atmosphere of the 1950s and early 1960s. Yet, much like Richard Nixon, the men around National Review managed to survive the fall-out from McCarthyism to become by 1960 increasingly influential fixtures of the American political landscape. In turn, Nixon's most consistent long-term success from his vice-presidential years to the 1968 election was his continuous ability to obtain the reluctant support of both wings of his party. Invariably, both conservatives and eastern liberals ended up seeing Nixon as a lesser evil against other candidates clearly committed to one faction or another within the party, while the irrepressible Nelson Rockefeller was to liberals what Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan would be to conservatism. Nixon's successes and some of his failures can only be fully explained by taking into account the decisions and attitudes of the conservative intellectual leadership towards the issue of radicalism - which also consisted of striking just the right measure of dissent without inviting accusations of extremism - and the subsequent evolution of the conservative movement during the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1964 Barry Goldwater delighted conservative Republicans and horrified the party's professional cadres (including Richard Nixon) when he proclaimed that 'moderation in the pursuit of liberty was no virtue'. The incident nicely fitted the conservative movement's carefully cultivated self-image as uncompromising champions of the right political gospel, as well as confirming liberal observers' perception of conservatives as radical relics of the past, dangerous political extremists or, more plainly, in the terms used by John Leonard to describe L. Brent Bozell, 'totally bananas'.\textsuperscript{107} However, a closer examination reveals that just as ideological disappointment never took them out of the Republican fold (and hence the political mainstream), whenever the intellectual leaders of American conservatism were

\textsuperscript{106} See Nash, Conservative Intellectual Movement, pp. 98–99.
\textsuperscript{107} As quoted in Judis, Buckley, p. 318.
confronted with the actions of certain more extremist champions of the right – such as the *American Mercury*, the John Birch Society or, later on, George Wallace – they consistently fell on the side of caution and, of all things, moderation.

To be sure, a degree of political pragmatism did not prevent instances such as Brent Bozell’s, repeated statement that nuclear holocaust was preferable to accommodation with the USSR (which caused Leonard’s aforementioned riposte). It did not stop James Burnham from carefully considering the use of nuclear (*tactical*, he was always clear), chemical or biological weapons in South East Asia; never mind Russell Kirk’s attacks on the entire university system; the universal tendency to advocate the privatisation of virtually everything, including the Tennessee Valley Authority; or the rather hairy, even for the standards of the day, *NR* stand on the racial affairs of the nation.\(^{108}\) In short, the Buckleyites certainly did not lack either ideological backbone or a penchant for generating ideological outrage. Yet their radicalism was carefully administered and very much circumscribed to both the rhetorical field and to the provision ‘red meat’ for the conservative grassroots.\(^{109}\) Crucially, at least from 1960 onwards, the men at the helm of *NR* were always restrained by the awareness that *NR* was ‘undoubtedly the center of the [conservative] Movement’ and that their actions could, they firmly believed, determine the future growth or the disappearance of conservatism from American politics ‘in [the following] 15 or 20 years’.\(^{110}\)

Despite their relative success during the second half of the 1950s, conservatives retained a strong sense of victimisation by what they perceived, to a degree correctly, as the hostile leadership of the American polity. William Rusher put it in rather clear terms shortly before the 1960 election: ‘the Liberals’ he said, ‘have succeeded in narrowing almost to the

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\(^{109}\) Interview with Lee Edwards, August 15, 2005, Washington DC. Edwards was a young campus conservative during the 1960s. He admitted that intelligent readers could distinguish between *National Review’s* virulent broadsides and its more modest policy-making suggestions (e.g. Burnham was an early advocate of withdrawal from Vietnam), but that they just preferred the more passionate ‘red meat’.

\(^{110}\) Frank Meyer to the Editors ‘Re. NR Position on Presidential Candidates’, May 10, 1960, box 10, f IOM, WFB papers.
vanishing point the area of what might be called Permissible Dissent'. Nevertheless Rusher could not help but notice that although *National Review* 'still roams at will in areas far beyond the narrow zone of Permissible Dissent' and that, moreover 'with the exception of the now totally proscribed mass organizations of the "Extreme Right", we are virtually the only voice left in this country that is doing so'. From there he went on to ponder 'Why, I wonder, are we, (generally speaking) immune from the proscription? ...verve and skill have something to do with it. But I suspect that the essential distinction is that we do not have a mass base in the political sense'. In the aftermath of the 1964 Republican National Convention, Frank Meyer agreed, noting that 'for years it has been an axiom... wherever the Establishment could use the mass-communications network to hatch its eggs that the contemporary Conservative movement and conservative ideas are outside the American consensus'. But then again, he also noticed that 'in the past couple of years, however, the momentum of the conservative movement has taken on such startling proportions that there no longer remains intellectually honest ground for the contentions of the liberal establishment'. And yet the Johnson campaign, Meyer correctly observed, 'is essentially based on a single theme... that Goldwater and the movement behind him represents "extremism."' Nearly a decade later, when William Buckley marvelled at the success of the conservative movement, he began his reflections by emphasising the 'efforts, some of them quite ingenious, either to make American conservatism go away or deprive it of meaning', not to mention the tendency 'particularly in the Academy' of 'identifying American conservatism with altogether eccentric political modalities'.

Of those dastardly liberal academics, conservatives tended to get particularly worked up by Columbia Historian Richard Hofstadter whom, according to Buckley, by 1967 had suffered from 'years and years of conviction that that which is not espoused by Professor

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113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
Hofstadter and his ideological colleagues is not worth analyzing but diagnosing.\textsuperscript{116} Conservative resentment against Hofstadter was not without grounds: in a series of lectures, opinion articles and academic texts, the Columbia historian had arrayed himself against the candidacy of Barry Goldwater and lambasted what he called the ‘pseudoconservatism’ defended by both the candidate himself and the men around National Review.\textsuperscript{117} Hofstadter argued that the American conservative movement, as a whole, belonged to a particular form of radical grassroots politics which he labelled ‘the paranoid style’ and which was, as one might guess from the name, both dangerous and squarely outside the politically sane, let alone the politically acceptable. In his devastating 1964 tract ‘Goldwater and Pseudo-Conservative Politics’, Hofstadter articulated the arguments that had been plaguing respectable conservatives for the best part of the previous half decade.\textsuperscript{118}

And Hofstadter was by no means alone. His views were essentially part of the thesis then put forth by Daniel Bell and other liberal intellectuals of the 1950s, which persuasively concluded that McCarthyism and grassroots right-wing protest were a consequence of the ‘status anxiety’ suffered by the traditional middle classes and blue-collar workers at a time of affluence and, more specifically, of enhanced upward social mobility.\textsuperscript{119} Less persuasively, Hofstadter, and (implicitly) Bell’s group also, argued that post-war American conservatism was most clearly and best represented by the radical right in general, and certain groups in particular. Of these – as Hofstadter’s essays nicely reflected – during the first half of the 1960s the John Birch Society was the best known and most difficult to deal with from the perspective of the ‘respectable’ right. Named after a US Air Force officer who happened to be an evangelical Christian and had suffered death at the hands of Chinese

\textsuperscript{117} See Richard Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992)
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., pp. 93–141.
\textsuperscript{119} See Daniel Bell ed., The New American Right (New York: Criterion Books, 1955). It is worth noting that very many of these intellectuals were to suffer their very own attacks of such phenomena twenty years later. As is frequently pointed out, the names listed in the index of contents of The New American Right could have well passed in the early 1970s for a roster of neoconservative intellectuals. See also idem., The End of Ideology (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), pp. 101-103 and 105-107; Nash, Conservative Intellectual Movement, pp. 125; Diamond, Roads to Dominion, pp. 183–84. Micklethwait and Wooldridge, Right Nation, p. 43.
communists, the society was created in 1958 by a former candy manufacturer named Robert Welch and operated through local chapters. In its heyday during the early to mid 1960s, its membership rose to tens of thousands (more precise estimates varied considerably between 20,000 and 60,000 members) on a nationwide scale, and the society managed to exert sizeable influence in the South and West of the nation where, according to William F. Buckley, 'for a season or two... joining the John Birch Society was on the order of joining the local country club'.

Most notoriously, Californians even sent two representatives who openly admitted membership of the JBS to Congress and several to Sacramento. The Society set up reading rooms for its members and achieved national notoriety through various 'writing in' and publicity campaigns aimed at objectives as varied as the cessation of trade with the Eastern bloc (which succeeded in forcing some of the major US retailers targeted by the campaign to withdraw products), and the impeachment of Chief Justice Earl Warren (which succeeded in earning the Society both considerable free publicity and great ridicule).

Lending weight to Hofstadter's contention, the JBS's views displayed considerable continuity with McCarthyism – particularly the shared, strident (and deluded) obsession with communist infiltration of the federal government and the treacherous behaviour of senior federal officials – and were broadly aligned with the religious and free-market-leaning instincts of respectable conservatism. However, Hofstadter overlooked the rather herculean, and eventually widely publicised, efforts of the men around National Review to first put some distance between themselves and the JBS, and subsequently to completely excommunicate the society from the mainstream conservative movement.

As the JBS brochures made amply clear, Robert Welch had been a senior member of the National Association of Manufactures and had received his education from Harvard Law School and the Naval Academy at Annapolis. Well-educated and well-connected, the head of the JBS enjoyed an extensive social network within the circles of highbrow conservatism.

121 Hodgson, World Turned Right Side Up, pp. 58–61; Micklethwait and Woodridge, Right Nation, p. 61; Diamond, Roads to Dominion, pp. 52–58.
This included a minority stake in *National Review*, and a warm relation with Buckley himself whom, obviously grateful for the modest support that Welch had lent the nascent magazine, declared himself initially 'delighted' at the foundation of the JBS, and even went on to offer Welch 'a little publicity' for his society in *NR*. Moreover, the initially inoffensive educational activities of the JBS, combined with its unequivocal anti-communism, commanded not merely the respect, but the active collaboration of prominent conservative leaders such as Dean Manion - also famous as an anticommunist proselytiser - Barry Goldwater and a number of his 1964 staffers, as well as Buckley himself and fellow *NR* editor Brent Bozell.

Such a cosy state of affairs came to an abrupt end as soon as Welch circulated (privately at first) the manuscript of a tract entitled *The Politician*, which denounced Dwight Eisenhower as a 'conscious and dedicated agent of the communist conspiracy' in cahoots with his brother and his administration's secretaries of state and defence as well as, obviously enough, Moscow. Inevitably, Welch's colourful assessment eventually found its way into the daily newspapers where, in principle, it should have remained yet another outburst from what William Rusher described as the 'loony right' and Russell Kirk the 'fantastics': enough to discomfit highbrow conservatives, but ultimately inconsequential. Except the society was actually relatively important in numerical and publicity terms; *National Review* could not bring itself to quickly and unequivocally disavow the JBS; the press also found out and publicised the very extensive links between the society and other respectable conservative outfits; and conservatives were indeed acquiring enough political muscle to make such revelations persistently attractive front-page news as Richard Nixon in 1962, Barry Goldwater in 1964 and Ronald Reagan in 1966 were to find out, at their own expense.

At a primary level, NR did not instantly denounce Welch’s delusions out of the same kind of solidarity towards anyone or anything that might be offensive towards American liberalism that propelled it to attempt a defence of Joe McCarthy. In the latter case, Buckley had recognised the senator’s ‘gratuitous sensationalism’, as well as his ‘outrageous’, ‘censurable’ and ‘reprehensible’ conduct, but still insisted in emphasising that the red menace was real, and doubted the motivations of liberals’ ‘slander’.125 In 1961, after The Politician became a nation-wide headline, Buckley wrote a special lengthy editorial dealing with Welch, in which he noted that ‘every issue of National Review stresses a different analysis [from Welch’s] of the causes of our difficulties’, and that these differences moreover, were ‘very grave indeed’, even ‘critical’. Yet Buckley arrived at this point only after emphasising that the interest of the press in the JBS reflected the fact that ‘the liberals, and to the extent their programs coincide with the Communists, feel threatened by the revived opposition’ from conservatives. In case of doubt, Buckley also lambasted ‘certain elements of the press [which] are opportunizing on the mistaken conclusions of Robert Welch to anathemize the entire American Right Wing’.126 Of course, it was essentially correct that ‘liberals’ generally felt threatened by growing conservative strength, as was the fact that ‘liberals’ in the press were all too happy to ridicule their political adversaries. Buckley however, failed to mention that Welch’s statements and analyses were actually positively slanderous, as well as ridiculous. In fact, National Review put out such a soft rebuke that Welch actually thanked him for the piece and for the general ‘encouragement… to go ahead and help form more chapters of the John Birch Society’.127 Moreover, the chief editor of National Review also went on to stress the difference between Welch himself, whose viewpoints were declared false, and the JBS as an organisation. According to Buckley, he had ‘never met a single member who declared himself in agreement with certain of Mr. Welch’s conclusions’, and therefore assumed that ‘the overwhelming majority of the members of the Birch Society were never aware’ of their leader’s opinions. After absolving the Birchers, Buckley concluded by

125 As quoted in Nash, Conservative Intellectual Movement, pp. 98–99.
stating, rather equivocally, that 'I hope it [the JBS] thrives, provided, of course, it resists such false assumptions as that a man’s subjective motives can automatically be deduced from the objective consequences of its acts'. And Buckley was merely reflecting a feeling that trickled down the conservative lines. Dean Manion, for instance, refused to resign from the society because 'he could not, as a matter of temperament, retreat under fire'. Frank Meyer on his part believed that NR’s role as ‘the conscience of American conservatism’ forced them to ‘come to the defence’ of the JBS (and Welch) ‘for civil libertarian reasons and to protect the right-wing from continuing attack from the state’ in general and Bobby Kennedy in particular.

Yet despite the depth of conservative solidarity and his aversion to attacking a personal acquaintance, Buckley’s hesitation is particularly surprising given that he had already put some distance between NR and the JBS. He requested and received a copy of The Politician in 1958, and subsequently engaged in a rather frank (but private) correspondence with Welch himself and a JBS supporter named Cap Beezley along basically the same lines that he would later publish in the NR editorial. Publicly, the NR had already disagreed with Welch’s contention that Boris Pasternak’s Dr. Zhivago was part and parcel of the communist conspiracy through an article written by Reader’s Digest editor and old-time anticommunist Eugene Lyons. Moreover, the journal was under pressure from high-minded anticommunist conservatives who, like free-marketeer and academic Tibor R. Machan, thought that ‘conservative efforts are finding themselves hindered by some so-called ‘ultra-rightish’ forces’, and that ‘remembering Senator McCarthy’s fate we should have learned by now’. Even Buckley himself needed no reminding. In March 1961, he confidentially admitted to Goldwater that Welch was ‘nuts on the Eisenhower-Dulles issue’, and confided

128 Buckley, ‘The Uproar’, (my emphasis).
129 As quoted in Buckley, Miles Gone By, p. 510; Frank Meyer to the Editors, March 26, 1961, box 14, WFB papers.
131 All of this was mentioned in Buckley, ‘The Uproar’; see also Robert Welch to William F. Buckley, July 2, 1959; Buckley to Welch, July 21, 1959, f. Robert Welch, box 9, WFB papers.
his fears that ‘he [Welch] will do our cause much damage’. Thus, the men around NR knew the risks of Welch’s excesses and, beyond instinctive solidarity with fellow right-wingers under attack, other considerations weighed at least as heavily in their minds to counsel restraint.

Firstly, as a friendly correspondent took pains to emphasise to Buckley, there was a ‘long list’ of JBS collaborators who also happened to be directly linked with NR, including at least three names which appeared on the magazines masthead: that of millionaire conservative patron Seth Milliken, one of the main benefactors of the Review, as well as those of occasional collaborators and good friends of the journal Clarence Manion and Spruille Braden. As might be expected, the writer noted ‘what a mistake that book was’, but still advised that ‘if NR does have to speak ever, it should not be in the present climate of “smear”’. Along similar lines, Frank Meyer advised his colleagues that the journal ‘must in one way or another dissociate itself’ from the JBS, but also bear in mind that ‘some of the solidest conservatives in the country are members of the John Birch society’. Thus NR ought to ‘act in such a way as to alienate them no more than is strictly necessary from a moral, political and tactical point of view’. Meyer was painfully conscious that, to fulfil its moral role, the journal also had ‘to continue to exist and exert influence’, and emphasised that ‘whatever we do must be carefully thought out so that we do the most good and the least harm’. As it turned out, Buckley’s editorial came out in the same issue that also reminded National Review’s readers of the journal’s annual fund drive (an event which happened to be vital to the survival of the magazine). Meyer, like the rest of the contributors, must have been aware of the difficulties that the previous excommunication of fellow right-wingers – that of the American Mercury – had inflicted upon the magazine in the form of cancelled subscriptions. The same would happen again, except the JBS had a considerably larger membership than the Mercury had had readers (or indeed had NR itself), and that that

135 Frank Meyer to the Editors, March 26, 1961, box 14, ibid.
membership was entirely made up of natural National Review readers.\textsuperscript{136} Two weeks after the editorial saw the light, William Rusher counted up to 150 cancelled subscriptions but warned the editors that ‘a very great many’ readers were ‘holding on to their subscriptions for the moment’ but ‘putting us on a sort of probation’.\textsuperscript{137} Caution, it seems therefore, was entirely justified.

By January 1962, as Meyer had predicted, Goldwater’s presidential hopes were becoming increasingly plausible and the JBS affair, which kept attaching itself to the senator, was increasingly an embarrassment. In the end a gathering of conservative leaders (including Goldwater and Buckley themselves as well as William J. Baroody Sr. of the American Enterprise Institute and a number of Goldwater staffers) decided it was time to rid the conservative movement of Welch’s embarrassing delusions.\textsuperscript{138} It was too late. As might be seen from the work of a serious observer such as Richard Hofstadter, the JBS matter lingered on as a highly damaging issue during the election, and indeed did inflict considerable damage to the short-term growth of political conservatism. Yet when the eventual, definitive repudiation of the JBS came around the pain was serious and sustained. William Rusher noted that ‘renewal figures’ following the blow against the Society suggested the Review had managed to ‘alienate... a large part of the American Right on which we had been battening’. National Review’s publisher felt that ‘quite a substantial fraction of our readership has bled away’ and that, after attacking Welch, the journal had probably reached its ‘upper limit of readership’. Painfully enough, Rusher believed that the JBS’ journal American Opinion had replaced NR as ‘the bible’ of a significant portion of the American right.\textsuperscript{139} The reaction was so stunning that it even surpassed the Buckleyites predictions and drove Buckley to, again, hesitate and ponder whether the repudiation of the JBS had not been ‘too severe’.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{136} ’Notes and Asides’, NR, April 22, 1961, p. 243. See also readers’ protestations and cancellations dated between April and June 1959, f. American Mercury Controversy, box 7, ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} William Rusher to William F. Buckley, March 2, 1961, f. IOM, box 20, ibid.
\textsuperscript{139} William Rusher to William F. Buckley, May 23, 1963, f. IOM, box 26, WFB papers.
\textsuperscript{140} Kirk, Sword of Imagination, pp. 257–59.
To be sure, the reaction from supporters of the JBS was perfectly understandable and entirely predictable. Unlike in 1961, this second time *National Review* did not draw any distinction between Welch and his organisation. In quick succession the *Review*, Barry Goldwater and Russell Kirk - the former on the widely seen TV show *Meet the Press*, the latter from the pages of the Catholic journal *America* - demanded the resignation of Welch from the JBS or the resignation of its members. Kirk associated Welch with 'freaks, charlatans, profiteers and foolish enthusiasts', as well as with 'political silliness'. More importantly, in the process he also trumpeted Goldwater's denunciation as 'the beginning, probably, of a general effort by enlightened American conservatives to reform or else cast off the political fantasists who have been clinging to their coattails' among which, besides the JBS were also to be counted other notorious (and embarrassing) right-wing activists such as Dan Smoot and Kent and Phoebe Courtney.141 After so much hesitation and caution, *NR* conservatives still could not avoid the wrath of Welch and his supporters, but nonetheless managed to fail miserably in their enterprise of modifying mainstream and liberal opinion: the antics of Robert Welch did indeed seriously hamper, at least in the short term, the hopes of those politicians associated with conservatism.

In 1964 the Democrats made sure that Goldwater's equivocal stands towards the JBS in 1961 were given considerably more publicity than his full repudiation in 1962, which effectively contributed to the magnitude of the electoral debacle. Prior to that, the tardy and weak conservative response to Robert Welch's claims also generated considerable problems for Richard Nixon, then running for governor of California.142 To be sure, at first Nixon had few of the qualms over which the men of *National Review* agonised. Back in the early 1950s, unlike his imitator Joe McCarthy (and McCarthy's collaborators such as Bozell and Buckley), Nixon sensed soon enough the limits of the red-scare, of its accompanying populist strategy and of conservative strength within (even more so without) the GOP. During the 1952 primaries, he allied himself with Eisenhower's brand of eastern republicanism and

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against Robert Taft, the conservative champion. Subsequently, Nixon moved away from the folksy, populist anticommunism of his Capitol days, while desperately attempting to repackage himself for the first time (it would not be the last) as a ‘New Nixon’: statesman-like, moderated and above everything, presidential. In 1962 it was only natural that he would repeatedly and vociferously repudiate the John Birch Society. Alas, ‘New Nixon’ or not, he still remained a standard-bearer for anticommunists determined to root out traitors from government, and was still seen by the general public (however vaguely) as somewhat to the right. Therefore the California press corps, not to mention Governor Pat Brown, kept asking the Republican candidate about the John Birch Society – hence doing him no favours among moderate and conservative-to-moderate voters. At the same time, every denial cost Nixon – as happened to the *National Review* editors – greater resentment from a hard-right that in California was, to an inordinate extent, made up of members of the John Birch Society. Among senior California Republicans, Nixon lost the support of Congressman John Rousselot, which could have helped to heal the wounds of the bruising primaries and to mobilise right-wing activists for the Nixon gubernatorial candidacy. Even Ronald Reagan, then a rising star and much sought-after conservative speaker, was careful to keep a low profile and as much distance as possible from the troubled Nixon candidacy. It is obviously absurd to account for Nixon’s defeat based only on the JBS issue, but disturbances on the far-right that forced impossible choices upon candidates facing close elections definitely contributed to the transformation of Nixon’s initially comfortable lead into a five per cent majority for Pat Brown. Nixon, for one, fully realised in 1962 that Republicans just could not win without the party’s right. With the experience of 1962 behind him, and the realities of delegate arithmetic for the 1968 convention ahead, Richard Nixon turned right. On their part, conservatives after 1964 also realised that the faithful could not win general elections as long as their candidates could be associated with extremist movements. Some of those conservatives would subsequently be readier than ever to rally behind a candidate who, if not ideologically immaculate, could be a plausible winner. If strict constructionism of the conservative gospel was too much for the electorate maybe a loyal Republican – one who, say, had soldiered on for Goldwater – would do. As conservatives looked around while 1964
became 1965, there was only one such hopeful in sight. It would seem that, no matter what Richard Nixon or conservatives did, their fortunes remained firmly tied to one other's.

CONCLUSION

During the 1950s, conservatives managed to make their challenge to the political consensus built by Franklin D. Roosevelt both more acceptable and more respectable. They offered the electorate a set of values according to which government, the left, and certain elements of the media and the education establishment bore the main responsibility for the problems of the nation. In the process, conservatism also articulated an alternative vision of the good, traditional, American citizen that fully coincided with that peddled by emerging Republicans such as Richard Nixon: the self-reliant, traditionally minded individual. The ultimate repudiation of the John Birch Society, like the excommunication of the *American Mercury*, eventually helped to dissociate respectable conservatism from the less savoury elements of the far right. By the beginning of 1965, the men around *National Review* had finally managed to establish what, exactly, constituted 'good conservatism'. The JBS, like the *Mercury*, eventually fell into obscurity and irrelevance, while its attacks on the Buckleyites – Eugene Lyons for instance would find himself accused of collaboration with the worldwide communist plot under the guidance of David Dubinsky, then president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union – merely enhanced the former's shaky position within the political mainstream.\(^\text{143}\) *National Review* continued on, strengthened, as American conservatism's intellectual centre of gravity. In 1962 and 1964 the Democrats could easily pin the label of 'extremist' on any given candidate associated with conservatism. In 1968 such a tactic was not seriously attempted against their Republican foes.

Divisions within the conservative grassroots persisted, but in the run up to the 1968 presidential campaign conservatives were both more united than ever before behind the GOP, and in control of the basic levers of the Republican party’s grassroots machinery. Simultaneously, the Buckleyites had also managed to construct an embryonic network of organisations centred around the Republican pressure group American Conservative Union (ACU), the youth organisation Young Americans for Freedom and the splinter Conservative Party of New York State. Through the magazine itself and the increasing muscle of this organisational network, the Review’s senior editors could and did claim virtually unchallenged ideological control, and as much overall capacity for political direction as could be reasonably expected in a diverse and fast-growing movement made up of highly opinionated and independent-minded activists. This success was partly the result of a conscious attempt at building up a reasonably cohesive movement, and partly the outcome of prudence and a remarkable determination to not offend any given family of the movement, including its ‘crackpot’ wing, beyond the strictly necessary. In a sense the material needs of a journal that actually suffered from cancelled subscriptions – hence the cautious behaviour of its senior staff – helped the NR circle built its influence. That said, from the mid-1960s onwards no conservative politician or activist in possession of an instinct for self-preservation would choose to ignore, much less openly defy, the National Review. Needless to say, if there was one virtuoso in the art of political survival in mid-century America that was surely Richard Nixon. Although he may have been second to none in terms of political opportunism, Nixon’s political outlook, political message and, for what they were worth, his actual ideological instincts (one hesitates to speak of ‘convictions’) on issues such as the red scare, ethics or even economics always remained strong positive forces driving him towards the conservative camp – or at least, they did so as long as this did not conflict with his electoral interests. Besides, as a close look at conservatives reveals, the most ideologically committed Savonarolas of the right – such as Burnham, Meyer and Bozell – could also be found engaged in some opportunism of their own, not infrequently in support, reluctant as it may have been,

144 See Liebman, Coming Out Conservative.
of a certain politician from Yorba Linda with a near-unfailing knack of spotting the direction of the political wind.

After the 1964 debacle Richard Nixon, still remembered by many as the first hero of the common American against the depredations of big government, surfaced as the sole presidential and loyal Republican that all conservatives could stomach and a few could even like. Once and again, frequently to both Nixon’s and conservatives’ chagrin, they found themselves catering to the same conservative and moderate-to-conservative constituency both within the GOP’s party structure and its corps of grassroots supporters, as well as within the electorate at large. Both parties believed themselves to be under attack from the same foes – led by the national press corps who had allegedly ruined Nixon’s electoral chances in 1960 and 1962 and savaged Barry Goldwater in 1964. During his ill-fated campaign for the governorship of California, Nixon experienced for the first time, the result of determined, well-coordinated and widespread conservative opposition in an actual electoral contest. Subsequently a horrified Nixon ensured that the first would also be the last instance. To the end of his political career, Nixon was willing to endure a degree of hostility from the right-wing intelligentsia in order to increase his overall electoral appeal, but would never again risk seriously displeasing conservative political activists. On the other hand, for twenty years conservatives could not bring themselves to inflict upon Nixon the same sort of sustained, ruthless attacks they administered to Rockefeller, John Lindsay, Dwight Eisenhower and virtually every other Republican candidate to left of Strom Thurmond (as well as some who were on his right). During all those years Richard Nixon translated into electoral politics the right’s contentions about the (populist) true soul of the nation and the nature of its adversaries. After 1964, it was only natural that Richard Nixon, always the good Republican, would seek the support of all those good conservatives busily redeeming the GOP
CHAPTER 2

THE 1968 ELECTION AND THE NORTHERNISATION OF SOUTHERN CONSERVATISM

The readjustment of the relationship between the White House and conservative Southern politicians between 1968 and 1973 was a central novelty of the Nixon administration. Until relatively recently, however, historians have preferred to focus instead on South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond's shift to the Republican party in 1964, and the subsequent emergence of the 'Sunbelt South' during the 1980s.\(^1\) Nixon, sandwiched in between these two explosions of conservative strength and Southern change, rarely receives much attention as an instrument of the conservative movement beyond the crucial role played by certain Southern Republican politicians during the 1968 national Republican convention.\(^2\) Yet it has never been doubted that Nixon's selection as Republican candidate in 1968 was a direct consequence of his ability to unite the party behind a moderate candidate acceptable to all factions within the GOP.\(^3\) As was widely acknowledged during the election and its immediate aftermath, he accomplished this partly by steering to the right, and thereby acknowledging and furthering the weakening of the liberal wing of the Republican party. Another phenomenon of equal importance, but less noticed at the time, was that Southerners did more than merely propel executive rhetoric and policy to the right. They also showed considerable flexibility and allowed Nixon to accommodate certain liberal Republican demands in order to preserve party unity in the election and the appeal to moderate voters.

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Although the crucial impact of the rise of Southern conservatism within the conservative movement, and Richard Nixon's central role in the consolidation of these Southerners within national politics, have long been acknowledged, the impact of Nixon's southern policy as a fundamental element in the growth of conservative influence in the national politics of the United States has largely been downplayed. Scholars and conservative activists are quite right to emphasise that the Nixon administration was not conservative in the sense that the Goldwater candidacy of 1964 was conservative. Most certainly, even though Nixon hoped to oversee a number of significant changes over the practices of post-war executives, he never proposed a sudden break with the existing social-democratic status quo comparable to that which had been self-consciously championed by Barry Goldwater. But then, Richard Nixon actually wanted to be president. He understood that, even under increasing strain, the United States as a polity was not prepared for outright and radical rejection of either familiar social-democratic governmental practices or of the basic assumptions supporting them. Yet, significant aspects of his administration's political behaviour made crucial contributions to the consolidation of an emerging new conservatism as a respectable contender for power. This chapter argues that in fact Nixon's behaviour as presidential candidate and president played a fundamental role in aiding the increasingly pragmatic Southern conservatives to move from being the marginalised representatives of reaction to becoming a major force in the national arena. Part one examines the composition of the main political groups within Southern politics during the 1960s, their relative strengths and their relations with the national political parties and the federal government; part two analyses the behaviour of Southern Republicans during the 1968, and part three the impact of that campaign upon the national political theatre during the subsequent presidential election campaign and Nixon's administration. Finally, part four assesses the effect of these

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developments upon the relationship between the Southerners and the National Review conservatives.

1. SOUTHERNERS, REPUBLICANS, AND PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

In modern American politics, 'the South' is usually understood to represent the eleven states that seceded from the Union in 1860–61, plus Oklahoma, Kentucky, and sometimes other 'border states' such as Maryland, Missouri, and West Virginia. By the 1960s, the meaning of the South had begun to merge with a different label, that of the 'Sunbelt', which would expand the group to include Southwestern states such as Arizona and New Mexico which were then experiencing similar socio-economic changes and emerging as an economic powerhouse vying for influence with the declining industrial centres of the North and Northeast. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, most observers still associated the South with the former Confederacy. Since the end of Reconstruction, the single most important characteristic of Southern politics had been its one-party quality. For most white Southerners the GOP remained the party of Lincoln and 'Northern aggression', and consequently, electoral politics gravitated around Democratic primaries followed by elections with only token or no Republican participation at all. In national politics, these elected officials acted as a cohesive and distinct group, providing mutual support based on common electoral needs: above all ensuring re-election by showing effective opposition to the civil rights initiatives pushed by the federal (mostly Democratic) authorities. In the public mind, Southern conservatism had been headed since the end of World War II by Strom Thurmond, the senator from South Carolina who, out of opposition to the national Democratic party's support for civil rights legislation, led the 'Dixiecrat' Southern Democrats away from the national party to run as an independent segregationist candidate in 1948, and left the party for good in 1964. However, these Southerners should be divided into at least two different

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5 The former Confederacy consisted of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North and South Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.
categories. From 1964 onwards an increasingly large segment of Southern political activists and elected officials operated as ‘Southern Republicans’, and after 1968 would either work within the Nixon administration or were particularly close to it. Secondly, the ‘Southern bloc’ was a slightly different, larger, but overlapping category that included Southern conservatives within and without Congress regardless of party affiliation. Thus, a smaller but growing group was made up by men like Senator Strom Thurmond himself; Senator John Tower (Texas) and Edward J. Gurney (Florida), who had either moved to the GOP or had been elected as Republicans. Yet most Southern conservatives, including some very prominent and influential members of the congressional Southern bloc such as Senator Richard Russell (Georgia), Harry F. Byrd (Virginia), Robert Byrd (West Virginia), John Stennis and James Eastland (Mississippi) and John McClellan (Arkansas) remained firmly within the Democratic fold. Partisan lines notwithstanding, the Southern bloc continued, however, to operate in much the same cohesive form as Richard Nixon entered the White House.

To be sure, it should not be automatically assumed that Southern politicians of either party conformed to the conservative mould except perhaps on the race issue, and even in racial matters, from the mid-1960s onwards both Republicans and Democrats tended to veer towards more liberal positions. For instance, in 1966 the Republicans managed to capture, for the first time in a century, two gubernatorial seats below the Mason-Dixon Line, but neither Winthrop Rockefeller in Arkansas nor Claude Kirk in Florida could be considered as conservatives and, regarding civil rights, Rockefeller quietly desegregated Arkansas’ schools, while Kirk ran a relatively liberal first campaign and behaved as a somewhat liberal governor until his second race (which he lost). Howard Baker Jr., who became Republican senator from Tennessee may have been a fiscal conservative, but he was also a racial liberal. As for Southern Democrats, men such as Arkansas Senator William Fulbright and Georgia’s Richard Russell (a man respected by both conservatives and Nixon himself) supported

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Lyndon Johnson's liberal initiatives, with the conspicuous exception of civil rights legislation—again a position which Fulbright subsequently moved away from. Similarly, there were limits to the willingness of the Southern Democrats to cross partisan lines. From his position in Nixon's Justice Department, Richard Kleindienst observed that, notwithstanding his support for certain presidential initiatives, Mississippi's Senator James Eastland continued to maintain Democratic discipline. Most conspicuously, North Carolina's Senator Sam Ervin would become a prime actor in Nixon's impeachment in his capacity as chairman of the Senate's Watergate committee.

But in broad terms, Southern Democrats and their conservative Republican counterparts from both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line had been routinely forming ad hoc coalitions generally (and correctly) regarded as 'conservative'. The success of this alliance rested on certain shared political views—particularly, but not exclusively, in the field of civil rights. A common, generally conservative outlook had helped Southern Democrats to routinely coalesce with congressional Republicans against liberal policies since the 1930s, be they New Deal reforms such as the Farm Security Administration and the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, or anti-labour measures such as the Smith-Connally Act and the Taft-Hartley Act, as well as Harry Truman's civil rights initiatives. Not surprisingly then, the conservative weekly National Review was not averse to lending its support to Southern Democrats and their views. On the eve of Richard Nixon's 1968 victory, the Republican Battle Line, another organ of Buckleyite conservatism published by the American Conservative Union, fervently hoped for a consolidation of the 'Republican-Southern Democratic coalition that has operated so effectively in the past to stop the passage of more radical Democrat legislation'. As Richard Nixon's political travails worsened in 1973 and 1974, the administration would continue to bank on the loyalty of Southern Democrats as

much as — and sometimes more than — that of even the conservative members of the president’s own party.

Perhaps most importantly, this Congressional coalition and the influence of Southern delegates in Washington generally rested on the remarkable adroitness with which Southern Democrats used the congressional seniority system to capture power-brokering positions in key committees. Of sixteen Senate committees in 1963, Southern Democrats chaired ten and were ranking members of another two. The powerful House Committee on Appropriations was chaired by a Southern Democrat from 1955 to 1993, including Texas’s George H. Mahon, a reliable Nixon supporter, between 1964 and 1979; the Senate Appropriations Committee was chaired by a Southern Democrat between 1969 and 1977, and by Senator John McLellan, another dependable source of support for Nixon, between 1972 and 1977. A further Nixon-friendly Southern Representative, Arkansas’ Wilbur Mills, chaired the powerful House Committee on Ways and Means between 1957 and 1976. Finally, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary was chaired by Mississippi’s James O. Eastland, who was to become another steadfast ally of the president, from 1956 to 1978. From that position, Eastland proceeded, according to a friendly Attorney General, to hijack the theoretically presidential prerogative of proposing judicial appointees to federal tribunals other than the Supreme Court. Right-wing Southerners were a crucial congressional force for any president, and as Richard Nixon moved into the White House facing a Democratic-controlled Congress, courting such a lever to compensate for the Republican’s minority status become a priority. In fact, the administration consistently attempted to attract conservative (mostly Southern) Democrats into the fold of either the Republican party or into an entirely new political organisation. As part of this strategy, Nixon would court prominent Democrats such as former Johnson staffer Daniel Patrick Moynihan in an effort that crystallised with John Connally’s appointment as Treasury Secretary, and culminated with a 1971 attempt to orchestrate the formalisation of an en masse defection of congressional Southern Democrats

to the Republican party. Although Watergate and the thorny issue of re-adjusting seniority prevented these White House schemes from succeeding, the administration was still quite successful at retaining Southern support.

That relationship was buttressed by a certain degree of philosophical agreement, or at least the image of it, projected by the White House. John Ehrlichman, Nixon's chief domestic advisor, believed that 'in fact,' the president 'felt closer' in ideological terms to certain Southern Democrats such as senators John Stennis and Russell Long than to liberal Republicans, certainly to those prone to displays of dovish instincts towards the Vietnam war. In a similar vein, Harry Dent, the White House's liaison with the South, believed that Nixon not only 'understood' the concerns of Southern conservatives, but also 'shared in them considerably'. Raymond Price, a Nixon loyalist and a relatively liberal northerner who worked as a senior White House speech writer, also reminisced about Nixon's genuine 'deep resentment' of the 'Northern attitude' towards the South, and about the president's sincere admiration for certain aspects of Southern politics and Southern conservatism. Just in case that did not suffice - and much to the delight of Southerners on Capitol Hill - Nixon maintained a clear line of communication between the White House and its Southern base of support in Congress. The president appointed Bryce Harlow, a conservative Oklahoman well known among the White House staff for being 'opposed to desegregation in all its aspects', as the White House congressional liaison. William Timmons, formerly from the staff of Tennessee congressman Bill Brock, became Harlow's assistant. Nixon's feelings towards conservative Southerners seem to have been reciprocated. The conservative newspaper Battle Line certainly believed that Southern Democrats would be a crucial element of support for the Nixon White House, and subsequent developments tend to support such views. John Ehrlichman, for one, estimated that between 1970 and 1972 eighteen Southern Democratic congressmen and eight senators voted for presidential policies at least 80 per cent of time.

11 Hodgson, World Turned Right Side Up, pp. 125-27; Mason, Quest for a New Majority, pp. 129-31.
14 Price, With Nixon, pp. 120-21.
15 Ehrlichman, Witness to Power, p. 224.
thus compensating for an equal number of Republican congressmen and nine Republican
senators who supported the White House in less than half of congressional votes.\(^{16}\)

If the strength of Southern Democrats within the legislative branch was a major reason
for Nixon’s courtship of the South, the key factor was the matter of his own electoral
prospects. Since the 1930s, the Democratic party had won all but two presidential contests,
and those two when the Republican ticket was headed by Dwight Eisenhower, a national hero
who also happened to have been born in Texas. This dominance had been based on a broad
electoral coalition in which the solidly Democratic South was a central plank. However,
conservative Southern Democrats had been threatening ‘a revolt from national party policies’
and to ‘destroy the party in the South’ since the late 1930s.\(^{17}\) Conversely, Southern
Republican inroads in presidential elections had begun under Eisenhower, who in 1952
capitalised on the growing tension between Southern conservatives and national liberal
Democrats to capture Florida, Tennessee, Texas, Oklahoma and Virginia. After the General’s
victory, the Republican National Committee attempted, for the first time, to seriously
challenge the Democratic juggernaut and to establish a permanent Republican foothold by
organizing an aptly named ‘Operation Dixie’ to reorganise and consolidate the party below
the Mason-Dixon Line.\(^{18}\) Eight years later, conservatives were already explaining the
relatively strong showing of Nixon in that region because ‘a new generation in the South is
seeking an alternative to the Democratic party dominated by radicals and liberals’.\(^{19}\) In 1961,
John Tower seemed to confirm such speculation when he won Texas’s senatorial race and
became the first Southern Republican senator in a century. To a large extent, it was
Eisenhower’s strategy that had precipitated Thurmond’s defection to the GOP in 1964, and
Goldwater’s subsequent strong showing in the Old Confederacy.\(^{20}\) Goldwater, however,
added a slight improvement to the GOP’s electoral efficiency in the South. During the 1950s
and early 1960s, Southern Republicans had tended to appeal to an expanding, urban,

\(^{17}\) Bartley, \textit{New South}, p. 80; Black, \textit{Rise of Southern Republicans}, p. 32.
\(^{19}\) Raymond Moley, ‘Why the South Resists the GOP’, \textit{Human Events}, February 3, 1961 (hereafter \textit{HE}).
upwardly-mobile segment of the white electorate which was attracted to a relatively moderate (for Southern white standards) stance on the race matter. In 1964 that state of affairs began to change.

By the mid-1960s the tensions between the liberal, pro-civil rights national Democrats and their Southern brethren were obvious enough. Conservative observers in particular wondered rather loudly whether ‘the demands of the Negro minority’ would ‘have the effect of breaking up’ the Democratic electoral coalition, or at least of reducing it ‘to the point where it can no longer command an effective majority’. Barry Goldwater and certain right-wing Republicans clearly thought so. The 1964 Republican presidential candidate told his fellow Republicans to ‘go hunting where the ducks are’, and proceeded to shift the party’s racial stand in order to exploit the prejudices of Southern whites. Among the earlier symptoms of the re-adjustment to the right of Republican’s Southern strategy was the intense courtship of both Strom Thurmond and George Wallace, the rabidly segregationist governor of Alabama, with the aim of pulling both away from the Democratic party and into the Republican ranks. This strategy was directed by Roger Milliken, a wealthy South Carolinian textile manufacturer who doubled as South Carolina’s GOP finance chairman, Goldwater man, main financial backer of Strom Thurmond (then a Democrat), and benefactor of conservative causes everywhere. Wallace never became a Republican, but shortly after Goldwater’s nomination, Thurmond changed parties and joined John Tower as the second Republican senator from the South. Goldwater for his part, went on to win Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina for the Republican ticket. These successes notwithstanding, he also managed to produce the worst presidential defeat in American history, losing in every other state except (barely) his native Arizona.

From the viewpoint of Southern Republicanism, the election of 1964 was determinant for 1968 on two accounts. Firstly, Republican convention rules rewarded states with strong

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results in the previous election. Goldwater’s success in the South and his disastrous showing elsewhere reinforced the Southerners’ voting strength in the 1968 convention to 356 delegates, making for 26.7 per cent of all votes, or about half the total number of delegates needed to win the nomination. The Goldwater debacle was sufficiently bad to force the party to alter the rules governing its National Committee so as to include all state chairmen, because originally only those states which had produced a congressional win or a presidential majority were eligible for representation. Applying these rules would have resulted in a drastic and somewhat surreal shift: a virtually all-Southern National Committee in a party with virtually no elected officials in the South. Moreover, the Southern delegations’ ability to co-ordinate efforts under an informal unity-rule agreement forced any serious candidate in the 1968 primaries to, at the very least, reach some form of accommodation. Secondly, Goldwater may have carried the South; but he did so at the cost of delivering a crushing defeat for his party. Dragged down by its presidential candidate, the GOP lost three senators (partly compensated with a win in California) and 36 Representatives. In 1966, even Ronald Reagan – universally seen as Goldwater’s heir – politely asked the Arizonan to stay away from his California gubernatorial race. The sobering effect of the 1964 election, and the subsequent impulse provided by the Johnson administration’s civil rights and welfare policies cannot be overstated. In 1968, Southern Republicans were determined to back a candidate who could plausibly reach the White House, contribute to a congressional Republican majority or, hopefully, deliver both. Richard Nixon, with his track-record of support for Goldwater in the 1964 general election, anticommunist credentials and life-long avoidance of open conflict with conservatives, was the only Republican with whom conservative Southerners could live to hold such a promise.

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This gave Nixon a distinctive advantage over the available alternatives: Nelson Rockefeller, the liberal governor of New York, and Ronald Reagan, the conservative governor of California. Rockefeller was universally perceived as a potential winner in the general election, but he was also anathema to Republican conservatives generally and to Southerners in particular. Reagan was the darling of the conservative South, but as far as men like South Carolina's Republican Party chairman Harry Dent were concerned, the unfortunate fact in 1967 was that 'Reagan was being perceived as another Goldwater. He could arouse the GOP stalwarts, but he would be rejected in a national election'. At a meeting with South Carolina Republican activists early during the 1968 primary season, Strom Thurmond put the message across to the party faithful. As far as the primaries went, said Thurmond, 'a vote for Reagan is a vote for Rockefeller', and concluded that 'we have no choice, if we want to win, except to vote for Nixon'. Perhaps sensing that his audience was not quite as ecstatic as it might be, Thurmond went on to press home the central point in the starkest terms: 'we must quit using our hearts and start using our heads'. He then proceeded to remind them of the horrors of 1964: 'I have been down this road so I know,' and based on that knowledge, Thurmond's conclusion was that 'I love Reagan, but Nixon's the one'.

2. THE 1968 PRIMARIES

The influence of the Southern bloc upon the administration has been well known since Nixon won the Republican primaries of 1968. According to most journalistic accounts published during and immediately after the election, the Nixon campaign manoeuvred to secure the political capital of the Southern Republicans in order to ensure his victory against competitors from the right within and without the GOP. Following this standard account, Nixon's strategy culminated when, as a result of his intense courtship, Strom Thurmond handed the Southern vote to the future president during the 1968 Republican convention.

25 Den, Prodigal South Returns, p. 79.
26 Chester, American Melodrama, p. 448.
Not surprisingly, contemporary press-records and more than a few political analysts (not least conservatives) focused heavily on Nixon’s Southern strategy as a symptom of the impending realignment of American politics, and of Nixon’s ruthless political skill in channelling this process for his own purposes.28 However, the behaviour of both Nixon and the Southerners needs to be put in perspective. Nixon’s willingness and ability to engage with discontented Southerners was neither new nor particularly imaginative, and it should be understood as a continuation and a consequence of similar strategies followed by the Republican Party leadership during the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. To be sure, the results of the 1964 election that strengthened Republican Southerners while penalising northern liberals in the 1968 primaries were an artificial distortion of actual party strength, while Strom Thurmond’s defection to the GOP and Republican victories such as those of Representatives Skip Bafalis in Florida and Prentiss Walker in Mississippi remained the exception rather than the norm within Southern politics. Yet, the Republican convention of 1968 certainly remained a powerful dramatisation of a crucial qualitative change: the collapse of single-party politics below the Mason-Dixon Line, and the growth there of a fundamentally conservative Republican party apparatus.

However, press accounts overlooked a second aspect of the relationship between Richard Nixon and Southern Republicans. In 1968 Thurmond had reminded South Carolina Republicans of the need to avoid a repetition of the 1964 electoral catastrophe. He was not alone. As a matter of a fact, Nixon did not even need to approach the Southerners: they approached him. As early as 1966, a close-knit group of conservative Republican cadres had met in Atlanta to discuss political prospects. Those in attendance included Mississippi’s Republican national committeeman Fred LaRue; Alabama’s Republican party leader John Grenier; Charles Middendorf, the party’s national treasurer and a northern conservative with

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close ties with South Carolina's Roger Milliken; and Peter O'Donnell, the party state chairman in Texas and one of those fiercely conservative Southerners struggling to dominate the Southern wing of the GOP. Like Thurmond, these men had been deeply involved in the inebriating conservative triumph in the 1964 Republican primaries and, most importantly, in the subsequent hangover. Hence, looking towards 1968 they were driven by two overriding interests: avoiding the capture of the Republican nomination by a liberal-leaning candidate, and preventing another disaster of Goldwater proportions. Like Thurmond, they were also 'determined that this time reason and logic would determine their choice'. 29 While the Atlanta group considered the advantages of nominating Richard Nixon, Nixon himself travelled to Columbia, South Carolina, to speak at a fund-raising event on behalf of Republican congressional candidates. Harry Dent, the state's party chairman and a close associate of Strom Thurmond, has claimed that he had personally 'sold the Southern strategy to Nixon' while driving him to the airport. In this conversation, after Nixon mentioned his plans to run in 1968, Dent reminded Nixon of the support that Thurmond had given to Goldwater in 1964, and of how instrumental that support had been. Subsequently, another group of embryonic Southern support was formed around Dent, this group including Mississippi Republican chairman Clarke Reed; Florida's William (Bill) Murphin; and later, Georgia's Howard (Bo) Callaway. Sometimes called the 'Greenville group' because of their frequent meetings at Reed's home in Greenville, Mississippi, like those meeting in Atlanta, these men had also chosen their presidential favourite before the candidate himself had yet engaged in either serious campaigning or serious courtship of Southern cadres.30

The first action of the Atlanta group, in April of that same year, was to arrange for LaRue and O'Donnell to request an appointment with Nixon and meet the yet-to-be-declared candidate in his New York law office, in order to ascertain whether the former vice-president would consider running were they to succeed in stimulating enough party support. He would. Nixon was also prepared to fulfil the only two requests the pair advanced as a precondition

29 Shadegg, Winning's a Lot More Fun, p. 65.
30 Dent, Prodigal South, pp. 6, 77, 85.
for their support. The first of these was that the now-candidate would refrain from micro-managing the entire campaign (widely assumed in Republican circles to have been Nixon's downfall in the close 1960 election). Mindful of the effects that having a 'southern strategy' had had upon Goldwater, their second condition was that Nixon allow this newfound source of Southern support to remain quietly away from the public eye for the time being. No other issues and no other requests were raised by LaRue and O'Donnell before they went back South to organise a 'Secret Steering Committee' to prop up the campaign. In December 1966, the group - now in close collaboration with Nixon's own men - helped to hire Gaylord Parkinson, formerly chairman of the California Republican party, and better known for healing the wounds of the vicious infighting within the state party to which Nixon had fallen victim in his 1962 gubernatorial race. It was also this group that, by March 1967, had made Parkinson director of 'Nixon for President', headquartered in Washington DC. However, Parkinson's Washington organisation clashed with Nixon's New York operation under the control of John Mitchell, then an unknown partner in the candidate's law firm. O'Donnell travelled to New York to try to resolve the situation (and to remind Nixon of his earlier promises) to no avail. Shortly thereafter, Parkinson left 'Nixon for President' and O'Donnell resigned as chairman of the Steering Committee. Yet, although both left the campaign, both did so quietly, deliberately avoiding damaging publicity about Nixon's failure to maintain his side of the bargain. O'Donnell continued to actively support the candidacy, as did his associate and fellow Texan, Senator John Tower, who declined to replace Parkinson on the grounds that working in the South he felt would be more efficient than moving to Washington. LaRue, however, remained a member of the official campaign.

Nixon may have been prepared to disregard Southern assistance within the senior levels of his campaign organisation, but he did not do such a thing when it came to the support of the Southerners in another, absolutely crucial, aspect of the campaign. The main service provided by both the Atlanta and the Greenville groups was to herd Southern delegates

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32 Shadegg, Winning's a Lot More Fun, pp. 113-14; White, Making of the President, p. 53.
towards the Nixon camp. Shortly after sounding out Nixon’s intentions, O’Donnell organised a meeting of the Southern Association of Republican Chairmen in December 1966, just ahead of the meeting of the Republican National Committee to be held in New Orleans in January 1967. The objective of the former was to ascertain Nixon’s popularity as a potential candidate within the Southern wing of the party, and to initiate a sustained effort to prevent any potential coalescence of support behind any other candidate. Yet, somewhat surprisingly, O’Donnell, LaRue, and their associates appeared to have not entirely coordinated their activities on behalf of Nixon with the Greenville group. The latter followed a similar but qualitatively different approach. O’Donnell’s group had formally committed themselves to Nixon even before they knew that he intended to run, and subsequently became a formal part of the campaign. Even after O’Donnell’s departure from the Steering Committee, LaRue remained embedded in the Nixon organisation. Not so the men from Greenville. Instead of publicly committing themselves to Nixon, Dent and his associates chose to retain the external wrappings of the undecided. The roots of this approach were again in the 1964 campaign, when Strom Thurmond and the rest of the Southern GOP had declared for Goldwater so early in the campaign that they had lost all bargaining power with the candidate. Moreover, Richard Nixon might have been considered a lesser evil, or a tolerable candidate by the leadership, but grassroots supporters generally disregarded such complex considerations and were near-universally committed to the potential candidacy of Ronald Reagan. Besides, Nixon was still not completely trusted by anyone. Hence, Dent and his associates proposed a strategy of ‘hanging loose, but hanging together,’ or in other words, of keeping the various Southern delegations uncommitted, with the hope of extracting further concessions and reassurances from the candidate.\footnote{Dent, 	extit{Prodigal South}, p. 79.} On the surface, the different strategies caused some predictable conflict between the Atlanta group which, being part of the Nixon campaign, was openly engaging in delegate hunting; and the Greenville group, which was desperately trying to keep the Southern delegations from too close a rapprochement with any given candidate. In fact, the differences were never so great. Both the Greenville men and Harry Dent’s
associates engaged in a little exercise of double-crossing aimed at retaining Nixon’s attention and pliability.34

Another event of the 1964 election campaign that was to bear some significance in 1968 was the emergence of Ronald Reagan as a conservative champion. A formerly Democratic B-movie star, Reagan had hosted a series of television programmes and performed nationwide tours for General Electric’s Employee and Community Relations programmes since the fall of 1954. In 1964 General Electric had ‘loaned’ Reagan to the Goldwater campaign, towards the end of which he had recorded a short speech for television, ‘A Time for Choosing’, which propelled him to conservative stardom.35 A few months after Peter O’Donnell and Fred LaRue had approached Richard Nixon in New York, the former actor went on to win the California gubernatorial race, running a campaign only slightly less conservative than Barry Goldwater’s had been in 1964, and against the same Democratic incumbent who had defeated Nixon in 1962.36 A mediocre actor, yet superb conservative proselytizer, had just become a deadly serious threat to Nixon’s chances in the Republican primaries of 1968. If most Southern Republicans harboured an irrepressible hatred of Nelson Rockefeller, they also seemed to share an equally irrepressible enthusiasm for the Governor of California. The Southern Republican leadership proceeded to exploit this state of affairs to increase their own bargaining power, and to commit Nixon to whatever promises they might exact in exchange for shielding the candidate’s right flank. The only problem was that Reagan was not running. To be sure, virtually as soon as he was sworn in as governor of California, the circle of conservative backers who had pressed him to run in 1966 began to press him to run in 1968, and by 1967 F. Clifton White, the mastermind behind Goldwater’s primary of 1964, was effectively directing Reagan’s presidential efforts. Nevertheless, Reagan’s efforts throughout 1967 and 1968 were conducted in absolute secrecy, and aimed at a declaration of candidacy at the last possible minute. After all, California voters were unlikely to appreciate the idea of their new governor running for national office in the middle of his term. Were Reagan to lose

34 Chester, American Melodrama, pp. 439, 443.
36 Ibid., pp. 121–24; Cannon, Reagan, pp. 110–17, 162–64.
the nomination in 1968, his prospects for re-election in the California race of 1970 had to be protected.\textsuperscript{37}

In view of this state of affairs, the Southern leadership proceeded to exert pressure on Nixon by using spontaneous grassroots support to start up their own 'Reagan for President' organisations throughout the South. They were so (involuntarily) successful that they actually came close to killing Nixon's own candidacy. As early as 1967, Peter O'Donnell and Senator Tower orchestrated the formation of Texas' 'Reagan for President', headed by J. R. (Butch) Butler, a loyal local cadre. Elsewhere there was no need for such manoeuvres. By the summer of 1968 Clifton White could count on Representative James C. Gardner leading a breakaway faction from the South Carolina delegation that neither Thurmond nor Dent could seemingly control. Prior to this, Martin Fieldman, Nixon's man in Florida, also reported to the national campaign on the alarming growth of uncontrollable Reagan support.\textsuperscript{38} Meanwhile Reagan himself, although still an official non-candidate, used his popularity to travel the length and breadth of the South in response to frequent speaking requests. In 1967 he earned the gratitude of South Carolina's Republicans (and particularly of their chairman) for participating in a fundraising event that cleared the debts that had been incurred by the party in the previous election. In May 1968 he visited Louisiana, North Carolina, Florida, and between June and July, toured Texas, Arkansas, Virginia and Maryland.\textsuperscript{39} Though Reagan did not officially campaign nor participate in the primaries, his support nevertheless grew from one per cent in New Hampshire to eleven percent per cent in the Wisconsin primary in April 1968, and from there it shot up to 22 per cent in Nebraska the following month, stabilizing at 23 per cent in Oregon.\textsuperscript{40} By then, the organisation set up by O'Donnell and Tower in Texas had escaped their control, and although they managed to prevent their delegation from going straight to Reagan, Nixon's Texans had to compromise. Instead of endorsing Nixon, Senator Tower went to the Miami convention as favourite son and was


\textsuperscript{38} Shadegg, Winning's a Lot More Fun, p. 20; Chester, American Melodrama, pp. 189, 443.

\textsuperscript{39} Dent, Prodigal South, p. 78; Chester, American Melodrama, p. 200; Shadegg, Winning's a Lot More Fun, p. 195.

\textsuperscript{40} Shadegg, Winning's a Lot More Fun, p. 156; Chester, American Melodrama, pp.206-208.
unable to extract anything beyond a promise to vote for Nixon in the event of a second ballot, but candidate Nixon needed their support in the first.41 By mid-1968, the situation below the Mason-Dixon line was so unstable that the Greenville group set up appointments with each one of the three main candidates. First with Rockefeller, who was (plausibly enough) hoping to reap the fruits of a conservative divide between Nixon and Reagan and to put some limits on the Southerners’ dislike of him; then with Reagan, who was (realistically) trying to break up into Nixon’s dominance of senior Republican ranks; and finally with Nixon (now seriously alarmed), who was trying to avoid the splintering of his own support toward Reagan.42 The Greenville group managed to force Reagan and Rockefeller to visit Reed’s estate in Georgia. Reagan aroused them, but, to the subsequent relief of his hosts, still refused to declare his candidacy. As Harry Dent put it, ‘had he asked for support in the atmosphere of that occasion, charged with this presence, the Californian would have received it from us then and there’, but ‘a non-candidate can be a non-candidate too long’. On May 19, 1968 the governor committed the same mistake again at the Southern State Chairmen’s conference in New Orleans.43

Richard Nixon had no such qualms. He met with the Greenville group on May 31 at the Marriot Hotel in Atlanta. This time Nixon embarked upon an intense campaign of courtship that would continue throughout the election and his entire term in office. The candidate presented himself as ‘sympathetic’ to southern concerns on issues ranging from civil rights to the war in Vietnam, through the Supreme Court.44 Dent himself was a little more forthright. Although reservations about Reagan’s ability to perform well in the general election were certainly an important element, the South Carolinian stated clearly that ultimately ‘Reagan was not my choice in 1968 because Nixon affirmed what people in the South wanted to hear’.45 After the meeting, Dent phoned Senator Thurmond, who flew to Atlanta on a

41 Chester, *American Melodrama*, pp. 442–44.
45 Dent, *Prodigal South*, p. 81.
chartered plane that same day. The following day, June 1, Thurmond and an expanded group of Southern Republican activists grilled Nixon again, and at the end of the meeting Thurmond committed himself to the candidate.\textsuperscript{46} It was three weeks later, at a meeting of the South Carolina delegation (each of whose 23 members were for Reagan), that the senator implored the faithful to 'quit using their hearts', and declared that he was 'laying my prestige, my record of forty years in public life, I am playing it all on the line this time' on behalf of Richard Nixon.\textsuperscript{47} Unlike John Tower's Texans, the South Carolina delegation went to the Republican national convention committed (if warily) to the Nixon candidacy.

Harry Dent and Fred Buzhardt, Dent's colleague on Thurmond's staff, travelled to Florida ahead of the rest of the delegation to prepare the ground for Nixon. Two weeks later, Reagan was the first candidate to reach the convention. Between that point and the acceptance speech, a painful battle developed between Nixon's men and the Reagan forces. The governor of California and his conservative backers joined forces with Nelson Rockefeller in an attempt to break enough Southern delegates away from the Nixon camp to force a second ballot. Being the ideal candidate for neither liberal nor conservative Republicans, Nixon's strength rested on his relative success in the primaries (he had won them all, but running virtually alone) and on a fragile coalition of liberal and conservative Republicans who, like the Southerners, wanted a presidential candidate able to defeat whomever the Democrats chose, and found him an acceptable, but far from ideal candidate. Since most of those delegates already committed to him were so only for a first ballot, Reagan planned to chip away support from Nixon's right. Both Reagan and Rockefeller planned to throw the nomination into a second or even third ballot in the hope of destabilising Nixon's forces. To the horror of the Southern leadership, their plans to use Reagan as a bargaining tool nearly worked too well. In the end Nixon won, but with only 26 votes over the 667 needed. It is a testament to Southern discipline and to the skill of the leadership that nearly half of those votes came from the South.\textsuperscript{48} Yet, the strategy was tremendously

\textsuperscript{46} Chester, \textit{American Melodrama}, p. 447; Dent, \textit{Prodigal South Returns to Power}, p. 207.
\textsuperscript{47} Chester, \textit{American Melodrama}, p. 448.
\textsuperscript{48} Chester, \textit{American Melodrama}, p. 434; Shadegg, \textit{Winning's a Lot More Fun}, p. 200.
successful in a different respect. Right up until the voting itself started, Reagan forced Dent, Buzhardt, and the rest to work tirelessly to counter his charm and the persistent rumours of a Nixon betrayal, but the very need for such exertion effectively earned them the future president’s gratitude and attention. From the day preceding voting night until the actual start of the voting, most rumours (fanned and inflated by both Reagan and Rockefeller) threatening Nixon’s chances concerned his choice of running mate. Long before the convention, the *New York Times* had proposed a Rockefeller-Reagan ‘dream ticket’ capable of balancing the internal politics of the GOP and presenting the electorate at large with a respectable presidential candidate. Following the same reasoning, rumours abounded during the convention about Nixon balancing his ticket with a liberal (and hence unacceptable for the Southern grassroots) candidate. On the very evening when the voting was to take place, the *Miami Herald* printed a story claiming that Nixon had already selected Mark Hatfield, a liberal senator from Oregon, as his running mate. The Southerners were forced to, literally, put their money where their mouths were to keep their delegations in line. Dent found the author of the article and, in front of the Louisiana delegation, bet him $300 that his story was wrong. Reed challenged his Mississippians to take on a $100 gamble each. Howard Callaway bullied the Georgians back into line with the same tactic.49

The issue of the vice-presidency had not been touched upon during the negotiations held between Nixon and his Southern backers before the convention. Even during the convention itself, Nixon had only promised Thurmond that he would choose a ‘national candidate’ or, in other words, someone who would not offend Southern sensitivities. During the tense hours that led to Nixon’s eventual victory, Thurmond and Dent claimed that the former possessed the power to force a choice of running mate on Nixon. Nixon had certainly never promised such a thing and, according to some accounts, he had decided to pick Spiro T. Agnew, then governor of Maryland, as early as the previous May.50 Yet, the truly remarkable event is that Thurmond did not quite exert such a power, and never tried to force any given

name on Nixon. The night before Nixon announced the name of his running-mate, the senator from South Carolina produced two lists of names. The first contained those of unacceptable liberal candidates (namely Rockefeller, Michigan governor George Romney and Senator Mark Hatfield). The second list included the names of the preferred conservatives: Ronald Reagan, Senators Tower and Baker, George W. Bush, Howard Griffin and Thurston Morton. The names on that list were in themselves quite revealing, for Griffin, Morton and Bush should be considered as moderates within the Republican right. Moreover, since at least mid-1967 and throughout convention, the Nixon forces had tried to stymie fledgling Reagan support by hinting at the chance of his becoming Nixon's running-mate. Reagan, who knew that acquiescing in such a thing would effectively kill his chances of capturing the leading spot, had flatly refused such a deal. Yet, in effect, Thurmond had declined to press Reagan onto Nixon, or in other words, had declined to press for the candidate that he knew would send his own grassroots into a delirium of ecstasy. Again, the painful memories of 1964 loomed large over the actions of Southern Republican cadres. At this point Richard Nixon had, as the press reported, plunged into a Southern strategy, but perhaps more importantly, once again, the Republican South displayed its willingness to moderate its demands in order to maximise Nixon's electability. Thurmond and the other southerners had managed to ensure that a candidate tolerable to their own constituents, or at least one that could be presented in the appropriate light, had captured the Republican nomination, and had also ensured that that candidate was firmly in their debt. Goldwater's chances of winning the 1964 convention had however been pulverized by the actions of the liberal-wing of the GOP. The men of Greenville and Atlanta were determined to avoid a reproduction of those devastating, internecine struggles this time around. As the discussion of possible choices went on around candidates who were objectionable to one or another Republican faction, Thurmond produced yet a third list. This included candidates who were not quite the South's first choice (like Reagan) or even 'acceptable' like the rest in the list of suitable names, but would still trigger

‘no objections’. Spiro T. Agnew, the virtually unknown governor of the border state of Maryland, was on that list.\textsuperscript{52}

Immediately after the Republican convention of 1968, the press reported that although the Southern caucus had not quite selected the vice-presidential candidate, Nixon had been presented with a list of unacceptable northern liberal Republicans, by which he had abided, and that Agnew had been chosen only after being deemed ‘acceptable’ by the South.\textsuperscript{53} Since the candidate allowed that impression to spread, it escaped no-one that, as far as the Southerners were concerned, the appointment meant ‘that the big [northern and liberal] cities didn’t get who they said they had to get’.\textsuperscript{54} The impact of Nixon’s choice for the vice-presidency on policy-making was zero, but the psychological boost that it provided to the embattled Southerners was incalculable. After the 1968 Republican convention, no literate Nixon voter could have remained blind to the fact that Nixon’s own candidacy and that of his running mate had come to be thanks to the offices of the Southern conservative bloc.\textsuperscript{55} After election night, it can have escaped no-one that the electorate at large had backed the candidate of the white South. In case anyone harboured doubts about the Southerners’ influence, Harry Dent went on to claim that Thurmond had personally ‘determined the outcome of the convention’. The senator himself was quite happy to use his first visit to President Nixon to let his influence on the White House be known, pushing for a military build-up at the expense of welfare spending – and hence doing no favours to Nixon’s delicate balancing exercise between moderate, liberal and conservative supporters.\textsuperscript{56} As for the Southern grassroots, South Carolina’s \textit{The State} felt entitled to demand the sacking of unpopular senior federal officials on the grounds that the president ‘owes a political debt of

\textsuperscript{52} Chester, \textit{American Melodrama}, p. 487; Dent, \textit{Prodigal South}, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{54} ‘Ex-Democrat, Ex-Dixiecrat, Today’s ‘Nixiecrat’’
\textsuperscript{55} The daily press at the time regularly reported the intimate relationship between Southern conservatives and the Nixon camp. See for instance ‘Was Agnew Choice Payoff to South?’, \textit{The Evening Star}, August, 9 1968, correctly noting that Nixon’s choice for the vice-presidency was intended to satisfy Southern demands; ‘The Nixon Political Strategy’, \textit{St. Louis Post Dispatch}, September 21, 1969; ‘Thurmond: The GOP Kingmaker’, \textit{WP}, August 11, 1968, emphasising the crucial role of Strom Thurmond in ensuring Nixon’s victory in the first primary ballot by ensuring that he would get 228 from the 310 votes of delegates ‘from the old Confederacy’ – note that the number of delegates sent by the South actually totalled 356.
some magnitude to the people of this region'. The Nixon administration still tried to avoid excessive publicity, at least in the northern and national press, about the close connexion with the Southerners, arguing for instance that the appointment of Harry Dent as special counsel to the president and his inclusion within Nixon’s ‘inner circle’ had been awarded exclusively on the basis of ‘shrewd political instincts and not his relationship with Mr. Thurmond or the Southern wing of the party’. White House denials notwithstanding, the New York Times still reported the appointment under the heading ‘A Thurmond Man Named Nixon Aide’. A little earlier, the same newspaper had also wondered whether Nixon had ‘sold the GOP’s soul to South Carolina’s Strom Thurmond’.

Yet, if the press was certainly right to point at the increasing influence of the Southerners within the Nixon administration, they failed to notice a more subtle but equally important development. Unlike in 1964, the South was now engaged in the politics of the possible, rather than in an ideologically driven crusade. Thurmond chose to renounce the beneficial effects that a Nixon-Reagan candidacy would have had for his own support back home for the sake of guaranteeing Nixon the precious asset of party unity in the general election. A little later on the same night Nixon met Thurmond to discuss vice-presidential candidates; he also met with two representatives of the Atlanta group: O’Donnell and Tower. On this occasion Tower did press Nixon to select Reagan, but neither he nor O’Donnell did so out of conservative solidarity. That meeting was concerned with a more pragmatic issue: in the forthcoming campaign Nixon’s main threat in the South, and for a while in the North too, was the impending candidacy of George Wallace. Reagan, reasoned the Southerners, was the best vote-getter Nixon could find to his right, and hence the best candidate to counter Wallace’s appeal. Nixon chose Agnew and party unity. In 1964 Barry Goldwater had faced the combined opposition of his Democratic adversary and of the entire liberal wing of the Republican Party headed by Nelson Rockefeller. Unlike Goldwater, Richard Nixon in 1968

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57 'Secretary Finch Veers From Nixon Philosophy', The State, January 10, 1970.
59 As quoted in Dent, Prodigal South, p. 104.
60 Chester, American Melodrama, pp. 488-89.
was allowed to avoid offending the still-influential liberals within the GOP, and went on to run against Hubert Humphrey with the support of a united party. As veteran journalist Theodore White put it, after 1964, ‘the Southerners had had enough of gallant lost causes; they wanted winners’.  

3. THE 1968 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN AND BEYOND

After ensuring Nixon’s victory in the primaries, the second task of the Southern Republicans consisted of limiting the potentially fatal haemorrhaging of their region’s votes towards the candidacy of George Wallace and, hopefully, of contributing to the capture of part of the regular Democratic vote. Between 1963 and 1972 George Wallace, the Democratic Governor of Alabama who ran a remarkably successful maverick presidential campaign in 1968, constituted a category of his own within American politics. The governor’s activities from 1968 onwards and throughout Nixon’s first term constituted an extraordinary combination of the most poignant characteristics that defined typical post-war Southern radical reactionary behaviour, together with the most dramatic example of an innovative Southern conservative strategy.

In 1968 Wallace followed the steps of Strom Thurmond in 1948, brushed aside party loyalty, and ran as an independent candidate. However, unlike Thurmond, Wallace deliberately sought to gain a foothold outside of his Southern Democratic heartland. Much to the alarm of both the Nixon team and the conservative leadership, he chose to do so by downplaying openly racial issues while emphasising a hawkish foreign policy (particularly in South East Asia) and appealing to growing exhaustion with perceived growing civil disorder — racially-inspired or otherwise. All of this was seasoned with the kind of right-wing

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populism designed to appeal to the anxieties of the same white working and lower-middle class voters traditionally associated with the Democratic party that Nixon hoped to attract.\textsuperscript{63}

The Nixon team’s serious alarm about the effects of Wallace’s splinter candidacy was obvious from very early on in the election effort, and would continue during the entire first term.\textsuperscript{64} As early as 1968, even Nixon’s conservative supporters acknowledged that the ‘breakout of Wallace from a sectional to national’ base was both a clear signal of the shift towards conservatism within the electorate at large, and the main threat to Nixon’s presidential hopes.\textsuperscript{65} Alan Greenspan, assisting Nixon during the campaign, noted that ‘if a major effort is not made against Wallace, we may not make it past November’.\textsuperscript{66} The subsequent effort to win Wallace’s voters was only partial successful. Throughout 1969, Republican activists still operated under the assumption that the only threat to a Nixon majority in the Southern and Southwestern states was Wallace’s ‘third party interference’.\textsuperscript{67}

Four years later, Patrick Buchanan, Nixon’s liaison with the National Review conservatives, noted again that Wallace was ‘quite apparently shifting tactics a bit’ by moving away from the race issue because ‘the Republican Right’ was ‘turned off by his racism’, and he was ‘clearly making an appeal to the Republican Right – which he only half heartedly went after last time’.\textsuperscript{68} Wallace himself acknowledged this, and pointed out that candidates throughout the nation imitated his own strategy by peddling ‘Alabama speeches with a Los Angeles, Minneapolis and New York accent’.\textsuperscript{69} Little changed in the run-up to the 1972 election when H. R (Bob) Haldeman, the president’s chief-of-staff, emphasized that Wallace’s third party effort was directly responsible for Nixon’s lack of a nationwide popular majority in the


\textsuperscript{64} For an overall analysis of Nixon’s desperate (and successful) attempts to gain the Wallacite vote see Carter, Politics of Rage, pp. 348–50; Black, Rise of Southern Republicans, pp. 210–11.


\textsuperscript{66} As quoted in ibid., p.175.

\textsuperscript{67} The Nixon Political Strategy’, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 21, 1969.


\textsuperscript{69} Mason, Quest for a New Majority, p.68.
polls. Nevertheless, the most significant impact of the Wallace campaign was to crystallise the association between the Southern white vote and the blue-collar and middle-class northern constituencies that were seen by the administration as responding to virtually the same issues. Both were perceived, according to influential presidential assistant Charles W. Colson, as 'our natural constituencies'.

A measure of the influence of the Wallace campaign was the publication of two analyses that, in practical terms, advocated Southern-friendly, conservative-leaning, readings of American politics. It is also worth noting the considerable appeal of these readings within the White House. 1970 saw the publication of *The Real Majority* by Ben Wattenberg and Richard Scammon, two Democrats who had been connected to the Johnson Administration, and who produced an analysis of the Wallace campaigns up to 1968, articulated around what the authors called the 'social issue'. Scammon and Wattenberg observed the early symptoms of an electoral backlash against the alleged permissiveness of the 1960s, while emphasising the increasing centrality of law and order as a concern for the electorate, and the growing association between lawlessness and civil rights activism. The book was an immediate hit within the White House, arousing the interest of a president who actively pressed his aides into reading it. By 1970, Jeb Magruder, a senior presidential advisor working on White House external communications and public relations, pushing for a particular initiative, took pains to emphasise that 'this does not fly in the face of the Scammon thesis'. By then, Wattenberg was also collaborating with the American Enterprise Institute, an increasingly influential conservative think-tank which counted with administration backing, and can thus be considered to have been on the periphery of the Nixon White House.

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74 Interview with Melvin Laird, May 16, 2006, telephone.
However, Nixon’s strategy to offset the Wallace issue was best articulated in a formal way by Kevin Phillips, then a recently graduated political analyst and a protégé of John Mitchell. Phillips had been charged with directing Nixon’s 1968 electoral effort in the South, and with the specific mission of designing the means for attracting white lower-middle-class and working-class constituencies. Although universally seen as a conservative, Phillips analysed the collapse of the New Deal political alignment, and advocated a political strategy that, in essence, replicated Wallace’s approach without Wallace’s stridency. Phillips expected the emergence of a Republican hegemony cemented upon a socially conservative, but otherwise firmly social democratic ‘silent majority’. He positively hoped that the Nixon administration would ‘dispel apprehensions’ about the future of such features of the New Deal-Great Society welfare state as collective bargaining and Medicaid in Republican hands. In fact Phillips wished that Republicans ‘could drop into the Potomac all those obsolescent conservatives who are still preoccupied with Alger Hiss and General MacArthur, and who keep trotting out laissez faire economics and other dead horses’, and who prevented the GOP from attracting growing numbers of hitherto Democratic, blue-collar voters. He exerted great influence over the president’s mind. Although his proposals, as a conservative Republican, differed somewhat from those of Scammon and Wattenberg (then two self-styled liberal-leaning Democrats), they reinforced one another, and tended to give credence to Wallace’s radical right-wing tactics and thereby push the administration’s electoral strategy towards the right. Nixon successfully identified himself with law and order, traditional values and the other elements of what Scammon and Wattenberg called the ‘social issue,’ but which in truth were conservative commonplaces, to such an extent that many conservative-leaning supporters of the president saw attacks on Nixon during the Watergate crisis as an

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77 Mason, *Quest for a New Majority*, pp. 75, 76, 49, 68.
assault ‘on their mores and way of life’. As a result, those who most immediately benefited were the administration’s Southern supporters, who were the central element in its attempts to compete with Wallace for the votes of disgruntled Democrats. Haldeman’s diaries note that, as the 1972 elections closed in, the president himself sought to enlist, in a repeat of the events of 1968, the Southern Republicans in the White House’s electoral effort. He ordered aides ‘to be sure we have’ Strom Thurmond’s ‘approval’ for all the White House’s electoral utterances.

The administration had been granting concessions to Southerners that were easy to perform and rather effective in retaining a loyal group of supporters in the Congress and a solid Republican base in the South. Conservative principles against federal intervention notwithstanding, Nixon and his Southern backers engaged in extensive ‘pork-barrel’ politics. An illustrative example of this phenomenon is provided by Howard Phillips, a loyal Nixon activist who would become head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, a major executive agency charged with delivering the social democratic programmes of Johnson’s Great Society. Phillips has described how, as acting director of OEO, he had lunch with Strom Thurmond ‘every week’ because Thurmond ‘wanted to make sure that we were giving grants’ to South Carolina. Phillips, who was appointed to OEO with the aim of closing down the agency, said that was ‘my main association with Strom Thurmond’. Having cut his political teeth in the conservative college campus organisation Young Americans for Freedom, Phillips was happy to declare publicly that he believed the OEO to be ‘harmful’ and ‘based on the wrong notions’. In pristine conservative language, he stated that, like any other instance of government-run social policy, it ‘undermined authority, challenged the family, promoted a welfare ethic and eroded democratic safeguards’. Yet, the zealous conservatism of Phillips’ ‘shutdown’ did not extend to the ‘numerous federal grants for South Carolina’. After his tenure in the OEO, Phillips went on to join the most radical wing within

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80 Haldeman, Diaries, p. 470 (my emphasis).
81 Interview with Howard Phillips, September 9, 2005, Washington DC.
the conservative movement, and devoted himself to lambasting full-time the iniquities of the welfare state. Not so Strom Thurmond, whose conservatism remained blunted by a willingness to compromise for the sake of electoral expediency. Another indirect way of assisting the South was through trade barriers – a form of state activity supposedly anathema to ideologically-driven conservatives. Nixon nevertheless made abundantly clear during the 1968 campaign that South Carolina’s textile industry would be protected, and subsequently raised import quotas against Japanese textile imports.84

Finally, the administration also distributed an extensive number of appointments to its Southern supporters. Winston (Red) Blount became Postmaster General, a position of no policy-making consequence, but endowed with ‘the best’ patronage opportunities to be distributed among grassroots supporters. These opportunities were particularly appreciated in the South, where GOP activists had historically been known as ‘Post-Office Republicans’.85

In more policy-substantive positions Mississippi’s Fred LaRue remained an influential free-roaming political counsellor to the president up until the Watergate debacle, as did South Carolina’s Fred Buzzhardt, another former Thurmond assistant. White House Relations with Congress were directed by Oklahoma’s Bryce Harlow and Missouri’s William Timmons, and in Nixon’s second term Frederick Dent, a South Carolinian closely related with the textile sector, became Secretary of Commerce at the instances of Harry Dent (no relation). Even the federal machinery entrusted with civil rights enforcement was penetrated by men who understood and sympathised with white Southern grievances. Assistant Attorney-General and former Goldwater staffer Richard Kleindienst, as well Southern sympathisers Robert Mardian (also a Goldwater man) and Patrick Gray, all found their way, ‘fortunately’ according to Harry Dent, into a newly created cabinet committee charged with dealing with civil rights.86

85 Dent, Prodigal South, pp. 105, 162; Chester, American Melodrama, p. 187.
Nixon’s policy created a virtuous circle in which White House largesse fostered Southerners’ increasing penetration of the federal apparatus, and hence a growing incentive to forego the radical right-wing populist politics that the likes of Thurmond had favoured during the previous twenty years. As the South became an ever-more solid and politically-reasonable base of support for the White House, the administration also found easier to sustain the Southerners’ limited demands. Not surprisingly, the thrust of the internal memos emanating from the desk of Harry Dent, the former Thurmond aide whose mission within the administration was to liaise with Southern Republicans, is unequivocal. Southern conservatives remained the most loyal and unproblematic element of conservative support for the president. In August 1971, the Republican state chairman of Georgia claimed to be ‘proud of our President’, and to demonstrate it proceeded to join with all other Southern party chairmen in signing a letter sent to 4,500 local Republicans to ‘recall some of the accomplishments of the present National Administration’.\(^87\) In November, Dent detailed plans to use Thurmond’s strong endorsement of the administration to ‘help stave off some of the conservative reaction against recent Presidential policies’.\(^88\) A month later, while a faction of the conservative movement led by the *National Review* Buckleyites was on the verge of ‘suspending’ its support for an administration which it felt had gone soft on foreign policy and interventionist in economics, the Southern Association of Republican State Chairmen released a resolution expressing ‘appreciation and support for the President’.\(^89\) Later, Dent himself devoted a substantial part of his political memoirs to explaining in some detail how ‘Nixon delivers’ on, for example, desegregation, bussing, the Southern textile industry, and Supreme Court appointments.\(^90\)

In any event, it is clear that the administration saw its Southern supporters as a crucial element of congressional sustenance that also allowed partisan lines to be routinely blurred

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88 Harry Dent to Herb Kenin, November 9, 1971, ibid.
89 “Resolution Adopted by The Southern Association of Republican State Chairmen at a Meeting at Washington DC, on December 10, 1971”, ibid.
on matters of race, civil rights and foreign policy. This relationship had two crucial effects. Firstly, it displayed Nixon’s own conservative instincts, or at any rate, his willingness to publicly espouse conservative principles. Secondly, the shift to the right in presidential rhetoric on issues such as civil rights and civil disorder allowed the Southern bloc to engage, bargain, and thereby participate in the political process far beyond reactionary civil rights obstructionism. Robert Mason has argued that Nixon’s main aim regarding the Southerners was to enlist their support for presidential initiatives in the foreign policy field generally, and in South-East Asia in particular. Yet, the proximity of the Southern conservatives’ views and the aggressive actions of the Nixon Administration in Vietnam was genuine, and Nixon’s efforts had the predictable effect of pushing the administration’s behaviour to the right in domestic affairs too. Most importantly, it made the electorate perceive the administration to be, at the very least, consorting with conservatives and adopting some of their principles.


Although the Buckleyites had always accorded a considerable degree of cross-party sympathy to the Southern bloc, the evolution of conservatism was particularly influenced by the emergence of the powerful Southern Republican wing as a fully-fledged sub-family within the conservative movement. Moreover, the progress of the smaller group of Southerners who became fully embedded with the movement mirrored to a great extent that of those Southerners who never became fully associated with either conservatism or the Republican party. This smaller group also developed peculiar characteristics, however. In philosophical terms the close interaction between Southern conservatives and the hard core anchored both groups to a distinct (if not necessarily coherent) modernised worldview. Politically, each group exercised considerable sway upon the evolution of the other. This interaction mutually coloured their simultaneously growing influence within the Republican party and reinforced the strong links between the conservative movement and the GOP.

91 Mason, *Quest for a New Majority*, pp. 79, 80, 158.
Thus, although many Southern Republicans chose to support the 'centrist' candidacy of Richard Nixon over that of conservative favourite son Ronald Reagan, this is not to say that Southern conservatives lacked ideological commitment to the conservative cause – or even that they only went along with conservatism to preserve racial segregation. For example, by the 1960s Strom Thurmond seems to have genuinely believed, as did conservative champions such as Texas' John Tower and Barry Goldwater, in small government – at least on a rhetorical level, and never to the point of renouncing the not inconsiderable amount of 'pork' sent to South Carolina by the White House. Thurmond, it seems, went along with federal 'interference' only as far as it served his own political purposes. In 1964 the senator had justified his apostasy from the Democratic fold by peddling the standard conservative critique of the New Deal. The Democratic party, Thurmond declared, had 'turned its back on the spiritual values and political principles which have brought us the blessings of freedom under God' and worse still, was 'leading our Nation to a socialist dictatorship'. He thereby touched on familiar conservative shibboleths such as opposition to government expansion, anticommunism abroad and at home, and traditional values. Moreover, he was also fond of wondering whether 'the welfare state is an alternative to communism', since 'both, in essence, are founded on the identical theories of state socialism'. Thurmond became a regular attendee of conservative gatherings and adorned his speeches with standard conservative concerns about 'communism,' 'collectivism,' and in language increasingly relevant to the mood of the electorate, 'the breakdown of moral codes'. As early as 1959 the senator from South Carolina 'reported to the people' that the conservative editors of *National Review* were pretty much the only 'objective writers' within the United States press corps on matters pertaining race.

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93 'Transcript of TV address to the People of South Carolina', September 16, 1964, f. Strom Thurmond, box 313, Group Research Records, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library (hereafter GR records).
94 'The Radical Left' *Strom Thurmond Reports to The People*, May 31, 1965, ibid.
95 'The Paper Curtain' *Strom Thurmond Reports to The People*, November 9, 1959, f. S. Thurmond, box 9, William F. Buckley Jr. papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University (hereafter WFB papers).
The Buckleyites on their part sincerely embraced Thurmond as a fully-fledged member of the conservative movement. Thanks to his hawkish foreign policy views and abundant use of right-wing language, conservatives and many scholars have, with some reason, identified Thurmond and a significant number of Southern ex-Democrats as conservatives who 'despised the increase in federal power almost as much as [they] hated communists' and who, unlike Wallace, were much more than 'simple segregationists'. Thurmond and those Southerners who followed him were therefore 'unlike other Southerners [read Democrats] who accepted federal money and interference in all but racial matters' and accepted conservative principle in other areas. The South Carolinian was seen by William Rusher, the influential publisher of National Review, as fully belonging to the conservative movement in his capacity as 'another conservative politician' of the same class as Barry Goldwater, Representative John Ashbrook and Ronald Reagan. In a similar vein, the conservative weekly Battle Line variously defined the South Carolinian as a 'hard line conservative', 'the greatest conservative in the party', and in the same category with other 'Republican conservatives' such as John Tower and Ashbrook. Human Events, going a little further, not only saw the South Carolinian as 'a great conservative', but in fact, as 'one of the greatest' within living memory. Thurmond consistently received the highest marks in the various political rankings published by conservative organisations from the early 1960s onwards. He was also a sought-after, regular speaker and signatory of circular letters for conservative organisations such as Young Americans for Freedom, Americans for Conservative Action, the American Conservative Union, and the Manion Forum. Conversely, the leadership of the conservative movement largely shared in, and lent a degree of respectability to, the Southern strategy of opposition to federally-imposed racial integration. By the early 1960s the conservative editors of National Review continued to express 'frank reservations about the wisdom of Brown v

96 Thurmond to Play Vital Role', Battle Line, December 1968.
97 Quoted from Brennan, Turning Right, p.126.
Board of Education', and dedicated themselves to supporting the delay of civil rights implementation and to the prevention of any further legislative expansion in that area — basically coinciding with the approach of the Southern bloc.\textsuperscript{100} Thus, by the mid-1960s, despite the natural maladjustment between fiery, ideologically-loaded language and the rather pragmatic approach to federal largesse displayed by Thurmond and his associates, the conservative Buckleyites — themselves not averse to some judicious adjusting to pragmatism — had accepted them as an integral part of the movement.

Philosophical alignment helped. Beyond the question of race, traditionalist conservatives — including William F. Buckley — had always been strongly attracted to the Southern agrarian tradition. Hard core conservatives consistently opted for a romanticised vision which attacked the iniquities of modernity, industrialisation, and free-market principles, while hailing an idealised vision of the traditional rural white South. Such views were still popular throughout the 1950s and 1960s as articulated by conservative intellectuals such as Richard Weaver and, certainly in its anti-modern, unfettered-market-sceptic aspects, by Russell Kirk, author of \textit{The Conservative Mind} and acknowledged leader of highbrow intellectual conservatism.\textsuperscript{101} Weaver thought that it was perfectly possible to 'turn the clock back' to some kind of pristine, pré-industrial past. Kirk, on his part, defined society as 'a spiritual community' ruled by 'divine intent'. Thomas Fleming, another prominent Southern conservative, put the issue in even starker terms. Reflecting on the character of Southern conservatism during the 1970s, he believed that 'when a Southerner calls himself a conservative he is usually thinking of a way of life, a social and moral order for which the people of the 1860s went to war'. Like Weaver, he also noted that the 'revival of social conservatism among the American working people' clearly perceptible as Richard Nixon reached the White House 'gives us all the first hope since 1865 that we can turn back the clock and renew the conservative struggle'.\textsuperscript{102} Such views did, nonetheless, lead certain

\textsuperscript{100} William Rusher to William F. Buckley, June 18, 1963, f. Negro Question, box 40, WFB papers.


conservatives to a partial divorce from reality. Russell Kirk, once defined by a less romantic fellow conservative as a ‘sentimental vaporizer,’ was notorious for leading a self-imposed medieval-like lifestyle. This included refusing to own a radio (never mind a television set) and, apparently, central heating, since he believed that ‘innovation is a devouring conflagration more often than it is the torch of progress’. Fleming had no trouble acknowledging that his own perspective on the South was based on little else other than nostalgic fantasy. ‘The only really conservative myth left to Americans is the South’, he wrote before adding that ‘it is a fairy-tale place, of strong courageous men and gentle but determined ladies’. Journalist James Jackson Kilpatrick resorted to similar devices to explain away the notoriously dysfunctional and scandalously corrupt politics of the South during the 1950s and most of the 1960s. In his view, elections were systematically rigged and voters (of both races) disenfranchised because Southerners felt ‘that gentlemen ought not engage in unseemly hassles for public trust’, and would find the prospect of partisan (that is, meaningful) electioneering ‘downright appalling’. Without a trace of irony, Kilpatrick pronounced such a thing ‘not mannerly’.

Of course, the presumed linkage between the 1960s and the events of the 1860s did not prevent Southern conservatives from updating and modernising their message much along the lines already established by National Review. As a glance at Strom Thurmond’s speeches clearly shows, the rebranded form of Southern conservatism included a partial embrace of free markets (as well considerable cold warrior enthusiasm) which clashed with the more traditional brand of Southern conservatism. Fleming, for instance, kept well within the Southern conservative tradition of scepticism towards classical liberalism (including free markets) and defence of social and moral conservatism when he argued that the 1850s writings of George Fitzhugh were still the ‘best sociology of the South’ (Fitzhugh had


employed pre-modern pseudo-socialism to propose the extension of the benefits of slavery to the northern white working class). Yet, he also had no trouble in echoing the economic views of Thurmond, Buckley and other conservatives, adapting his discourse to the partial integration of free-market economics within modern conservatism, and pronouncing ‘free enterprise’ as ‘the best of all economic systems’. In language typical of 1960s hard-core conservatism, Fleming easily assimilated the classical liberal viewpoint when he declared that the aim of initiatives in ‘affirmative action, bussing and child-care laws’ was, far from achieving racial equality, to ‘concentrate still more power in the socialist state’.104

Together with philosophical adjustment, the most noticeable aspects of the modernisation of Southern conservatism were surely the abandonment of the Democratic fold and a deliberate effort the leave behind the most histrionic aspects of race-baiting populism. In this sense, the contrast between the conservative treatment of the Southerners led by Strom Thurmond and their contempt for George Wallace is notable and illustrative. As early as 1963, National Review had rapturously reported the ‘tide of Southern Republicanism that rises so dramatically toward the White House’. In 1964, the magazine applauded Thurmond’s defection, advised Republicans to be ‘generous’ regarding seniority with congressional Democrats that might follow Thurmond (the party leadership, incidentally, listened) and indulged in some hopeful day-dreaming about the number of ‘conservative-minded Democrats’ that might join the party.105 Yet, at around the same time Wallace had also proclaimed himself the champion of the traditional South, and had been peddling a political discourse indistinguishable in many respects from that of Strom Thurmond. William F. Buckley, however, ‘greatly objected’ to ‘naming a chapter of YAF as George Wallace’, and thought that such a thing would be ‘intrinsically wrong and devastatingly bad policy’.106 During 1968, although Buckley admitted to largely sharing the Alabaman’s views, National Review opted for a frontal and unsuccessful attack that left its normally gentlemanly editor

106 William F. Buckley to Robert Bauman, August 17, 1964, f. YAF, box 33, WFB papers.
ruefully looking for ‘a way to handle the son of a bitch’.107 Up to a point, the conservative leadership’s hostility towards Wallace was a response to ‘the kind of [racist] pitch that Wallace used’ in defence of white Southern views, which, it was argued, ‘contaminated’ a conservative position based on legalistic and classical liberal arguments. Wallace, needless to say, undermined the decade-long efforts of these men to purge the movement of its most unsavoury radical elements.108 Yet, as the 1968 race approached, conservative cadres were quite willing to ignore Wallace’s new-found Thurmond-like avoidance of open racism. In reality, it seems that conservative blasts against George Wallace derived from the ever-present pro-Republican partisanship of the movement. Performing a peculiar and somewhat cynical political twist, conservatives even strove to question Wallace’s claims to conservatism by using the Alabaman as a blunt partisan instrument to attack the civil rights credentials of their Democratic opponents. Orthodox conservatives gleefully noted that George Wallace’s crusade against ‘federal interference’ in local affairs never included federal subsidies, and that his economic policies as governor of Alabama had more in common with (in an admittedly populist and corrupt form) mainstream social democratic collectivism than with his own free-market-leaning rhetoric.109 William F. Buckley is still fond of noting that by the late 1960s ‘the left-wing’ was wooing Wallace, and that when Wallace was shot, ‘Senator Edward Kennedy was the first person to call to the hospital’, a reaction that, according to Buckley, ‘was interesting’.110

As it became evident that Wallace intended to run as an independent in 1968, he also became much more of a threat to the Republican party than other Southern Democrats who managed to remain as such while supporting Nixon. Thus, during the final stages of the campaign while Thurmond travelled the South on Nixon’s behalf, the conservative leadership struggled, to the considerable irritation of some of its own local cadres, to marshal its

107 William F. Buckley to Neil McCaffrey, undated, c. February 1968, f. Neill McCaffrey (Jan-July), box 52, ibid. This is one of the only two instances in which Buckley abandoned his exquisitely polite epistolary demeanour. Perhaps not surprisingly, the other referred to the John Birch Society.
108 Interview with William F. Buckley, July 25, 2005, New York City; Brennan, Turning Right, p. 132.
110 Interview with William F. Buckley.
grassroots away from Wallace and towards the Republican party. Albeit reluctantly, conservatives had remained well within the Republican fold in presidential politics since the Eisenhower years, and conservative sectarian behaviour was nothing particularly new. The novelty during the late 1960s was the much-publicised political clout enjoyed by the Southern Bloc as the single most powerful segment within the conservative political leadership, over a presidential candidate first and later within the White House itself. During the Eisenhower years National Review had considered conservatives to be the ‘captive faction’ of a ‘miserably bad President’, whose only redeeming feature, from their viewpoint, was that he was neither Kennedy nor an actively liberal Republican. With Richard Nixon Southern conservatives found a president who was as much a ‘captive’ of the right as the right was of the Republican party. Thus, the growing importance of Southern Republicans within the GOP propelled the other conservative families to both intensify their enmity against Wallace, and towards a more enthusiastic acceptance of the Republican party as the natural political vehicle of the right.

Conservatives also benefited from the fact that the GOP’s natural growth below the Mason-Dixon Line proceeded along with right-wing grassroots expansion. Up until 1964 Southern Republicans had possessed no representatives in the Senate, very few in the House of Representatives and virtually no elected officials at state level. According to Morton Blackwell, who in 1964 became the youngest delegate for Goldwater representing Louisiana’s Republicans (then totalling one per cent of registered voters against 98 per cent Democrats), to be a senior Southern Republican before Goldwater’s campaign implied putting oneself across as a ‘hopeless candidate’, or contributing ‘a lot of money to a hopeless candidate’ or alternatively, to have worked ‘for hopeless candidates for many, many

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111 For an insight over the grassroots tensions between Wallacite and Republican-minded conservatives in the run-up to the 1968 elections, see Arnold Steinberg to William F. Buckley, September 24, 1968 f. YAF (Sept - Dec 1968), box 57, WFB papers; James P Ruffy to Neil McCaffrey, June 13, 1967, f. McCaffrey, Neil, box. 43, ibid.
112 Crossroads at Dixie”; ‘Senator Goldwater Speaks His Mind’, NR, January 14, 1961; William Rusher Memorandum to William F. Buckley, September 14, 1960, PLB Memorandum to William F. Buckley (undated), f. Interoffice Memos, box 10, WFB papers.
But then again, a small and poorly organised party structure had certain advantages for the young, hard-working and ambitious. From the early 1960s onwards, a number of these young, fiercely conservative activists took full advantage of Republican organisational weakness to steer the Southern GOP firmly in a rightward direction. Blackwell gained the delegate post in 1964 as direct consequence of his vigorous and successful activities organising Youth Republican Party groups ‘in every corner of Louisiana’. When the Louisiana Republicans had to choose their representative for the 1964 convention, ‘as it turned out, since the Party was small across the state and not very well organised I was one of the very few people that all the delegates from all the parts of the state knew’. After turning around the disorganised, demoralised and largely inconsequential Louisiana Republican organisation, Blackwell went on to became the longest serving executive director of the College Republican National Committee. Blackwell was by no means the only member of a new breed of aggressively conservative Southern Republicans with a penchant for organisational activities who would become increasingly influential within the national party and in the conservative organisations that gravitated around it. Texas-born Richard Viguerie and David Franke played crucial roles organising Young Americans for Freedom, and the former went on to direct the emergence of the Moral Majority together with Jerry Falwell, then heading the Southern Baptist Convention. In 1965, Robert Watson, a South Carolina Representative, followed in the steps of Strom Thurmond, became a Republican, won re-election and was appointed to the board of the American Conservative Union, the organisational arm of conservative Republicans.

116 Ibid.
118 Interview with Morton Blackwell.
120 'Watson for Governor', Battle Line, March 1970.
By 1971 the numbers of Southern Republicans in Congress had swollen from one in 1962 to 21 representatives and six senators. The conservative *Battle Line* consistently awarded approval ratings of over 70 per cent to more than half of the Southerners in Congress, while less than a third received ratings below 50 per cent.\(^{121}\) By 1972 conservatives celebrated the definitive emergence of an eminently conservative Republican ‘new South,’ as Thurmond’s initial move was consolidated when four victorious incumbents were joined by eight new conservative Southern Republicans, including men like North Carolina’s Jesse Helms, Mississippi’s Representative Thad Cochran (who would eventually replace James Eastland in the Senate), and Senator Trent Lott (who was backed by William M. Colmer, his segregationist mentor and Democratic predecessor). As the conservative press was quick to announce, an immediate consequence of Southern success was the parallel increase in the influence of conservatives within the party.\(^{122}\) In fact, candidates such as Lott, Florida Representative Skip Bafalis, and Louisiana Representative David Treen (the first Louisiana Republican in Congress since Reconstruction) had actually received financial assistance from the American Conservative Union, and enjoyed special reports devoted to the consolidation of their conservative credentials in *Battle Line*, ACU’s organ.\(^{123}\) In view of right-wing Republican successes, conservatives were understandably disinclined to support a Democrat (even a renegade one), although they were considerably less reluctant when it came to wooing Wallace’s voters. Thus *Battle Line*’s blasts against Wallace merrily coexisted with flagrantly contradictory remarks about how the Alabaman’s appeal was based on conservative issues such as ‘big government, high taxes’ and ‘welfare spending’, as well as racial anxiety and social disorder.\(^{124}\)

Capitalising on what one may call the ‘Wallace factor’ had been a successful strategy for conservatives since the exploits of Southern Republicans had swollen the conservative ranks within the party after 1964. Thus, when Harry Dent had first approached Nixon in

\(^{121}\) ‘How Your Congressman Rates’, *ibid.*, August 1971.

\(^{122}\) ‘Conservative Victories’, *ibid.*, November 1972.


1966, he was already using Wallace to bolster Strom Thurmond’s bargaining power. Nixon, needless to say, did not need much reminding of the importance of the border states or even perhaps of the Deep South itself for his own electoral prospects.\textsuperscript{125} As a consequence of the deepening Republican inroads in the South, by the 1968 primaries Nixon needed to face up to the fact that the Southern wing of the GOP had become a right-wing force of nature within the party. Any presidential contender needed the acquiescence of the South to triumph in the primaries — as, no doubt to his dismay, Nelson Rockefeller discovered when he found himself investing a considerable amount of time and effort convincing Southern Republicans that he did not ‘have horns’.\textsuperscript{126} Moreover, national candidates also needed the party to provide the precinct-level, nuts-and-bolts operatives who manned offices, performed door-to-door canvassing, answered telephones and carried out all the myriad of minor, yet crucial electoral chores. The problem was even more acute in Nixon’s case because, unlike Rockefeller and Reagan in their respective states, he lacked a local base of support. Even hiring Nixon’s first official campaign chairman, required Reagan’s clearance because Gaylord Parkinson, Nixon’s chosen man, was also the chairman of the California GOP. In New York, Nixon’s own senior organisation was entirely based on his law firm and personal contacts, for the formal party structure was controlled by Rockefeller and the grassroots operatives that supported him in 1960 were in 1968 fully aligned with the Buckleyite-leaning Conservative Party of New York State.\textsuperscript{127} Elsewhere, despite the purge within the party leadership that had followed the 1964 debacle, most active mid-and low-level party operatives nationwide still tended to be Goldwaterite conservatives broadly aligned with the Southerners. Nixon acknowledged these facts when he selected Richard Kleindienst as his campaign’s National Director of Field Operations. A man recruited from the Goldwater inner circle, Kleindienst in turn put together an organization that ‘was composed mainly of persons who were part of the Goldwater field operation’.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{125} Dent, \textit{Prodigal South}, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 80–81; Chester, \textit{American Melodrama}, p. 446.
\textsuperscript{127} White, \textit{Making of The President}, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{128} Kleindienst, \textit{Justice}, p. 48.
In the 1950s and 1960s Southern conservatives became an integral part of the conservative movement. During those years the Southern philosophical tradition became embedded within the modernised, rebranded conservative canon developed by *National Review*, which was, in turn, broadly accepted the Southerners. In political terms, Southerners and Buckleyites mutually reinforced their partisan attachment to the Republican party. By the time Richard Nixon initiated his second presidential race, it was also the conservative cadres who had been entirely aligned with Goldwater who could (and did) provide Nixon with the much needed manpower and local know-how in the South as well as a solid delegate base from which to win the Republican presidential nomination. Pandering to the Southern wing of the party (and therefore to the conservative movement they were embedded in) was a necessary requisite to satisfy a crucial nucleus of national Republican activism. Hence, in 1968 a central part of Nixon’s electoral strategy was to ‘sectionalise’ his message in order to isolate northern voters from the most blatantly anti-civil rights and conservative-leaning statements aimed at a Southern audience, and to isolate the Southerner grassroots from the most liberal-leaning aspects of the Nixonian programme.\(^{129}\) The Southern conservative leadership – not entirely unlike the Buckleyites – needed no insulation, for they had accepted Nixon’s moderation as a useful quality, rather than a handicap, of their chosen candidate.

**CONCLUSION**

There can be no doubt that the strategy of the Southern political leadership was a major force deepening the entanglement of the conservative hard core with the Republican party. Between 1964 and 1970 the single most important group of conservative political leaders were Southerners and Republicans. More importantly, the expansion of the political branch of the movement eroded, for the first time, the influence of its original leadership, because the Southerners possessed a base of support relatively immune to the criticism of conservative intellectual organs such as *National Review*, *Battle Line* or even *Human Events*. To be sure,  

\(^{129}\) See McGinniss, *Selling of the President*, pp. 122–25.
after 1968 these publications would criticise the relative passivity of the political wing of the movement against the most egregious instances of Nixonian liberalism. Yet to the considerable frustration of some conservative opinion-makers, they did so with no visible effect upon the behaviour of Southern conservatives in Congress, who remained broadly committed to the Nixon White House. Throughout Nixon’s two terms, Southerners outside the GOP also continued to break Democratic discipline to support the president and to move towards his party. Even as the White House became increasingly keen to disassociate itself from the GOP from 1971 onwards, those Southerners who were already Republicans, some having received financial support from the administration, remained notably supportive of the president right up to his final sinking. In 1968, far from being ‘captive’, conservatives endorsed and actively participated in the electoral campaign and in the subsequent administration. The mutual embrace between the Nixon campaign and the GOP’s Southern wing was a crucial element of this phenomenon.

At the same time, in a triumph of rhetoric over substance Strom Thurmond managed to foster a close alliance between himself, the rest of the conservative movement and Richard Nixon. But in politics symbols matter and even more so in an atmosphere, like that of the late 1960s, dominated by highly emotional issues such as one’s patriotism, commitment to ‘law and order’ and ‘traditional values’. Association with Southern conservatives helped the administration’s strategy of steering towards a quasi-Wallacite right-wing populist discourse, pregnant with symbolism but, beyond the issue of school integration, devoid of much substantial policy content. After all, besides increasing appropriations for crime prevention and funding for the nation’s police forces, how can the preservation patriotism or traditional values be legislated for? Through rhetoric and symbols, which in turn help to consolidate the proximity between the White House and the conservative movement at large. Remarkably, although Wallace was never accepted by the conservative leadership as one of their own, it

131 Greenberg, Nixon’s Shadow, p. 185.
was his menacing presence, combined with the objective strength of Southern Republicans within the party that eased Richard Nixon’s steering to the right.

If Thurmond’s rhetorical position mirrored ideas expounded by the conservative movement, these ideas did not prevent him from accepting the kind of federal aid programmes run by the Office of Economic Opportunity, and from pressing the Nixon administration into raising protectionist trade barriers for South Carolina’s textile industries. Ultimately Thurmond and his congressional allies, unlike many of the conservative movement’s leadership but very much like Richard Nixon, had ceased to behave like ideologues and begun to operate as pragmatic politicians.132 In other words, in order to preserve their traditional political influence over national politics the conservative South ‘northernised’ its message, adjusting their strategy of resistance to further racial equality to what was politically acceptable throughout the nation: formal acceptance of the end of de jure segregation and skilful manoeuvring to preserve de facto segregation. Harry Dent was crystal clear on the matter and had no qualms in acknowledging that by 1968 ‘the Southern Strategy we envisioned was designed to fashion the ends of southern power in the executive councils of the national government to compensate for the diminishing southern power on Capitol Hill’.133 The moderation of Southern requests at Miami not only helped to off-set the challenge of the California governor to Nixon’s presidential ambitions. The Southerners also allowed Nixon to deflect conservative pressure to appoint either Reagan himself or another conservative as vice-president, and helped Nixon’s team to secure the nomination of an unknown running-mate acceptable to the liberal wing of the party. Willingness to accept federal funding and to prop-up protectionist policies flew right against the conservative canon, just as much as opposing the conservative primary challenges of Ronald Reagan in 1968 (and later John Ashbrook’s in 1972) sabotaged the political manoeuvring of the conservative intellectual leadership.134 The contrast between Thurmond’s behaviour in 1968 and his strategy in 1948 and 1964 could not have been sharper. Instead of engaging in a

132 Bartley, New South, p. 395
133 Dent, Prodigal South, p. 8.
134 Ibid., pp. 198–207.
symbolic, largely doomed quest, Southern Republicans played a crucial supporting role within Nixon’s strategy to both preserve the all-important image of party unity, and to allow the candidate to make a sustained appeal to moderate voters. From the run up to the 1968 election onwards, Thurmond and his Southern associates were engaged as major players in serious presidential politics. Moreover, they were on the winning side. The willingness of Richard Nixon to accommodate and to adopt as his own the views of these men enabled the right-wing South to abandon the politics of reaction and radicalism that Thurmond and his Southern associates had practiced since the late 1940s. The Southerners forced that logic, which included accommodating the non-conservative initiatives of the Nixon White House, into the behaviour of conservatives at large. After all, the single largest group of conservative political leaders in Congress was the Southern Bloc. A first inkling of this phenomenon was the clear frustration of certain conservative operatives during the 1968 primaries, when the Southerners manoeuvred to secure Nixon’s victory during the Miami Republican convention. Thurmond and his southern colleagues battled not only for Nixon, but also against the right-wing threat posed by Ronald Reagan, the conservatives’ favourite son. Nixon’s Southern strategy was at the same time a response to political changes already in place since at least the mid-1950s, coupled with the particularities of the 1968 Republican convention. It was also a somewhat delayed and reluctant reaction. During the 1964 primaries Nixon had declared that a Goldwater victory would be a ‘tragedy’ and that such conservative views had to be ‘challenged and repudiated’ by the party. Ever after, he would continue to lament the fact that the Goldwater campaign had allowed Republicans to be ‘portrayed as reckless and racist’. Even in 1968, conservatives within the administration complained that Nixon’s ‘horizon’ did not extend ‘beyond the election’. However, even if Nixon’s Southern strategy and his support for conservative Southerners followed, at least initially, a needs-must, politically expedient strategy rather than a genuine commitment to either

135 Whalen, Catch the Falling Flag, pp.178-80, 199-201; Chester, American Melodrama, pp. 465, 486-87.
136 Whalen, Catch the Falling Flag, p.175; Rusher, Rise of the Right, pp. 213-17.
137 Cannon, Reagan, pp.162-64; Chester, American Melodrama, pp. 436-50, 457-70.
140 Whalen, Catch the Falling Flag, p. 179.
conservatism or Southern grievances, it still unquestionable that Richard Nixon’s 1968 campaign and presidency had a double effect. First it lent the prestige of the presidency to the main political group then sustaining the electoral advances of the conservative movement, while it also contributed to making the Republican Party a respectable option for conservative Southern whites. After all, in presidential terms and with the exception of Jimmy Carter, the South remained firmly Republican for the two decades following the 1968 elections. The jump from electing a president presumed to have been anointed by the forces of Southern reaction, to electing a self-proclaimed champion of Southern conservatism, after all, is about as long as the distance between Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan.
CHAPTER 3

‘ENTITLED TO PREVAIL’¹: NIXON, CONSERVATIVES, AND THE POLITICS OF CIVIL RIGHTS

During the early months of the first Nixon administration, Attorney General John Mitchell appealed to civil rights leaders to ‘watch what we do, rather than what we say’. Thereafter, the White House first tried to keep ‘a low profile’ on civil rights, and, in the words of Nixon’s Chief of Staff Bob Haldeman, to ‘do what we have to do and not brag about it’.² Richard Nixon informed his associates that the administration should ‘not make a good deal of all we are doing’ on this issue, but ought to concentrate on doing ‘quietly our job’, and above all, should not ‘be sucked into praising our ‘great record’ on civil rights because ‘low profile is the key’.³ In his memoirs, the president self-servingly explained that behind this strategy lay his intention to ‘tackle the [civil rights] problems instead of talking about them’. Nixon argued that it was necessary to demonstrate that ‘we do care by our actions and not just by our words’, and hoped, yet again, that his administration would be judged by ‘what we do rather than by what we say’.⁴ Yet that quiet strategy soon gave way to a much noisier approach – one clearly slanted towards protecting the interests of the president’s Southern white conservative supporters, and which involved various addresses to the nation by the president and the senior administration staff dealing with civil rights matters. Nevertheless, a number of contributions to our understanding of the Nixon presidency have taken these earlier statements at face value, concluding that the administration intended to both neutralize racial unrest and foster the implementation of civil rights legislation. Furthermore, according to these revisionist accounts, the White House

³ Kotowski, Nixon’s Civil Rights, p. 35 (emphasis in original).
actually succeeded, hence rendering Nixon an unlikely ‘champion of civil rights’. The following pages analyse the rationale behind the Nixon administration’s choice to downplay the apparent quantitative successes of its own civil rights policy, and the long-term effects of this strategy upon the conservative community to which Southern conservatives belonged, while emphasising that, in government, ‘what we say’, may be just as crucial as ‘what we do’.

Building upon that premise, there is a fundamental difference between this examination of the Nixon administration’s civil rights policy and most previous analyses: it focuses on the school desegregation policies of the Nixon administration to explore the legitimative effects of policy. This analysis, however, avoids both a reiterative quantitative analysis of Nixon’s policy initiatives, and an even more reiterative evaluation of the president’s alleged or real intentions, instincts and beliefs. Instead, it is assumed that if actual policy-making, whether in the form of failed attempts or of successful implementation of new initiatives, is obviously crucial, it is not the only form or the only effect of government action. Any given policy initiative is of necessity sustained by a rhetorical apparatus designed to make it acceptable to the citizenry. Presidents – and for that matter all state officials, elected or not – invest a considerable amount of effort in symbolic gestures more or less empty of ‘practical’ content, such as bestowing presidential recognition over particular persons, institutions or ideas. Neither rhetoric nor symbols need to match the actual impact of policy. Governments can, and do, carry policies in the exact opposite direction of those expounded by, say, the intellectuals they celebrate, and at the same time implement policies clearly at odds with the ideas they claim to defend.

6 A recent and excellent analysis of Richard Nixon’s public persona (or rather, personae) can be found in David Greenberg, Nixon’s Shadow: The History of an Image (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), p. 336.

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The Nixon team between 1968 and 1974 elevated a common practice to the category of a fine art when, in the field of civil rights, it consciously embarked on a deliberate effort to re-adjust the *perceived* duty of the federal government away from civil rights enforcement, while at the same time pursuing a moderately successful policy of school integration. It also did so as a central part of a conservative-leaning symbolic drive to create a new electoral platform, one designed to serve the political interests of Richard Nixon.\(^8\) Attempting to discern Nixon’s own intentions, the ‘conservatism’ of his policies or the empirical effect of the administration’s initiatives is, in this sense, irrelevant. It may be the case, for instance, that between 1968 and 1972 Nixon presided over the enrolment of more black southern schoolchildren in desegregated schools than ever before.\(^9\) Yet during this period the inevitability of *de facto* school segregation also ceased to be the fallback position of Southern reaction, and instead became another acceptable argument well within the mainstream of political debate both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line. It is this latter, more difficult to grasp, aspect of executive policy that is addressed in this chapter. Thus, part one examines the increasing strain put upon the basic principles that had driven federal policy toward the expansion of civil rights legislation and enforcement. These developments constituted a political and ideological milieu external to those engaged in policy-making, but these shifts in public perception facilitated the Nixon administration’s decision to satisfy certain demands put forward by its Southern white constituency. Part two analyses the internal impact of the race issue on the conservative movement itself, and assesses the extent to which it shaped the relationship between different strands of the conservative movement. Finally, part three evaluates the close relationship between the Nixon camp and Southern conservatives, and the extent to which the Southerners’ demands were indeed satisfied by the administration in the specific field of school desegregation, as well as the impact of these trade-offs on public opinion.


\(^9\) The total number of school children attending all-black schools fell from 40 per cent in 1969 to 12 per cent in 1972, according to Graham, *Civil Rights Era*, p. 448.
1. THE DEMISE OF THE LIBERAL CONSENSUS ON CIVIL RIGHTS

As the 1968 Republican convention approached, the Nixon campaign had welcomed and fuelled the growing support it was receiving from the Southern conservative wing of the Republican party. Subsequently, these Southerners remained a solid source of sustenance for an administration that went to considerable lengths to retain their loyalty. A prime aspect of the Nixon White House’s strategy to maintain this constituency was the administration’s handling of the race issue. Nevertheless, both Nixon’s ability to engage with Southern conservatives and the willingness of Southern Republican cadres to publicly display their loyalty to the White House were in part due to a combination of factors well outside of any administration’s control. By the time Nixon took office Southern conservatives were in the process of accepting as inevitable the end of *de jure* segregation, and had in practice ceased to demand a full repeal of recent civil rights legislation. Of course, a relatively small, but significant, sector of the white South’s political and economic leadership had been seeking some form of accommodation in the field of civil rights since the early 1950s, but it was not until the 1966 and 1968 elections that exhaustion with die-hard resistance became an increasingly dominant feeling even at grassroots levels.\(^\text{10}\) Kevin Phillips, who had helped mastermind Nixon’s 1968 Southern strategy and remained influential in the White House, was clearly aware of the fact that, as he put it, the Southern conservatives’ ‘physiological disposition to fight a hopeless rearguard action’ was ‘shrinking in the face of the inevitable’.\(^\text{11}\)

By 1966, Southern Republican leaders were primarily concerned with avoiding an administration overtly committed to further affirmative action on civil rights matters – and in particular to integration of Southern schools and the bussing of school children to achieve


racially-balanced classrooms everywhere; forestalling any prospect of a civil rights-committed vice-president; and maintaining a healthy degree of influence within the White House.\textsuperscript{12} Southerners' ability to secure these relatively modest aims was facilitated by the fact that since 1965, civil rights activism had progressively radicalised and shifted from seeking the legal enfranchisement of Southern blacks towards a nationwide programme which was increasingly focused on social and economic inequalities.\textsuperscript{13} Republican operatives and neutral observers alike were fully aware that 'civil rights exhaustion', and the growing association between race and what were perceived to be soaring crime rates, had gone a good deal towards explaining the remarkable success of George Wallace's thinly-veiled racist third party effort in the 1968 election.\textsuperscript{14}

Furthermore throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Southern resistance to further civil rights advances began to receive support, albeit indirectly, from rather surprising quarters. A group of intellectuals, politicians and social scientists deeply embedded in the academic world and the intellectual circles of New York City, and which had hitherto provided staunch support for the liberal consensus, progressively turned against what they perceived to be the excesses of the sixties and the failures of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. Dissatisfaction with civil rights activism would be a prime force propelling these men, later to be known as 'neoconservatives', towards the right.\textsuperscript{15} These mostly Jewish intellectuals' disenchantment with liberalism was reaching a peak the same year that Richard Nixon arrived to the White House. That year, the growing tension between the (mainly Jewish) teachers and the (mostly black) parents and students of the schools in the New York neighbourhood of Ocean Hill and Brownsville led to a teachers' strike that effectively signalled the end of the informal pro-


civil rights alliance between the Jewish and black communities.\textsuperscript{16} The distance separating black activists and Jewish intellectuals had been increasing for some time: in 1963 Norman Podhoretz, then a prominent ‘radical’ New York intellectual and editor of the prestigious Jewish journal \textit{Commentary}, published an article in which he questioned liberal ‘pieties’ on the race issue. Drawing upon his own experiences of growing up in a racially-mixed Brooklyn neighbourhood, Podhoretz observed that according to liberals, ‘Negroes were supposed to be persecuted,’ and yet, ‘such evidence of the senses as comes from being repeatedly beaten up, robbed, and in general hated, terrorized, and humiliated’ seemed to indicate that ‘it was the Negroes who were doing the only persecuting I knew about’.\textsuperscript{17} During the run up towards the 1972 election, Podhoretz would culminate his apostasy from the liberal-democratic fold by unleashing a campaign in support of the Nixon in \textit{Commentary}.\textsuperscript{18}

Another case in point is provided by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a well known Harvard academic and Kennedy supporter then working within the Johnson administration. In 1965 Moynihan triggered the fury of civil rights leaders while jumping to nationwide prominence as a result of penning a Department of Labor study which seemed to suggest that the main root of African-American socio-economic problems lay in the so-called ‘collapse of the black family’. In the same year, a group of liberal intellectuals and academics, including Moynihan, gathered around the pages of a new journal, \textit{The Public Interest}, which aimed to discuss issues of public policy – including the problems of ‘the Negro American’. By 1968 the journal had become an immensely prestigious source of comment on the limitations of government intervention and the iniquities of the Great Society, and in the following year Moynihan himself could be found working within the Nixon White House and publicly doubting the efficacy of 1960s civil rights policy.\textsuperscript{19} A year later, a memorandum from

\begin{footnotes}
\item[18] Interview with Norman Podhoretz, June 28, 2004, telephone.
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Moynihan to the president which advocated a period of 'benign neglect' on civil rights issues was leaked, infuriating African-American leaders (Nixon was enthusiastic about the report's conclusions). At around the same time Sydney Hook, yet another formerly liberal intellectual close to the Public Interest circle, was also actively supporting the White House out of concern about racial quotas and campus violence. Throughout Nixon's first term in office, the so-called 'neoconservatives' became progressively embedded within the administration. While Moynihan and Hook actively collaborated with the administration from the inside, Ben Wattenberg and Richard Scammon, two other Democrats from the Kennedy-Johnson administrations, published The Real Majority, an analysis of Wallace's campaigns up to 1968 focused on what they called the 'social issue'. The book evaluated the first electoral stirrings of what has come to be known as the 'backlash' against the permissiveness of the 1960s, and recommended a political message centred on the 'law and order' issue while emphasising the growing link between public disturbances and civil rights activism in the public mind. Nixon, needless to say, was understandably taken by the reasoning. Shortly after the 1968 inauguration, even before the book came out, Wattenberg could already be found operating on the periphery of the White House as a collaborator with the American Enterprise Institute, an administration-backed conservative think-tank.

Thus, to the delight of the White House, a significant group of formerly Democratic and (mostly) perceived-as-liberal intellectuals was openly supporting the administration, questioning what they saw as the 'excesses' of the civil rights movement and hence, at least implicitly, supporting what would prove to be the rather equivocal White House policy on the matter. What is more, these intellectuals were prepared to discuss in all seriousness...
arguments that were commonly regarded as conservative (and segregationist) euphemisms, such as the appropriate role of 'state and local action,' or whether desegregating schools was 'less important than getting better schools'. To be sure, the role of race relations in the development of what would later be called neoconservatism should not be overemphasised. Scammon and Wattenberg noted that most blacks were as sensitive to lawlessness and permissiveness as whites, and also expressed some delight at what they perceived to be a 'liberalizing' trend toward civil rights enforcement ‘even in conservative bastions’. In most cases, these intellectuals' evolving critique of the civil rights movement did not preclude opposition to, and indeed had little to do with, de jure segregation itself, but stemmed largely from hostility towards the establishment of racial quotas in universities, alarm about campus violence, and a general disenchantment with the Great Society. Yet, although the neocons' motivation sprang from their experiences in the universities and frustration with the perceived debacle of the Great Society, their arguments against affirmative action had a way of coinciding with and lending gravitas to similar anti-civil rights views expressed by other conservative sub-families. Pre-empting the protestations of neoconservatives such as Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, the classical liberal Milton Friedman had stated the case in a letter to William F. Buckley nearly ten years earlier. ‘The fundamental mission of the university’, Friedman asserted, ‘is to provide instruction and the opportunity for the search for understanding’, and nothing else – no matter how ‘admirable and desirable’ objectives such as ‘clearing slums’ or racial equality might be. That was why libertarians also ‘fought against the idea that the universities should be agencies of social change’ through, for instance, racial quotas.

The emergence of the proto-neoconservative critique dramatised in a quite public manner the increasing erosion of support for further affirmative action outside of the South. These intellectuals did not question civil rights enforcement out of previously held

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24 Milton Friedman to William F. Buckley, April 26, 1964, f. 13, box 22, Milton Friedman papers, Hoover Institute, Palo Alto CA (hereafter MF papers, HI).
conservative views, or attachment to a segregated way of life: it was the perceived iniquities of 1960s civil rights policies that helped to push them towards the right. Scammon and Wattenberg certainly believed that civil rights-related violence and the consequent changing perception of the movement was ‘at the root’ of the emergence of the ‘social issue’. In 1970, and employing language which echoed that of George Wallace, Sydney Hook would go as far as to equate ‘benighted’ Southern ‘racists’ with the radical liberal ‘homicidal idealists of Madison, Boston, Rochester and elsewhere’. Increasingly, these intellectuals’ assaults upon ‘bureaucratic inefficiency’ differed less from the typical line peddled by conservatives during the previous decades. Both the Nixon White House’s policy of ingratiating itself with Southern conservatives, and indeed the Southern conservatives themselves, greatly benefited from the emergence of this prestigious critique of civil rights. Hence, the critique of civil rights promoted by individuals who would later be termed as neoconservatives, although not motivated by support for segregation, strict constructionism, or even a fundamental disagreement with state interventionism per se, had the effect of sustaining and reinforcing white Southerners’ conservative agenda. This impact was all the more significant because unlike most conservatives, men like Moynihan, Podhoretz and Hook had operated within the very liberal community that had originally helped to create and to manage the post-war liberal consensus, only to discover the limitations of government programmes which, according to a Public Interest collaborator who again echoed Wallace-type rhetoric, consisted of having an elite of ‘middle-class civil servants hire upper-class students to use lower-class Negroes’ against the ‘existing local political systems’.

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25 At this time, conservatives themselves tended to consider these intellectuals as ad-hoc liberal allies against the excesses of ‘radicalism’, Interview with Jeffrey Bell, August 29, 2005, Washington DC; Interview with Morton Blackwell, August 29, 2005, Washington DC; Interview with William F. Buckley, July 25, 2005, New York City; Interview with David Keene, August 24, 2005, Washington DC.


28 Interview with David Keene; Aaron Wildavsky, ‘The Empty-Head Blues: Black Rebellion and White Reaction’, PI, Spring 1968, p. 3.
Race was not the only concern of the neoconservatives, and neither was it the case that all of these intellectuals actually supported Richard Nixon.²⁹ Yet, in 1969 the president’s camp clearly had some justification for concluding that public support for further affirmative action on civil rights was collapsing, or at the very least, that the popular ‘sentiment for integration’ had been ‘much higher’ in the mid-1950s than it was by the late 1960s.³⁰ As a consequence, Southern conservatives’ relatively limited demands in the field of civil rights might be met with no negative effects, and perhaps positively good ones for the president’s popularity. The political evolution of Vice-President Spiro Agnew – charged with countering the Wallacite menace – illustrates how the trajectory followed by the administration mirrored the evolution of an emerging sector of the public opinion which, like the neoconservatives, had previously identified with, or at least been neutral towards, the advancement of civil rights legislation. Although the future vice-president would eventually became an outspoken conservative, before the 1968 convention Agnew was, in ideological terms, a fundamentally illiterate, liberal-leaning Republican with strong ties to the Rockefeller wing of the party.³¹ For the most part an unknown quantity, he was at best perceived as ‘philosophically insubstantial’. Not only that: according to a conservative insider, Agnew was also surrounded by ‘political innocents’, and his adoption as Nixon’s running-mate had ‘incensed’, among others, ‘many conservatives’.³² Rather than for his then tenuous anti-civil rights credentials, Agnew had been accepted by the Southerners because he was an unknown quantity who would not hurt Nixon’s appeal among moderate voters and liberal Republicans, and would also be unlikely to offend the white electorate below the Mason-Dixon Line.³³ In fact, his rightwards shift and emergence onto the national stage began shortly before the convention, as a result of the riots that broke out after the assassination of Martin Luther King, and continued as a consequence of his subsequent discovery that a hard-line approach to race-

²⁹ For an overview of these developments see Podhoretz, *Breaking Ranks*, pp. 285–357. For Podhoretz’s (rather representative) views on civil rights, see *ibid*, pp. 118–69.


³¹ Interview with David Keene.


related disturbances was rather popular among disgruntled white voters. The Nixon administration was willing to make extensive and ruthless use of this new-found rhetorical champion, firstly to woo Wallace supporters, and later to assuage dissatisfied conservatives. Less than a year into the first Nixon administration, its adversaries from the left were already noting how 'Southern Wallace voters, under the spell of Spiro Agnew' were being 'safely tucked in the Nixon portfolio,' along with a 'growing number of nervous northern middle-class suburbanites'.

Aside from the choice of running-mate, Southern conservatives' other demands were essentially met by three pledges that Nixon made to his Southern supporters during the months preceding the Miami convention: to oppose bussing as a means of racial integration; to appoint conservative strict constructionist, and preferably Southern judges to the Supreme Court; and to ease the pressure on Southern schools to desegregate. For Nixon, the bussing issue was relatively easy to handle. Being primarily the responsibility of the courts, all the president could do was to either protest against it or propose a constitutional amendment which would expressly prohibit it. Sensing the strong and widespread opposition to the policy, Nixon systematically attacked the measure in the strongest terms before, during and after the 1968 election. As for a constitutional amendment, his Southern backers, and conservatives more broadly, certainly applied a degree of pressure on the White House to go beyond mere rhetoric, and the administration did contemplate the prospect. Yet both the Nixon team and its Southern supporters understood that such an amendment had very slim chances of passage through a Democrat-dominated Congress and, before the run-up to the 1972 election, Nixon was also concerned about the consequences of steering too far to the right. Regarding the Supreme Court, the White House embarked on a vicious struggle with


35 Dent, Prodigal South, pp. 82, 97.


Congress over the appointment of collection of conservative judges. According to a leading Southerner, after two much-publicised showdowns with Congress, ‘Richard Nixon was a hero in the South’. Given the growing collapse of the always superficial popular support for further expansion of civil rights policies which had been demonstrated by the shifting views of the neoconservatives and the aloof behaviour of classical liberals, being the hero of the South was, perhaps for the first time in the post-war period, a useful political asset rather than a hindrance.

2. RACE AND THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Southern white conservative political leadership had developed a close relationship with the intellectuals who, through the pages of publications such as National Review and Human Events, or organisations like the American Conservative Union (ACU) and Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), were leading the revival of American conservatism. For instance, following the lead of National Review and the less sophisticated tabloid Human Events, conservative journals consistently lent space to white Southern intellectuals’ and journalists’ defences of segregation. Modern Age, under the editorship of the prestigious Russell Kirk, incorporated Richard Weaver, a notorious intellectual champion of the traditional white South, and the conservative Southern journalist James Jackson Kilpatrick, as editorial advisors and contributors. Even libertarian-leaning periodicals such as the New Individualist Review were published under the co-sponsorship of both the libertarian Milton Friedman and the aforementioned Weaver. This relationship between conservative Southern traditionalists and the other factions within the conservative community was grounded in a number of shared views regarding race and segregation. In effect, National Review conservatives attempted to provide what they regarded as a

38 Hoff, Nixon Reconsidered, p. 89; Dent, Prodigal South, pp. 208; 214.
respectable argument in defence of segregation in the South, and in the process helped to secure the position of Southern political conservatives within the broader conservative community. With the accession of these Southern politicians, the conservative cause would also acquire a relatively large popular constituency in the South, a region which until the late 1940s had been solidly aligned with the Democratic party and certain aspects of Roosevelt’s New Deal.

Espousing the cause of Southern segregation, however, triggered two less welcomed effects for the movement as a whole. Firstly, it tarnished conservatism with the stain of racist reaction at a time when conservatives were consciously struggling to achieve ideological respectability. Furthermore, the intellectual leadership’s stance on race exacerbated the ever-present tension between the different constituent parts of the conservative movement, particularly during the second half of the 1960s, and both of these effects would linger on through the 1970s and 1980s. Yet Richard Nixon’s racial policies between 1968 and 1972 represented a turning point because for the first time, a president addressed racial matters speaking the language created and rehearsed by those very conservative intellectuals. In short, Nixon helped to soften race-related intra-conservative disputes, which progressively faded away as the president succeeded to defuse the issue while supporting the case of the white South on conservative grounds.

The first line of the rhetorical defence of segregation peddled by the Buckleyites was, much like that of Southern conservatives, to flatly deny that there was any ‘objective basis’ to support the claim that the United States (one of the ‘least racist countries in the world’) had any particularly virulent race problem at all. In fact, National Review articles and Thurmond speeches were equally prone to blame the ‘utter distortions of reality’ promoted by criminally-minded civil rights activists for the growing racial violence of the 1960s. 40 The criminalisation of civil rights campaigners was reinforced by the alleged association between

African-American activists and international communism. *The Washington Report*, published by an influential anticommunist business group, was quite blunt on this subject: in 1968 it cited five examples of cities and towns in which ‘the Communist Party or Communist splinter groups had sought actively to inject themselves in legitimate civil rights activities’. At around the same time *National Review* looked into the issue as well, and denounced the alleged links between ‘Negro militants in America and subversive guerrillas in Latin America’, while noting that ‘some leaders of the US civil rights movement are responding to directives coming out of Havana’. After 1969 that conservative critique filtered into the White House and Nixon’s Justice Department deliberately placed civil rights activists in the same category as common delinquents and, particularly after Martin Luther King declared his opposition to the war in Vietnam, with the radical left generally. To be sure, the Johnson administration had not shied away from treating civil rights activists as criminals or communists and had accordingly put them under surveillance, but the Nixon White House put that strategy at the heart of its public relations operation, taking it to the national press rather vociferously and in terms much reminiscent of both Southern and *National Review* conservatives. Thus, after the 1965 Watts riots, the ACU released a statement blaming the peaceful protests led by King for the explosion of violence. According to the ACU, “‘non-violent’ protest of necessity leads to total mob action’. The Nixon administration, through Vice-President Agnew, peddled the same argument with such enthusiasm that even an aide to George Wallace acknowledged in *Battle Line* that Agnew could (and did) ‘do a damn good selling job’ on Wallace’s Southern turf. According to Nixon and his conservative supporters of all stripes, the civil rights problem was, more than anything, a matter of public order.

During the 1950s and 1960s most conservatives – ranging from traditionalists to libertarian free-marketers through neoconservatives – offered critiques of civil rights legislation and affirmative action on grounds that were at least ostensibly non-racist. Such conservatives, in contrast to Strom Thurmond and others of his ilk, opted instead to emphasise legalistic arguments grounded on ‘strict construction’ of the Constitution; idealised analyses of society as a slow-changing organic structure; or negative judgements on government efficacy to effect change. The leadership of the conservative movement and particularly the more tradition-minded conservatives had for the previous twenty years fully shared in the Southern white strategy of opposition to federally-imposed integration. *National Review*, as the voice of intellectual conservatism, had dedicated itself to supporting the delay of implementation, and also argued against any further expansion of civil rights legislation – basically coinciding with the approach of the Southern bloc. As far as the Buckleyites were concerned, segregation was the product of the South’s spontaneous social development: federal interference was not only unconstitutional – it also risked wreaking havoc over the region’s social fabric. An illustrative and typical example is provided by a 1957 editorial, in which the magazine articulated its standard line on race. ‘The South does not deprive the negro of the vote for the sake of depriving him of the vote’, it helpfully informed African-Americans. Far from such a thing: disfranchisement reflected the fact that ‘the White community merely intends to prevail – that’s all’, on ‘any issues on which there is a corporate disagreement between Negro and White’. Besides, according to the magazine, ‘the great majority of the Negroes in the South do not vote and do not care to vote, and would not know for what to vote if they could’. The stand remained essentially unchanged: on the eve of the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights act, *National Review*’s editors continued to harbour ‘frank reservations about the wisdom’ of the Brown decision.

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As the voice of sober conservatism aimed at acquiring respectability, *National Review* usually stopped short of more blatant strains of racism, although at the same time it did occasionally indulge in 'explorations' of the relationship between race and intelligence.\(^49\) Instead, the editors opted for a combination of paternalism and what might be described as xenophobia. According to this view, Southern blacks possessed a distinct culture that was both alien and inferior to that of whites. Indeed some conservatives considered black culture to be sufficiently foreign to justify their support for the draft on the grounds that 'a volunteer army would attract...specifically blacks', and 'we don't want to be dependent upon a black army to defend us'.\(^50\) In fact, the Buckleyites articulated a view of African-Americans that was astonishingly close to the one that *National Review* was applying to the newly-independent African nations during the 1950s and 1960s. Hence, it followed that African-Americans deserved about the same treatment that the British had dispensed to the Kenyans and the French to the Algerians, all in the name of preserving a superior European culture. The substance of the hard core's analysis of race relations in Alabama and Georgia was virtually identical to that applied to South Africa and Rhodesia. It was argued that the political enfranchisement of black Rhodesians was undesirable because white Rhodesians saw the 'one man one vote' principle as 'a form of reverse racism' which 'would destroy the white community completely and deprive the country of all the techniques of a modern society'. Hence, 'the franchise should call for a high degree of education and other qualifications'. Similarly, as black Rhodesians should expect the advent of full political equality 'gradually', so segregation in the United States should last 'for whatever period it takes to effect a genuine equality between the races', or in other words, according to conservatives, for as long as it took blacks both in the United States and in Africa to become 'westernized' – that is, socially and culturally 'white'. Subsequently, the editors of *National Review* reached the 'sobering' conclusion that Southern whites were 'entitled to prevail' because 'for the time being' they were 'the advanced race', much like the Rhodesian whites who had created a 'western, parliamentary and democratic society' in parallel to a black

\(^49\) Ernest Van Den Haag, 'Intelligence or Prejudice?', *NR*, December 1, 1964.
‘tribal society’. In both cases it was asserted that ‘the claims of civilization supersede those of universal suffrage’. For conservatives the strength of those claims was limited only by their concern about white violence. Hence, segregation in the United States should only last ‘so long as’ it contributed to the enlightenment of African-Americans ‘by humane charitable means,’ just as white Rhodesians ought to ‘tamper with the tribal society’ only through ‘example and persuasion’.51 Seemingly, National Review conservatives remained entirely oblivious to the fact that Southern ‘persuasion’ was becoming increasingly violent throughout the 1950s and 1960s. But then, these were men who believed that school segregation below the Mason-Dixon Line ‘was made essential by the social geography of the South’, whereupon ‘through of no fault of their own, Negro children are markedly different from the well-mannered Negro children’ who attended ‘northern schools’.52 This, no doubt, also helped to explain why ‘the South African idea’ of apartheid might help to ‘bridge the gap between tribalism and urban civilization’.53

The conservative intellectual leadership also integrated the white South’s rearguard action against civil rights legislation within a libertarian-based broad opposition to ‘government interference with the individual’ and to the ‘socialist’ tendencies of the Great Society.54 In this sense, a significant portion of the free-market libertarian-leaning wing of the conservative movement played an absolutely crucial role and was considerably more successful than the Buckleyites in providing Southern whites with a consistent and seemingly colour-blind argument to sustain segregation: civil rights legislation was equated

52 Richard Weaver, ‘As the South Sees it’, ibid., February 13, 1960.
with government regulation. Many libertarians reached the same conclusions defended by Southern political leaders who, in the 1956 ‘Southern Manifesto’, had denounced the federal ‘dictatorship’ from other end of the conservative ideological spectrum. That stand was quite efficiently abstracted by the *New Individualist Review*, a prominent libertarian journal. ‘None can deny that discrimination solely on the basis of race is morally indefensible,’ it argued. ‘But the right to discriminate, the right to express a preference in the use of one’s property which is at variance with the prevailing majority sentiment is of the very essence of liberty’.55

Along very similar lines, Milton Friedman was particularly candid on the matter. Beginning with the assumption that black Americans had ‘progressed a good deal since the nineteenth century’, he also noted that such a development had occurred ‘thanks to market mechanisms’, and that ‘this progress has been actually slowed down by government intervention’.56

Friedman took the reasoning to its logical, practical conclusion in a 1973 letter to Patrick Buchanan, who was then still serving as Nixon’s advisor. ‘The ultimate goal’ of the administration in the area of schooling, according to Friedman, ought to be ‘the complete elimination of governmental finance as well as operation, except perhaps in cases of extreme distress’.57 Needless to say, this also implied ceasing to interfere with *de facto* segregated schools. Frank Meyer, a free-marketeer and *National Review* senior staffer, had noted ten years previously that ‘while maintenance of equality before the law is a function of government’, other issues such as ‘social customs and attitudes’ were ‘not the concern of government’. He therefore reached the type of conclusion that Richard Nixon would later peddle from the White House: ‘segregation laws and integrating laws’, Meyer claimed, ‘are equally wrong’.58 A few years later, and shortly before Nixon’s accession to power, Leonard Read – the head of the radical libertarian Foundation for Economic Education – lambasted the ‘application of coercion to education’, and demanded a full withdrawal of state intervention because ‘universal education may be a worthy objective. But when coercion is

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56 Milton Friedman, *There is No Such a Thing as a Free Lunch* (LaSalle IL: Open Court, 1975), p. 216.
57 Milton Friedman to Patrick Buchanan, October 25, 1973, f. 11, box 22, MF papers.
applied, compelling universal attendance, it becomes necessary to "scrape the bottom of the barrel" to find teachers. The qualified teachers are "watered down" by the unqualified, turning the trend away from excellence and toward mediocrity.  

Even though many libertarians genuinely disagreed with the moral iniquities of segregation, by performing something of an exercise in selective dogmatism, their opposition to 'big government' and 'state interference' in the economic realm led them to oppose civil rights legislation as well. In the process, libertarian conservatives also appealed to a deep-seated streak of conservative grassroots resentment and mistrust of the federal authorities that civil rights legislation had done nothing but exacerbate. The fact that such legislation was in place precisely to preserve the individual rights of African-Americans seems to have gone unnoticed.

Yet, as the mainstream of American politics absorbed the right to legal racial equality as a given, the *National Review* conservatives' approach to race created a degree of tension within the broader conservative movement. Religious beliefs led a number of Catholic conservative intellectuals and a few devout Protestant Southern politicians such as North Carolina representative Charles B. Deane to denounce segregation. Garry Wills, a former seminarian who became one of the brightest conservative rising stars and was William F. Buckley's protégé, realised by the late 1960s that conservative views on race either ignored the point of view of African-Americans, or portrayed them as a threat to the existing white-dominated Southern society. In a blunt letter of 1967 to Buckley, Wills asserted that conservatives only understood one South: the white South. 'That is not enough anymore,' he declared, 'in fact only to understand one side – black or white – is not even to understand that'. Nearly a decade earlier L. Brent Bozell, a radical conservative Catholic, Buckley's brother-in-law, *National Review* editor – and himself no shrinking violet when it came to
accusing the ‘Negro leadership’ of deliberately ‘singling out for violence’ certain Southern cities – had vigorously contested the magazine’s cavalier nonchalance in the face of what he regarded as a clear violation of both the United States Constitution and basic Christian principles. After all, National Review’s position on civil rights was, Bozell correctly emphasised, particularly poignant from self-proclaimed strict constructionists and defenders of the Christian West.63 Ten years later, Garry Wills would leave the magazine and the conservative movement altogether amidst some acrimony, largely out of discontent with the position on race.64

In a similar vein, the hard core’s ambivalence towards the plight of African-Americans also helped to increase the tension between traditionalists and those libertarians who believed that the Buckleyites only considered the rights of ‘Anglo-Saxons’. Thus, the libertarians of the New Individualist Review had no qualms about denouncing what they regarded as the ‘mindless racism’ of National Review conservatives, and the influence of what they saw as ‘segregationists and reactionaries’ within organisations such as the Young Americans for Freedom.65 This conflict would indeed play a part in precipitating the near implosion of the conservative movement’s youth wing. In December 1969, the entire California branch of YAF, as well as the most active parts of the New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania state organisations threatened a collective walkout. According to David Friedman, Milton Friedman’s son and then a leading young libertarian, the event would have meant the loss of the ‘bigger associations, with the most active leaders’.66 Eventually, the California state organisation was disbanded, and the issue even surfaced in the national press. Tensions about race had the power to intensify the petty power struggles within the YAF leadership and the general strain between traditionalist conservatism and radical libertarianism in the

64 Judis, Buckley, p. 130; Garry Wills to William F. Buckley, July 30, 1968, f. Garry Wills, box 57, WFB papers.
66 David Friedman to Frank Meyer, December 1, 1969, f. YAF, box 66, WFB papers.
broadest sense. William F. Buckley, Lee Edwards, David Keene and Morton Blackwell, all either closely related or founding members of the organisation, coincide in emphasising the former as routinely triggering crises within YAF. Yet, race also became a particularly sore element of libertarian-traditionalist ideological tension throughout the 1960s. Many young libertarians objected to what they saw as *National Review*'s devotion to 'a polite form of white supremacy'. Others, like a young Floridian activist, voiced disgust at the perceived 'incorporation of racists, know-nothings and anti-Semites' into the movement. As early as 1964, some libertarian YAFers deplored their organisation's self-identification as 'conservative', and genuinely (but mistakenly) believed that its views were based 'largely on the concepts of pre-1880 English liberalism. Namely: freedom, rationality' and 'the perfectibility of all men'. In fact, the conservative youth was even more divided than its elders. For instance YAF's own organ *The New Guard* labelled Strom Thurmond 'a man of courage' and trumpeted the fact that the senator 'has been one of our most outspoken supporters'. It was also not afraid of labelling civil rights protests 'unchristian' and 'a threat to our system of law', or of even claiming that the main 'problem' with the African-American was that 'on average, he lacks a desire to improve himself and lacks a willingness to discipline himself to this end'.

If the race issue provoked some tension between different conservative sensibilities, it also forced the Buckleyites and the conservative community at large to adjust to the new political reality brought about by black enfranchisement. Thus, by the early 1970s the movement's intellectual leadership had come to understand at least the electoral rationale of a

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68 Ronald Hamowy, 'National Review: Criticism and Reply,' *NIR*, November 1961; Hamowy's article offers an overview of the ideological tensions between 'libertarian-liberal,' 'rationalists', 'traditionalists', and 'authoritarians'. See also James O'Connell, 'The New Conservatism', *ibid.*, spring, 1962, p.17–22; Stephen Mare Slepin to William F. Buckley, May 24, 1964, f. YAF, box 33, WFB papers; Robert Bauman to Buckley, July 6, 1964, ibid.


70 'A Man of Courage', *The New Guard*, October 1964; Allan C. Brownfield, 'Disrespect for Law and Order', *ibid.*, December 1964; George Stigler, 'The Problem of the Negro', *ibid.*, December 1965. Stigler was a leading libertarian academic in the same league as Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek, and was also a founding member of the Mont Pelerin Society.
much softer approach to civil rights. In 1970, *National Review* lent its pages to Vincent S. Baker, an African-American conservative keen to remind his fellow travellers that America's blacks 'wanted in' to the conservative movement and the Republican party. Eventually, some conservative operatives came to regret, and recanted from, their previous opposition to civil rights legislation. As early as 1968 *National Review*, although still concluding that full desegregation was a near-impossibility, celebrated the limited success of a locally managed experiment in integration in Shaker (Ohio). Jeffrey Bell, a young conservative operative who worked for the Nixon campaign is quite illustrative of this shift: ‘I was never a racist or a segregationist, but at one time I questioned the need to have national laws on things like public accommodations. I later realised that you did need that’. Eventually many, indeed virtually all, libertarians declared their support for civil rights legislation, but continued to oppose affirmative action generally and racial quotas in particular. In 1970 even William F. Buckley applauded the judicial decision calling upon Governor Kirk of Florida to obey the law, and defined Kirk's Wallace-like racial sabre-rattling as 'grandstanding against the law'. However irresponsible and intellectually inconsistent their approach to racial issues may have been, *National Review* conservatives do appear to have been genuinely free from consciously racist motives. Hence as their Southern brethren shifted towards a more respectable position led by no less than the president, they followed their cue. This should not be equated with unequivocal support for integration, but merely as a reproduction of the strategy of Southern conservatives, who had also shifted towards supporting *de facto* segregation on the right side of the law. James Jackson Kilpatrick, for instance, was quite clear on the matter: although sixteen years after the *Brown* decision he recognised that 'segregation is dead as a permissible legal device', he still believed that it nevertheless survived 'in fact and human nature'. Kirkpatrick then proceeded to peddle the typical Southern discourse that would also be reproduced by President Nixon, arguing that 'the constitution [and *Brown*] does not require affirmative measures to undo *de facto* separation.'

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72 Saul Friedman, 'The Ludlow Precedent', *ibid.*, July 16, 1968; Interview with Jeffrey Bell.
73 Interview with Michael Baroody, September 6, 2005, Washington DC; Interview with Leonard Liggio, May 18, 2004, Fairfax, VA.
74 William F. Buckley, 'Repression USA', *NR*, April 7, 1970.
and concluded by expressing his 'own conviction' that 'the problems will be tolerably resolved through the return to old principles of community'.

The conservative critique of 1960s civil rights legislation was also reiterated by the Nixon administration in its efforts to legitimise policies designed to secure and maintain the political collaboration of the conservative white South. Thus the repeated attempts to appoint Southern-friendly judges to the Supreme Court were defended by the White House as intended to equilibrate the Court with 'strict constructionist' voices. According to Nixonites, much like conservative activists, such debates about legal philosophy were entirely unrelated to the race issue. The public at large and the mainstream press had no trouble connecting the dots outlining Nixon's conservative strategy and the Southern strategy's role within it. For instance, in October 1969, the New York Times noted that the administration's 'retreat' from civil rights activism, the nomination of Judge Haynsworth to the Supreme Court and the tactic of shifting responsibility for desegregating Southern schools to the courts had been 'prompted by political pressure from Southern conservatives'. More importantly, it noted that although 'this has sometimes been called the “Southern strategy” of Mr. Nixon and Mr. Mitchell', the "forgotten American" whose feelings it seeks to soothe may hold the political balance in many crucial Northern areas as well'. Even more interestingly, the Times also emphasised that Nixon's Southern strategy also included such standard conservative pieties as 'giving states a freer hand', and was clothed in standard conservative rhetoric, as exemplified by the president's promise to prevent the federal government from 'grabbing power from the people' in 'transportation and other realms', as well as in civil rights and education matters.

On the ground in the South, even prior to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights act and Barry Goldwater's inversion of New Deal electoral alignments, conservative observers had

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been noting the rise in black electoral registration. Southerners fully realised that, in the words of James Jackson Kilpatrick, ‘vastly more Southern negroes will be voting in the future’, and wondered about the effects of such a development on party alignments. By 1966, Arkansas had elected Winthrop Rockefeller as its first Republican (and integrationist) governor since Reconstruction, a path that was followed in 1969 by Virginia which also elected, for the first time, a Republican governor with liberal--leaning instincts in the field of civil rights. That same year, conservatives hailed the emergence of a ‘new South’, which had been epitomized during Nixon’s 1968 campaign by the embryonic Republican Party apparatus and its opposition to George Wallace. Conversely, in 1971 Floridians had also rejected the candidacy of Claude Kirk when the then-governor opted for a Wallace-style strategy of racial populism. Other Southern conservatives avoided Kirk’s miscalculated turn to the populist right. In fact, the most skilled ones had no trouble understanding either Nixon’s equivocal message towards African-Americans or the behaviour of their suddenly successful, relatively liberal colleagues. Harry Dent’s reaction to the publication of The Emerging Republican Majority is quite illustrative. Thurmond’s man in the White House advised the president that the White House ‘should not try to repudiate the book’. Yet Dent also counselled that the administration ‘should not permit it to be the “gospel according to Richard Nixon”’ either. After all, he concluded, ‘we are writing off no state and no vote’. Moreover, and rather disingenuously for someone who has been variously defined as ‘important for Nixon’s Southern strategy’ and as having ‘a lot influence’ in Nixon’s dealings with Southern Republicans, Dent also added that ‘I know nothing about any Southern strategy, anyway’.

79 Bartley, The New South, p. 393; Mason, Quest for a New Majority, p. 67.
82 Harry Dent Memorandum to John Ehrlichman, July 22, 1969, f. Kevin Phillips, Southern Strategy, box 98, William Safire papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress (my emphasis) (hereafter WS papers); Interview with Morton Blackwell; Interview with David Keene;
But then, political metamorphoses were nothing new in Southern politics. George Wallace’s decade-long racist political career had been preceded by a refusal to join Thurmond’s third-party Dixiecrats in the 1948 Democratic convention. It originated after losing his first gubernatorial race as a consequence of being ‘out-niggered’ by his opponent, and eventually concluded when Wallace fully recanted his racism and joined the race to woo the African-American vote.\(^83\) Thurmond, rather similarly – except that he never received any flak from the conservative movement – had run in 1947 as an orthodox New Deal liberal firmly in favour of federal support for, of all things, education as well as welfare programmes while maintaining, for Southern standards, a relatively moderate stand on the race issue.\(^94\)

Regardless of his pro-market rhetoric Thurmond was also an accomplished manager of federal funding and according to conservative insiders, a substantial proportion of the federal ‘pork’ supplied by the Nixon administration to South Carolina went to ‘Strom Thurmond’s black projects’. In fact, old-fashioned ‘pork-barrel’ politics enabled him to reach out to African-Americans while minimizing the potential alienation of his traditional white base of support. From the early 1970s, as race progressively became less of a focal issue within Southern politics, both Thurmond and (rather spectacularly) Wallace, managed to remain in the limelight by reconciling themselves, at least to some extent, with their black constituents.\(^85\)

Since the mid-1950s, the hard core had developed a close relationship with Southern conservatives, one in which the former provided some form of intellectual legitimacy and obtained in return a relatively influential political arm, as well as the broader constituency that came with it. Nevertheless the price of this collaboration for Buckleyites was the perception that they were plainly racist, a perception which was underlined by the heightened tension with other conservatives less comfortable with the hard core’s stance. Of course the relationship between the Buckleyites and the Southerners was not static. Over time, it

\(^84\) Bass, *Ol’ Strom*, pp. 83–86.
\(^85\) Interview with David Keene; Interview with Morton Blackwell; Bass, *Ol’ Strom*, p. 289, 296–302; Cohodas, *Strom Thurmond*, pp. 446–52; Carter, *Politics of Rage*.  

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evolved towards more moderate, pragmatic positions that accepted the legal gains of the civil rights movement. But the conservative community never seriously held any pretensions of acquiring substantial black support, platitudes to the opposite notwithstanding. Most conservatives followed Buckley’s example and defended states’ rights while denying any racist undertones to their position. Consistently they supported Nixon’s open indifference towards de facto segregation and his efforts to paralyse any further measures designed to promote racial equality. After all, President Nixon sustained his own political stand on the race issue with the conservative canon.  

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3. SCHOOL DESEGREGATION AND THE RHETORIC OF POLICY-MAKING

The most troublesome civil rights issue faced by the Nixon administration concerned the desegregation of Southern schools. Unlike bussing, the principle of equal education – at least in an abstract sense and where legally segregated Southern schools were concerned – retained a considerable degree of popular support. Moreover, in contrast to the question of judicial appointments, school desegregation disputes were quite likely to degenerate into highly emotional, even violent, conflicts. The Johnson administration’s tactic for enforcing the Brown decision had been to threaten segregated schools with the cutting off of federal funding, which would be carried out through the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). By the time of Nixon’s inauguration, most Southern schools remained segregated and the federal government was still struggling, ineffectively and to the irritation of all concerned, to impose the Supreme Court’s ruling. Yet, somehow, by 1974 Nixon had managed to both defuse the issue and effectively desegregate the majority of Southern schools. Of course Southern conservatives were well aware that school desegregation, unlike bussing, was perceived as an issue which mainly concerned Southern schools, and it therefore retained relatively high levels of nationwide popular support. They had finally acknowledged

that *de jure* segregation had to end. Harry Dent, the administration’s resident Southerner, had no qualms about stating, in a memorandum sent to the president early in 1969, that ‘deliberate segregation and the dual school system concept must be eliminated’.  

These sentiments were not limited to those Southerners operating within the White House. Even local Republican cadres below the Mason-Dixon Line had virtually given up on the issue. In fact, as Florida governor Claude Kirk found out in 1971, a populist, die-hard Wallace-style approach to school segregation could very well backfire with the electorate. Elsewhere in the South local activists were clearly changing their tactics from confrontation to equivocation. In February 1970, John E. Courson, the financial director of South Carolina’s Republican Party ‘realized’ that the state’s executive branch had ‘no constitutional right to ignore judicial decisions’, and claimed that in fact South Carolina had ‘long been reconciled to the fact that integration is the law and has not doubted its validity’.  

A little earlier in the year, another South Carolina Republican appealed to Dent on behalf of his local school district. Far from refusing to integrate the schools, the missive merely requested a six-month postponement in the schedule to desegregate, enough, he claimed, until a new school was built.  

A similar letter from Laurence McIntosh, also from South Carolina, emphasised that local whites realised that ‘some workable plan for carrying out the desegregation of this school district must be arranged’, and volunteered a scheme that, according to McIntosh, was both ‘legally sound under the applicable statues and court decisions’ and, crucially, ‘a plan with which the community can live’. Yet a fourth disgruntled Southerner reminded Dent that his local education board was struggling against federal officers in trying to implement ‘a workable plan which will not go the way of Washington and Wilmington’ in triggering an eruption of violence, while another of Dent’s correspondents joined the chorus of protests against HEW, but took pains to establish that his school board had done an ‘honest,
straightforward, conscientious job of trying to integrate our schools in keeping with the federal law'.

This is not to say that Southern conservatives had suddenly embraced or even reconciled themselves with the prospect of meaningful racial integration. Rather, it meant that local white conservatives opted for a softer approach, which consisted of refusing to go beyond a rather narrow interpretation of the law in their still-dogged attempts to perpetuate *de facto* segregation. This tactic had been advocated (without much success) by a minority of ‘moderate’ white Southern politicians and businessmen ever since the 1950s. The fundamental novelty was that hard-line political leaders, local cadres and grassroots activists seemed to have abandoned frontal opposition as well. The missive from Laurence McIntosh to Dent is particularly candid on the matter. According to McIntosh, although the ‘citizens’ of his area were prepared to comply with federal law, HEW’s plan was ‘completely unworkable’ because it was, shockingly enough, ‘designed to produce a maximum degree of integration’, and those unnamed ‘citizens’ would not be compelled to send their children to a school where they would be a minority. Thus, if ‘for example’ white children wanted to stay in such a school, that would be ‘all right’ with the school board, but if some of them preferred to transfer to a predominantly white school, ‘they should be allowed’. Needless to say, blacks would be given the same choice afforded to the aforementioned, and would be able to either attend any school of their choosing, so long as they remained a minority, or to transfer to black-dominated schools.

In different ways, much of the school-related Southern correspondence to Southern-friendly administration officials such as Dent and HEW’s assistant secretary Robert Mardian had similar undertones. Southern school authorities attempted to block actual integration with ‘freedom of choice’ plans; defences of ‘neighbourhood schools’ coupled with shameless

91 Sanders ‘Rassling a Governor’, pp. 332-359, and citations in footnote 9 above.
92 Laurence McIntosh to Harry Dent, May 27, 1969, box 1, RM papers.
gerrymandering of school districts if the patterns of housing were not organically segregated; accusations that HEW’s officials were engaged, precisely, in gerrymandering for the sake of integration; and heartfelt proclamations in defence of ‘quality of education’; not to mention pointed protests about federal bias against the South. For instance, in June 1969, John E. Courson’s protestations of integrationist impetus were accompanied by a lengthy explanation of how the small size of certain schools which were still in the process of being built as part of the desegregation plans in the district would simply not allow for full practical integration. Don Albergotti wrote on behalf of a Florence, South Carolina school district expressing horror at HEW’s plan to desegregate because the only purpose of the aforementioned plan was ‘to accomplish total racial integration’. Nevertheless, Albergotti emphasised that the district had a track record of compliance and that the local whites’ main concern was the plan’s ‘detrimental effect on education’. Another Republican official, this time from Georgia, again had no trouble acknowledging that segregation was indeed ‘discriminatory’. Yet, he complained bitterly about HEW’s own ‘rank discrimination’ against Southern schools vis-à-vis those, de facto segregated but unmolested institutions that happened to be situated north of the Mason-Dixon Line, and demanded equal treatment for his own schools. Similarly, E. F. Lucas, who had proudly noted the success of the desegregation efforts of his school district in North Carolina, also thought that the district was ‘unique’ in having a residential pattern which placed ‘91% of the total Negro population’ in one single area of the city. While Lucas did not know how such an unfortunate fact could have come to pass, he was quite aware that the only remaining all-black schools remained there – including an unspecified number of new ones built precisely in that area of the city after the initiation of the actual process of desegregation. However, he could not ‘for the life of me figure out’ how desegregating those (new and pre-existing) schools was going to work ‘on a practical basis’, since that would require bussing for white children. Somewhat reiteratively, he also asserted that ‘all of us involved in the school business should spend our

94 Don Albergotti to Harry Dent, May 16, 1969, ibid.
95 G. Paul Jones to Harry Dent, June 3, 1969, ibid.
time and energies on educating the children', and presumably invest a little less time and resources in meaningful desegregation.\(^96\)

Unfortunately for the likes of E. F. Lucas, neither HEW’s officials nor civil rights activists seem to have seen things in this light. According to an outraged South Carolinian, HEW’s compliance officials ‘insisted that no plan was constitutional if it resulted in an all-Negro school’, and instead appeared to have assumed that such schemas were nothing but ways of bypassing the law to replace \textit{de jure} segregation with \textit{de facto} segregation.\(^97\) As a HEW officer working in Alabama put it, hearings in the state’s Washington County rather illustratively revealed ‘a picture of token desegregation’. Noting that the school authorities had not been ‘unreasonable’ in their approach to school integration, he nevertheless concluded that they had not moved ‘rapidly, decisively or adequately’. In fact, according to this officer, such tactics ‘might produce more segregation’: unsurprisingly, such plans were usually rejected by the department.\(^98\)

The reaction of Southern conservatives to these setbacks was, however, somewhat nuanced: even if the aim was to exert pressure on the administration through a rather shameless form of electoral blackmail, Nixon’s personal reputation among his Southern white constituents seems to have been left largely unscathed. Thus, in June 1969, John Courson’s explanations of his district’s prevarication were accompanied by the pointed observation that HEW’s activities were creating a ‘credibility gap’ between the administration and its white South Carolinian voters.\(^99\) In December 1969 South Carolina’s \textit{The State} wondered whether the president was ‘speaking from both sides of the mouth’ and ‘retreating’ from his campaign promises to cease integrating schools ‘for integration’s sake’ and to have ‘no more bussing’. Yet, \textit{The State} also maintained that ‘the implications’ of its own musings were perhaps ‘harder than the Nixon administration deserves’, and contented

\(^{96}\) E. F. Lucas to Harry Dent, April 29, 1969, ibid.
\(^{97}\) D. W. Robinson to Harry Dent, September 4, 1969, ibid.
\(^{98}\) ‘Dilemmas in HEW Case’, and ‘$ 500,000 at Stake In Ruling on School’, \textit{Atlanta Journal and Constitution}, February 23, 1969.
\(^{99}\) John Edward Courson to Harry Dent, February 6, 1970, box 1, RM papers.
itself with demanding that Robert Finch, then HEW’s Secretary, be kept in line with Nixon’s campaign utterances in the South or be replaced. Two weeks later, the paper was still confident that the horrors of HEW were the consequence of Secretary Finch’s deviation from Nixon’s own philosophy.100 In mid-1969, Houston representative Jim Earthman organised the mailing of 50,000 letters opposing bussing on the grounds it would ‘lead to impairment of mental health’ among youngsters while at the same time creating an ‘educational monarchy’. Yet together with the ritual agreement with ‘equal educational opportunities for all American citizens regardless of race, creed or color’, the signatories squarely put the blame on ‘a previous administration’ and unruly officials at the Justice Department.101 Alvin J. Wall of Charleston, writing to Dent on behalf of yet another desegregating school district maintained, rather menacingly, that unless HEW’s ‘meddling’ in the state’s ‘local affairs’ ceased, he was ‘confident that some energetic reporter’ would find out about South Carolina’s school problems with HEW officials. Such a thing, wrote Wall, would surely have harmful effects for the standing of both Nixon and the GOP at large in the state. Yet Wall’s specific demands were limited to requesting that something be done to bring ‘Secretary Finch’s public utterances more in line with his private directions’ and Nixon’s ‘campaign promises’.102 Clearly, as far as most Southern Republican conservatives were concerned, the sincerity of Nixon’s campaign promises and the president’s personal sympathy for the plight of white Southerners were not matters of doubt.

During the early months of 1969 HEW – if haphazardly and unsystematically – had indeed threatened to cut off federal funding to Southern schools, and this pledge was occasionally implemented.103 Observing the situation, Georgia Republican G. Paul Jones wrote to John Sears, a deputy counsel to the president, summing up the implications from a point of view fully understood by the president’s men. Jones pointed out that

102 Alvin J. Wall to Harry Dent, May 13, 1969, box 1, RM papers (my emphasis).
103 Exempt Food from Fund Cutoffs, Solon Asks’, Macon Telegraph (undated cutting), ibid.
if, in 1970, it can be accurately and truthfully said that the Richard Nixon administration did not cut off the funds of a single school district for lunch programmes or for educational programs, we have a political plus that almost defies the imagination. We would be off a (sic) running, and 1970 and 1972 will offer unbelievable potential for Republican gains in the South.\textsuperscript{104}

Nixon seems to have agreed. In July 1970, the president ordered his troops to cease ‘catering to liberals and integrationists to our political disadvantage’.\textsuperscript{105} In fact, by then White House political operatives were already systematically seeking to corner their Democratic counterparts into publicly supporting affirmative action on school integration, in the belief that a clear pro-civil rights stand would damage the latter’s electoral standing. As historian Robert Mason has indicated, Nixon’s interest in the fortunes of Republican candidates during the 1970 mid-term elections was limited. This was not, however, the case when it came to his own prospects for 1972. In December 1970, Charles Colson, a senior advisor to the president, was brutally candid on the matter. In a memorandum to H. R. Haldeman, Colson declared that

The Ribicoff bill to force integration of white suburban schools is the greatest piece of political gold to drop in our laps... It is my suggestion that we engineer some pressure... [in] all states in which Democratic Senators will be up for election in 1972 to try to force Democrats to co-sponsor the bill... This should be done fast to try to get them to give it a reflex reaction endorsement. We should not miss this opportunity under any circumstance.\textsuperscript{106}

Resistance to federally-imposed school integration and particularly to bussing were not only useful tools to harm Democratic aspirations. These were also crucial elements of what Scammon and Wattenberg had termed the ‘social issue’ or, as far as the Nixon White House was concerned, the central themes in the consolidation of a new Republican majority made up of suburban, middle-class and blue-collar support in the North, together with the mass of the white Southern vote.

\textsuperscript{104} Paul Jones to John Sears, February 25, 1969, ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} Haldeman, Diaries, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{106} Mason, \textit{Quest for a New Majority}, pp. 67, 77, 100–101; Charles Colson memorandum to H. R. Haldeman, December 7, 1970, f. HRH Memos 1969\textsuperscript{-}1970 (2 of 3), documents from boxes 1 to 9, Contested Documents, CC papers.
In electoral terms, this strategy had been first articulated in a formal way by Kevin Phillips, who by mid-1968 already claimed to be 'plugged in absolutely' with the campaign. According to Phillips himself, he had achieved a quite remarkable feat within the Nixon organisation: 'any memorandum I write' he claimed, 'gets to the top of the heap [read Richard Nixon] in five minutes'.107 His influence certainly did not fade away after election night either. In early 1970, when John Ehrlichman, in his capacity as the administration's domestic issues 'supremo', tried to resist what he saw as 'the pure conservative line which Phillips peddles', he was castigated with a week long 'big freeze', or complete cut-off from the president – which in turn triggered the near paralysis of decision-making in domestic policy. Although Nixon eventually changed track and re-instated Ehrlichman, Phillips retained a considerable influence over the president's mind. Most importantly, by then, Southern whites and blue-collar and middle-class northern constituencies were seen by the administration as responding to virtually the same issues and, according to Charles Colson, were Richard Nixon's 'natural constituencies'.108

In policy terms, the first measure taken by the administration to satisfy its Southern supporters was to appoint Southern-friendly staffers to the desegregation machinery. That approach culminated in February 1970 when – facing a considerable degree of internal infighting and external pressure – the administration, at the urgings of Dent and the other members of the Southern lobby created a cabinet-level committee on school desegregation. This committee, Georgia representative Howard Callaway warned Secretary Robert Finch – then entrusted with the federal machinery for school desegregation – ‘must be believable in the South’ and hence made up of men who ‘at least have no bias against the South’.109 By July 1970, Robert Mardian, a notorious Southern sympathiser, and Patrick Gray, yet another

108 Ehrlichman, Witness to Power, pp.212-22; Haldeman, Diaries, p. 145; Mason, Quest for a New Majority, pp. 67, 77, 100-101; Charles W. Colson memorandum to the President 'Recommendations in accordance with Haldeman's memorandum of November 7th', November 19, 1970, f. Memorandums to the President, box 3, CC papers.
conservative-leading Southerner had found their way ('fortunately' according to Dent) into the aforementioned cabinet committee, which was chaired by no less than Vice-President Agnew, then already well on his way to becoming the darling of white Southerners in particular and of the conservative movement in general.\textsuperscript{110} Nixon, to be sure, had appointed Robert Finch, a civil rights-committed liberal, to head HEW, but he also appointed Gray and Mardian as Finch's executive assistant and top legal assistant respectively. According to his colleagues at HEW, Mardian also happened to be 'one of the most aggressive conservatives in the first Nixon administration', and a man who 'thought... that HEW was essentially the enemy'.\textsuperscript{111} Upon his nomination, Dent instructed Mardian that his mission at HEW was 'to be the balance wheel' and to 'straighten the wheel out' within the department. Subsequently, Mardian could be seen informing civil rights activists via \textit{The Washington Post} that penalties for segregated Southern schools should be stopped in order to avoid, as his fellow conservatives would have put it, 'teaching underachievers with overachievers'.\textsuperscript{112} From a Southern conservative this statement was nothing remarkable. However, this was the first time that senior federal officers placed in the very machinery entrusted with implementing desegregation measures – and within the administration at large – openly voiced opposition to further affirmative action and openly disagreed with the moderate civil rights leadership.\textsuperscript{113}

In two internal memorandums addressed to Finch and dated March 14 and May 19, 1969, Mardian was particularly clear on the subject. The Johnson administration had, he asserted, operated on the assumption that HEW's mission was to 'require without exception a terminal desegregation plan which requires the elimination of all-black schools by September 1969'. Yet according to Mardian, such an interpretation was not 'required by the present guidelines'. Besides, as he correctly noted, HEW's behaviour was 'totally inconsistent with the President's statements during the campaign', as well as with the secretary's 'own

\textsuperscript{110} Kotowski, \textit{Nixon's Civil Rights}, p. 34; Dent, \textit{The Prodigal South}, p. 139.
statements' in a then-recent interview published by the *US News and World Report*. Mirroring the behaviour of white Southern conservatives, Mardian did not advise, in the first memorandum, an open change to HEW’s segregation guidelines, but a mere reinterpretation – according to which the administration should only deal with ‘those problems that are preventing schools from compliance’. In the second memorandum, the department’s deputy general counsel St. John Barret concurred, counselling that ‘such policy clarification probably should not be the subject of any particular public announcement’.

Nixon seems to have thought differently, and in fact, would eventually reach the opposite conclusion. Despite his earlier urging to his troops to ‘keep a low profile’ on civil rights, during his first year in office the White House released two major public communiqués on school desegregation. According to Ehrlichman, these were ‘major announcements which attracted enormous press attention and comment,’ and hence they hardly complied with the doctrine of low profile. Yet Nixon was convinced that he would suffer politically – with the electorate and with Congress – unless his position was ‘perfectly clear’. Presidential rhetoric, both public and private, was carefully attuned to avoid accusations of racism. But it was quite clearly aimed at – and certainly had the effect of – delegitimising the ideological soundness of both affirmative action and the most unpopular policies aimed at achieving of racial equality. For instance, in a notable reversal from the previous federal stand Nixon, according again to Ehrlichman, did not want the administration’s initiatives on school segregation to be based on whether it was a ‘moral wrong’. ‘If we must disagree with segregation’, asserted the president, ‘it is not because Southerners are morally wrong but rather because they are legally wrong’.

Throughout 1969, the administration had struggled to find a way to handle Southern schools which remained segregated. Nixon’s thinking, according to his assistant for domestic

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114 Robert C. Mardian to Secretary Robert Finch, March 14, 1969, box 1, RM papers; Mardian to the Secretary, May 19, 1969, ibid.
affairs, was grounded in the conviction that ‘this whole subject has had a history of hypocrisy’, and had been based on ‘unrealistic guidelines’. The administration would therefore do better to ‘face the facts as they really are’ so as to ensure that it took ‘a new and realistic approach’. For further information on this approach, the president referred his assistants to ‘summaries of statements’ prepared by former Thurmond’s assistant Harry Dent. Initially, the White House contemplated the prospect of organising a fully-fledged presidential statement on the matter. According to notes on a draft of that speech made by Nixon’s congressional liaison in June 1969, it went ‘in the right direction’ because the president ‘rebuts Wallace’s claims’ that there was no difference between his approach to desegregation and that of Johnson-Humphrey. Further indications that Nixon’s approach was designed to satisfy the white South were provided by the recognition that deadlines were ‘ineffective’ and, more revealingly, by the president’s siding against the ‘hated bureaucratic meddling by HEW officials’ – the fact that he possessed ultimate authority over HEW employees seemed to have gone unnoticed. However, the administration initially chose to shift tactics, avoid the direct involvement of the president, and handle the issue through a speech jointly delivered by the secretary of HEW and the attorney general. Although the presidential speech of 1969 was never delivered, the thrust of the administration’s public utterances remained firmly on the same course.

The aforementioned draft presidential speech suspending deadlines for unreconstructed Southern schools began by echoing Mardian’s declarations to the press. ‘Efforts to achieve compliance’ with the 1964 Civil Rights Act often resulted’, it was argued, ‘in a sacrifice in the quality of education’, while it concluded by noting that by suspending the deadlines, the

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119 Draft speech attached to L. Patrick Gray to John Ehrlichman, June 25, 1969, ibid. Interestingly enough, this quotation – from a different source and sans the recommendation to follow up through Dent – has been used elsewhere to exemplify Nixon’s strong pro-civil rights stand. See for instance Hoff, Nixon Reconsidered, pp. 88–89.
120 Bryce Harlow Memorandum to the President ‘Draft of President’s statement on school desegregation’, June 10, 1969, f. Desegregation Memoranda, box 76, WS papers. Nixon’s ability to portray himself as an outsider within (and at the top) of government and to project an image of victimisation at the hands of hostile bureaucrats in cahoots with liberal journalists and elitist members of the ‘establishment’ seems to have proceeded from sincere belief, which may explain its remarkable success, see Nigel Bowles Nixon’s Business. Authority and Power in Presidential Politics, (College Station TX: A & M University Press, 2005), pp. 24, 242; Greenberg, Nixon’s Shadow, pp. 180–207.
president hoped to ensure ‘that educational quality is maintained’. Although there seems to be little doubt about Nixon’s sincere commitment to educational quality, the president was far from unaware of the term’s connotations: as he himself would subsequently observe to his speech-writing staff, ‘quality education is a code word’. In the interim, the speech went on to touch on other seasoned or soon-to-be typical conservative common-places. It first denied state responsibility for interfering with de facto segregation – as far as the administration was concerned, it was segregation ‘imposed by official policy’ that was ‘in violation of the constitution’. Regarding de jure segregation, while vowing to put in place the mechanisms to end it, the administration also acknowledged that ‘at a time when the whole concept of a society based on law is under challenge, it is important to recognize that this [school desegregation] has mostly been achieved through voluntary compliance by citizens’. Thereby the Nixon team not only intended to broadcast its belief that white Southerners were capable of integrating their own schools. They went on to add that, as every conservative had claimed since the 1950s, local communities (read Southern whites) were better equipped to carry this out than the federal government, and vowed to avoid ‘bureaucratic disruption of the educational process’. In short, as congressional liaison Bryce Harlow had asserted, the administration intended to send out a clear message that federally-imposed guidelines had proved to be an ‘ineffective’ means of achieving school desegregation, and hence had be put to an end.

In March 1970, the president himself delivered a further, remarkably lengthy discourse which was even more clearly aimed at sustaining the position of Southern conservatives on race matters. Within a lengthy recapitulation of judicial decisions and executive action to
date, he remarked that ‘certain changes’ were needed in ‘the Nation’s’ approach to school desegregation. According to Nixon, certain (unidentified) judicial decisions had ‘gone beyond’ what he understood to be the ‘accepted principles’ guiding federal policy, and hence did not warrant the White House’s consideration.\(^{126}\) For more information about what the limits of those accepted principles were, Nixon informed the nation that the courts had not ‘spoken definitely on whether or not, or the extent to which, ‘desegregation’ meant ‘integration’. He then proceeded to clarify, on two separate occasions, the distinction between \textit{de jure} and \textit{de facto} segregation, stating that in the case of the latter school authorities were not ‘constitutionally required to take any positive steps’, and that the federal government would not ‘insist on a remedy for [the] lawful de facto segregation’, and neither ‘should this condition by itself be cause for federal enforcement actions’\(^{127}\). Moreover, white Southerners and civil rights activists alike also learned that from the president’s viewpoint, integration was ‘no longer seen automatically and necessarily as an unmixed blessing’ for minority students. In fact, and mirroring the kind of statements normally peddled by segregationists, he asserted that such ideas responded to little beyond the ‘smug elitism’ and ‘hypocrisy’ of ‘those in the North most stridently demanding racial integration in the South’ while sending ‘their children to private schools’.\(^{128}\) Needless to say, everybody understood such a description to fit an enemy shared by Richard Nixon, Southern conservatives and conservatives at large: Northeastern liberals. Finally the president also left clear his empathy for those parents who, quite rightly in his view, perceived integration ‘as a threat to their children’, and also volunteered a possible ‘imaginative’ solution to the problem of race relations: ‘bringing the children together’, but ‘limiting it to part-time activities’ outside the schools themselves.\(^{129}\)


\(^{127}\) Ibid.

\(^{128}\) Ibid.

\(^{129}\) Ibid.
Some scholars have interpreted the end of the deadline-approach to school desegregation as a change from an ineffective tactic to a more effective one which was ultimately aimed at increasing the pace of school integration.\(^{130}\) According to this view, the Nixon team intended to replace deadlines with state-wide legal suits, or in other words, to re-route school desegregation from the realm of HEW to that of the Justice Department – then, incidentally, headed by John Mitchell, one of the architects of the Southern strategy in 1968 and a man for whom Strom Thurmond had ‘the greatest respect’, and this while Nixon was trying to pack the Supreme Court with Southern conservative appointments. The aim of this strategy was undoubtedly to divert the issue towards the judicial system and away from the White House. Although the ‘maximum efficiency view’ is supported by favourable statistical evidence, the reception that the Nixon approach received at the time was somewhat different.\(^{131}\) The day after the president’s speech was delivered, the *Miami Herald* announced that ‘Nixon Eases School Integration Stance’, while the *Louisville Courier-General* informed its readers that the president was ‘to relax [the] US campaign against *de facto* segregation’ and the *Des Moines Register* noted that ‘Nixon...won’t press schools on *de facto* bias’. Most incisively, the *Jackson Daily News* reminded its Southern white readership that although ‘Nixon asks race mix in schools’, ‘no force’ would be applied to implement such a policy.\(^{132}\) After all, the president’s speech had clearly spelled out that his first and foremost objective was ‘to minimize the number of cases in which it becomes necessary to cut off funds’ from Southern schools. Of course, it escaped no-one that by happy coincidence, as Bryce Harlow put it, ‘guideline enforcement hurts Southern Republicans’.\(^{133}\)

When guideline enforcement was dropped, with all the fanfare of an address to the nation, Nixon’s immediate aim may have been to shore up his own electoral coalition. Nevertheless, as liberal civil rights sympathisers within the administration like Leon Panetta

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133 Bryce Harlow Memorandum to the President ‘Draft of President’s statement on school desegregation’, June 10, 1969, ibid.
then the beleaguered head of HEW’s Office for Civil Rights – realised, it also conveyed a symbolic message that in the long run would help to undermine a crucial element of post-war progressive liberalism: the belief that the federal government was responsible for ensuring a level playing field for the disadvantaged generally, and African-Americans in particular.\textsuperscript{134} This is not to claim that the Nixon administration effected a sudden and complete \textit{volte face} on civil rights, but that it did initiate a long-lasting shift in the opposite direction to that of previous policy. Of equal importance was the fact that the administration did so using arguments commonly associated with the conservative movement – the inefficacy and dubious moral legitimacy of government action, both in its own right and vis-à-vis local authorities and communities. Whether in quantitative terms Nixon was the ‘unanticipated hero’ of the civil rights movement may be open to scholarly discussion.\textsuperscript{135} The public perception and broader significance of his stand is not.

The reception of the new approach within the embattled group of civil rights-friendly White House officials did not leave much room for doubt either. Their reaction was instantaneous, revealing and fully in line with the press headlines. As early as March 1969 a memorandum from Mardian and Jerris Leonard – then the assistant Attorney General heading the Justice Department’s Civil Rights division – had spelled out quite clearly the fracture which lay beneath the administration’s public acceptance of ‘what the law demands’ regarding school desegregation.\textsuperscript{136} A pro-Southern camp headed by men like Bryce Harlow, Mardian and Dent remained anxious to find ways of satisfying the president’s Southern white constituency, while a civil rights-minded sector comprising other such as Leon Panetta, Finch and speech-writer William Safire desperately attempted to implement practical desegregation along the lines mandated by the Supreme Court. In June 1969 Robert J. Brown, then a liberal-leaning, African-American advisor to Bob Haldeman, was clear about the effects of presidential rhetoric in his comments about the undelivered presidential speech: ‘I would not

\textsuperscript{134} For a similar assessment, see Kotlowski, \textit{Nixon’s Civil Rights}, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{135} Hoff, \textit{Nixon Reconsidered}, p. 91.
issue the proposed statement’, he asserted, because it contained ‘several references’ that ‘in themselves could easily cause a strong reaction among integrationist-minded groups’, and it ‘would be considered by many to be an excuse for gerrymandering school districts’.137 That same month Leon Panetta complained bitterly about the administration’s plans to abandon previously set deadlines for schools to desegregate. Panetta noted that the initiative, besides being illegal, ‘would be a clear signal to all Southern school districts that the administration supports delayed and weak implementation’ of the 1964 Civil Rights act.138 As an acknowledgment of the liberal critique from within the administration and of the irritation it caused to Southern conservatives, Nixon took the personal decision to sack Panetta in February 1970. He later noted that ‘the only good thing we have done in this area is to fire Panetta’ because, Nixon informed John Ehrlichman, ‘in these race matters, one strong action is better than a lot of words. Firing Panetta is worth a dozen speeches and statements about integrating schools’.139

Predictably enough, the former administration official published a book on the matter denouncing what he regarded as the administration’s pro-segregation instincts, while Robert Finch, Panetta’s liberal-leaning boss at HEW, suffered the stress-induced paralysis of one arm and eventually resigned. *Time* magazine lost no time in explaining the resignation as a consequence of ‘conservative pressure’, and of Finch’s ‘liberalism’ towards civil rights.140 Regarding Mardian, Dent claimed in one of his numerous letters to Southern supporters that ‘the President was leaning heavily on him’. Dent was probably exaggerating but the conservative Mardian continued to rise within the administration until competition from Jeb Magruder, another rising star within the White House, and the Watergate scandal put an end to his career.141 Much like Mardian, other Southerners and friends of the South such as

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138 Panetta to the Secretary [Robert Finch], June 6, 1969, f. Desegregation Memoranda, box 76, ibid.


141 Harry Dent to David Robinson, September 9, 1969, box 1, RM papers.
Patrick Gray and Bryce Harlow enjoyed successful careers within the administration. From the outside, civil rights leaders themselves also did not seem to need much encouragement to disparage the administration’s trajectory. After an interview with Nixon during the early months of his presidency, a hopeful Roy Wilkins, head of the NAACP, declared that he was waiting ‘with some trepidation’ for the time when the president would be able to finally establish that ‘there is not a single school district’ either ‘in the South or the North’ that has not had ‘ample notice’ to enforce federal civil rights legislation, so as to follow up with firm federal action.\textsuperscript{142} Less than a year later, Bishop Stephen G. Spottswood, chair of the NAACP’s board, blasted the administration for being anti-black, and after the Mitchell-Finch speech on civil rights, Wilkins declared that the administration’s stand on desegregation was ‘almost enough to make you vomit’.\textsuperscript{143} It seems that for both African-Americans and white Southerners alike the conservative rhetoric of the administration mattered rather a lot.

Throughout Nixon’s first term in office Southern politics had also begun to reflect the presence of the newly enfranchised black vote. Curiously enough, the administration made even less of an effort to adjust to the expanded black electorate than its Southern allies did. Partly as a consequence of the extension of the franchise, and partly as a consequence of the relative easing of racial tension in the South, the electoral wooing of African-Americans slowly ceased to be taboo and increasingly became a necessity for Southern conservatives.\textsuperscript{144} As the 1972 election approached, both White House officials and Southern political operatives displayed a growing awareness of these new developments, and even the administration appears not to have been entirely immune to the appeal of the African-American vote.\textsuperscript{145} During the 1968 presidential campaign, Nixon had sought to distance himself from the Goldwater campaign of 1964 – even though Goldwater had pioneered conservative Republican inroads in the South through essentially the same formula that

\textsuperscript{142} ‘The White House Press Conference of Roy Wilkins’ (Undated), f. Desegregation Memoranda, box. 76, WS papers.
\textsuperscript{143} Mason, \textit{Quest for a New Majority}, p. 170; Kotlowski, \textit{Nixon’s Civil Rights}, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{145} Haldeman, \textit{Diaries}, p. 145.
Nixon was using. After all, in 1960 Nixon had managed to capture 32 per cent of the black vote, not far from Eisenhower’s 39 per cent in 1956 and still a crucial percentage in a close election.146 Once in power the administration still clung to a somewhat equivocal stand: although the general thrust of White House utterances was to justify an end to active federal intervention in civil rights matters (particularly on the school segregation issue), they also contained several instances of lip-service support for racial integration – mostly in flagrant contradiction with both the meaning of major White House speeches and the direction of actual policy.147 Similarly, after the publication of Phillips’ *The Emerging Republican Majority*, and at the instigation of some of its liberal-leaning members, the White House had conducted something of a soul-searching exercise. William Safire believed the book to be ‘most dangerous’, and noted that in practical terms its effect was ‘to leave many millions of Americans with the clear impression that, as a Republican, he [Nixon] does not see a place for blacks in his party’. Safire even suggested that the administration ‘produce an article for Harper’s or similar publication’ to reach out to ‘the poor, young and black’.148 Even Patrick Buchanan, Nixon’s fiercest conservative speechwriter concurred. Alarmed at the potential effects of a purely conservative discourse, he noted that the administration should give the impression that ‘there is a healthy rivalry’ between ‘competing ideologies and ideas’.149 Needless to say, it can be assumed that Buchanan intended for the conservative substance to be left unchanged, and in any event, as early as 1970 Haldeman had noted that for the administration, making serious inroads within the black community was ‘really not possible, except with the Uncle Toms’.150 In this light, it is clear that the administration’s reluctance to ‘write off [any] vote’ needs to be understood as aimed at the moderate elements within what was identified as its ‘natural constituency’: the white middle-class and blue-collar vote, rather than at African-Americans. Indeed, the black vote had already been virtually abandoned.

149 Patrick Buchanan memorandum to Bill Safire, July 29, 1969, ibid. (my emphasis).
150 Haldeman, *Diaries*, p. 145.
during the campaign of 1968, and the small number of African Americans who belonged to
the conservative movement were aware of the fact that ‘the Southern strategy of the Nixon
administration’ was ‘not going to help’ the White House’s prospects among black voters.\textsuperscript{151}

CONCLUSION

Throughout Richard Nixon’s first term in office, for the first time since the 1954 Brown
decision, the White House followed a policy of barely concealed hostility towards the further
implementation of civil rights legislation. Moreover, presidential rhetoric clearly reveals that
the administration chose to undermine the legitimacy of school integration by borrowing
staple conservative defences of ‘quality education’ and ‘neighbourhood schools’, as well as
standard conservative fears about ‘social engineering’, ‘coercion’, and ‘federal interference’.
This is not to suggest that the conservative authors of such terminology such as Irving
Kristol, William Buckley and Milton Friedman, did not regret the existence of racially
segregated schools. Nevertheless, they effectively supported the aspirations of
desegregation’s opponents and, as might be seen in the declarations of men like Nixon civil
rights enforcer Robert Mardian and Strom Thurmond, their discourse was borrowed by the
spokesmen of the white South inside and outside the Nixon White House. In a diluted form,
even the anti-civil rights arguments of the neo-liberals found their way into the presidential
lexicon in the White House’s draft and actual civil rights speeches of 1969 and 1970. At the
same time, the white South had clearly reached a point of exhaustion, which saw flat refusal
to integrate local schools replaced by a pragmatic approach, consisting of circumventing the
law so as to replace legally segregated schools with \textit{de facto} segregated schools. As a
comparison between Southerners’ letters to the White House and the administration’s
utterances demonstrates, the Nixon team grasped the growing popular hostility to further civil
rights action reflected in the ideological evolution of the neoconservatives, and consistently

lent legitimacy to this approach. Whether out of sincere commitment or electoral opportunism, the White House between 1968 and 1972 broadcast views that until then had been typically associated with the conservatism articulated by *National Review*, *Modern Age* and their Southern political allies. The respective stances of President Nixon and the partially defeated, yet increasingly pragmatic white South appear virtually indistinguishable.

The entente between Southern conservatives and the Nixon administration ultimately represented a significant break with one of the core elements of the public consensus which had guided policy-making since the advent of the New Deal. After 1968, open scepticism about the methods for achieving racial equality no longer belonged to the outer fringes of the political spectrum. Thus, the deliberate actions of an administration which sought to satisfy Southern demands lent the gravitas and legitimacy of the presidency to a central element of the conservative community’s challenge. As press reports and the memoranda of demoralised liberal federal officials show, the message received by the electorate from the Nixon administration’s relationship with the Southerners, regardless of the quantitative outcome of his civil rights policy, was unequivocally conservative.

Simultaneously, the Southern political leadership, increasingly sensitive to the growing strength of the black vote, initiated a process of re-packaging itself in a non-racist fashion. Those closer to the administration found their task facilitated by federal largesse. The bulk of the conservative movement, in the meantime, led by the increasingly moderate behaviour of the Southerners, adjusted to this new political reality and left behind the most egregious instances of pro-segregationism which, throughout the 1960s, had threatened to destabilise an ever fractious alliance between different conservative factions. Both the political leadership of the white South and the intellectual leadership of the conservative movement took advantage of Nixon’s equivocal race policy and the emerging critique of civil rights policies produced by former Great Society staffers and liberals to leave behind racial reaction and press ahead with other aspects of the conservative challenge against the post-war consensus. During the 1940s and 1950s these Southerners had adopted the conservative canon and had
reneged on their previous support for New Deal interventionism in order to strengthen their defence of segregation. Twenty years later, as the race issue was effectively neutralized as a political weapon, Southern conservatives remained firmly embedded within the conservative movement. The result was a shift to the right of the political mainstream, or at least a shift to the right of what was seen as 'politically doable' by those operating at the centre (and the top) of national politics. The white South may have failed to achieve its ultimate objective of maintaining legal segregation; it did however succeed in undermining the principles of the liberal consensus in the United States. Until the rise of Richard Nixon to the presidency Southern conservatives had faced an unsolvable political dilemma: the approach necessary to assuage their grassroots support and guarantee re-election had also ensured that they remained locked in a radical position squarely outside of respectable politics – hence renouncing effective influence in the policy-making process, other than protesting and stubbornly delaying the approval of civil rights legislation for the sake of political survival.\(^{152}\)

Richard Nixon's approach to the race issue helped to ensure the disappearance of this dilemma. His blatantly anti-integrationist rhetoric, his support for right-wing Southern politicians and their views, contributed to consolidate the position of Southern Republicans within the national party and allowed the Southerners to both retain the respect of their white constituents while becoming respectable political actors in the national political arena. In the process, the conservative movement gained a stronger base of political power in national politics while finding some of its most controversial ideological tenets accepted, at the very least, as legitimate objects of political discussion.

\(^{152}\) The isolation of the Southerners was perhaps best exemplified by Strom Thurmond's twenty-four hour long filibuster aimed at obstructing the passage 1957 Civil Rights bill, and by the relationship between President Lyndon Johnson and the segregationist Senator Richard Russell, Johnson's political mentor, see Cohodas, *Strom Thurmond*, pp. 295–97; Jon Margolis, *The Last Innocent Year: America in I964–The Beginning of the 'Sixties'* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1999), pp. 34, 128, 167; Chester, *American Melodrama*, pp. 478, 481; Tony Badger has emphasised how Southern politicians with national aspirations tended to gravitate towards racial moderation, see 'Southerners Who Refused To Sign', pp. 517–34.
CHAPTER 4

Just over a year after the cataclysm of the 1964 election William Rusher warned his fellow *National Review* editors that, looking towards 1968, 'the question we will have to answer sooner or later – probably about the turn of the year [1967] – is, Nixon or Reagan?'\(^1\) With his usual perceptiveness, a frustrated Rusher anticipated that Richard Nixon's carefully worked out comeback act was in all probability destined to succeed. Worse still from the perspective of a seasoned political observer and Nixon-hater, his fellow Buckleyites were threatening to re-engage in the same old courtship dance with Nixon which had, according to Rusher, plagued conservatives for the previous two decades. 'I urge you,' he pleaded pitifully, 'not to be over-hasty in plunging for Mr. Nixon'.\(^2\) As Rusher rightly feared, in the end the men of *National Review* would do precisely that: plunge for Richard Nixon and even hail the would-be president as conservatism's own champion. Except in this case it was not only, or even mainly, the Buckleyites own doing. Long before Rusher wrote his early warning, two other factions of the conservative movement – the former Dixiecrats led by Strom Thurmond and the strengthened old Republican southerners represented by Senator John Tower of Texas – had already, independently from one another and without consulting the intellectual leadership, pledged their support for Nixon. In a move that could certainly be described as 'over-hasty' these men gravitated towards Richard Nixon so early on that they had to request discretion from the candidate, lest potential centrist voters be alienated by his new-found supporters.\(^3\)

Predictably enough, or so Rusher would later think, the same old game of rapprochement and rejection between the Hard core and Richard Nixon would unfold between the run-up to the 1968 presidential election and the culmination of the Watergate

\(^1\) William Rusher to the Editors, March 31, 1967, f 10M, box 43, William F. Buckley Jr. papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University (hereafter WFB papers).
\(^2\) Ibid.
This chapter will examine how the behaviour of the Buckleyites between 1966 and 1972 closely followed the same well-established patterns that had drawn them once and again towards Nixon. In contrast to most other accounts of the Nixon presidency, the present analysis is not structured on a purely chronological basis nor along policy lines. It is instead divided into three thematic blocks. The first deals with the period between the 1966 mid-terms and the 1968 presidential election, focusing on the tensions experienced by the hard core as the conservative movement gradually moved onto the Nixon bandwagon. The second part examines the two periods of greater harmony between the president and the Buckleyites, which occurred between Nixon’s first presidential victory and the 1970 mid-terms, and – after a period of renewed tension – again during the 1972 presidential campaign. Finally, the third section accounts for the eruption of discontent and eventual actual warfare between the administration and the hard core throughout 1971 and the first two-thirds of 1972.

This structure facilitates an analysis of how, between 1966 and 1968 (mirroring developments between 1960 and 1964), the seemingly unbreakable partisan loyalty of most conservatives helped Nixon gain widespread and early support from the influential Republican right, and prevented less committed conservatives from mounting an effective blockade against him. At this time, the deliberate quest to gain acceptance as a respectable political option on the part of their liberal adversaries forced the Buckleyites to consolidate a systematic and vicious campaign against the ambitions of Alabama Governor George Wallace. This quest followed lines not entirely dissimilar from those rehearsed during earlier fistfights with the John Birch Society, and also put in practice by Nixon’s Southern conservative supporters. Inevitably, the biggest beneficiary of Wallace’s excommunication could only be Richard Nixon, whose enduring appeal to the same constituents that National Review catered to left the Buckleyites with nowhere else to go: the space to the left, between the heirs of LBJ and the rising New Left, was occupied by the Democrats; to the right, there

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appeared to be only the ‘stigmata’ of demagoguery and ‘racism’ offered by the ‘lunatic fringe’ supporting Wallace.\(^5\)

The Nixon administration also brought about developments that were less evident even to conservatives themselves. The halcyon years of Richard Nixon in the White House brought with them the definitive consolidation of the American conservative movement as a political force of nature ready to rock the politics of the United States beyond recognition. In the process, however, the internal dynamics of the American right were significantly altered as the displacement of *National Review* and the Buckleyites from their position as unchallenged leaders of the movement began. The hard core certainly welcomed the emergence of a new, larger and increasingly influential American right. Yet a concomitant element of such expansion was the transformation of conservatism into a considerably more fractious and fragmented force. By the downfall of Richard Nixon, very many young right-wingers were busy developing new approaches to conservative politics. Men like Howard Phillips, Richard Viguerie, Morton Blackwell and David Keene, who had all cut their teeth under the aegis of *National Review*, emerged from the Nixon years determined to revamp the conservative movement in a form distinct from, increasingly critical of, and certainly as more aggressive than that of *National Review*. In a few years these right-wing Young Turks would direct the ascent of the so-called ‘New Right’: a new conservative sub-family which was not only considerably less keen to toe the line marked by the Buckleyites than their predecessors, but also better able to readjust the conservative message created by the hard core in order to develop alternative strategies.\(^6\) Richard Nixon bore prime responsibility for conservatism’s


remarkable comeback from the 1964 Goldwater debacle – a feat almost as astonishing as
Nixon’s own political resurrection if the obituaries of conservatism written after November
1964 are to be believed – because, despite Nixon’s repeated and occasionally spectacular
waving, for the first time the basic tenets of the conservative credo were put forth to the
public from the highest office of the land. Moreover, for all the conservative groaning and
moaning, the Nixon administration was the first opportunity for young Buckleyites to
exercise meaningful, sometimes direct, influence upon executive policy. However, virtually
all those committed conservatives who served in public office experienced frustrations with
the press, the bureaucracy and the actual limits imposed over the capacity to bring about
change of those who actually held office, as opposed to those engaged in writing ‘well
framed editorials’. These frustrations would ultimately trigger a break with the conservative
political strategy of the previous two decades.

Recent scholarship has rightly emphasised the significance of Richard Nixon in the
sharp turn to the right of American mainstream politics during the 1968 and 1972 elections, a
transformative role which would culminate with his frustrated attempt to make reality, of all
things, the old dream of no less than William Rusher: a conservative third party made up of
blue collar workers, white ethnics, Southern and Midwestern conservatives – that is, Nixon’s
own backers in 1968, plus supporters of George Wallace and those right-of-centre Democrats
who could still bring themselves to vote for Humphrey but had been definitely alienated by
George McGovern and the New Left in 1972. And yet, it cannot be overemphasised that –

Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1992), pp.152–55 offers the viewpoint of the Buckleyites on such developments, and is
fully backed by the author’s interview with William Rusher, March 21, 2006, (telephone), and William Rusher, ‘The
Press, 1999), pp. 183–99. See also the new-righters own written accounts in Whitaker’s aforementioned collection, as
well as in Howard Phillips ed., The New Right at Harvard (Vienna VA: Conservative Caucus, 1983); Richard A.
Viguerie and David Franke, America’s Right Turn: How Conservatives Used New and Alternative Media to Take
Power (Chicago: Bonus Books, 2004), pp. 39–107, 137–45; Richard A. Viguerie, The Establishment vs. The People:
Is a New Populist Revolution on The Way? (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983); idem., The New Right: We’re Ready
to Lead (Falls Church, VA: Viguerie Co., 1981).

William Rusher to L. Brent Bozell, September 28, 1961, f. IOM, box 10, WFB papers.

See Robert Mason, Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
Press, 2004); Rick Perlstein, Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America (London: Scribner,
2008); Jerome L. Himmelstein, To the Right. The Transformation of American Conservatism (Berkeley: University of
bar a few instances such as the Watergate imbroglio – Richard Nixon always remained more
cautious follower of events than a visionary shaper of his own, or his country’s, political
destiny. It is no accident that he sought to ‘equilibrate’ conservatives and liberal-progressives
within both his first cabinet and inner circle of White House advisors. Even before that, his
1968 campaign had been a highly sectionalised affair, plagued by vagueness and flagrant
contradictions designed to appeal to the ‘centrist’ voter or to the sensibilities of whatever
constituency he was addressing at any given point in time, to a degree that a left-leaning
observer such as Joe McGinniss was scandalised by what he viewed as the philosophical and
political vacuity, rather than the conservatism, of the Nixon train.⁹

But then again, if conservatives could rightly point to Richard Nixon’s lack of political
bravery as one of his main personal handicaps, the Californian’s lack of foresight about the
changing nature of American politics was fully shared by most National Review
conservatives themselves. Symptomatically, during 1967 and 1968 they agonised for too long
about Ronald Reagan’s options – Rusher was, again, right to notice the California governor
could have won the Republican primaries. Subsequently, as before, the Buckleyites remained
stuck within the analytical framework they had built for themselves during the late 1950s and
early 1960s. For instance, as if nothing had changed since the days of Alger Hiss, they
persistently and implausibly associated the civil rights and anti-war movements with the old
threat of Communist infiltration (of course, a creature of the political Pleistocene such as J.
Edgar Hoover ensured that even Johnson Democrats would not be entirely free of such
delusions), and stubbornly adhered to a China policy that may have served William
Knowland well but was altogether outdated two decades later.¹⁰ In a social context were
returning Vietnam veterans found that, after their twelve month tour of duty, ‘change was
shocking’, ‘totally devastating’ and ranging from ‘clothes’ to ‘people’s attitudes’, the hard

¹⁰ Bob Haldeman referred to Hoover as ‘a real character of days of yore’ who found it ‘hard to relate to current times.’
Of course, that did not stop the administration from lending credit to the continuum between Khrushchev and Martin
Luther King. The pages of National Review were littered with analyses as delusional as Paul D. Bethel, ‘Black Power
core was nearly as unable ‘to comprehend’ those changes as the returnees from Vietnam. Unlike other conservative families, the Buckleyites (much like, incidentally, the Nixon administration) took inordinately long to fully grasp the rapidly overheating debates about matters such as abortion, homosexuality and sexual mores that would become the bread and butter of the right from the mid-1970s onwards.

In the end, the Buckleyites’ moderation prevented them from either abandoning Nixon or bringing him over to conservatism more openly and earlier in his presidency. Richard Nixon on his part, faced with conservative mildness and handicapped by his own political short-sightedness, refused to see the Buckleyites as potential political partners in a long-term strategy. As ever before, he opted instead for manipulating conservatives according to short-term objectives. The right always remained Richard Nixon’s main source of support, but the president refused to become the leader of the movement and never quite managed to turn it into his own constituency. The short-term end result for both camps was to miss the opportunity to capitalise on the electoral realignment well underway in 1968. The right had to wait for another decade to consolidate itself as the dominant force of American politics. By then, the deeply unsatisfactory experience of the Nixon presidency had served to further fracture the cohesion of the movement, and contributed to an enhancement of the autonomy and influence of its younger, more radicalised wing at the expense of the hard core.


Relations between the National Review conservatives and Richard Nixon after the Republican recovery of the 1966 mid-terms followed a pattern of distrust, offence and insincere reconciliation that had been familiar since the late 1940s. In the run up towards 1966, at a time when conservatism was still supposed to be heading for the political

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graveyard, Nixon had declared that the Buckleyites were 'a greater menace to the Republican party than the Birchers'. The predictably indignant reaction from NR was followed by a coy answer from the Nixon camp, which Rusher labelled as 'other handed and phoney as only Mr. Nixon can be', but still good enough for the journal to be 'justified in constructing it as a denial'. Clearly, the editors of National Review believed that Nixon had said what the press had reported him as saying but, as ever before, thought best not to initiate an open war with a man who had managed to position himself as the senior Republican most loyal to the party's Goldwaterite wing. Nixon, on the other hand, knew which side of the Republican toast was buttered and, when William F. Buckley ran as the Conservative Party of New York State's candidate for New York's mayoralty in 1965, took pains to remind the hard core that 'it would be a tragedy for this nation if conservatives should abandon the GOP to form splinter parties'. Subsequently, the Californian would also send the Buckleyites copies of his speeches dealing with issues such as 'the rising disregard for the rule of law', the manifold iniquities of university professors, social workers and 'left wing radicals,' and the need to upheld traditional 'square values'. Torn between well grounded mutual distrust and powerful practical considerations attracting them to one another, Richard Nixon and the editors of the National Review eventually arranged a meeting in December 1966. As might be expected, the gathering was entirely inconclusive.

The conservative hard core's internal dynamics regarding Nixon also remained largely frozen along the same lines that they had been for the best part of two decades. William Buckley hesitated; Frank Meyer and James Burnham fatalistically readied themselves to accept what they increasingly saw as the inevitable Nixon candidacy in 1968, while Rusher's frustration grew in direct proportion. In the immediate aftermath of Nixon's agonic

15 Patrick Buchanan to William F. Buckley, June 6, 1966; Buchanan to Buckley, June 9, 1966, ibid.
convention victory the Old Pro quite literally exploded in a lengthy memo that, somewhat comically reflects the atmosphere in the _National Review_ offices:

Unless the convention of 1972 requires merely the pro-forma re-nomination of President Nixon, I expect to be involved (as I was this time [the other editors were not], and probably much more so) in its foreplay and outcome; and I am quite resigned to further accusations of distortion through bias in the successive analyses I will undoubtedly press upon you — not, let me hasten to add, that I am conscious of any guilt in that respect. But I would like to think that the relevant parties might abjure, next time, of those relentless declarations many months in advance, that Candidate X [read Nixon] had it “all locked up” — declarations fortified, this year, with displays of mathematical logic and quotations from Cosimo de Medici, and buttressed by reiterated offers of cash wagers, all at a time when the merest YR in South Jersey knew that the outcome was still very uncertain indeed…

It is not known whether Rusher cashed the wagers, but he was certainly correct. In 1963 and 1964, the stubborn refusal of NR’s cooler (and less politically literate) heads to believe in Goldwater’s possibilities had turned the _Review_ into a less effective tool than it may otherwise have been. However, since Goldwater won the primaries anyway, the deleterious effects of the Buckleyites’ condescending torpor were circumscribed to hurting Rusher’s pride. In 1967 and 1968 things were different. Rusher, with some reason, believed that _NR_’s failure to administer to Richard Nixon the same treatment accorded to other non-conservative Republicans, compounded with their refusal to accept Reagan’s real possibilities of success, had become a hindrance to the right’s political hopes. He therefore lambasted what he described as ‘these gratuitous, hard-breathing pronunciamenti, appearing (as they did this year, on more than one occasion) in the pages of NR’, asserting that they contributed ‘in some small measure to the very outcome they predict: they are, in their minor way, self-fulfilling prophecies’. It was the editorial board alone, he reminded his colleagues, which possessed the prerogative to determine ‘whom we shall support’.

By early 1968, Rusher had correctly measured the strength of conservative power from ‘the midwest, the west and the south’ within the GOP, and desperately warned his fellow...

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19 Ibid.
Buckleyites that ‘to settle for less than the top spot [of the Republican presidential ticket] seems unnecessary and indeed irresponsible’.\textsuperscript{20} Moreover, the uncommonly sharp Rusher could already see some rather dark clouds looming over Lyndon Johnson’s future, and playfully noted that ‘assuming Johnson runs again’ and giving the distorting effects of Vietnam upon the American political landscape, the ‘liberal establishment’ may very well find an eastern Republican, such as New York governor Nelson Rockefeller or Michigan’s George Romney, more palatable than LBJ’s dauphin. In such a murky state of affairs, there was only one ‘logical answer’ for conservatives in 1968. Since the hard core was wedded to the GOP, its best bet for power was to block a potential left-of-centre takeover of the party by rallying, and as soon as possible, behind the only candidate who could present Republicans with a much needed ‘fresh face’ and a winning conservative profile: Ronald Reagan.\textsuperscript{21}

As for Richard Nixon, according to Rusher his main virtues consisted of having the support of the ‘regular pros’, which the Californian had gained during his tireless campaigning in 1964 and 1966. Just as importantly, Nixon had ‘with callipers and a footrule... finally found the exact centre of the Republican party, and occupied it’.\textsuperscript{22} Since that had been Richard Nixon’s game since at least 1960 (and perhaps even 1956), Rusher could be therefore excused for contemplating the possibilities of Nixon shifting towards the left, as he had done in 1960, if right-wing strength were to bleed away from him and towards Reagan. According to Rusher, a further Nixon problem derived from the above circumstances was the vice-presidency. Since Nixon had placed himself at the ideological centre of the party, ran Rusher’s logic, his choice as vice-president would necessarily detract from either the conservative or liberal faction within the GOP. Rusher’s rather fanciful proposal for derailing Nixon’s presidential hopes in 1968 consisted of a ticket made up of the conservative Reagan and a tolerable, liberal running mate such as Illinois Senator Charles Percy.\textsuperscript{23} It is no accident that other Buckleyites such as James Burnham reasoned along similar (and

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} William Rusher to the Editors, October 20, 1967, ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
somewhat less far-fetched) lines to propose a Reagan-Rockefeller ‘stop Nixon’ ticket. It was only a few months later, in June 1967, that Rusher implored his fellow editors to ponder more carefully the prospects of both Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan.

Three elements conspired against Rusher’s manoeuvring and in favour of the final success of Richard Nixon. Firstly, the man from Yorba Linda himself was quite aware of his own relative position within the GOP and of his own past mistakes. In 1968 he had no intention, at least not during the primary season, of accommodating the Rockefeller wing of the party and repeatedly declared himself to be a conservative ‘at least as I define it’. Nixon was certainly aware of conservatives’ long memories and of the deleterious effects that the ‘Compact of Fifth Avenue’ had had upon his image among them. Most importantly, the would-be candidate could count heads just as well as William Rusher, and was perfectly aware that conservatives were the single largest (if most fractious) block of convention delegates, as well as the party’s main corps of grassroots activists. It is no surprise then that as his campaign consolidated itself, Nixon would seek out the help of the kind of conservatives who were broadly aligned with National Review, such as journalist Richard Whalen, and economists Martin Anderson and Roger Freeman. As early as 1965, he had also enlisted the support of former Goldwater staffers such as Robert Mardian, Richard Kleindienst and Charles Lichenstein, all of whom he had come to know during his Herculean campaigning of the previous year. These would be the men who went on to staff the campaign’s all-important field machinery in the West and Midwest with other Goldwater veterans. In 1966 political observers could remark that warmth towards Richard Nixon was ‘seldom seen’ in other conservative quarters such as the Young Americans for Freedom.

24 Kelly, Burnham, p. 317.
The candidate was determined to change such a state of affairs and began by organising a meeting with representatives of Young Americans for Freedom (led by the ubiquitous William Rusher) in March of that year. After the gathering Nixon had managed to attract the then little-known president of the youth organisation named Tom Charles Houston, who told Squire magazine that whatever his shortcomings, Richard Nixon was about the only candidate ‘acceptable to all kinds of Republicans’. That kind of reasoning would soon became commonplace within the conservative community.

A second issue favouring Richard Nixon was that, even assuming that National Review could keep the factions within the conservative movement closest to itself away from the Californian, after 1964 the journal was no longer the single voice of the movement, and neither were the Buckleyites its undisputed nucleus. As Rusher himself had feared, conservatives were organising by means other than ‘well phrased editorials’. In remarkably large numbers, and unknown to the Buckleyites, from 1966 to 1968 they flocked of their own accord toward the Nixon bandwagon. It is significant that Nixon’s first staffer devoted full time to the advancement of his presidential ambitions would be a young right-wing former St Louis Globe-Democrat journalist named Patrick Buchanan. At the time Buchanan possessed no direct personal connection with either National Review or any other conservative faction, but had been inspired by the NR throughout his youth. Subsequently, he quickly became Nixon’s main conduit to the American right and, later, the senior-most resident conservative within the Nixon White House. It is worth noting that Buchanan was one of those cases where deep commitment to conservatism mixed easily with an equally deep admiration for Richard Nixon harking back to the Hiss case, and that it was Buchanan who deliberately sought Nixon – and freely admitted so to whoever asked – rather than the other way around.

A similar process occurred with the former Dixiecrats who, under the leadership of Strom Thurmond, had defected from the Democratic party to Goldwater Republicanism in 1964;  

and with traditional Republican southern conservatives led by men such as Fred LaRue, the Republican national committeeman of Mississippi, John Grenier, leader of the party in Alabama, and Texas' senator John Tower. In different ways, all these men coalesced behind the candidacy of Richard Nixon voluntarily and independently from each other as well as, initially, from the candidate himself.\footnote{The complex and fascinating story of the various and overlapping Southern plots to ensure Nixon's victory and retain influence over his subsequent administrations have been best told in Harry S. Dent, \textit{The Prodigal South Returns to Power} (New York, 1978) and Lewis Chester, Godfrey Hodgson and Bruce Page, \textit{An American Melodrama: The Presidential Campaign of 1968} (New York, 1969).}

The third element preventing the conservative hard core from mounting a successful challenge to Nixon was its own relative timidity – which mirrored that of the conservative movement as a whole – combined with an absolutely pragmatic political realism. The southerners had joined Richard Nixon because after the 1964 debacle, to quote from Theodore White, 'they wanted winners'.\footnote{Theodore H. White, \textit{The Making of The President 1968} (London, 1968), p. 241.} Richard Nixon offered the best shot at the presidency from a palatable candidate. Slowly, most conservatives from Richard Whalen to Patrick Buchanan, through the former Goldwaterites, came to the same conclusion. And Nixon was a plausible presidential nominee precisely because of his centrist position. In a backhanded way, even Rusher had to acknowledge that conservatism by itself could not win in a general election, even if it managed to railroad the Republican eastern wing in the primaries as it had done in 1964. In the same memorandums in which he excoriated Richard Nixon's lack of ideological substance, Rusher also suggested that Reagan should ape Nixon's moderate strategy. Early on in the primary campaign the old political hand freely admitted that 'if [Governor Reagan] elects to posture himself as merely the 1968 edition of Barry Goldwater' it would actually help Nixon, and speculated that Reagan may therefore 'may not prove so accommodatingly extreme'.\footnote{William Rusher to the Editors, July 10, 1967, f. IOM (July-Dec 1967), box 43, WFB papers.} About a year later Rusher repeated almost verbatim that Reagan should 'not to be so cooperative as to remain merely the stand in for Goldwater'. Instead, he urged that the governor 'substantially broaden his appeal toward the centre of the Republican party'.\footnote{William Rusher to the Editors, May 3, 1968, f. IOM (Apr-Jun), box 50, ibid. (emphasis in original).} In other words, Rusher was explicitly asking Reagan to adopt Nixon's
centrist strategy and to occupy, to the extent that that was possible, a place as close as possible to Nixon’s own at the centre of the Republican ideological spectrum.

In such circumstances, it is not surprising that the other NR editors adopted a fatalistic, pro-Nixon stand long before the 1968 convention opened its doors and at a point when Ronald Reagan’s candidacy had, as Rusher correctly pointed out, realistic possibilities of success. A few months before the Republican national convention, Rusher could take the Review’s lassitude no more, and addressed the matter emotionally by asking his fellow editors ‘why should it be necessary for me [Rusher] to manoeuvre and counter-march in an effort to keep N[ational] R[evie]w from doing an irreparable disservice to Reagan?’ In an increasingly desperate tone, he went on to remind the Buckleyites that ‘Reagan is the conservative spokesman, standard bearer and candidate in this race’ and therefore, according to Rusher, had ‘more than a right to our silence… he has a right to our support’. And yet, for all Rusher’s passion, Buckley had already expressed his views over a year before when, asked which Republican presidential possibility he considered the ‘wisest choice’, he had replied that Richard Nixon was ‘the one who could win’, and that he himself was ‘for the most right, viable candidate who could win’. Buckley subsequently refused to alter the aloof stand of the National Review towards the unfolding Reagan-Nixon contest. Throughout the primaries the Review would remain generally friendly to Reagan but, as Rusher correctly noted, in practical terms it supported Richard Nixon to the point of, about two months before the convention, even musing about a possible Nixon-Reagan ticket. And it did so with the support of Frank Meyer. Neither a Republican loyalist nor a Nixon admirer, Meyer nevertheless refused to ‘see any emergency which would justify a change in the position officially adopted [by NR] – to implacably oppose Rockefeller and to treat Nixon and Reagan with complete even-handedness’. Of course, Meyer was perfectly aware that apparent

36 Ibid. (emphasis in original).
37 Judis, Buckley, p. 280.
neutrality was tantamount to a blessing (even if admittedly backhanded) of Richard Nixon and a slap to Reagan. James Burnham, a man who had freely expressed his disgust at the Eisenhower presidency and who, like Meyer, was not known for his love of either Nixon or Republican politicians, had ‘resigned himself’ to Nixon by early 1968. Once Burnham had persuaded himself that the man from Yorba Linda had the nomination ‘wrapped up’, he took an attitude, reminiscent of that of 1960, which led him to go out of his way to ‘excite interest in the Nixon-Agnew ticket’ only days after the Republican National Convention of 1968.40

In his final, desperate memorandum to Buckley, Rusher correctly emphasised that ‘Nixon not only isn’t’ a conservative, ‘he doesn’t want to be’.41 Rusher chose to forget that conservatives of all factions, including those working at the National Review, had decided four years before that with Barry Goldwater they had already had their fair share of unelectable ‘Sir Galahads’. Rusher’s own persistent ruminations about Reagan’s need to move to the centre lent credibility to his fellow conservative’s support for the genuine moderate within the roster of Republican presidential candidates. Moreover, aside from the short-term electoral calculus, Richard Nixon’s 1968 candidacy also offered the Buckleyites the possibility of consolidating their position within the American political mainstream. After all, in conservative terms Richard Nixon was a candidate who had managed, like Goldwater, to gain ‘the establishment’s mortal enmity’ but – unlike Goldwater – its acceptance as a legitimate contender for power. In 1960, 1962 and 1964 National Review conservatives had miserably failed to dissociate themselves from what they themselves labelled the lunatic fringe, then personified by Robert Welch and the John Birch Society. The presidential election of 1968 allowed the Buckleyites to attempt anew the redemption of conservatism from its association with the radical right. For supporting the Republican presidential nominee meant to oppose George Corley Wallace, formerly governor of Alabama, presently a populist, radical right-wing third party candidate. The stand of National Review conservatives within Republican politics clearly signalled how in 1968 the Buckleyites were more worried

40 James Burnham to William F. Buckley August 14, ibid., Kelly, Burnham, pp. 317-19.
about being plausible political contenders than immaculate conservative doctrinaires. Their stand *outside* the Republican party, and in particular their determined opposition to the former Governor of Alabama, fortified their claims for a place within the acceptable political spectrum.

From the outset, Wallace presented conservatives with a similar challenge to that of Robert Welch, to the point that the American Conservative Union’s weekly *Battle Line* deliberately tried to associate these two adversaries of respectable conservatism.\(^{42}\) The Buckleyite response was similar in substance: faced with a choice between respectability and successful, populist, right-wing radicalism, *National Review* would do everything within its power to dissociate conservatism from the latter, but always at the minimal possible cost to the movement. Neil McCaffrey, a conservative activist and close friend of Buckley noted, as Frank Meyer did with the John Birch Society, that the ‘answer on the Wallace problem’ was to ‘not shatter the conservative coalition (uneasy and awkward at best) beyond repair’.\(^{43}\) A distressed McCaffrey realised that as the election of 1968 approached, Wallace counted with enough popular support to be a threat to a conservative organisational network still in its infancy – particularly organisations such as the Conservative Party of New York State which needed the support of disenchanted Democrat voters – comparable to the one posed by Welch towards *National Review* in the early 1960s. Accordingly he warned Buckley that ‘when leaders loose touch with their followers, they find new leaders, even from Alabama’.\(^{44}\) And McCaffrey was onto something. The Wallacites themselves noted that Buckley and the CPNYS’s stubborn subservience to the GOP held back the support of disgruntled Democrats who felt increasingly attracted to the right, but still abhorred all things Republican – subsequently, Richard Nixon himself would come to the same conclusion.\(^{45}\) Back in 1964, a group of young YAF members had tried to set up a chapter named after the Alabamian:

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43 Neil McCaffrey to William F. Buckley, February 27, 1968, f, McCaffrey, Neil (Jan-July), box 52, WFB papers.
44 Ibid.
Buckley had instantly resorted to the national director of the organisation to block it.\textsuperscript{46} Subsequently, Wallace's appeal certainly went from strength to strength among the white working class disenchanted with the Democratic party, as well as among a substantial fraction of the traditional conservative vote. Alarmingly enough, and heralding latter shifts within the conservative movement, Wallace even attracted men like Richard Viguerie, one of the most effective among the young conservative activists who had cut their teeth in Young Americans For Freedom. Viguerie went on to work for Wallace, as did a number of the old Goldwater grassroots supporters, because, as even \textit{Battle Line} was forced to acknowledge, Wallace was correct when he noted that not all that much separated the two mainstream parties.\textsuperscript{47}

In the meantime, as happened with the JBS, Buckley tried to excommunicate Wallace from the American conservative movement by denouncing him as a political 'impostor', but had some severe trouble in actually distinguishing the conservative message from that peddled by Wallace.\textsuperscript{48} Though Buckley believed that the former governor 'contaminated' the conservatives’ legalistic position on segregation, he was forced to acknowledge that the Alabamian had refined his ‘coarseness’ of yore and his basic themes on law and order and against civil rights activists – as well as, even if Buckley neglected to mention it, the accompanying, racially-loaded political dog-whistling – were indistinguishable from \textit{National Review’s} or, for that matter, Nixon’s.\textsuperscript{49} When it came to Wallace’s most evident shortcomings from a conservative viewpoint – namely his addiction to government funds as governor – McCaffrey noticed that not even Goldwater or Reagan, much less so Nixon, would pass the kind of muster that Buckley tried to apply to Wallace.\textsuperscript{50} In the end, Buckley’s frustration gave way to an extremely rare example of crude name-calling; ‘I do wish I could

\textsuperscript{46} Marilyn Flinn to William F. Buckley, August 13, 1964 and Buckley to Robert Bauman, August 17, 1964, f. YAF, box 33, WFB papers.


\textsuperscript{49} Interview with William F. Buckley, July 25, 2005, New York City.

\textsuperscript{50} Neil McCaffrey to William F, Buckley, February 27, 1968; Buckley to McCaffrey, February 27, 1968, f. McCaffrey, Neil (Jan-July), box 52, WFB papers.
think of a way to handle the son-of-a-bitch' he told McCaffrey. 'That', Buckley resentfully insisted 'is what he is'. National Review conservatives never quite managed to justify their visceral hostility to Wallace with any degree of persuasiveness, but unlike their earlier experiences with the JBS, they did succeed in distancing themselves publicly and vociferously from the Wallacite school of radicalism. When Buckley took Wallace to his Firing Line TV program he managed to come across as an angry, confused and half-irrational opponent of the latter, reduced, according to McCaffrey, to trotting out ‘the most unconvincing set of double standards’. After all, as early as 1964 National Review had openly acknowledged that ‘few conservatives could fault or improve upon Wallace’s assaults on liberal foreign policy attitudes’. Nevertheless, it went on to remind its readers, ‘Wallace may proclaim the faith but no one in the dues-paying Right’ was about ‘to invite him into the doctrinal temple for a guest sermon’. Cynically enough National Review concluded, as Buckley would repeat later on, that despite Wallace’s pretence to be a conservative, he did not ‘look like one’. Of course despite Buckley’s views, which combined plain snobbery with a frustrated, backhanded admission of defeat, Wallace’s political ‘beauty’ was precisely that his arguments definitely looked and sounded like a conservative’s, and that by the second half of the 1960s his still-strident but modulated style and the abandonment of the traditional two-party system threatened to out-manoeuvre the Buckleyites. At a personal level the whole affair was a painful fracas for Buckley – in rather delicate terms half a century later he still defined that Firing Line show as ‘one of the most tense’ he ever did – but then again, he definitely came across as a strong opponent of Wallacite populism, in the process assisting the conservative movement’s slow road towards respectability. Wallace had inadvertently performed a useful role in propelling the Buckleyites, who desperately wanted as much distance as possible between themselves and the Alabamian’s ‘disrepute’, further and more firmly within the Republican fold and therefore behind Richard Nixon. In order to achieve

51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
respectability, *National Review*, *Battle Line*, the Washington conservative weekly *Human Events* and, individually, virtually every conservative of consequence supported the idea that 'the conservative movement would be better served by voting for Nixon'.

A crucial difference between Wallace and previous, more difficult to handle instances of right-wing 'paranoid style' populism was that, as conservatives never tired of reminding anyone who would listen, George Wallace came directly from the ranks of the Southern Democratic party. Unlike Robert Welch and the other right-wing radicals excommunicated in the early 1960s, Wallace had never been part of the conservative organisational, political, much less so social, networks. As a result the Buckleyites' task of disavowal was considerably easier. The men at *National Review* may have had trouble communicating to the faithful a coherent disavowal based on philosophical finesse but, at long last, Wallace afforded serious conservatism the possibility of satisfying their deep yearning for political acceptance through an attack on the populist right constructed on visceral partisan grounds. After all, as *National Review* had pointed out back in 1964 and *Human Events* repeated in 1968, Wallace had been as big a threat to Barry Goldwater as to the Democrats and the Governor’s political origins were in Jim Folson’s Alabama Democratic party machine.

As a result, despite McCaffrey’s fears, the excommunication of the Alabamian took place at a relatively low cost in terms of cancelled subscriptions to *NR* or even actual damage to the good health of the movement. The CPNYS, for instance, actually endorsed Nixon before the convention following a form of reasoning opposite to McCaffrey’s: right-wing New Yorkers hoped that such a move would ‘deflate’ the Wallace threat in the city and elsewhere. Similarly enough, the leaders of YAF reported in September 1968 that despite pressure form ‘the Wallace people’, the organisation remained ‘solid for Nixon’, and it only registered one

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resignation in protest at the Buckleyites' hostile treatment of the ex-governor.\textsuperscript{60} For once, conservatives found themselves siding with the dreaded establishment they had fought off for so long, and thereby implicitly accepting the legitimacy of their main political adversaries. In 1968 Wallace's third party candidacy helped conservatism to complete the long road from political ostracism to acceptance by the political mainstream that had taken \textit{National Review} from supporting Joseph McCarthy to opposing George Wallace.

The months that elapsed between Richard Nixon's victory in the Republican National Convention of 1968 and his swearing-in ceremony in Washington D.C. were a moment of unchecked conservative euphoria on a par with the weeks that had followed Barry Goldwater's primary victory in 1964. Even the nagging William Rusher, who had spent the previous three years fustigating his fellow conservatives' tenderness towards Nixon, could not help suffering from contagion. 'Make no mistake' he told his fellow editors at the \textit{National Review}, 'Nixon was a candidate of a strictly and highly conservative bloc, put together in the first instance by Goldwater, financed by [major conservative patron Jeremiah] Milbank, blessed by Buckley and ultimately put over the top by the accession of J. Strom Thurmond'. Nixon, according to Rusher, 'had almost no liberal support whatever', and therefore if 'Nixon's nomination may have been (as I [Rusher] believe) an error' it 'was at last the error of a group of indisputable conservatives'.\textsuperscript{61} Less than a month later, error or no error, Rusher finally went all the way and volunteered to pen (and sign) \textit{National Review}'s formal endorsement of Richard Nixon, explicitly 'hoping' to make it 'all the more effective because it comes from a Reagan supporter'.\textsuperscript{62} Where \textit{National Review} went, the other organisations in its orbit followed. Both \textit{Battle Line}, the organ of the American Conservative Union, and \textit{Human Events} had continuously expressed a preference for Reagan throughout the primaries, but also accorded an even-handed and occasionally friendly coverage to Nixon

\textsuperscript{60} Arnold Steinberg to William F. Buckley, Sept 14, 1968, f. YAF, box 57, ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} William Rusher to William F. Buckley, September 3, 1968, ibid.
and his growing number of conservative supporters. The CPNYS endorsed him nearly a month before the convention, at a time when Reagan’s hopes were still fairly high. At around the same time, John Chamberlain noted that ‘the nation as a whole is well aware that Republican conservatism is lining up behind Richard Nixon’. From then on, individual conservatives ranging from young activists such as Jeffrey Bell, to old warhorses such as Jeffrey Hart joined the Nixon ranks to write speeches and position papers. After the convention, enthusiasm for Nixon reached a feverish state: Battle Line went out of its way to celebrate how the Nixon campaign had got off to ‘a roaring start’, while Human Events underlined that ‘conservatives across the country should take heart’ from Nixon’s victory. After the general election, YAF activists celebrated the opportunity granted to the conservative movement to ‘take part in guiding the destiny of the nation’, since the new administration clearly owed ‘its very life to the electoral votes delivered by Republican conservatives’. Along identical lines, Human Events headlined how ‘Nixon victory provides great opportunity’, and Battle Line celebrated ‘the conservative mandate for President Nixon’.

After November 1968 the right faced new, exciting and uncharted territory. For the conservative movement had finally become a major and accepted player in national politics, to the point that the tenant at 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue owed his position to conservative support. The question for conservatives then was to figure out how much access to actual power Richard Nixon would be prepared to grant to the right and what, exactly, was to be done with that power. For the previous two decades the movement had been relentlessly

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critical of the men who had held the responsibility for making policy decisions. In 1968 they found themselves closer than ever before to the other side of the barrier.

2. ‘IN THE SADDLE’? THE HARD CORE AND THE HALCYON DAYS OF NIXON’S PRESIDENCY

After the vote-counting had been completed, the Buckleyites’ first activity was to subject the president-elect to as much pressure as they could possibly muster to influence the general character of the new administration’s appointments, and to place within it as many conservatives as possible. Immediately after the election, F. Clifton White reminded the hard core that ‘the White House is incomparably the most important place in Washington’, and advised them that ‘the stress should be on putting good people there’. Buckley, for one, set about it in earnest, channelling conservative names towards the Nixon staffers then engaged in hiring administration personnel. In the meantime Daniel Mahoney, of the Conservative Party of New York State, set up an appointment with John Mitchell, who was already seen as one of the key figures within Nixon’s closest circle of aides and advisors. From within the Nixon camp men such as Tom Huston and Patrick Buchanan not only pushed for conservative hopefuls, but also actively spurred the Buckleyites’ efforts to mount pressure on Nixon to appoint the ‘right’ candidates. Predictably, some disappointments were inevitable. Tom Huston framed his appeal for support within the ‘awful’ ‘performance and appointments’ of certain senior Nixon advisors such as Robert Finch in the Department of Health Education and Welfare (which dealt with civil rights matters), and William Rogers in the State Department. Buckley on his part engaged in a rather personal and ultimately unsuccessful quest to emplace his personal friend Evan Galbraith in the new administration.

72 William Rusher to William F. Buckley, February 12, 1969, f. IOM Jan-Feb, box 61, ibid.
Eventually Buckley, irritated by the president-elect’s unresponsiveness to recommendations in favour of his friend, went out of his way to publish an article (sanctioned by Barry Goldwater), in which he attacked Nixon’s recruitment practices on the grounds that former Goldwater staffers had been ‘blacklisted’. Even prior to this, *Battle Line* had already expressed doubts about Nixon’s staffing practices and their alleged leftward drift, while around the same time conservative columnist and *National Review* resident southerner James Jackson Kilpatrick noted the increasing ‘sense of unease among the conservative right’. His fellow columnist Richard Wilson ‘hoped’ that Republicans would not be ‘entirely excluded’ from ‘the spoils of victory’ after ‘watching so long the benefits accruing to their Democratic colleagues’. Yet on close examination, conservatives’ complaints can neither be construed as a Nixonian repudiation of the right, nor used to sustain that claim that ‘conservatives did not have an intellectual champion in the Nixon White House’ simply because more moderates and liberals were employed on his staff. After all, the Evan Galbraith affair that so incensed Buckley arose because the position was eventually filled by Warren Nutter, a prominent member of the 1964 Goldwater ‘brains trust’. As for the cabinet-level appointment of moderates that so irritated the right, these were more than compensated for – as the press took care to publicise – at sub-cabinet and assistant level by men from the Goldwater and Southern factions of the conservative movement such as Richard Kleindienst, Harry Dent and Robert Mardian, the latter in an area of special sensitivity as was HEW, much like Nutter and his own retinue of conservatives at Defence. And to these must be added White House staffers such as Patrick Buchanan and (in a more junior capacity) the later infamous Tom Huston. To crown it all, even the less ideologically-driven Nixon senior advisors seemed to

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lean towards the right: most notably John Mitchell, the virtually unknown Attorney General, who quickly sided with white Southerners against civil rights activists, and labelled Republican liberals and old foes of the Buckleyites in the Ripon Society 'juvenile delinquents'. Lastly, the administration was increasingly receptive to a number of political analysts who were either unknown or formerly related to the Democratic party, and whose viewpoints reinforced Richard Nixon's populist conservative instincts. The most popular of these was Kevin Phillips, who published his *The Emerging Republican Majority* after orchestrating Nixon's 'southern strategy'. His influence was reinforced by that of two former Johnson assistants, Ben Wattenberg and Richard Scammon, who published *The Real Majority* in 1970 and became administration electoral gurus on a par with Phillips. By mid-1969, the public image of the administration was sufficiently right of centre to prompt even Pat Buchanan to recommend that the White House should project the image of 'healthy rivalry' between 'competing ideologies and ideas in the administration'.

As the remarks of Richard Wilson clearly indicate, a substantial aspect of the conservative disappointment with the administration's recruitment policies had more to do with old fashioned struggles for patronage than with Nixon's presumed ideological meandering. It should not be overlooked that, in his article, Buckley was able to mention by name no less than five senior members of the administration that had been directly approached on behalf of Evan Galbraith. The noise that the Buckleyites made over appointments was, at the very least; in equal measure the product of a new-found sense of belonging within the political mainstream and of their right to the perks of such membership, than of any feeling of ideological rejection. Throughout the first two years of the Nixon presidency, conservatives could find relatively little of substance to genuinely complain

about: Nixon continued to talk the conservative language on the crucial issues of the day ranging from student unrest to economic policy, through the Vietnam withdrawal and civil rights radicalism. Beyond rhetoric, Nixon’s aggressiveness in South East Asia, vigorous response to student protesters, a school desegregation policy virtually designed and run by Southern conservatives together with the battles over judicial appointees essentially guaranteed a reasonable level of conservative satisfaction. Even in economic policy, from 1969 to 1971 the administration adopted a ‘steady as you go’ approach approved by no less than Buckley friend and conservative star-economist Milton Friedman. 80 It is no surprise then, that in January 1969 a close acquaintance of Buckley advised him in alarm to maintain a ‘critical distance from the President’ and that, a year later, the conservative press could proclaim that ‘Rightwing Making Gains Under Nixon’. 81 Less enthusiastically, but still broadly satisfied, Battle Line noted that Nixon had provided ‘something for everyone’, and that ‘for every concession the liberal GOP has received, the conservatives have been handed a prize as well’. 82

Paradoxically, as the Nixon White House moved rightwards, both William F. Buckley and to some extent National Review had by 1968 lost much of their previous taste for provoking the outrage of the liberal establishment. Buckley was no more the enfant terrible of the McCarthy years, but was now a mature man accustomed to receiving the recognition of the intellectual and journalistic establishment. By the late 1960s he had developed a remarkably successful socialite life – mingling with the likes of actors David Niven and Roger Moore, Princess Grace Kelly and Keynesian economist John Kenneth Galbraith on the Swiss slopes - and seemed more driven towards writing fiction, skiing, and sailing than toward incensing liberals. 83 It was in this context that Buckley’s acquaintance with Henry

Kissinger deepened into full-blown friendship. The two men had known each other since at least 1956, when Kissinger had suggested a meeting to exchange impressions about the newborn *National Review*. Subsequently Buckley himself as well as Frank Meyer, L. Brent Bozell and especially James Burnham on various occasions attended Kissinger’s international seminar – in itself a clear symptom of the distance between *National Review’s* ‘radicalism’ and the lunatic fringe even during the early years of the magazine. In 1964 and 1968, Kissinger, who had always been closely associated with Nelson Rockefeller, tried (unsuccessfully) to mediate between the Governor of New York and the Buckleyites. Once Kissinger found himself as Nixon’s National Security Advisor he became a major conduit between the White House and *National Review*. Later on, he failed to assuage conservative fears about Défense and the opening to China, but it was still remarkable that Henry Kissinger, Buckley’s most powerful friend in the White House and someone immensely respected by James Burnham, also happened to be the nation’s premier practitioner of *realpolitik* and, therefore, the *bête noire* of the less sophisticated evangelical anticommmunist – which is to say most conservatives.

So far did Buckley gravitate towards the respectable centre, while the administration’s rhetoric moved in the direction of the populist right, that he found himself opposed to Spiro Agnew during the run up towards the 1970 mid-term elections because the vice-president had become too strident in his populist right-wing message. Although an entirely minor incident – NR eventually fell into line – the affair was quite revealing of the shifts in the relative positioning of both Richard Nixon and the conservative hard core during the first two years of the former’s presidency. After November 1968, Richard Nixon and a good many political analysts led by Kevin Phillips, Ben Wattenberg and Richard Scammon realised that the addition of Wallace’s electoral support to that of the president amounted to both a conservative political mandate for Nixon, and the definitive implosion of Franklin

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Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition. In a nut-shell these observers noted that the growing reluctance to address *de facto* segregation, the perceived increasing violence of civil rights and anti-war protestors, together with the challenges to traditional mores about sex and drugs had finally had the deleterious effects upon the Democratic coalition that Nixon and the Republicans had been waiting for ever since 1946. According to the men assisting the president, the culture wars of the 1960s had, at long last, achieved in 1968 what affluence, wartime controls and fellow-travelling all combined could not in the late 1940s: that the blue-collar white Democratic voter had finally tired of the arrogant liberals castled up in the federal bureaucracy, the mass-media and the liberal foundations.\textsuperscript{85}

As might be expected, Richard Nixon was not about to miss the chance of nailing his manifold ‘establishment’ enemies, but his shift from the candidate of the centre to the president of the right-wing, disgruntled voter took place gradually and unevenly between November 1968 and November 1970.\textsuperscript{86} Throughout their first term in office, both Nixon and his assistants reacted warily to his narrow defeat of Humphrey.\textsuperscript{87} After all, support for George Wallace may have lent the administration conservative moral support, but what counted was the ballot box and the Alabamian was not expected to disappear in 1972.\textsuperscript{88} Move too far to the right, and in a three way election one could very well lose the centrist vote that had actually pulled Nixon ahead of the Democrats in 1968, with no accompanying electoral gain whatsoever on the right. That calculus explains Nixon’s deliberate efforts to include liberal Republicans within his cabinet: it was a measure designed to retain a hold on the liberal wing of the party, and one which should be seen in the same light as the careful tailoring of the message during the campaign that provoked so much outrage among observers of every ideological stripe.\textsuperscript{89} The situation only changed, and rather gradually, as the 1970 mid-term

\textsuperscript{85} Patrick Buchanan to the President, November 10, 1972, f. Memorandums to the President, box 7 (Staff Memoranda), Patrick Buchanan papers, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives, College Park ML (hereafter PB papers and NA).
\textsuperscript{88} Patrick Buchanan to the President, July 5, 1972, f. Presidential Memos 1 of 2, box 7, PB papers.
\textsuperscript{89} McGinnis, *Selling of the President*, pp. 24-28; Wills, *Nixon Agonistes*, pp. 371-72; Whalen, *Catch the Falling Flag*, pp. 208-10, 228.
elections approached. During those months, campus dissent and civil rights hostility to the president increased, partly because of the administration’s transparent support for conservative Southern resistance to school desegregation and partly because of the expansion of the Vietnam war into Cambodia and Laos.

The later months of 1969 saw an intensification of the sort of dynamics that eventually led to the Kent State and Jackson State killings, the New York Hard Hat riot and an evident shift to right of the president’s rhetoric. As far as the ‘social issue’ derived from civil rights and antiwar dissent went, the administration progressively intensified its hard, hostile approach to the protestors themselves and anyone else who the administration could possibly perceive as one of its ‘natural enemies’, including university faculties across the nation and the bulk of the press corps, as well as the Democrats. Nixon’s troubles with the left began with the ‘Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam’ in October, which was replied to by the White House with an address to the nation by the president on November 3, followed by an antiwar mobilization day on November 15 and two speeches by the vice-president in Des Moines and Montgomery on November 13 and 20. Nixon’s famous ‘silent majority address’ quite simply re-stated that he ‘would be untrue to my oath of office if I allowed the policy of this nation to be dictated by the minority’ which was trying ‘to impose on the nation by mounting demonstrations on the street’. The national press correctly identified the address as an exceedingly successful and essentially conservative ‘message to the silent majority’ and ‘the people who elected him’, and one which did not really add much to what was already known about the war. The White House, paranoid as ever when it came to the press, perceived the assessment as ‘ranging from disappointment to anger’. Vice-President Agnew, who had already established himself as the blunt instrument for use against Nixon’s adversaries during the 1968 campaign, took things even further ten days later when he lambasted television coverage of the presidential address as another example of how an

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90 H. R. Haldeman to Chuck Colson, ‘Natural Enemies’, April 8, 1971, f, Action Memos, Colson, f. 2 of 2, box 3 (Staff Memoranda), PB papers.
92 Ibid., p. 93–96.
93 Ibid., p. 94.
‘unelected elite’ could ‘make or break – by their coverage and commentary – a moratorium on the war’, and charged the television networks with having ‘abused the power they enjoy’. The president actually participated in the writing of the speech, which ‘amused and highly pleased him’. Five days later Agnew replied to the predictable journalistic outrage by expanding the attack to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* with the consequent ‘swift, predictable and explosive’ expansion of journalistic rage.

In theory therefore, conservatives should have been ecstatic to hear the vice-president of the United States reproduce what they themselves had been proclaiming throughout the previous two decades. Indeed William Rusher and Cliff White went to meet their newfound champion in December 1969, and the former subsequently wrote the VP that he was ‘an enthusiastic supporter of everything you are doing’, and even stated that ‘you can count on me on anything I can be of assistance’. From there onwards Rusher developed a veritable political love story with the vice president (later, a genuine deep friendship), while Agnew himself became more and more embedded with the right. After the 1968 election he had become an icon for American conservatives, and was certainly the most notorious right-winger within the administration. The vice-presidential staff in turn became a hub of young, up-and-coming appointees of every conservative stripe, including *NR* contributors-cum-vicepresidential speechwriters. Nevertheless, Spiro Agnew never quite became a fully fledged member of the conservative movement, which is why in early October 1969, just before antiwar protestors took to Washington, William F. Buckley decided to have a ‘rap’ at the VP. According to Buckley, Agnew’s performance had been ‘pretty bad’ thus far, and he concluded that the vice-president was not ‘skilled in polemics, and therefore should not
engage in them without help'. Later on, both the White House and Agnew personally got wind of rumours alleging that Buckley believed ‘the president’s re-election contingent on the dropping of the vice-president’. National Review’s editor went out of his way to deny such a thing but admitted that he may have analysed Agnew’s retention as Nixon’s running mate on strictly electoral grounds, and that such analysis may not have been entirely supportive of Agnew’s position. Even more interestingly, Buckley warned the distressed VP that the magazine’s contributors and editorial line would continue to carry such analysis on ‘technical’ grounds.

In reality, the relationship between Agnew and the Buckleyites, and Buckley’s travails in differentiating his personal relationship with Agnew from his capacity for political analysis revealed a deeper issue then engulfing the American right – one that the journal’s tepid attitude towards Reagan in 1968 had already signalled. For the presidency of Richard Nixon witnessed, and in part helped to bring about, a growing gulf between National Review conservatives and the younger generation of right-wing activists then coming of political age and clustered in Agnew’s staff. Richard Nixon had selected Spiro Agnew as running mate because the governor of Maryland was political incognita, mostly known for his association with the Rockefeller wing of the GOP and for grossly mishandling the Baltimore race riots of 1968. William Rusher’s first reaction upon hearing about the candidacy was to ask ‘Spiro who?’. From there, as was the case with most conservatives, he made clear his contempt for a man he rightly considered entirely innocent of philosophical attachments. Agnew’s function as Nixon’s right-wing hatchet man, coupled with the evident hostility of the press corps during the election, naturally endeared the ex-governor to Rusher and most grassroots right-wing activists, but even then, a year or even longer lapsed between the national

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101 Pat Buchanan to H. R. Haldeman, May 28, 1971, f. Patrick J. Buchanan Documents from boxes 1 to 5, f. 1 of 2, Contested Documents, PB papers.
104 Interview with William Rusher; Interview with David Keene.
convention and moves on the part of Rusher and other hard core conservatives to actually meet the VP.

The distance between the hard core and conservatism’s latest political champion was in equal parts a social and ideological matter. By 1968 conservatives had already developed their own political star system – populated by the likes of Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan, John Tower and the ACU’s John Ashbrook – with which the vice-president was not even remotely connected. Moreover Agnew, by the admission of his own conservative advisors, might have been receptive to ‘new ideas’, but he was also a complete ignoramus when it came to the philosophy of conservatism. His shortcomings were also a matter of style and inclination. The hard core had spent the best part of the previous decade trying to dissociate conservatism from precisely the kind of right-wing populism that Agnew was enthusiastically espousing. Moreover, by the late 1960s and early 70’s the sages at National Review tended to have a lot more interest in Henry Kissinger than in those considered to be half-hysterical, barely literate ex-governors (whether from Maryland or Alabama). Agnew never quite managed to overcome these handicaps: while he received considerable sympathy from the pages of National Review, this was not enough to stop Buckley from publicly losing patience with the vice-president’s verbal antics or to refrain himself from damaging Agnew’s chances of retaining the vice-residency when Nixon was actively considering dumping Agnew in favour of John Connally. Neither was it enough to prevent the Review and most of its contributors from deserting the vice-president when murky financial dealings from his Maryland years provoked his downfall.105

Yet this time around, National Review’s stance did not necessarily correspond with the evolution of conservatism elsewhere. During the second part of the 1960s, the conservative organisational network had helped to create and promote a new generation of activists who were younger, more aggressive and completely free from any need to gain the acceptance of the political mainstream. These ‘Young Turks’ within the movement would later became

known as the ‘New Right’ and, during the Nixon years in the White House, as they gained experience and independent stature they also became less willing to toe the National Review line. These were men who had often broken their political teeth as young activists during the Goldwater campaign, and had made their way up via Young Americans for Freedom or as conservatives within the Young Republicans and who, in remarkable numbers, found their way into junior positions within the Nixon administration generally, and the vice-president’s entourage in particular. Tom Huston, and Agnew-staffers David Keene and Howard Phillips (later director of the Office for Economic Opportunity) had all held senior office in YAF. Others took a different route: Richard Viguerie set up his own political operation and supported Wallace, while M. Stanton Evans moved up the ranks within the National Review group as did John Coyne, later to move onto Agnew’s and then Nixon’s speechwriting teams. Furthermore, young conservatives like Jeffrey Bell and Richard Whalen actually re-joined the conservative organisational network fairly early in Nixon’s first term after working in the campaign or having suffered brief and unhappy stints in the administration. These new conservatives – within and without the administration – far from being embarrassed by Spiro Agnew, saw him as ‘a fighter’ and were instead naturally drawn to his vigorous right-wing populism. As long as Richard Nixon presented a plausible case for conservatism, the fault-line went largely unnoticed. After all, as Rusher remarked, the Nixon ranks in the 1968 primaries contained as many of those young conservatives as the Reagan forces did, and the situation remained largely unchanged for the first year and a half of Nixon’s first term: not so as the public image of the administration drifted leftwards between 1970 and mid-1972.

In 1970 the president, frustrated by what he saw as Republican candidates’ poor showing and by the failure of his conservative-leaning strategy, moved back to the centre. By mid-1972 that disappointment had given way to a fairly acute case of the not-uncommon

106 Interview with Jeffrey Bell; Interview with David Keene; Interview with Morton Blackwell; Interview with Howard Phillips, September 7, 2005, Washington. DC; Viguerie and Franke, America’s Right Turn, pp. 39-107, 137–45. see also footnote 6 above.
107 Interview with Jeffrey Bell; interview with David Keene; Interview with Morton Blackwell.
White House syndrome that distances second-term presidents from their party. As re-election approached and the Democrats selected George McGovern as their presidential candidate, Nixon knew that incumbency, together with his own appeal to the party’s essentially conservative grassroots activist – which had been immensely fortified by a Democratic candidate vulnerable to charges of radicalism – insulated him from any need to pay lip-service to the ever-more debilitated liberal wing of the GOP. Ambitiously and aggressively, the president initiated what historian Robert Mason has labelled a ‘sharp turn to the right’.\footnote{Mason, \textit{Quest for a New Majority}, 161–62.}

Nixon, being Nixon, vindictively aimed for a ‘clearing out’ of his ‘enemies’. More meaningfully, he also planned to initiate the ‘building up’ of his ‘own establishment’, as well as ‘clearing up the bad programs’, particularly the Great Society’s ‘huge social programs’ which, according to the president, ‘don’t work’.\footnote{Haldeman, \textit{Diaries}, pp. 614, 615–16.} Richard Nixon was, at long last, prepared to give the American right the counter-revolution they had been seeking since 1945. Moreover, looking to the longer-term, he also set his sights on the creation of a national conservative party.\footnote{Ibid., p.668; Mason, \textit{Quest for a New Majority}, pp. 161–62, 191; Reichley, \textit{Conservatives in an Age of Change}, p. 236.}

Conservatives, needless to say, had already been there, and provided an excellent test run for the president in 1970 when the White House backed James Buckley, running on the CPNYS ticket, against incumbent liberal Republican Charles Goodell. A year later, while the hard core, smarting from Nixon’s shift to the centre, was trying to make the president’s life a little more difficult, Patrick Buchanan drafted a proposal exploring ‘the possibility of a national Conservative party’ which would in effect replicate the New Yorkers’ strategy throughout the nation: having Nixon on a double Conservative-Republican ticket.\footnote{Patrick Buchanan to H. R. Haldeman, November 30, 1971, f. Contested Documents from boxes 1 to 5, f. 1 of 2, box Contested Documents, PB papers.} Conservatives, thought Buchanan, would consent because they would finally acquire a national party. Richard Nixon’s benefit would be an strengthened candidacy in what Buchanan predicted might still be a four-way election between Nixon and an Edmund
Muskie-like centrist Democrat at the centre pitted against Wallace to the right and a McGovern or perhaps Eugene McCarthy-type on the left. In that scenario Buchanan’s proposal would enable the president to make inroads into the Wallace vote by escaping the Republican label in those sections of the country – such as New York itself and the Deep South – where conservative sentiment was on the rise, but cohabited with a visceral anti-GOP partisanship that still hindered Republican advances. Buchanan was not the only conservative thinking new party thoughts. William Rusher, Nixon’s old conservative nemesis, strategised along very similar lines, and would eventually publish a similar proposal for the radical restructuring of the GOP, or its substitution by a new conservative party.113

Of course, the president did not need much persuading. Since the run up towards the 1968 elections, Richard Nixon had been fully aware and had greatly benefited from the growing disaffection of those southerners who, although generally loyal to certain incumbent Democrats on Capitol Hill, had already voted for a Republican president in 1964 and an Independent in 1968. As Nixon was inaugurated in 1972, Louisiana’s Joe D. Waggoner led conversations between no less than forty conservative (and not only southern) Democratic representatives and the GOP on the subject of switching sides.114 In part this was a consequence of the ascent of George McGovern which, coupled with rather unnerving Republican gains in the South since 1964, had become the last straw for many of those Democrats in the legislative branch who had already lent their wholehearted support to the president during the campaign.115 As November 1972 had approached, the Democratic old guard – the wing which comprised the trade union and white-ethnic vote and which had been gravitating towards the right since 1968 – had had about enough of McGovernite new left adventures.116 Outside the South, Chicago’s all-powerful Mayor Daley, Philadelphia’s party machine boss Frank Rizzo, together with the AFL-CIO’s George Meany and Teamster

113 Rusher, New Majority Party, pp. 96–113.
115 See for instance the reception of the presidential entourage in Mississippi in July 1972, as described in Haldeman, Diaries, p. 594.
president Frank Fitzsimmons, as well as (covertly) Lyndon Baynes Johnson, repudiated the Democratic party of George McGovern and embraced Richard Nixon’s ‘silent majority’. To crown it all, even George Wallace, then recovering from a gunshot wound but still his old right-wing populist self, discreetly backed Nixon against McGovern. In exchange he only asked that the Wallacite ‘message on the issues’ be heard. The president enthusiastically obliged.

However, if political realignment meant spectacular implosion for the Democratic party, the Republicans also culminated a metamorphosis of their own. The GOP had first undergone a highly pyrotechnical internal transformation in 1964. Since then party liberals had, incrementally and almost imperceptibly, lost influence, first at grassroots level and later at more senior levels. In 1968, as William Rusher correctly noted, the right-wing of the party was strong enough to enjoy a choice between two candidates – Nixon and Reagan – but had lacked the self-confidence to go all the way for their own champion. Throughout Richard Nixon’s first term the position of liberal Republicans deteriorated to the point where, as William Rusher liked to gloat, New York’s mayor John Lindsay and Representative Ogden Reid left the party altogether, while Senator Charles Goodell found himself expelled from office by the joint efforts of the CPNYS and the White House. In 1972 not even Richard Nixon dared to irritate the faithful, and ruefully kept Agnew as his running mate. Less than three years later, Nelson Rockefeller’s selection as Gerald Ford’s vice-president was very much the swan song of the Eastern Republican establishment that had so much tormented both Richard Nixon and the conservative hard core since the days of Dwight Eisenhower. In the light of such developments Richard Nixon came to the same conclusion that William Rusher had reached earlier and, going beyond what Patrick Buchanan had suggested in 1970, actively manoeuvred to create his very own conservative party.

117 Moving Nixon’s wife to ruefully note that ‘at least they [Daley] are not going to try to steal votes form us like they always have’, Ambrose, Triumph of a Politician, pp. 585; James Reston Jr., Lone Star: The Life of John Connally (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), pp. 446–47.
118 As quoted in Ambrose, Triumph of a Politician, p. 587; Reinhard, Republican Right, p. 226.
119 Much to the chagrin, as may be expected, of the moderate wing: see for instance John D. Saloma, Ominous Politics: The New Conservative Labyrinth (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), pp. 94–103.
120 Rusher, New Majority Party, pp.102–103; Mason, Quest for a New Majority, pp. 94–95.
And yet, as always, Nixon tried to enlist conservative support without recruiting the conservative movement itself. The president's chosen dauphin and putative head of this enterprise was former Johnson protégé, outstanding Treasury secretary, and Democrat turncoat, John Connally. Nixon's relationship with Connally had begun in late 1970 and quickly took the president from respect to believing his flamboyant Treasury Secretary to be the only man who could take his baton in 1976 and thereby transform the politics of the United States. On the surface he was right. Connally was regarded as the sort of earthy, right-of-centre southerner who would be safe and likeable for conservative Republicans, and attractive for those Democrats gravitating towards the GOP. Moreover, Connally possessed the political savvy, physical energy and capacity for dealing effectively with high-level functionaries and grassroots activists alike that had gained the admiration of the two most dangerous political beasts of the mid-twentieth century United States. Few men could command the respect and support of no less than Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon at the same time. Hence by December 1972 Richard Nixon had persuaded himself that Connally could act as the conduit for a rightward electoral readjustment which would culminate in a new conservative party that would go beyond traditional sectarian partisanship. The president was wrong, and even someone as ambitious as Connally knew better. The Texan thought it was more plausible to 're-establish the old Republican party' along new ideological and electoral lines. Nevertheless, even this more modest approach was destined to fail.

As Watergate began to unfold, the president was soon forced to became single-mindedly focused on his own survival and, without White House support, Connally was a mere turncoat despised by both his former fellow-Democrats (one of them back in Texas though it would be a good idea to have Connally, who had been travelling in Kennedy’s car on that fatal day in Dallas, shot ‘every six months’), and by the Republicans whom he had regularly humiliated for most of his political career in Texas. When Connally had joined the

administration back in 1970, the president’s men had gloated over Democrats’ rage, while assuaging the hostility of prominent Republicans by distributing patronage and reassurances to the likes of George Bush Sr., Senator John Tower and Texas state party chairman-cum-early Nixon backer Peter O’Donnell. The effort sufficed as long as Nixon remained a commanding figure, but Bush never forgot that Connally had left him unemployed in the 1970 mid-terms, much like Tower and O’Donnell did not forget a decade-long string of continuous lost battles against Connally as governor. In 1973, as Spiro Agnew fell into disgrace, the administration knew it lacked the wherewithal to overcome the visceral bipartisan opposition that Connally’s confirmation hearings as vice-president were certain to generate. Abandoning the Democratic party, the Texan had become a Nixon creature bereft, like Nixon himself, of any political base of his own. The conservatives that John Connally was meant to appeal to reacted as they had initially towards Spiro Agnew. Even those within the administration saw him as an opportunistic ‘politician’ with whom they held little in common. Moreover, unlike Agnew, Connally bore the burden of the deep-seated hostility of several prominent Southern conservative leaders such O’Donnell and Tower; he never appealed to visceral right-wing populism; and, on top of it all, was also rightly associated by conservatives with Nixon’s dreaded price and wage controls. These developments effectively ended Richard Nixon’s attempt at boldly altering the political map of the nation, and the conservative movement’s earliest opportunity to become the acknowledged hegemonic force of American politics.


The tone and the limits of Richard Nixon’s conservatism were solidly established during his first two years in office. Throughout his years in the White House, the president’s

124 Wicker, One of Us, p. 544; Price, With Nixon, pp. 251–52.
125 Interview with William Rusher; Interview with David Keene; Interview with Milton Friedman; Interview with Jeffrey Bell; Interview with Morton Blackwell.
right-wing leanings would remain selectively circumscribed to the ‘social issue’ and the tortuous particulars of Vietnam disengagement and school desegregation. Other domestic matters such as social security and environmental regulation were left for the underlings within the presidential entourage – mostly those working under the self-consciously technocratic John Ehrlichman – to deal with. Overall, domestic affairs received as little direct attention as Nixon could possibly afford and such as was given remained dictated by political expediency.\textsuperscript{127} International affairs certainly received the bulk of Richard Nixon’s interest, but there the Nixon-Kissinger tandem held very specific and clear views quite at odds, excepting Vietnam, with the conservative worldview.

In mid-1971 Patrick Buchanan was instructed by the administration to interview the conservative columnist Holmes Alexander in order to gauge the administration’s ‘problems with conservatives’. In that interview – which Buchanan judged a good barometer of right-wing attitudes – Alexander conveyed ‘the feeling among conservatives’ that the president had ‘moved left’, and how the right felt that ‘for [the previous] two years the President was doing just fine on the anti-inflation front, the war [in Vietnam], on the Supreme Court, on law-and-order [and] on a balanced budget’, but that after the mid-term elections ‘all that, except the war, has changed’. Conservatives were only partially correct. Richard Nixon’s policies had never been nearly as conservative as conservatives had hoped in 1968, but in 1970 the president felt he had lost the mid-terms, which had been approached by using Agnew to ‘hit hard’ and ‘play the conservative trend’ in order to ‘hang our opponents as radical liberals’.\textsuperscript{128} Alas the expected transformation of the new majority into a Nixon Congress did not materialise, and in response the president attempted to move the administration’s image back to the centre.\textsuperscript{129} For the following months – up to George McGovern’s victory in the Democratic primaries – the conservative movement and Richard Nixon re-enacted, as if following a metronome, the second move of their recurrent dance (mutual recrimination and

\textsuperscript{127} Ehrlichman, \textit{Witness to Power}, p. 207-8. Ehrlichman claimed that Nixon ‘insisted I not bother him about many things’, and that he actually had \textit{carte blanche} for all domestic matters lacking direct electoral implications.


\textsuperscript{129} Patrick Buchanan to the Staff Secretary, March 1, 1971, f. Contested Documents, box 1-5, 1 of 2, PB papers.
denunciations). As ever, the hard core’s disappointment was again tempered by the pragmatism and moderation of some of its members – Burnham, Buckley, Jeffrey Hart – while the old Nixon haters – Rusher, until his death Meyer, and the younger, more radicalised elements – unsuccessfully struggled to realign the right against Nixon. Yet this time around the long term consequences of those old dynamics turned out to be quite different from before. For now new and younger conservatives watched and learned.

Although earlier reports of systematic ‘trouble on the right’ had been reaching the White House since the fall of 1970, it was not until early 1971 that Patrick Buchanan began to produce systematically alarming memos for the president. Early on, declared Buchanan, disaffection had been located within what he labelled ‘the Reaganites at the Miami convention’, as well as ‘a majority of the younger conservatives’.130 Yet, he declared in January 1971 ‘the situation on the Right’ had become ‘as bad as I have known it since joining R[ichard] N[ixon]’.131 Buchanan managed to sound the alarm loudly enough to concentrate the president’s mind on his political right-flank, but neither for long enough nor with sufficient depth. Initially, Nixon admitted the administration’s ‘move to the left’ may have been excessive, but expressed as much reluctance to ‘get too far off his natural [right-wing] base’ as to follow Buchanan’s counsel ‘to go all conservative’. Nixon settled instead for ‘PR’.132 As Rusher would have noted, after the failed experiment of 1970 Richard Nixon’s ‘ruler and calliper’ told him that the exact centre of American politics was not as far to the right as some had thought. Nevertheless, the most active elements of the right itself were not about to be as accommodating in 1971 as they had been in 1968. As Buchanan warned, conservatives ‘feel that they are the dominant force in the Republican party; yet the president seems sensitive to them only at election times’, and that ‘while they get the “rhetoric” the liberals within the party get the policies and programs’.133 Worse still, as Buchanan reported, conservatives had correctly concluded that ‘the squeaky wheel in the Nixon administration

130 Patrick Buchanan to the President, January 26, 1971, ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Haldeman, Diaries, p 281.
133 Patrick Buchanan to the President, January 26, 1971, f. box 1 to 5, 1 of 2, box Contested Documents, PB papers.
gets the grease’, and were thus about to ‘start squeaking publicly’.134 This they did. Throughout 1971, the leaders of the four main Buckleyite bodies – ACU, YAF, National Review, and the CPNYS, which became known to the administration collectively as the ‘Manhattan 12’ – initiated a crescendo of hostility which culminated in their ‘suspension’ of support for Nixon, and the subsequent mounting of a symbolic (and entirely unsuccessful) primary challenge by John Ashbrook in the 1972 primaries.135

Yet at no point did Richard Nixon actually consider altering his political course as a consequence of conservative pressure. In practical terms the administration’s response to conservative disaffection between late 1970 and August 1972 chiefly consisted of the continuous administration of the ‘White House stroke process’ to selected conservatives.136 The president’s men also increased their efforts in the communications area, both to translate the administration’s un-conservative initiatives into conservative language – this required some remarkable but yet fairly unconvincing contortions – and to drum up its genuinely conservative initiatives.137 By late 1970 the president was alarmed enough to order the creation of a conservative monitoring group outside the White House intended to examine the contents and effects of major presidential communiqués in order to ‘get their [conservatives’] views and to enlist them as advocates’.138 Nonetheless, so firm was Nixon’s intention to put some distance between himself and the right that an outraged Buchanan had to arm-twist Haldeman into accepting that such analyses be channelled through the White House’s resident conservatives instead of the Republican National Committee: Nixon, through Haldeman, relented, but still insisted on conducting the flow of documentation through one single person – Buchanan himself.139 By February 1971, the White House had intensified the

134 Ibid.
136 See Patrick Buchanan to H. R. Haldeman, f. Ehrlichman 1972, f. 1 of 2, box Contested Documents boxes 1 to 5, PB papers; Buchanan to Haldeman, December 1, 1971, f. Haldeman, 1971, f. 1 of 2, box 3, ibid.
activities of the ‘group of six’, an informal gathering of the most prominent insider conservatives (David Keene, Martin Anderson, Buchanan, Houston, Harry Dent and Bill Timmons), to figure out how best to deal with right-wing discontent, and which subsequently recommended William F. Buckley’s appointment of as counsellor to the president (Nixon had suggested NR columnist James Jackson Kilpatrick). In the end nothing formal came out of it but, as may be expected, Buckley continued to receive personal White House attention, as did some of the most relevant conservative columnists such Kilpatrick, Holmes Alexander, James Burnham, and John Chamberlain, in the form of direct sessions with the president as well as highly elaborated meetings with Henry Kissinger and other senior White House staffers.

The effects of White House attention were at best uneven, and on the whole certainly fell short of Nixon’s hopes. Buchanan and the other right-wingers inside the administration knew better, and unsuccessfully tried to remind other staffers that conservatives were ‘ideologues concerned with substance and policy, more likely to be alienated than appeased by gestures and cosmetics in the absence of action’. Charles Colson, who was by late 1971 charged with handling White House relations with external groups, found out soon enough and to his own evident irritation that men like William Rusher were ‘beyond recovery’, and quite impervious to the administration’s ‘logic’. The White House’s inability to satisfy the hard core’s demands had, by December 1971, pushed conservatives into allowing the latter to become the ‘leader of the group and [its] designated spokesman’. The move was calculated to ignite war, for Rusher doubtless enjoyed telling Nixon staffers exactly what he thought of the president. Buchanan had correctly identified him as the ‘most hawkish’ of the Manhattan

140 Interview with David Keene
141 Patrick Buchanan to H. R. Haldeman, February 11, 1971, f. Haldeman 1971, f. 2 of 2; Buchanan to Haldeman, February 8, 1971, ibid., box 3, PB papers; Buchanan to Haldeman, June 17, 1971, f. Conservatives, f. 2 of 2, CC papers. To conservatives’ general hilarity, Kissinger had a habit of warning his audience they should keep the contents of the briefings secret ‘from even their wives’, Interview with Jeffrey Bell.
142 Patrick Buchanan to H. R. Haldeman, September 13, 1971, f. Conservatives, f. 2 of 2, box 52, CC papers.
Twelve, and Colson thought him possessed by ‘latent personal hostility’ to all things Nixon. Other conservative leading lights, such as YAF national director Randall Teague—who had in 1970 proclaimed the organisation to be ‘behind you, as President and as Commander-in-Chief’—were by mid-1971 judged ‘unacceptable altogether’, and quite simply blacklisted by the White House.

And yet what would prove to be the administration’s siren songs certainly had some effects upon a number of prominent individuals. National Review editor Jeffrey Hart, for instance, was offered the directorship of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities, and subsequently wrote what Buchanan considered ‘the best thing that has been written about Richard Nixon’. He was also asked to ‘put together some lists of pro-Nixon artists, writers, professors and the like’ liable to ‘be gradually moved into our orbit’, which he complied with by recommending San Diego academic Ronald Berman for the post at the NFAH—where he remained long after Watergate—and passing onto Buchanan the names of novelist and NR contributor D. Keith Mano as a potential alternative to Arthur Miller. And Hart was by no means alone. All the main conservative political stars—including most of those closely associated with the hard core—behaved similarly. James Buckley, the newly elected Senator from New York on the Conservative party ticket in 1970 was reported as ‘continuing to do an effective job for the administration’ as late as September 1971, while a few months earlier Ronald Reagan dispatched a ‘blistering four-page letter’ to some over-enthusiastic supporters in YAF who had endorsed him against Nixon, and whom he called ‘pea-brains’ and ‘irresponsible’. Not only were both Reagan and Senator Buckley uninvolved in the right’s ‘suspension of support’ for Richard Nixon: they were seen by the president’s men as their ‘most effective political spokesmen’ to rebellious conservatives. After all, in 1970 Reagan

146 Randell Teague to George Bell, September 22, 1970; Teague to Charles Colson, May 3, 1970, f. YAF, box 52, CC papers; Patrick Buchanan to H. R. Haldeman, June 17, 1971, f. Conservatives, f. 2 of 2, ibid.
147 Patrick Buchanan to H. R. Haldeman, August 11, 1971, f. Haldeman, f. 2 of 2, box 3, PB papers.
advisor and close acquaintance Lyn Nofziger advised Nixon — no doubt with the governor’s knowledge — to shift to the centre and seek some ‘distinguished Democrat’ for the cabinet in order to replace former Johnson aide Daniel Patrick Moynihan (who had resigned). Later on, Richard Nixon’s speech accepting his re-nomination was preceded by those of, precisely, Reagan and James Buckley. Goldwater, much like the southern contingent on the Hill, remained as steadfastly loyal to Richard Nixon throughout the conservative storms as he would be during the subsequent Watergate crisis.

However, so much solicitude put those conservatives friendly to the administration in an increasingly uncomfortable spot. Too much opposition to Richard Nixon meant losing their useful connections with the White House; too much support could lose one the respect of fellow right-wingers, as well as any usefulness one might have for the men in the White House. Hence, following his political chat with Patrick Buchanan, Holmes Alexander engaged in a remarkably Nixonesque exercise in political funambulism on behalf of the president. In view of the deteriorating relationship between the administration and the right, he was forced to resort to some of the most well worn conservative arguments for rallying behind Richard Nixon. Firstly, reminiscent of James Burnham’s ruminations back in 1960, Alexander reminded his readers both of the Democrats’ deplorable nature, and of the fact that the president also happened to be a Republican. While he acknowledged that by no stretch of the imagination did the comparison make Nixon appear spectacularly conservative, he concluded that ‘you can say the same words about Richard Nixon that Dwight Eisenhower once said about old age “its pretty bad until you consider the alternative”’. Moreover, the journalist emphasised, whatever his shortcomings Nixon remained a conservative at heart, and the administration had achieved some indisputably conservative achievements such as

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150 Reston, Lone Star, p. 378.
151 Nelson Rockefeller was the person selected to nominate Nixon and to thus symbolise Republican unity behind the president, Ambrose, Triumph of a Politician, p. 600.
152 Chuck Colson to Patrick Buchanan, December 20, 1971, f. Conservatives, f. 2 of 2, box 52, CC papers; Barry Goldwater to Gilbert E. Wheeler, December 17, 1971, ibid. The latter is a three-page reply to an unhappy conservative in which Goldwater not only mustered the usual common place arguments to defend Nixon, but amazingly enough even brought himself to positively justify wage-and-price controls. See also [Release] From the Office of Senator Barry Goldwater, December 29, 1971, ibid.; Reinhard, Republican Right, pp. 225–26.
the comparatively ‘tough on crime’ stance of Attorney General John Mitchell, and the four ‘strict constructionist’ appointments to the Supreme Court.\footnote{Alexander, ‘Nixon Keeps Promise’.}

William F. Buckley also suffered an ordeal of his own. Back in 1970, an infuriated young conservative had written to the NR complaining that Buckley had ‘certainly’ not ‘thumped on the Nixon administration with the gusto of old’. Although the correspondent emphasised ‘I really do like NR’, its editor, he thought, could be ‘terribly stuffy at times, really’.\footnote{As quoted in Buckley, \textit{Living It Up}, p. 199.} In January of the same year Patrick Buchanan reported, more seriously, that Buckley’s ‘influence among the hard-core right’ was fast ‘being diminished’, and the administration ‘cannot count on his bringing them over’.\footnote{Patrick Buchanan to the President, January 26, 1971, f. box 1 to 5, 1 of 2, box Contested Documents, PB papers.} As might be expected, those conservatives who were within the administration suffered the most. Tom Huston found himself writing anonymous attacks on the administration’s domestic policy while, by 1971, the wavering conservatives explicitly demanded that presidential advisor Chuck Colson keep Buchanan out of the meetings between themselves and White House – partly to avoid their being ‘smoothed over’, and partly because they did not believe in his capacity to influence ‘the Old Man’ any more. Buchanan, it must be noted, complied with the request.\footnote{Interview with Jeffrey Bell; Interview with David Keene; Charles Colson to Ken Cole, November 2, 1971, f. Conservatives (1 of 2), box 52, CC papers; Reichley. \textit{Conservatives in an Age of Change}, pp. 166–67.} Around the same time David Keene reported that anti-Nixon feeling was spreading, by association, to other bona-fide right-wingers in the White House such as Agnew, Goldwater speechwriter and ghostwriter Stephen Shadegg, and himself.\footnote{David Keene to Jeb Magruder, September 8, 1971, f. box 1-5 1 of 2, box Contested Documents, PB papers; Interview with Jeffrey Bell; Interview with David Keene.}

In fact by that time, the epidemic of anti-Nixon dissent had expanded from those conservatives – like Rusher – who had opposed Nixon in favour of Reagan in 1968, to those who had been all along behind the president.\footnote{Patrick Buchanan to the President, January 26, 1971, f. box 1 to 5, 1 of 2, box Contested Documents, PB papers.} In qualitative terms this expansion also intensified resentment exponentially since, as Keene reported, the latter group turned out to
suffer, reasonably enough, from an even greater frustration and sense of betrayal than the former.\textsuperscript{159} Yet despite the obvious expansion of conservative disappointment, their disenchantment completely failed to either affect any changes in executive action or even so much as to disturb, never mind derail, Richard Nixon’s steaming race towards re-election. John Ashbrook’s gallant primary challenge ended in near-ridicule and, in the end, the organisations represented by the Manhattan Twelve wound up behind the president in 1972 with even greater enthusiasm than in 1968. Nixon’s feat was even more remarkable in light of the administration’s manifest unresponsiveness. After all, conservative complaints referred to specific issues, were in their own terms entirely justifiable, and went accompanied with specific, feasible policy alternatives. As Buchanan put it, despite the admittedly uncompromising ‘shopping list’ that the anti-Nixon right-wingers repeatedly sent over to the White House, in the last instance conservative demands boiled down to three issues: elimination of the Family Assistance Plan espoused by the administration at Moynihan’s urgings (which Nixon eventually allowed to die but for reasons unrelated to conservative pressure); a significant increase in or at least maintenance of the defence budget (which Nixon ignored); and the guarantee of Taiwan’s seat in the United Nations (which Nixon sacrificed). Spiro Agnew’s continuation as Nixon’s running mate was the only act which responded to conservative pressure between the mid-terms of 1970 and Nixon’s re-election. Other frankly galling matters such as the opening to China itself, wage and price controls and the occasional flourishing of Nixon’s Keynesian enthusiasm were digested – with much noise, certainly – by what appears on closer inspection to have been the not-so uncompromising Buckleyites.\textsuperscript{160}

Yet the Buckleyites were no longer the undisputed leaders of the conservative movement. As the stream of Buchanan and Colson memoranda and the enthusiasm for Spiro Agnew in certain quarters clearly showed, underneath the calmer \textit{National Review} façade

\textsuperscript{159} David Keene to Jeb Magruder, September 8, 1971, ibid.
\textsuperscript{160} In retrospect nearly all conservatives admit to their own moderation and justify it by claiming that Richard Nixon fooled them: Interview with William F. Buckley; Interview with William Rusher; Edwards, \textit{Conservative Revolution}, p. 178.
lurked a much less accommodating new generation of right-wing activists. In contrast with the likes of William F. Buckley and James Burnham, the emerging conservative Young Turks did not need nor seek the approval of the liberal ‘establishment’. The Buckleyites, on the other hand, for all their passionate hostility were pure-bred establishment specimens themselves. It cannot be emphasised enough that the entire National Review senior staff had received an Ivy League education – fortified in each case with stints in British institutions – and possessed rather ‘Eastern’ prejudices regarding literary matters and, as the reaction to Spiro Agnew and George Wallace indicates, political action as well. In contrast, most new-righters (bar exceptions such as Howard Phillips, who had attended Harvard) tended to proceed from Southern, Western, or Midwestern institutions such as the University of Louisiana (Blackwell), the University of Houston (Viguerie), and the University of Wisconsin (Keene). Moreover, Richard Nixon had given some of these young right-wingers the opportunity of joining a presidential administration without the need to renounce an ounce of their conservatism, while others had been busy building up what Sidney Blumenthal perceptively termed a conservative ‘counter-establishment’. Four men were particularly shocked by what they saw during the Nixon years, and would eventually play a vital role in the creation of the New Right. Within the administration David Keene and Howard Phillips, formerly of the YAF national structure, moved into Spiro Agnew’s staff. From there, Phillips found his way into the Council on Youth Opportunity and the Office for Economic Opportunity. Operating well outside the White House was Richard Viguerie, who had learned the basic ropes of grassroots mobilisation watching Marvin Liebman run the Young Americans for Freedom, and had effectively already become a Nixon foe while working for George Wallace. Somewhere in between the young conservatives in government and the young conservatives trying to make government’s life more difficult was Morton Blackwell, a man immensely proud of having been Goldwater’s youngest delegate in 1964.

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161 Interview with William F. Buckley; Interview with William Rusher.
162 Interview with David Keene; Interview with Morton Blackwell; Interview with Howard Phillips.
164 Himmelstein, To The Right, pp. 80-94; see also footnote 6 above.
who went on to serve on the Republican National Committee before spending two years, between 1970 and 1972, engaged in building up the American Enterprise Institute’s bank of scholars – a database of academics and intellectuals ready to be supplied to the White House by the sole conservative think-tank then in operation. These four men, together with other ‘conservative impresarios’ (Blackwell’s words) such as Paul Weyrich and Lee Edwards, were directly responsible for the explosion of renewed conservative energy that immediately followed Nixon’s downfall, which would translate into the creation of the Heritage Foundation – AEI’s great competitor as the nation’s second right-wing think-tank – and the eruption of religious right as an organised political force.\(^{166}\)

As with virtually all conservatives who followed Richard Nixon into government in 1968, these young men had believed that the experience of power – especially under the leadership of ‘the slayer’ of Alger Hiss, a man most of them had supported against Kennedy in 1960, whose support they had received in 1964 and whose anticommunism was widely admired – would allow them to initiate the reversal of the liberal policies they had opposed since the mid-1960s. By 1972 disappointment with the president had set so deeply that even those working within the administration could barely bring themselves to support him. Keene and Houston, for instance, were sent in 1972 to prevent the YAF national convention from declaring against Nixon. They dutifully attended, but limited themselves to playing ‘a week-long poker game’ and observing the proceedings, finally reporting back with glee the intense level of conservative animus towards the president. That, according to Keene, was ‘all our contribution to the Nixon campaign’ in 1972.\(^{167}\) Not long thereafter Howard Phillips, who had also entered the administration under the general patronage of Agnew, had developed a deep admiration for the VP, and was then busily trying to dismantle the OEO from its directorship, became one of the first conservatives to publicly request the president’s resignation.\(^{168}\) Phillips’ quarrel with Nixon was not Watergate \textit{per se}: like very many


\(^{167}\) Interview with David Keene.

\(^{168}\) Interview with Howard Phillips; see also Diamond, \textit{Roads to Dominion}, p. 116.
conservatives he saw the affair as another example of the deplorable dark political arts that had been part and parcel of most previous presidencies – usually with conservatives and Republicans as victims. Yet even if John Mitchell’s ‘White House horrors’ were no reason to impeach a president, according to Phillips Nixon’s decision – born of political weakness – to sign into law the creation of the Federal Legal Services Corporation was certainly a capital motivation for demanding the president’s resignation. In a similar vein and at around the same time, Morton Blackwell got ‘very upset’ and resigned in disgust from the American Enterprise Institute when he realised that the AEI was refusing to publish any documentation regarding legislation being discussed on the Hill until after it had been approved or rejected. With some reason, an indignant Blackwell thought such a strategy self-defeating and proceeded to inform Joseph Coors, head of the beer-brewing company, conservative patron of unparalleled largesse and a main AEI donor, who in turn failed to affect any changes in the Institute’s policy. Less than three years later Blackwell, with the financial backing of Coors and together with Paul Weyrich and Lee Edwards, set up the Heritage Foundation. In keeping with its creators’ cast of mind Heritage, a far more aggressive outfit than AEI, was variously described as a ‘do-tank’ and ‘advocacy-tank’, as opposed to a think-tank. The status of Heritage as the main source of conservative intellect for the Reagan administration would be paralleled (although only indirectly related to) the decline in influence of the more moderate AEI.

As Heritage’s modus operandi indicates, if the right-wing Young Turks brought with them a philosophical and political outlook fiercer than that of the Buckleyites, they had also developed a remarkably pragmatic, technically-minded attitude to the art of conservative

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170 Interview with Howard Phillips; see also Phillips, ‘A New Right Perspective’, pp.4–11.

171 The reason for so much caution was that in 1964, Lyndon Johnson had ordered the IRS to investigate AEI’s accounts in order to get its tax-exempt status removed for involvement in political campaigning. Since this was the second time that the Democrats went after AEI for the same reasons, William J. Baroody Sr., the Institute’s director, subsequently opted to play it safe, Interview with Morton Blackwell; Interview with Michael Baroody, September 6, 2005, Washington DC; Interview with David Keene.


173 AEI suffered a major crisis and severe restructuring in the mid 1980s, normally ascribed to financial mismanagement, but the increasing competition for conservative funds cannot have helped the institution; Interview with Michael Baroody; Interview with David Keene; Interview with Lee Edwards.
politicking that had been notably scarce among the hard core—bar the happy few, such as Rusher and F. Clifton White, responsible for Goldwater's success in the 1964 primaries; it is no accident that that campaign, and its failure in the national election, marked the new-righters' coming of political age. In Morton Blackwell's terms, 1964 taught them to disregard the 'Sir Galahad Theory of Politics' according to which 'being right, in the sense of being correct, is enough to make you win'. According to the new-righters, earlier conservatives tended to behave as if they could 'win' because their 'heart is pure': the Young Turks set about winning because their use of technology was also more refined. While the Buckleyites had spent two decades translating the philosophy of conservatism into politically respectable terms, the younger right-wingers proceeded to develop the technical resources to turn what they believed to be good and respectable political ideas into the basis of actual electoral success. Blackwell, Keene, Viguerie, Weyrich and later on even Patrick Buchanan had all seen National Review's well phrased editorials as a foundation stone of the movement, but unlike the earlier generation of conservatives, they eschewed philosophical lucubration and highbrow-inclined journalism in favour of the kind of activity that could channel growing popular dissatisfaction into grassroots conservative political action. The combination of Nixon's unresponsiveness with the older conservative leadership's relative timidity and absolute inability to bring the supposedly friendly administration further to heal accelerated that process.

The Young Turks not only displayed a different attitude to conservative action: they were also developing a new set of issues over which to fight the liberal 'establishment'. An early lesson was learned in late 1971 when one of the few instances of genuine conservative influence upon the White House was orchestrated by Connie Masher, a young YAF staffer working for the organisation's newspaper New Guard and closely associated with the Viguerie group. On that occasion Masher managed to ignite conservative indignation against

174 Interview with Jeffrey Bell; Interview with David Keene; Interview with Morton Blackwell; Interview with Lee Edwards; Edwards, Conservative Revolution, p. 184.
175 Interview with Morton Blackwell.
176 Ibid. See also Viguerie, America's Right Turn.
the Child Development bill by flooding the White House with sufficient angry conservative
mail to move Nixon personally to veto it — and, rather ironically, to actively seek the support
of the Buckleyites in order to offset the ‘heat from the left’ the president expected to
attract.\(^{177}\) At around the same time Phyllis Schlafly, an old Goldwater supporter and fierce
grassroots organiser made her own transition from 1950s anticommunist conservatism to the
1970s anti-new left, culture-war version. Like Masher, Schlafly moved to oppose what she
saw as the government’s double sin of interfering with citizens private lives while failing to
protect certain traditional mores, this time in the form of the proposed Equal Rights
Amendment (ERA) then on the verge of being added to the Constitution.\(^{178}\) These were the
first stirrings of the pro-family and pro-life movements, and the earliest incursions of right-
wing evangelicals into organised conservative political action.\(^{179}\) Activists such as Viguerie,
Blackwell and Schlafly, all of them originally associated with the Buckleyites, began in the
early 1970s a process of ideological readjustment that would transform the American
conservative movement much like the transition from Taftian isolationism to the belligerent
cold-warriorism espoused by *National Review* and Richard Nixon had in the early 1950s. Yet
on this occasion both the president and the bulk of the hard core were, in practical terms,
oblivious to the potential political effects of that particular aspect of the backlash against the
cultural revisionism of the 1960s.

Abortion was, needless to say, at the epicentre of the incoming culture wars. As Nixon’s
policies helped to neutralise Vietnam and civil rights as issues of political contention, the
nation braced itself for the increasingly acrimonious disputes between conservative and
liberals regarding the right (or lack thereof) for women to voluntarily interrupt their
pregnancies. Richard Nixon and the hard core, however, remained oblivious to the future
relevance of the issue. The White House desperately sought to pass what it saw as a hot

\(^{177}\) Charles Colson to H. R. Haldeman, December 8, 1971, see also attachment James Jackson Kilpatrick, ‘Child
Development Bill Is a Monstrosity’, f. Conservatives, f. 1 of 2, box 52, CC papers; William Martin, *With God on Our
\(^{178}\) For a detailed account see Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism* (Princeton:
potato on to somebody else’s – namely the states’ – hands. The Buckleyites, apparently confused, decided to open a debate, not against the usual list of radical liberalism’s defenders, but between themselves, and with some considerable publicity. Forced by circumstances and pressure from the ever-vigilant Catholic Church hierarchy, Nixon reluctantly released a number of statements outlining his position. In April 1971 the president reversed the liberalising policy on abortions in military bases sited in the United States carelessly approved by his own administration the previous summer – the price of leaving such things in the uncontrolled hands of John Ehrlichman. To justify such a volte-face Nixon explained that ‘from personal and religious beliefs’ he considered abortion ‘an unacceptable form of population control’, and certainly not the ‘the kind of alternative to its social dilemmas’ for ‘a nation with a Judaeo-Christian heritage’.

Two virtually identical messages were released in May 1972, a second to the nation (when the president received a pro-choice leaning report from the Commission on Population Growth) and a third to Cardinal Cooke of New York (then initiating a pro-life campaign against the state’s ‘liberalized abortion laws’). Nixon’s language might be indistinguishable from what later became common-stock Catholic or evangelical pro-life speak, but there were at least two fascinating twists distinguishing the president from the right-wing champions of subsequent decades. Firstly, he framed his posture as opposition to mass-scale abortions as a form of population control or as a part of anti-poverty programmes, which was tantamount to, and about as controversial as, being opposed to eugenics: the real abortion debate was that of the rights of foetuses versus those of pregnant women. The president was aware of this, but sought to capitalise on the matter by burdening the Democrats with the issue of moral choice about abortion in the abstract, while carefully avoiding any mention of women’s rights. Charles Colson recognised the twist when he noted that ‘as far as the Catholics are concerned, they care only about the Democrats’ personal views. As far as the women’s lib go, we are best simply leaving the issue as it is’ –

181 ‘Statement by the President’, April 3, 1971, f. Ehrlichman Memos, f. 2 of 2, box 7, CC papers.
unaddressed, one might add.\textsuperscript{183} To complete what Sir Humphrey Appleby would have labelled – approvingly no doubt – as the administration’s ‘no-policy policy’, Nixon refused to take any step to initiate a serious political debate, never mind legislation on the subject. Even when abortions on military bases, which squarely depended on the federal government, became an issue the president opted for adjusting the situation in each individual base to the law in the state it was located in. It should escape nobody that military policy towards issues such as segregation, and more recently gay rights, had sent in the past a clear signal of White House positioning towards matters of complex legislative solution.

The Buckleyites did not fare much better. To be sure, virtually all NR senior editors held deeply felt religious (and Catholic at that) beliefs and were personally dead-set against abortion, but the matter was never a priority. As a young Jeffrey Bell delicately put it, Bill Buckley’s attitude, and by extension that of the journal he headed, to the nascent cultural wars in the early 1970s was ‘aloof’ – others have used the adjective ‘casual’ – when compared with issues such as the state of the nation’s military and of the federal budget, always much closer to the heart of men who remained the children of McCarthyism and Robert Taft.\textsuperscript{184} Along similar lines William Rusher openly rejected the argument that the unborn should have the same rights as the women who carried them, and believed that ‘other preliminary social considerations should figure more prominently in the social program of the Catholic Church’.\textsuperscript{185} In yet another example of National Review’s pragmatism, both Rusher and Buckley agreed that the Church’s frontal opposition to abortion was actually counterproductive. In their view, Rome should actually downplay its pro-life stand in order to avoid an unnecessary increase of the already raising ‘resentment against the Church’ which, the pair agreed, ‘might be of itself the greater evil’.\textsuperscript{186} Moreover, the conservative movement contained a powerful, even if always subordinated, libertarian and libertarian-leaning undercurrent which did not have things so clearly decided, even if during the 1960s the split

\textsuperscript{183} Charles Colson to John Ehrlichman, August 5, 1972, ibid.
\textsuperscript{185} William F. Buckley to William A. Rusher, March 29, 1966, and attachment, f. IOM, box 39, WFB papers.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
between libertarians and traditionalists remained largely controlled and circumscribed to how best to approach the Cold War. In retrospect, Morton Blackwell thought that 'in 1964 I am confident that nobody asked Barry Goldwater "do you favor legalizing abortion?" I am confident nobody ever asked him "do you favour legalizing bank robbery?" either, because then abortion and bank robbery were thought illegal and thought settled in the United States'. But if they had, they may have discovered that Goldwater’s wife was both the founder of Arizona’s Planned Parenthood in 1937, and a firm pro-choicer. As it was, when confronted with the situation, the Sir Galahad of American conservatism infuriated several members of the New Right when he turned out to favour legalised abortion on civil libertarian grounds. His later reversal, in order to secure pro-life support and re-election, was a telling example of the New Right’s spectacular success. Much the same happened with Ronald Reagan, whose rather passive attitude towards a proposed change in California’s abortion laws was quite akin to that of the Nixon White House. Like Goldwater, Reagan later recanted, but the severe split within his gubernatorial entourage and his own indecision were an accurate reproduction of the division that the cultural wars opened within the conservative movement at large, separating traditionalists and new-righters from the entire neoclassical and libertarian wings of the movement, which remained firmly – if not always too conspicuously – in the pro-choice camp.

And thus, the downfall of the Nixon administration found the Buckleyites as an immensely prestigious wing, perhaps a primus inter pares, within the different factions of the growing conservative movement. However, NR had already ceased to be the only source of conservative leadership and direction. Adjectives such as ‘aloof’, ‘right-wing establishment’ and even ‘stuffy’ directed towards National Review conservatism by fellow conservatives

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187 Interview with Milton Friedman.
188 Interview with Morton Blackwell.
189 Howard Phillips, for instance, believed that Goldwater ‘had his daughter impregnated’ and then ‘had his daughter have an abortion’, Interview with Howard Phillips; see Lee Edwards, Goldwater. The Man who Made a Revolution (Washington DC: Regnery, 1993), pp. 420–22.
190 Lou Cannon, Reagan (New York: Putnam, 1982), pp. 128–32; Interview with Milton Friedman; Interview with David Keene; Interview with Richard Ebeling, November 20, 2005, Swindon, UK. When asked about abortion Ebeling, the current head of the libertarian Foundation for Economic Education specifically requested the tape-recorder to be switched off and noted that he personally favoured a libertarian, pro-choice option but could not risk losing sponsorship. He therefore kept his personal views to himself and FEE’s corporate views away from the issue.
were squarely on the mark, for the Buckleyites had achieved between 1968 and 1973 what most of them had yearned for since the 1950s. They had been accepted as respectable contenders for power and could exert direct – if not always successful – influence over the men at the top of the federal government. But success in the quest for respectability came at the price of a degree of pragmatism. During the following decades pragmatism and the will to accommodate, combined with a remarkable, even if somewhat natural slowness in adjusting to new political and cultural circumstances, would relegate them to a secondary place within the American right. As William Rusher and Neil McCaffrey had feared, in the end, the conservative grassroots found leaders who could take them beyond well phrased editorials.

CONCLUSION

By the time the Watergate affair became a national obsession threatening the political survival of the president, the hard core could be found in the same place it had been almost every time Richard Nixon had run into trouble: as a loyal source of support for the man from Yorba Linda. Thus, *Battle Line* ran a campaign under the heading ‘Millions Say No to Impeachment’, in which it denounced the ‘hysteria’ and the ‘open season on the president’. Similarly, John Chamberlain thought the scandal a ‘circulation building circus’ orchestrated by the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, both of which had joined in ‘a Roman orgy’ entirely ‘out of all proportion to anything... the president had done’. Truly astonishingly, even William Rusher was reported to be behaving as a ‘Nixon loyalist.

To be sure, Nixon’s good luck with the right during the final period of his presidency was largely due to the same negative reasons that had propelled Burnham to support Nixon against Kennedy in 1960, and which remained well in place right to the end: Nixon’s enemies were conservatism’s enemies. Rusher’s spectacular *volte face*, for instance, reflected the fact

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that he, like Howard Phillips and very many other conservatives, saw Watergate as 'Nixon was being railroaded by the usual liberal suspects'. The Democrats' appetite for self-destruction and the selection of George McGovern as their presidential candidate in 1972 magnified those feelings even further. McGovern, a certifiable egghead down to possessing a PhD, openly championed the 'new politics' of the Democratic left, proposed a radical reduction of the armed forces and a 'dishonourable' withdrawal from Vietnam. He was, at least according to the perception of McGovern by the conservatives and the projection of its adversary put forth by the Nixon camp certainly, a pristine incarnation, almost a caricature, of that liberal establishment that Nixon and most conservatives envied and despised. The McGovern candidacy – accompanied as it was by the scandalous nature of the Democratic National Convention – was rightly perceived as signifying the takeover of the Democratic party by New Left activists and had the instant double effect of horrifying conservatives – even the Rusher types – into an 'anybody but McGovern' position, while simultaneously pushing Nixon towards the right. McGovern re-kindled the kind of visceral hostility, fully shared with the president, that National Review had developed in the 1950s and 1960s, that had been entirely assumed by the New Right and that men like Tom Huston were prepared in the 1970s to put forth in terms of wiretapping and security proposals such as those included in the infamous 'Huston Plan'. At the same time, the Democrats also enabled Nixon to exploit and magnify McGovern's perceived radicalism to move to the right while appealing to the centre too – reversing what Lyndon Johnson did with Barry Goldwater in 1964. The further to the left that McGovern seemed to be, therefore, the sharper to the right that Nixon could afford to move. The political circumstances were in this way ideally arranged for the president and the Buckleyites once more to proceed to the third step of their particular dance: reconciliation for the sake of expediency.

195 Reichley, *Conservatives in an Age of Change*, pp. 259–69. Reichley has correctly emphasised the explosive effects which resulted from the mix between Nixon's personal (and sometimes clearly delusional) rancour against the liberal establishment and the Buckleyites' own, together with the very real tension and hostility generated by Vietnam and civil rights protestors. He mentions reports of 3000 bombings only in 1970. Each element of the combination contributed to magnify and increase the effects of the others, and resulted in a peculiarly tolerant attitude towards the kind government-sanctioned security operations that eventually led to Watergate.
Yet those events, external as they were to the fundamentals of Nixon's relationship with the hard core, do not in themselves suffice to account for either the persistent loyalty of conservatives to the president, or the ultimate failure of the entente hostile between the president and the right. At a deeper level the Californian's ability to hold onto his vital right-wing support in the end and when it mattered was also a consequence of both Nixon's very real shift of the presidency towards the right and of the move to the centre of a substantial segment of the conservative leadership. If anybody had any doubts about how conservative Richard Nixon was, the Democratic party certainly did its best to dispel them, but presidential conservatism was, between 1969 and 1970 and again in 1972, real and meaningful even if it was progressive and partial. As conservatives rightly complained, matters such as relations with the great powers and environmental protection had no trace of conservative influence but still, as the president gained confidence in the move to the right of the electorate, the administration intensified the rhetorical assaults on the establishment and conducted entirely conservative policies in Vietnam, civil rights and, until 1971, economics. It was only the disappointing returns of the 1970 mid-terms and the deteriorating economic situation that pushed Nixon leftwards and towards the centre for the following eighteen months. Thus, the bitter complaints of those conservatives who suspended their support certainly held water. But then again, the relapse towards right-of-centre pragmatism, however galling it may have been to the hard core, by no means translated into Nixon's either becoming or being perceived by the electorate at large as a liberal. Vietnam, which remained the all-dominant political issue of the day, ensured that the president was rightly perceived as a conservative hawk. In fact, depending on one's viewpoint, some intelligent observers have seen Richard Nixon as a warmonger, for some even one of the variety nowadays dealt with in the International Criminal Court.196

The president’s decision to put an end to Spiro Agnew’s incendiary speech-making and to ‘tune down’ the conservative tone of the White House’s public language arrived too late, and had little or no effect upon a press corps and an intellectual class which had been thoroughly alienated by the president’s men, and which the administration itself had given up as lost to the left and the Democrats. School integration went apace and slowly ceased being a thorn in the side of both the administration and its Southern conservative supporters but, as the latter and everybody else was well aware, it did so on the best terms that the likes of Strom Thurmond could possibly expect to obtain within the realm of the politically and legally possible. When the polls opened in November 1972, every vote for Richard Nixon was cast for a conservative president who was proposing a conservative agenda. And Richard Nixon knew this. Eventually the hard core had nowhere to go except behind the president, where the bulk its own constituency already was. Ironically enough, for much of 1972 the hard core found itself at war with the president precisely at the point of Richard Nixon’s career at which he was preparing himself to follow the electorate further to the right than at any other time since the 1952 elections.

The unfolding Watergate catastrophe soon eliminated Nixon’s capacity to do much of anything, never mind realign the partisan lines of the nation for, if anything else, the scandal temporarily hardened up those wobbling sectarian walls that John Connally needed to collapse in order to lead the emergence of either a new conservative party or a reconstructed GOP. In the end the two national parties struggled for the best part of a decade to adjust to an electoral realignment that all major political actors had recognised in 1968. The GOP eventually managed to reconstruct the Nixon coalition of 1968 and 1972 in 1980, but the strained relationship between Nixon and the hard core bore as much responsibility for such a remarkable time lag as Watergate. The case of the Democrats is less surprising, since believing that they had a clear base of support among minority voters and the young, together with still-strong support among organised labour and even a wing of foreign policy hawks,

the party never quite figured out whether realignment should actually take them to the centre, the left or a combination of both according to policy area. In the meantime, the conservative movement generated its own band of Young Turks, free from the inferiority complex that had plagued the president and their conservative forebears, politically savvier than the latter, aware of conservative strength within Republican ranks and willing to reach out for further support. These were the men who were first among conservatives to lose patience with the Nixon White House and, eventually, with the Buckleyites within and without National Review for failing to bring the administration to heel.

In 1972 the Buckleyites rallied behind Richard Nixon for purely negative reasons – he was not McGovern – fortified in the case of politicians such as Reagan and James Buckley by plain political expediency – he was a right-of-centre Republican and a popular president. But the distance between the two camps was still seemingly unbridgeable. Nixon even failed to take the Buckleyites seriously enough to make the still-leaders of the American conservative movement part of his plans for a new conservative party. For if Richard Nixon always managed to obtain the support of the hard core right whenever electoral expediency so demanded, he was never the ‘right, viable’ political leader that conservatism had desperately needed since the late 1940s. And thus, Nixon was instrumental in both easing the hard core into the politically accepted mainstream and in preventing conservatism from becoming the dominant force in American politics, while he also contributed to the further fragmentation of the movement along strategic and generational lines.

Deep-seated resentment against the established cultural and political elite of American society is one of the most often mentioned traits of Richard Nixon’s complex character and personality. This has been the case to the extent that in a recent biographical analysis, detestation (and envy) of this elite was persuasively described as the most important aspect of both Nixon’s personal psychology and political strategy for well over twenty years.¹ His early political battles against Jerry Voorhis and Helen Gahagan Douglas were fought against wealthy and sophisticated socialites. Subsequently, Nixon chose to portray himself as the champion of the hard-working common man against a morally weak class of arrogant snobs. From the perspective of his political career, that message reached a paroxysm of intensity during the Hiss case when the defendant became, in Nixon’s hands, the personification of that class. From a more intimate viewpoint, the (false) accusations, magnified by the press corps, that led to the Chequers Speech in 1952; followed by the clear hostility of the Washington social scene against Vice-President Nixon during the 1950s; and his narrow defeat in 1960 at the hands of John F. Kennedy (that is, at the hands of the social aristocracy of the Democratic party and the nation) pushed resentment into the near-paranoid mindset that would eventually grip the entire Nixon White House and, ultimately, trigger the downfall of the president. Throughout, Nixon’s attitude towards what he saw as a hostile ‘establishment’ oscillated between seeking acceptance in an envious yearning to belong, and a hostile, alarmingly aggressive, contempt.

Much of the conservative movement shared Nixon’s anti-establishment perspective. From the late 1940s to the early 1970s conservatives strenuously devoted themselves to two

seemingly incompatible objectives: achieving acceptance as legitimate sparring partners with the liberal establishment and destroying (and replacing) that very same liberal establishment. The best known example of this is the *National Review*, which from its inception until the 1970s sniped mercilessly at the representatives of the regnant liberal consensus and their works, but did so according to the standards of literary quality and intellectual coherence set by the intellectuals and opinion makers who led that consensus.

As the movement matured into an increasingly influential force within American politics, it also determinedly set out to dissociate itself from the most radical (and unsavoury) elements of the ‘lunatic fringe’. Very early on, William F. Buckley Jr. and his associates wrote off from the movement the anti-Semitic *American Mercury*. Later on, the excesses of the John Birch Society led to painful denunciations and the severing of ties between the conservative movement and the Birchers. Finally, Richard Nixon himself would benefit from conservative abhorrence of George Wallace’s rebranded form of racist right-wing populism. For over twenty years, and mirroring Nixon’s journey, conservatives had sought to earn a place in the mainstream of American politics, while at the same time aiming to alter the basic tenets that defined the ‘respectable’ so as to achieve acceptance of conservative political principles marginalised within ‘the liberal consensus. Some conservatives realised relatively early on that certain organisations which gathered funding, ideas (particularly ideas applicable to public policy) and politicians together played a crucial role in ‘setting up the agenda for government’, and hence were a vital part of that consensus. By the 1950s these organisations had begun to be known as ‘think-tanks’, and have ever since operated, or aspired to operate, as ‘islands of excellence applying full-time interdisciplinary scientific

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thinking to the in-depth improvement of policy-making' and as bridges between 'power and knowledge'.

This type of institution appeared in the first half of the twentieth century as a consequence of two parallel forces: the progressive impetus to improve government efficiency through 'objective' technical analysis, and the expansion in the functions and complexity of government itself. Between 1916 and 1950 some of the better known examples emerged to lend a charitable helping hand. The list includes the National Industrial Conference Board, the National Bureau of Economic Research, the Twentieth Century Fund and the Committee for Economic Development. The most conspicuous, successful and prestigious of them all was the Brookings Institution. First set up in 1910, Brookings consolidated itself in 1927 with the amalgamation of two other similarly-minded organizations. Although it initially reflected the predominantly free-market-leaning zeitgeist, Brookings became a staunch supporter of New Deal policies during the 1940s as social democratic mores became hegemonic within American politics. Subsequently it became a mammoth organisation – its budget reached $15 million in 1987 – and it remained closely associated with New Deal liberalism. Brookings became a core element of the establishment to the point that Arthur Okun, a prominent member of its own staff, believed that it had become ‘too establishment oriented’ and ‘too much part of the system’.

A crucial aspect of the conservative movement’s endeavours to enter the mainstream of American politics was its effort to generate a conservative stable of think-tanks capable of challenging the older network of liberal institutions. The Washington-based American Enterprise Institute was at the heart of that effort, and it would eventually become the best known and most important intellectual powerhouse for conservative policy-makers thanks in

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great measure to the efforts of the Nixon White House. By the end of Gerald Ford’s presidency, AEI was a think-tank capable of generating about as much respect and acceptance as its older liberal-minded counterparts. The following pages examine the Nixon administration’s crucial role in these changes, and evaluate the impact that the AEI’s transformation had upon and within the general metamorphosis of the American conservative movement. A first section traces the origins and early history of the Institute during the 1950s and 1960s, followed by a section which discusses the interaction between the Nixon White House and AEI. Finally, this chapter closes with an examination of the most important effects of AEI’s spectacular growth and rise to prominence upon the trajectory of conservatism at large.

1. THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT PRIOR TO 1969

The American Enterprise Institute, or the American Enterprise Association as it was initially known, was founded in 1943 by Lewis H. Brown, president of the Johns-Malville Corporation, and a number of fellow right-of-centre businessmen. Its aim was to combat the tide of New Deal policies by publicising free-market leaning views and supplying business-friendly analyses of pending legislation to responsive congressmen and senators. For about a decade, the AEA remained a small, relatively ineffective outfit whose main expenditures were the fees it paid to a Washington Law firm named Sullivan, Bernard & Shea for preparing analyses of proposed legislation. Yet, if its activities during this early period paled in comparison to those of its liberal counterparts, it nevertheless succeeded in capturing the attention of congressional Democrats and labour activists alike. In 1950 the association was already being monitored by Group Research Inc., a labour-financed research outfit devoted to keeping tabs on conservative organisations. That same year it was also subjected by

Democratic Representative Frank Buchanan to the first of the various in-depth examinations of its activities aimed at suspending its tax-exempt status. Although AEA’s fiscal status remained unchanged, the Buchanan Report clearly indicates that the Association had already developed some of the traits that would characterise it for the following half-century. In the first place AEA adopted a *modus operandi* and technocratic veneer that it has retained for the rest of its life and which remains a central element of its organisational character. It eschewed attaining a broad constituency and instead adopted a selective outreach strategy: the analyses produced by the association’s staff were sent to political operatives on Capitol Hill, and to educational institutions such as universities and other think-tanks, but there was no hint of attempts to reach the wider public. Furthermore, the association took pains to emphasise that its work was of a technical nature and that, being developed on a bipartisan basis, was being supplied to members of both the Republican and Democratic parties. Thus AEA proclaimed that it took ‘no stand either in favour or against any proposed legislative measure’, while its president proudly emphasised in 1949 that the ‘outstanding value’ of AEA’s work had been to provide a ‘working base’ for a ‘coalition of Republicans and Democrats on major legislation’ grounded on technical expertise rather than ideological politicking.

In second place, for all its claims of aseptic bipartisanship and technocratic neutrality, Democrats and labour activists were right to signal AEA’s close association with the GOP and with business interests. For instance, during the 1950s its president, Sinclair A. Weeks, was a member of the National Association of Manufacturers, and Robert A. Lund, the president of the NAM, also doubled as a member of AEA’s board of directors, while three directors of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States moved subsequently to AEA. Other prominent businessmen linked to AEA’s management were Lewis H. Brown, the first president of the association, who had also been director of AT&T, and H. C. Lumb, a trustee, who was also vice-chairman of the NAM. Colby M. Chester and Charles R. Hook, both some time presidents of the same organisation, also found their way onto AEA’s board, as did

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9 *Report of the House Select Committee.*
NAM vice-president Arthur Kemp. The GOP supplied the board with Robert P. Burroughs from the Republican National Committee; John O'Leary, who had been vice-treasurer of the Hoover campaign, and the aforementioned Sinclair Weeks, who as well as being connected with the NAM, doubled as president of AEA and treasurer of the Republican National Committee. The list of companies recorded as supporting the early AEA included champions of the automobile industry such as General Motors, Ford, Chrysler and Studebaker, as well as large corporations in other sectors such as International Harvester, General Electric, Standard Oil and Bethlehem Steel. Yet although the list of early contributors to the association included a total of 261 names, AEA's funding relied mainly on a much smaller list of large contributors. Consistent with this, the association avoided the mass pamphleteering and direct mailing efforts that would later on be a trade-mark of the conservative movement, and opted instead for a selective fundraising strategy: funds were captured through contacting a mix of selected heads of prominent companies and getting them to either suggest other potential donors or to contact these possible donors themselves.

Unfortunately for its sponsors, the business response to the association's appeals was rather tepid, and by 1950 the organization was all but bankrupt: from 1947 to 1950 contributions went down from $192,000 to an altogether insufficient $94,000, against expenses which ran to $160,000 in 1949. However, this depressing panorama changed significantly after 1953, when A.D. Marshall, then heading General Electric, took over the chairmanship. As the victorious Republican candidate Dwight Eisenhower took office, instead of shutting down AEA as some of the Association's early supporters suggested, Marshall hired two new members of staff: William J. Baroody Sr., a Lebanese immigrant who became executive vice-president and effective head of the association, and, as his assistant, Glenn Campbell, an economics PhD. Baroody Sr. was one of those conservatives

11 Ibid.
12 Such correspondence constitutes the bulk of AEI’s early epistolary archives within the papers of William J. Baroody Sr., the longest serving head of AEI, who continued this fundraising strategy and the general thrust of the activities performed by the organisation.
who perceptively realised that Brookings fulfilled a number of functions central to the maintenance of the New Deal consensus in Washington and beyond. He set about creating an AEA that would fulfil the same functions for the conservative challengers to the status quo. Baroody sought to turn the association into an entirely different organisational animal: a think-tank. First, he and Campbell deliberately sought to change the old image of the organisation as a pro-business advocacy outfit. Baroody convinced Marshall to allow the association to change its name to the less compromising and more academic-sounding American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, while continuing to impress on the neutral and technocratic character of the organisation. The standard fund-raising letter that he sent throughout the 1950s reflected quite neatly the organisation’s aims and strategy. AEI, Baroody asserted, was ‘not a crusade to save the world. Nor is it designed to achieve miracles’. Rather, the Institute ‘operates on the premise that better legislation results from a better informed legislative [sic]’. In second place, Baroody and Campbell also endeavoured to drastically reorganise AEI and to expand its scope of action so as to turn it into a much more efficient organisation. Therefore, the activities of the Institute up to the early 1970s increased in number and quality but were still focused on assisting congressmen and senators through press digests, occasional papers, ‘legislative analyses’ of ‘current legislative issues’ according to ‘timely’ and ‘factual’ criteria, as well as broader studies aimed at supporting the free enterprise system. In third place, throughout the 1950s and early 1960s AEI also acquired an expanded cohort of academic advisors, incorporating men like Milton Friedman, Warren Nutter and Gottfried Haberler. Far from being a ‘crusade’, most of the Institute’s associates were senior academics and technical advisors who, if generally conservative and certainly linked with the right-wing of the Republican party, tended to take a pragmatic approach to policy-making.


Furthermore, a number of conspicuous AEI associates — such as Maurice Stans, Arthur Burns and Paul McCracken — served, as befits technocrats, both in the moderate Eisenhower administration’s Bureau of the Budget and the Council of Economic Advisors before moving, respectively, to the Commerce Department and the chairmanships of the Federal Reserve and the CEA during the first Nixon administration. Of course, influence over actual policy-makers in the executive branch was crucial for the success of any self-respecting think-tank. During the Eisenhower years the AEI managed to build something of a relationship with the White House through men such as the already mentioned Burns, McCracken and Stans, as well as others such as the all-powerful White House Chief of Staff Sherman Adams, Secretary of Commerce Sinclair Weeks, his undersecretary Phillip A. Ray and John B. Hollister, head of the International Cooperation Administration from its inception in 1955 to 1957. During these years AEI even succeeded in obtaining some public works contracts, most notoriously a request from a Senate Special Committee to study foreign aid programmes which ended up splashed across the pages of the *New York Times*: AEI’s was the one analysis out of ten advising the suspension of all programmes, and AEI trustee John B. Hollister was also head of the ICA. The fact that Baroody gave testimony accompanied by a well-known conservative such as Milton Friedman escaped no-one either. By the late 1960s the AEI was still modestly funded but it had survived, and what is more it was beginning to develop the main characteristics that define a think-tank, including steady links with a decent stable of donors, academics and office-holders.

2. THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE AND THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT PRIOR TO 1969

16 For an illustration of the AEI’s relationship with the Eisenhower administration, see the correspondence between White House Chief of Staff Sherman Adams and William J. Baroody Sr. in f. Ad-Ak, box 3, WBSr papers.
18 ‘GRI Report’ (undated), f. American Enterprise Institute, box 11, GR records.
The American Enterprise Institute, together with its sister organisation the Hoover Institution, were unique organisations within the conservative spectrum. Since the early post-war years, the conservative community had generated a number of organisations pursuing a wide range of aims. Some, such as the Foundation for Economic Education and the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, operated as educational charities distributing literature and organising seminars; others like the American Conservative Union and the Young Americans for Freedom effectively became political-pressure enterprises harnessing growing grassroots support. A third group, including the Philadelphia Society and the regional branch of the Mont Pelerin society, successfully helped to expand the movement within academia and the intellectual world. However, until the mid-1970s AEI was alone in fulfilling a different but crucial function, even if until 1964 it remained small and largely inconspicuous. As a think-tank, AEI operated by distributing funds amongst academics, who in turn produced policy proposals and policy analyses for supply to the public in general and to elected officials on Capitol Hill in particular. In other words, the AEI worked to connect conservative ‘moneymen’ and academic ‘experts’ on the one hand, with policy-makers and the public at large on the other.

Conservatives’ lethargy in the policy-making field during the 1950s and 1960s is particularly remarkable giving their strenuous (and largely successful) efforts to expand in the education and grassroots fields. Neglect of this area reflected at least three core aspects of the conservative movement’s evolution and outlook prior to the late 1960s. Firstly, a major element of conservative belief – with the partial exception of some neoliberal thinkers – was precisely the rejection of the overt ‘rationalism’ which characterised the liberal approach to policy. As far as conservatives were concerned, the less governments did, the better, and what the state needed to perform better accorded to ‘spontaneous’ and ‘organic’ evolution. Hence,

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there was little to push people with that kind of viewpoint into engaging precisely in what was regarded as inefficient rationalising about unnecessary, if not positively harmful, policies. In second place, until the late 1960s conservatives were seen, and largely saw themselves, as a very much peripheral political option with little or no chance at all of actually holding governmental responsibility. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the conservative movement, led by the National Review, specialised in criticising the government and spreading the ideological gospel. Organisations such as the Foundation for Economic Education, the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists and the Humane Studies Institute later on all excelled in this field. But again, given conservative remoteness from the actual seats of power, there was little to propel them towards developing actual policy proposals. Perhaps more importantly, their position on the margins of the political spectrum gave them even less of an incentive to engage in the kind of compromise and trade-offs that are part and parcel of attempting to introduce new policies: for the right, ideological purity was considerably more valued than capacity for actual political success. As has already been seen the AEI leadership, which always understood the importance of a certain amount of moderation and of gradual change, was distinct in that crucial aspect. Thus, although by the late 1950s and early 1960s AEI coexisted with a number of conservative institutions and foundations, all of these focused virtually exclusively on ideological proselytising via education or grassroots political mobilisation.

The oldest of these was the Foundation for Economic Education, founded in 1946 by Leonard Read, a disenchanted New-Dealer who devoted his time to spreading the gospel of free market economics. Although FEE achieved considerable strength and a secure economic basis, its work was entirely devoid of political direction and circumscribed to organising.

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seminars and courses for high school and university students. A similar organisation was the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists (later renamed Intercollegiate Studies Institute), founded by the anarcho-libertarian activist Frank Chodorov in 1953. As its name indicates, ISI devoted itself to working with undergraduate students. Unlike FEE, the ISI was always closely related to National Review, with men such as Russell Kirk and Buckley himself doubling as NR editors and ISI trustees-cum-speakers. It soon moved away from a pure libertarian position to incorporate traditionalist conservative stands. To be sure, both FEE and especially ISI helped to link intellectuals to conservative donors and, to some extent, with politicians who were invited regularly as speakers to seminars and summer courses. Despite the notable differences in aims and operational outlook AEI, FEE and ISI did share more than a broad ideological outlook. The same academics and advisors who worked for AEI tended to assist the educational organisations, as was the case with writers and academics like Herrell DeGraff from Cornell, Henry Hazlitt, Roscoe Pound from Harvard and James McCarthy of Notre Dame. Further, these organisations tended to exchange senior staff and trustees. Thus, one Malcolm Hardgrove doubled as Washington representative for AEI and FEE when both were based in New York, and by 1963 at least three trustees of AEI (Henry Bodman, Hughston McBain and Charles White) were also on the board of FEE. Moreover, these organisations all had to compete for funds from a limited number of conservative donors and right-wing ‘philanthropists’ such as Henry Salvatori, Joseph Coors, Richard Scaife and Roger Milliken, as well as foundations such as Kresge, Olin, Mellon Donner, Relm, Earhart and the Volker Fund. Given the strong focus of conservatives on

24 The two most conspicuous examples of active politicians with a penchant for attending conservative educational get-togethers were Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, see ibid., pp. 115–16.
26 Edwards, Educating for Liberty, p. 146; Mark Blyth, Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 156–57. William J. Baroody’s careful courtship of these conservative foundations is best spelled out in a fundraising letter to Amos F. Gregory, head of the Kresge Foundation, see William J. Baroody Sr. to Amos F. Gregory, December 27, 1955, July 8, 1955, and September 14, 1956, f. Grea–Grun, 1954–1980, box 12, WBSr. papers. Other instances of early support from conservative foundations can be found in Baroody to Amos. F. Gregory, November 7, 1955, July 1, 1965, ibid. As early as 1966, the fruits of Baroody’s networking amongst the foundations were solid enough to warrant an offer of
education, it is no surprise that AEI moved into the field through a spin-off organisation named the Institute of Social Science Research. Even there, however, the emphasis remained on the publication of policy recommendations and analysis rather than on proselytising. In short, by the mid 1960s conservative organisations had developed a certain division of labour. FEE and the ISI operated in the education field while AEI, and to some extent the Hoover Institution, directed the financial and human resources of the growing conservative movement towards influencing the policy-making process in Washington DC.

Despite being the only conservative organisation with a working horizon aimed at the implementation of policy, AEI had always had an uneasy relationship with the hard core of the movement. William J. Baroody Sr. had been in touch with the National Review group through William F. Buckley and his brother-in-law L. Brent Bozell since at least 1957, and by the early 1960 these men enjoyed a warm relationship. However, although AEI regularly passed on research to NR, the closeness between Baroody and Buckley seems to have been grounded more on personal sympathy and shared Catholicism (Buckley also sent Baroody a manuscript by fellow Catholic and then-rising National Review star Garry Wills) than on professional grounds. At no point did the intellectual leaders of the movement coordinate their activities or develop a consistent working relationship with the-then modest AEI. AEI’s limited means and technocratic outlook, together with Baroody’s efforts to acquire bipartisan credentials put the Institute somewhat on the periphery of a movement centred on grassroots mobilisation and firmly focused on strident ideological fighting. More significantly, after 1964 the correspondence between the NR offices and AEI grew remarkably scarce and

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27 For an overview of the ISSR see ‘Institute for Social Science Research’, September 27, 1963, f. Institute for Social Science Research, box 176, GR records. 
28 See William Rusher to Don Bostwick, August 8, 1957, f. Ru-RY, box 26, WBSr papers. 
30 See ibid., p. 201.
devoid of the previous personal warmth between Buckley and Baroody. Beyond accidental meetings in conservative get-togethers (most notably in the meetings of the Philadelphia Society) no relationship seems to have been maintained after that year.31 Yet, for all its ideological nuances, sudden coolness was mostly a direct consequence of the not-so-discreet power struggle that followed Barry Goldwater’s primary victory in 1964, pitting National Review conservatives against a circle of close Goldwater associates headed by Denison Kitchel and AEI’s senior staff. Kitchel was a political novice whose only qualification to preside over the campaign (according to the Buckleyites), was his being the candidate’s personal friend and attorney. Baroody, who had known Goldwater for years through his work with senators and congressmen, was certainly a more experienced and better connected operative. Baroody’s political experience, however, was confined to peripheral activities with already elected officials on the Hill, and had not involved electoral politics. Understandably, men like Buckley and William Rusher – not to mention Cliff White, who had masterminded Goldwater’s victory in the primaries – considered themselves, and with some reason, entitled to a major role in the campaign, and resented both being displaced by the candidate’s ‘Arizona Mafia’ and Baroody’s status as Goldwater’s ‘guru’ and ‘grey eminence’.32

Resentment blossomed into fully-fledged rancour when that struggle became public in a manner less than flattering to the Buckleyites. A leak, apparently produced at the instigation of Baroody and describing a strategy meeting between the two camps, led the New York Times to publish a story about how the ‘Goldwater-for-president ship has just repelled a boarding party from the forces who supposedly occupy the narrow territory to the right of the Arizona senator’. In case Goldwater’s intentions were not clear enough, the article reproduced the campaign’s belief that ‘what their candidate needs least is more support from the far right’, which the Times proceeded to identify, by name, as Buckley, Bozell and

Perhaps not surprisingly, such infighting resulted in the *National Review* circle being politely but firmly ignored by a campaign tightly controlled by the Baroody-Kitchel tandem, and the near-termination of relations between Baroody and the most influential elements of the conservative movement.\(^{34}\)

However, although the power struggles between Baroody and the *National Review* circle neither reflected nor definitively triggered any ideological battle, they did reflect rather important tactical differences. Baroody had set to turn Goldwater into a mainstream acceptable candidate. Buckley, for one, seemed to realise Goldwater’s conundrum and accepted that ‘he doesn’t want me around and, I say this with all sincerity, shouldn’t have me around, since my style and personality are different from his’.\(^{35}\) Alas, most of the hard core were less forgiving and reacted in a fashion well expressed by James Burnham, a leading *NR* luminary. Burnham summed up the feelings at the magazine’s offices, observing that ‘the fact is, as we know, that Goldwater is a second-rate person; and seems to be surrounded by third- and fourth-rate persons’, while urging Buckley to attack ‘the conduct of the campaign’ from the pages of the magazine.\(^{36}\) Yet, the meeting which resulted in the leaks to the *New York Times* was aimed at discussing a proposal by Buckley to form an ‘advisory committee’ made up of intellectuals and academicians, which was still established despite the leaks. More tellingly, although the *National Review* crowd was deliberately shut out of the committee’s formation (and virtually from the rest of the campaign) its membership, in theory drawn from AEI’s own stable of talented conservatives, included virtually the same men who were both already advising Goldwater and connected to Buckley and Bozell.\(^{37}\) Baroody, thus, did


\(^{34}\) See William F. Buckley to Denison Kitchel, August 19, 1964, f. Goldwater Correspondence, box 30, WFB papers; Kitchel to Buckley, October 26, 1964, ibid.; Interview with Michael Baroody, September 6, 2005, Washington DC.

\(^{35}\) William F. Buckley to William Rusher, April 14, 1964, f. Interoffice Memos, box. 29, WFB papers.

\(^{36}\) James Burnham to William F. Buckley, April 16, 1964, ibid.

achieve some success at gathering existing conservative talent on technocratic rather than ideological grounds, and at publicly distancing the candidate from the relatively abrasive style of *National Review*. Nevertheless Baroody’s strategy, which included declaring to the press he couldn’t ‘really say whether I am a liberal or a conservative’, did prevent Goldwater from suffering a humiliating defeat after being painted as a dangerous radical.\(^{38}\) Goldwater was too poor a presidential candidate and too closely associated with aggressive conservatism – not even the efforts of *National Review* itself to assure readers that ‘President-elect Goldwater would not call for a atom bomb rattling, or for dismantling the social security system’ could soften the Arizonan’s hard image. Lyndon Johnson was too skilled and ruthless to let the electorate forget about such alleged radicalism, and successfully ensured that voters would, to use Buckley’s own expression, ‘recoil with funk’ at the prospect of Goldwater in the White House.\(^{39}\) Most important, the electorate was too broadly attached to the New Deal consensus to receive Goldwater’s proposals with anything other than ‘funk’.

Of course, in 1968 all these elements would be different but in the meantime, and in common with the other factions within the conservative family, AEI had to survive in the political wilderness, trying to preserve its own niche within an increasingly crowded organisational field and all that without much support from the *National Review* circle. As the ‘Arizona Mafia’ discovered, to enter the conservative field having irritated the established leadership could have notably deleterious effects. After the debacle that conservatives endured in the aftermath of the 1964 election, an alternative organisation emerged from the Goldwater campaign when Denison Kitchel set up the Free Society Association, which in turn used extensive AEI support. The FSA counted a number of key AEI members among its senior staff such as Lynn E. Mote, who was FSA’s executive director, Ann Brunsdale, as FSA’s research director and Karl Brandt, as FSA advisor.\(^{40}\) If that were not enough, FSA’s board also included a number of academics and writers conspicuously linked with the AEI


\(^{39}\) William F. Buckley to All Concerned, ‘Re: July 14 Issue of NATIONAL REVIEW’, June 9, 1964, f. Goldwater Correspondence, box 30, WFB papers.

such as Robert Bork, Milton Friedman, Raymond Moley, Gerhart Niemeyer and Warren Nutter.\textsuperscript{41} Although the Watts riots would subsequently trigger some AEI-like specific policy proposals, Kitchel’s FSA developed a markedly different character when it proclaimed through Barry Goldwater its determination to ‘launch a crusade of unusual gravity... aimed literally at the preservation of the free American society’.\textsuperscript{42} To be more specific, FSA entered the fields of action into which established conservatives had been drawn (and in which they had more experience) during previous decades. Thus, FSA ‘was organized for the purpose of establishing a nationwide, grassroots political education program’ by providing educational material devoted to ‘the principles of the free society’ for use at the community level by discussion and study groups.\textsuperscript{43} Of course this presented Kitchel and his associates with a bit of a problem: that field was already alarmingly overcrowded. Hence, in his fundraising efforts, Kitchel acknowledged the existence of ‘many organizations which are disseminating information on specific phases of the conservative philosophy’, and tried to justify FSA’s existence by noting that ‘the Free Society Association is the only organization which represents an educational program in all phases of responsible conservatism’.\textsuperscript{44} As may have been expected, potential donors do not seem to have been wildly impressed by such tactical finesse.

Forced to look for other forms of action, Kitchel tried to enter the second-most well-trodden field of action for conservatives: political organising. To that end FSA began to operate a ‘Public Affairs Consulting Service’, offering political analysis and services such as a ‘Basic Action Course in Practical Politics’.\textsuperscript{45} The trouble was, again, that that field was also already occupied by yet another set of organisations, led by the American Conservative Union, which aspired to take on the role of ‘a much needed overall coordinator’ of

\textsuperscript{41}‘The State of Our Free Society’ (1966) f. 6, box 81, MF papers.
\textsuperscript{42}Whitaker and Baxter to Denison Kitchel, August 26, 1965, f. Consultants, box 2, Free Society Association records, HI (hereafter FSA records); Barry Goldwater, ‘A Call to Arms’, f. 6, box 81, MF papers; ‘The State of Our Free Society’ (1966), ibid.
\textsuperscript{43}Denison Kitchel to E. F. Wildermuth, June 24, 1966, f. Correspondence, box 2, FSA records.
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45}‘Basic Action Course in Practical Politics’, (undated) f. Consultants, box 2, ibid.; ‘Services Offered by the Public Affairs Consulting Service’, (undated), ibid.
conservative political organisations. Like ISI in the educational field, ACU was intimately related, and in many ways dominated, by the men around *National Review*. If being repudiated by the Goldwater presidential campaign was hurtful, to be challenged on their own organisational turf was outright intolerable for men who had considered themselves the leaders of political conservatism for over a decade. William F. Buckley wrote to Goldwater in clear terms, complaining he had not been informed of what FSA ‘was about’. He was willing, he continued, to do publicity for it in *National Review* as a personal favour to Goldwater, but he also emphasised the fact that ‘the organization of FSA amounts to a repudiation of the ACU,’ not least because of FSA’s ‘failure to list any conspicuous official of the ACU among [its] organizing cadre’. In part, such a failure corresponded to the obvious pro-Republican (or at least conservative-Republican) outlook of ACU against an FSA which claimed to be a ‘non-partisan haven for all those who share the principles of the free society – Republicans, Democrats, and independent alike’. But above all, its ‘organizing cadre’ reflected the intimate relationship between the association and AEI – and the notable coolness between that group and the men around *National Review*. In the end, lack of support from the core element of the conservative movement helped to bring about FSA’s demise: after four frustrating years it was forced by its inability to attract sufficient financial support to close down.

Hence by 1969 AEI found itself in a peripheral position within a conservative movement dominated by the *National Review* intellectuals. Moreover, both its own size and the general ideological climate of the time prevented Baroody’s enterprise from rivalling the influence of the older liberal-leaning think tanks, and therefore from mounting a credible challenge to the liberal premises that they defended. By the mid-1960s AEI’s funding had, unlike the FSA, reached a respectable amount that oscillated between half and three quarters

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48 ‘Memorandum for Editors on the Free Society Association’ (undated, c. 1965), ibid.
49 Denison Kitchell circular letter to the members of FSA, June 1, 1969, f. FSA, box, 10, FSA records; Interview with Milton Friedman, May 4, 2004, San Francisco.
of a million dollars depending on the estimate. Baroody even contributed to the appearance of two new organisations that emerged out of AEI: the Institute for Social Science Research and the Center for Strategic Studies at Georgetown University. On the other hand, Glenn Campbell, who had been Baroody's closest associate and right-hand-man at AEI, became head of Stanford's Hoover Institution in 1960, but retained a place on the board of AEI's, just as Baroody himself gained a seat at Hoover's board of advisors. From then on, Hoover quickly evolved from the holder of the eponymous president's personal papers into a conservative research centre not entirely unlike AEI. In other words, by the end of the 1960's AEI had amassed financing to guarantee its own survival, and had even become the centre of gravity of an embryonic network of conservative organisations. Yet if this evolution was, as Baroody himself put it, 'healthy' it was certainly 'non-spectacular' and at any rate, the Institute's situation was still a far cry from the resources and prestige of liberal organisations such as Brookings or the Rand corporation.

Moreover, the zeitgeist of the 1950s and 1960s had not served to enhance AEI's influence. Despite the clear links between the Institute and the Eisenhower White House, the general's administration remained firmly attached to the basic tenets of the post-war consensus, to the point of triggering no small amount of conservative criticism. Far from achieving acceptance by what conservatives perceived as liberal bastions, the CSIS had to dissociate itself from Georgetown University at the urgings of the latter's faculty, while the Hoover Institution lived through more or less constant low-level warfare with Stanford University. The Institute for Social Science Research eventually withered away. Even the

50 'Rightist group list expenses of $421,088', St. Louis Post Dispatch, January 20, 1965. AEI declared to the taxman a total income rising from $273,259 in 1962 to $545,681 in 1964, see 'American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research Attachment to Form 990-A', f. AEI General, box 12, GR records.
51 Inevitably, the ISSR also caught the interest of the liberal wing within the trade union movement, see the briefing elaborated by the National Education Association under the title 'Institute of Social Science Research, American Enterprise Association, Inc and Roger Freeman' (undated, c. 1958), and 'Institute for Science Research', Group Research Report 27, September 1963, f. American Enterprise Institute, box 11, ibid. For hints of ISSR's financial troubles, see William J. Baroody Sr to Glenn Campbell, August 12, 1969, f. Campbell, box 6, WBSr papers.
52 It is clear that the expertise gained by Campbell at AEI was a prime contribution to Hoover's success: for decades, the latter was known as the 'East Coast AEI', Interview with Michael Baroody; John Mickelthwait and Adrian Wooldridge, The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America (New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. 49–50; William J. Baroody Sr. to Glenn Campbell, July 5, 1960, f. Campbell, box 6, WBSr papers; Baroody to Campbell, February 8, 1961, ibid.; Thomas F. Johnson to the Chairman of Admissions of the Cosmos Club, December 27, 1972, ibid.
53 William J. Baroody Sr. to Glenn Campbell, July 19, 1960, ibid.
American Enterprise Institute itself lived through one of its lowest periods in the aftermath of the 1964 election, when Baroody's professed reluctance to engage in crusading had proved to be no obstacle to his deep involvement in the management of a fiercely conservative presidential campaign.\textsuperscript{54} Baroody's political adventure ensured that AEI acquired certain nationwide notoriety, but the Institute also became quickly and inevitably identified with the most conservative wing of the Republican party – to the point of calling for the renewed and unwelcome interest of the Internal Revenue Service which, under the Johnson administration, unleashed another two-year long investigation into AEI's charitable status.\textsuperscript{55}

By the time Richard Nixon arrived at the White House, AEI possessed the technical characteristics and traits of a think-tank, including a 'talent roster' listing over one thousand intellectuals and academics.\textsuperscript{56} Nonetheless it still lacked the financial clout to fully develop its ideas; had never found a willing audience in the seats of power capable of implementing those ideas; and, last but not least, was still perceived as remaining squarely outside of the ideological mainstream of American political life. To complicate things further, AEI had also something of an outcast status even for conservatives, who had tended to frown upon Baroody's seemingly tepid stands and, in the case of the \textit{National Review} circle, were still smarting from the Goldwater campaign's power-struggles. In 1969 therefore, the AEI – like Nixon (if we take him at his word) and conservatism at large – was still an outsider.


\textsuperscript{55} Interview with Michael Baroody; Interview with David Keene, August 24, 2005, Washington DC. See also National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, "The Professors and the REA: An Account of How Tax-Exempt, Non-profit, Educational Front Peddles Power Company Propaganda About Rural Electrification", f. American Enterprise Institute, box 11, GR records.

\textsuperscript{56} Anne Brunsdale to Glenn Campbell, October 7, 1968, f. Campbell, box 6, WBSr papers; William J. Baroody Sr. to Campbell, July 15, 1970, ibid.
Nixon and his advisors were quick to recognise the potential of an organisation like the American Enterprise Institute. In the immediate aftermath of the 1968 election, President-elect Nixon wrote to Baroody that ‘the time has now come for a really major effort’ to re-examine the legislation of the Great Society. In fact, Nixon declared himself to be ‘fully convinced of the urgent need for such an effort. It would be a public service of far-reaching significance if the Institute could launch such a program as quickly as possible’.\(^57\) By January 1969, AEI was already contracted to conduct a ‘series of evaluative studies of significant government programs’.\(^58\) A year later, under the watchful eye of White House Chief of Staff, Robert (Bob) Haldeman, Nixon’s inner circle began plans to ‘orchestrate certain White House and Administration personnel’ into a nationwide fundraising campaign on behalf of AEI.\(^59\) Initially, the campaign was designed to last for at least a year; eventually it continued until 1973, when Charles Colson, the devoted and determined Nixon advisor who was directing it, was replaced by William J. Baroody Jr.\(^60\) According to the plan, administration appointees such as congressional liaison Bryce Harlow, Under-Secretary of State John Irwin, Under-Secretary of Defence Packard and presidential counsels Lynn Nofzliger and Jeb Magruder attended fundraising meetings following an established *modus operandi*, whereby presidential staff refrained from direct fund-raising on behalf of AEI but, we can assume, emphasised the links between the political interests of the administration and the organisation. Thus, Baroody Sr. would ‘make the financial pitch’ while White House personnel ‘would not discuss business but talk on general governmental problems’.\(^61\) Also in February 1970, presidential assistant Peter Flannigan recruited Secretary of Commerce and old AEI friend Maurice Stans for the White House’s ‘sustained and systematic effort’ to build


up a think-tank base of support for the administration.\textsuperscript{62} Shortly thereafter, Colson ordered Stans to pursue a second, ‘long term’ line of support on behalf of AEI through which the administration would seek to enlist wealthy foundations as well as large corporations. Stans’ assignment was to lobby Howard Pew, then heading one of the major conservative foundations to increase Pew’s contribution to the AEI.\textsuperscript{63}

By April 1970, Bryce Harlow described the effort as the ‘development of powerful support on an urgent basis for the American Enterprise Institute’ and urged Colson to involve President Nixon personally in the fundraising drive.\textsuperscript{64} In March, Colson and Baroody had enlisted John Swearingen, president of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana and chairman of the American Petroleum Institute’s Special Services Committee, an organisation gathering the executive heads of all the major oil companies. Swearingen’s role was to act as envoy to the business community, after the same fashion as Stans was approaching the foundations. Throughout the remainder of 1970, Swearingen and Colson organised an intense campaign of fundraising covering private foundations, wealthy individuals and corporations.\textsuperscript{65} Both men essentially followed the same technique that Baroody had been pursuing since the late 1940s: a qualitative strategy of approaching a few very wealthy potential donors, normally at the suggestion of those already supporting AEI; only that now AEI had acquired, and would thereafter retain, the capacity to multiply its appeals and direct them to the largest and wealthiest businesses nationwide.\textsuperscript{66} Between August and October 1970 Swearingen’s progress on behalf of AEI included contacts with all the major national banks based in New York City including Chase Manhattan, Morgan Stanley and First National Bank, top industrial corporations like ALCOA, IBM, Bethlehem Steel and Ford Motor, as well as all the Texas-based oil companies. Furthermore, this was in addition to appeals to traditional conservative donors to either initiate or increase their support for AEI, which included the

\textsuperscript{62} Peter Flanigan to Secretary Stans, February 16, 1970, ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Charles Colson to Maurice Stans, February, 27 1970, ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Bryce Harlow to Charles Colson, April 6, 1970, ibid.
\textsuperscript{65} Charles Colson Memorandum to the President (draft), May 18, 1970, ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} See for instance Baroody’s letter of thanks to John E. Angst, of the American Car and Foundry, detailing the answers of the ‘seven companies to which you sent letters’, William J. Baroody Sr. to John E. Angst, June 29, 1960, f. Am-Ar 1954-1979, box 3, WBSr papers; see also note 12 above.
DuPont Family, the various foundations controlled by the Pew family, the Coors brothers, Roger Milliken, Reed Hunt and the Kellogg Foundation.\textsuperscript{67}

Most importantly, by May 1970 Nixon himself put the weight of the presidency behind AEI’s fundraising effort, and gave direct orders that ‘ways be found to fund more adequately the American Enterprise Institute’.\textsuperscript{68} A month later, Bob Haldeman (no doubt with Nixon’s knowledge) instructed Colson to concentrate his efforts in the search for ‘one or two big funders to finance the entire AEI operation’, and pressed Colson into keeping him (and hence the president) updated on the progress of the project. As well as urging Colson to report on the matter ‘as soon as possible’, Haldeman also guaranteed that if such funders were to be found, ‘they could meet with the President’.\textsuperscript{69} In fact, the president took the issue into his own hands, called Swearingen and, through Dwight Chapin, summoned both Colson and Swearingen to the White House for a discussion about the progress of AEI’s fundraising effort.\textsuperscript{70} The meeting took place on June 23, after a further follow up call from Nixon on June 19.\textsuperscript{71} Shortly before that, in April, Swearingen had proposed a first meeting between the president and a potential donor, De Witt Wallace, in order to capture endowment funds for AEI. By then, Colson was claiming that the whole AEI project was Nixon’s own idea, and was freely using presidential backing to press the White House’s staff into swift action.\textsuperscript{72} In fact, Colson was probably exaggerating. There is no evidence that the president ever met with any AEI donor, and in early 1971 Nixon refused (against Colson’s advice) to chair an AEI fundraising event.\textsuperscript{73} Still, such an investment of the president’s time as there was would have been rather noteworthy for any administration; in the case of a president who, like Nixon,


\textsuperscript{68} Charles Colson Memorandum to the President (draft), May 18, 1970, f. American Enterprise Institute (f. 3 of 4), box Contested Documents (boxes 31 to 59), CC papers.

\textsuperscript{69} Haldeman to Colson, June 17, 1970, f. American Enterprise Institute (f. 4 of 4), ibid.

\textsuperscript{70} Dwight Chapin to Colson, June 29, 1970, ibid.


\textsuperscript{72} Charles Colson to Dwight Chapin, April 5, 1971, ibid.

\textsuperscript{73} William J. Baroody Jr. to the President, January 12, 1971, f. AEI 1971, box 32, CC papers; Charles Colson to Hugh Sloan, January 14, 1971, ibid.; David N. Parker [on behalf of the President] to Charles Colson, January 28, 1971, ibid.; Reply slip from the President’s office to Colson (undated), f. AEI William Baroody, ibid.
famously refused to see even his own senior appointees, it was truly remarkable and it underlines both the White House's and Nixon's determination to enhance the standing of AEI.

From mid-June onwards the White House stepped up its efforts. Prior to Nixon's personal push the effort was mainly conducted by Haldeman, Nixon's personal aides Peter Flannigan and Jeb Magruder, Colson, and Secretary of Commerce Maurice Stans. According to a summary written by Colson, those members of the administration who had been closely related to the AEI prior to 1968 were formally enlisted only once the fundraising effort was in full swing – although clearly these men had obviously been acting on AEI's behalf, even if in an informal and somewhat more discreet fashion. Secretary of Defence Melvin Laird became actively involved in the White House's formal efforts from July 13. It is safe to assume however, that Laird, who was a long-time close associate of Baroody and had William J. Baroody Jr. as his chief personal assistant, had been working on AEI's behalf since election night; James A. Smith has written that the White House campaign on AEI's behalf was kickstarted in an undated meeting at a 'Pentagon dining room', presumably at the behest of Secretary of Defence Laird. Senate minority leader Gerald Ford followed suit several days later, and was joined by Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors Paul McCracken.

During December 1969, Baroody Sr. had already tried, unsuccessfully, to get Vice-President Agnew's support for AEI by inviting him to speak at a 'dinner session' organized by the Institute. In September 1970, Colson tried again, informing the vice-president of Swearingen's activities, and emphasising that they were being carried out on behalf of

76 Smith, Ideas Brokers, p. 179.
President'. It appears that Agnew decided against being involved in the AEI effort, but by January 1971 at the latest, the Institute was already regularly organising, and at a pace of ‘several’ every week, the sort of meetings between AEI staff, administration officials and members of large corporations that Baroody and Haldeman had been planning about a year earlier. Each meeting was designed as an ‘informal gathering’ on ‘major issues of the day’ of interest to business leaders, such as tax policy, income policy or environmentalism, and was limited to around ten attendees. Administration officials, very much the centre of gravity of the whole exercise, were provided with a list of possible attendees and dates from which to pick the most convenient. By this time, more members of the administration such as Secretary of Labor (then at the Office of Management and Budget) George Shultz, Transport Secretary John A. Volpe, Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality Russell Train, Special Assistants to the President Virginia H. Knauer, Egil Krogh and John P. Whitaker, as well as other junior members of the presidential bureaucracy were also lending their weight on behalf of AEI. The outreach effort had also expanded beyond typically conservative donors and Swearingen’s friends within the Texas oil companies and the financial world. AEI now approached leading companies working, for instance, in the utilities (ITT, Allegheny, Pacific Gas) Chemicals (Dow), shipbuilding (Norfolk), the aircraft industry (United, Boeing), mining (Kennecott, Hanna) and heavy industries (Aluminium of America and American Metal).

The White House’s efforts to support AEI were not limited to increasing the flow of funding towards the Institute. With the aggressiveness characteristic of the Nixon administration, Colson and Baroody Sr. also sought quite actively to, in Colson’s terms, ‘nip

80 Interview with David Keene. Keene began working for the vice-president in 1970 and could not recall any fundraising efforts undertaken by Agnew on AEI’s behalf.
in the bud any competing fund raising efforts.\textsuperscript{83} As early as February 1970, Haldeman’s assistants re-routed towards the AEI an ongoing programme to create a think-tank type centre of intellectual support for the president.\textsuperscript{84} By September 1970, Colson had un成功的ly attempted to incorporate another alternative project, directed by banker Henry Wallich, into AEI and was pressing Baroody to negotiate Wallich into the AEI effort. At around the same time, a third competing effort pushed by Undersecretary of the Treasury Charles Walker was ‘turned off’, and Walker became involved in the AEI drive.\textsuperscript{85} In January 1971, Colson instructed Secretary Stans to abort yet a fourth alternative project, this time organised by Sandy Trowbridge under the aegis of the National Industrial Conference Board.\textsuperscript{86}

As a result of the administration’s aggressive support for AEI, the Institute performed, in the words of a long-time staff member ‘a great leap forward’.\textsuperscript{87} In qualitative terms, traditional conservative sources of funding continued to assist AEI, but the Institute no longer depended exclusively on them, and could parade a wide, non-political or even liberal range of funders. In quantitative terms, by December 1971 AEI’s annual budget jumped from $750,000 dollars to nearly $2.5 million.\textsuperscript{88} In fact, the Institute appears to have suffered some problems keeping pace with the administration’s efforts. Symptomatically, both Colson and Haldeman noted at different stages that one of the main problems facing the AEI throughout the entire fundraising campaign was that the organisation lacked specific detailed plans to put such a large amount of new funding to specific use.\textsuperscript{89} In February 1970, when Colson instructed Secretary of Commerce Stans to lobby the wealthy conservative donor Howard Pew to increase his contribution to AEI, Pew initially refused to contribute because he ‘didn’t

\textsuperscript{83} Charles Colson to William J. Baroody Sr, September 16, 1970, f. American Enterprise Institute (f. 3 of 4), box Contested Documents (boxes 31 to 59), CC papers.
\textsuperscript{87} As quoted in Smith, Ideas Brokers, p. 179.
\textsuperscript{88} Other sources situate AEI’s 1968 budget at around $1 million, see ibid., p. 179.
\textsuperscript{89} Charles Colson Memorandum to the President (draft), May, 18, 1970, f. American Enterprise Institute (f. 3 of 4), box Contested Documents (boxes 31 to 59), CC papers.
know why AEI needed such a large quantity of money'. Subsequently, Colson urged Baroody Sr. to produce a detailed blueprint of AEI's future activities. By June 1970, Colson informed the president that Baroody had managed to produce a 'sound operating plan for effectively using substantial additional revenues'. It did not remain on the drawing-board for long. In a letter to Glenn Campbell dated December 1971 an exuberant Baroody Sr. noted that 'it is a measure of how busy things have been here over the past six weeks that my thank you notes get off as part of some new business'.

4. OUTSIDERS WITHIN: AEI'S WORK FOR THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION

As early as December 1970, Colson had emphasised to Haldeman that the White House's efforts had put AEI 'in a strong position', and that what was now needed was 'to make use of the resource'. To this Haldeman added, in handwriting, ‘let’s be damn sure we do’. From the viewpoint of the administration, the new business of AEI fell squarely within three categories. On a short-term basis AEI became a source of position papers and speeches to be supplied directly to the president, other members of the administration and Nixon supporters outside government. The administration profited politically from AEI's ostensibly non-partisan status, and from its capacity to be an effective producer of academic literature supporting presidential initiatives. From a longer-term perspective, the administration clearly intended to use AEI as a counterweight to what it saw as the predominately hostile, liberal establishment entrenched in the universities, the press, and particularly, the Brookings Institution. In 1970 Brookings was a mammoth think-tank boasting, according to White House estimates, a budget of around $7 million and an endowment of $50 million, against AEI's initial $750,000 budget and no endowment at all.

92 William J. Baroody Sr. to Glenn Campbell, November 2, 1971, f. Campbell, box 6, WBSr papers.
Bob Haldeman, for one, was also determined to make ‘damn sure’ that AEI’s services were primarily ‘not for the Domestic Council but for R[ichard] N[ixon]’, and helpfully suggested that if Ehrlichman, the then-White House supremo on domestic matters, or his Domestic Council were to use AEI’s resources, ‘they should pay a consulting fee’.95 Most of those within the administration involved in the AEI project were, however, a little more open-minded. For Colson, it was certainly ‘imperative’ that the AEI acquire a ‘top flight writer’ who could ‘write thoughtful position papers, analyses, and perhaps even speeches’. With characteristic candour Colson emphasised that the administration’s need for such a person was ‘very desperate’, and instructed AEI to place this ‘at the top of the agenda’.96 However, he was careful to emphasise that AEI’s functions and capabilities went well beyond assisting the presidential speech-writing team. Perhaps understandably, AEI’s staff also had different ideas to Haldeman’s, and had no intention of becoming a mere addendum to Nixon’s personal staff. In January 1971, Baroody requested to Jeb Magruder that either Ken Cole or Ed Morgan, two Ehrlichman staffers, be appointed as liaisons between the Domestic Council and the AEI.97 Of course, AEI had already been supplying the kind of services that Colson was referring, even if on an informal basis and mostly to those members of the administration already within its orbit.98

As early as January 1969, the office of the president-elect was already using AEI to assist the economic programme of future Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur Burns.99 By 1970, it was also being suggested that various federal agencies should evaluate whether ‘some of their functions might not better be farmed out to the private sector, in particular to the Institute’.100 Subsequently, AEI activities both expanded and became increasingly

97 Jeb Magruder to John Ehrlichman, January 4, 1971, ibid.
98 See William J. Baroody Sr. to Arthur Burns, June 10, 1969, f. Burb-Bryo, box 6, WBSr papers; Burns to Baroody, March 5, 1969, ibid.
embedded within the administration's strategy. Most importantly, AEI's proposals were now
listened to at the highest levels, and not only by those who had previous links with the
Institute. During September 1970 the Institute produced a survey on the proposed Hatfield-
McGovern amendment, which would have cut-off any further funds towards the war effort in
South East Asia. According to Colson, it was a 'good example of how AEI can be quickly
responsive to our needs'. The survey, Colson added, was 'written to present both sides of the
argument', but 'clearly it is slanted our way': to that extent, it was 'useful to our supporters in
the closing days of the fight' in Congress - a fight that the administration won by a 55–39
margin.101

AEI's offices were again enlisted to collaborate in the 1970 Heard Report - which
concluded that, although the Vietnam War was increasing tension in the campuses, the
president had been more sensitive toward student and minority concerns than in the past.102
Less than a month after that, the Institute agreed to 'undertake a study of the effect of campus
political activities on the tax-exempt status of colleges and universities'. AEI thereby trained
its sights on what the administration believed to be the breeding-ground of its enemies: the
universities.103 An AEI panel, directed by the future United States Solicitor General and
United States Attorney General Robert Bork, concluded that the tax-exempt status of
universities should preclude their indulging in 'almost any kind of political activities', and
proposed that 'individual citizens' could bring suits to force the Internal Revenue Service to
revoke that status if such activities were to take place on-campus.104 The IRS also noted, in a
rather menacing release carefully choreographed by Colson to achieve maximum impact, that
college officials could even risk 'prosecution for violation of the federal Corrupt Practices
act'.105 The value of the study for the administration was twofold. The findings of the AEI
panel were widely publicised by the national press as sponsored by 'a private organisation of

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102 Charles Colson memorandum to Larry Higby, August 3, 1970), ibid.
103 'Memorandum for AEI File from Charles W. Colson', f. AEI (f. 4 of 4), box 32, ibid.; Joseph Baroody to Charles
105 Charles Colson to Undersecretary of the Treasury Charles Walker, October 3, 1970, f. AEI (f. 1 of 4), box 32, ibid.;
'\textquoteleft A Look at Collegiate \textquoteleft Recesses\textquoteright', \textit{Washington Star}, October 8, 1970.
non-partisan character'; headed by a ‘Yale law professor’; and, in true AEI technocratic style, one which had also included the collaboration of ‘the president of a university’ and ‘the dean of a law school’. Hence the White House threatened to suspend the tax-exempt status of any university which allowed anti-war demonstrations on campus, which in turn triggered widespread closures of predominately liberal college campuses ordered by panicky university governing bodies. And all this choreographed to take place during the run up toward the 1970 congressional elections. Yet Nixon’s men did so under the cover of a possibly ‘stern’, but ‘not unfair’, and most certainly non-partisan report.107

Jeb Magruder also realised the potential usefulness of AEI as an addendum to the presidential speech-writing and research staff. However, he was also well aware of its potential wider uses, as an ‘asset to the President in getting his programs sold and understood both on the Hill and by the Public’. When it came to the Hill, AEI possessed 20 years’ experience assisting members of the Congress. According to the Institute’s staff correspondence, in the early 1970s AEI had definitely ceased to be the sleepy, largely inconspicuous organisation of the early 1960s and the ideologically stigmatised conservative hotbed of the late 1960s. Now, AEI was being ‘swamped with rush projects’ from congressmen. Regarding the public at large, Magruder noted that ‘AEI can be productive in the area of continuing emphasis, on debates and utilization of other public forums’. This was especially the case with television, a medium that the Nixon team had been ruthlessly exploiting since the 1968 campaign, and which was where ‘spokesmen of AEI, assisted by our office, could be placed in adversary positions with the other side’. AEI had been organising, under what they called the ‘Rational Debates Series’, precisely that kind of public discussion between prestigious conservatives and well-known liberals since the late 1960s.

106 ‘Political Activism on the Campus’, St. Louis Globe-Democrat, October 9, 1970. A manuscript of the report can be consulted in ‘Political Activities of Colleges and Universities’, f. Political activities in colleges and universities, Box A85, MRL papers.
Now the series took on new impulses with more prestigious guests, a wider audience and more frequent debates.

Similarly, AEI also helped to enhance the administration’s standing thanks to its academic-minded, non-partisan image. In this function, the Institute was particularly useful for Colson who, being responsible for the administration’s liaison with external groups, frequently distributed Nixon-friendly material. When it came to the academic constituency, the AEI was an efficient and credible source from which to distribute that literature. Along similar lines but on a different front, from the end of 1971 the nucleus of the Buckleyites had finally had enough of Nixon’s liberal gimmickry, ‘suspended their support’ for the administration, and mounted a conservative primary challenge against the president out of outrage at Nixon’s opening to China and erratic economic policy. Subsequently, Baroody Sr. found himself in a position not entirely unlike that of 1964, when he determined to push Goldwater’s public image towards the political mainstream. In its capacity as a right-of-centre think-tank, the AEI co-sponsored a 1972 book-length study entitled *Bear at the Gate*, which concluded that although the Chinese were indeed bent on world-wide revolution, that threat could be better met through ‘trilateral’ power equilibrium. Hence, and in frank violation of a conservative article of faith, AEI declared that ‘Nixon’s China policy promotes US interests’. That same year, and in the same vein, AEI also became the venue for Secretary of Defence Laird’s defence of the ‘Nixon Doctrine’ of Détente, in which he directed a thinly-veiled attack on the *National Review* conservatives, whom he defined has ‘utterly ruthless’ and ‘pure moralist’ types unable to operate ‘in the real world’.

And then there was Brookings, the press and the liberal establishment. Nixon believed he had been at the receiving end of the national press corps’ vindictiveness since his involvement in the Hiss case. From 1968 onwards this developed into a notorious and highly-

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publicised war between a near-paranoid administration and the mainstream media, particularly the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the television networks. The conflict was best illustrated by Vice-President Agnew's savage denunciations of the press in speeches delivered in Des Moines and Montgomery in November 1969.\(^{114}\) Although Agnew became the focal figure in the dispute, his views were widely shared throughout the administration. For instance, Patrick Buchanan believed that press to be not merely 'occasionally hostile' to 'the president and his purposes', but 'endemically hostile'. According to Nixon's men, 'a small, ideological clique has managed to acquire monopoly control of the most powerful medium of communication known to man', and was using that power to 'politically assault the President and his Administration'.\(^ {115}\) Needless to say, the dysfunctional behaviour of the Nixon White House tended to both frighten and infuriate a press corps that would soon develop a 'healthy fear' of certain members of the administration, hence further rarifying an already bad relationship – and perversely confirming the administration's perception.\(^ {116}\) Subsequently, perhaps due to AEI's growing media expertise and certainly as a result of its increasing respectability and relative autonomy vis-à-vis the administration, in late 1972, the White House also used the Institute to organise a General Advisory Committee, chaired by Colson, to evaluate and hopefully uncover that bias in the television coverage of the 1972 election.\(^ {117}\)

In a presidential memo dated that same year, Buchanan also noted the 'clear need for a conservative counterpart to Brookings which can generate ideas', and which would be crucial in transforming Nixon's 'Silent Majority' into a truly 'permanent majority'.\(^ {118}\) Buchanan was not alone. Charles Colson, notoriously, thought that bombing Brookings may have been a good idea, while a less bloodthirsty aide to Haldeman merely recommended 'the low road' of

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\(^{115}\) Patrick Buchanan to the President, November 10, 1972, f. November 1972, box Contested Documents (boxes 1 to 5), Patrick Buchanan papers, Nixon Presidential Materials, NA (hereafter PB papers).


deliberately associating Brookings and other liberal organisations with 'pro-Hanoi and anti-American' activities so as 'to arouse the wrath of the unenlightened folks west of the Appalachians'. As early as February 1970, one of the main aims of the administration's drive on behalf of AEI was to provide 'a reasonable alternative to Brookings', as well as hopefully 'to direct future funds away from the negative foundations like Brookings'. Baroody Sr. himself, fully aware of the White House's detestation of Brookings, was fond of reminding those members of the administration within his reach of the clear links between that organisation and past Democratic administrations. In fact, the administration saw Brookings as the heart of that liberal establishment bent on destroying the work of the Nixon White House. As Colson put it, by undermining Brookings 'we would be striking at the heart of the establishment'. In a passage revealing of the Nixon's men's view of their own position, Colson warned that AEI 'could expect a response in kind' on the part of the administration's alleged enemies and that, since the aim of the Institute was increasingly pro-Nixon and anti-establishment, it would collapse 'through the IRS' if the administration were to lose the 1972 elections. Consequently, the White House went to some lengths to keep the pro-AEI effort in the most absolute secrecy. Even after Gerald Ford left office, and once AEI had become openly known as the Republican party's own 'government in exile', several memoirs by former Nixon staffers involved in the effort remained conspicuously silent about their endeavours, and with some success: even the academic literature tends to associate AEI's rise to prominence with Ford rather than Nixon.

119 Silk, American Establishment, p. 174-75; Smith, Ideas Brokers, p. 197.
121 One particular report, released shortly after the 1969 change of administration, which contained a list including several members of the Johnson White House who had moved to Brookings underlined, appears to have found its way to virtually everybody concerned with the AEI fundraising drive, including the president himself, see 'Untitled', William J. Baroody Sr to Arthur Burns, June 18, 1969, f. Brookings Institution, box 86, WBSr papers; Burns to Baroody Sr, June 23, 1969, ibid.; J. E. Swearingen to Baroody Sr. and C. V. Colson, October 13, 1970, 'Personnel Engaged in Brookings Studies of National Security', f. American Enterprise Institute (f. 2 of 4), box Contested Documents (boxes 31 to 59), CC papers.
123 Ibid.
124 The most remarkable case is perhaps Jeb Magruder, who acknowledged in his memoirs that 'the President gave top priority' to creating a 'right-wing Brookings Institution', but went on to maintain that 'we never got our institute into operation'. Jeb Stuart Magruder, An American Life: One Man's Road to Watergate (New York: Atheneum, 1974), pp. 87-88. A example of rather deafening silence may be found in Maurice H. Stans, One of The President's Men: Twenty Years with Eisenhower and Nixon (Washington DC: Brassey's, 1995).
4. REAPING THE REWARD: AEI'S COMING OF AGE

If the administration benefited greatly, the rewards for AEI were even more substantial and long-lasting. AEI-related personnel moved on into government, a possibility previously closed to conservatives at large and only tangentially fulfilled during the years of the tepid, consensus-seeking Eisenhower administration. As may be expected, the presence of these men within the administration had a two-fold positive effect for the AEI. First it lent a degree of policy-making influence during the tenures of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford and, just as importantly, once the GOP lost the presidential election of 1976 the Institute acquired its own stable of experienced former (and potentially future) office-holders to be added to its academics and financial backers. In other words, it had acquired all the traits that had characterised Brookings as the Democrats policy shop-cum-refuge when out of office. It was not long after November 1976 that the press and liberal activists alike identified the AEI as the conservative wing of the GOP's 'government in exile'. A second positive effect of close proximity to executive power and an increasing flow of financial support was a significant expansion of AEI's outreach activities. This went quite beyond its work on behalf of President Nixon and into a veritable battle of ideas to challenge liberal mores. Somewhat ironically, AEI's expansion led the Institute into the kind of outreach work traditionally performed by other organisations within the conservative movement, although AEI's version always retained its trademark technocratic bent. As a result of all these developments, AEI achieved what had been Baroody's – and after their own fashion, of all other conservatives' – objective ever since the 1950s: acceptance by the liberal establishment and the recognition of the AEI as an equal by the liberal champions within the growing think-tank community. In this sense, it is not an exaggeration to affirm that Baroody's moment of success arrived when the Ford Foundation agreed to finance an AEI project, and Brookings organised it with the AEI in a joint programme.125

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In the aftermath of the Nixon electoral victory of 1968, Baroody’s networking for over nearly two decades produced some immediate results. A number of AEI associates became members of the administration, mainly in the Defence Department and in economics-related positions. Through the offices of AEI, the benefits of patronage trickled down the conservative ranks.\textsuperscript{126} Melvin Laird, perhaps the closest political ally of the AEI in Congress, was appointed Secretary of Defence, and William J. Baroody Jr., the son of AEI’s president, was made his personal assistant. Warren Nutter, a strict conservative economist with a taste for foreign affairs, became Assistant Secretary of Defence for Internal Security. Nutter, in turn, appointed Richard Ware, then president of the conservative Relm Foundation, as his own assistant.\textsuperscript{127} Edward Feulner, Laird’s fiercely conservative assistant in the House and future head of the Heritage Foundation, was assigned to the office of the assistant secretary responsible for filling the 90-odd slots available to the new administration. From there, Feulner paid ‘frequent’ visits to the White House Office of Personnel to defend Laird’s insistence on appointing candidates who were ‘right on defence’.\textsuperscript{128} Martin Anderson, a close associate of AEI, became first Nixon’s 1968 campaign Director of Research, and subsequently went on to serve as presidential special assistant. Paul McCraken, chairman of AEI’s advisory board, became Chairman of the Council for Economic Advisors, and Arthur Burns, a close friend of Baroody Sr. and one of the many academics who occasionally collaborated with AEI, became Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. Milton Friedman became an unofficial but rather influential advisor to the president, while in 1973 Baroody Jr. replaced Charles Colson as special assistant to the president in charge of liaising with external groups. According to Howard Phillips, the conservative activist and former head of the Office for Economic Opportunity, that same year, it was Baroody Jr. and Melvin Laird who managed to secure the appointment Gerald Ford, yet another long-term associate of AEI, as vice-president.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{126} Thomas F. Johnson to Martin Anderson, September 24, 1969, f. Am–Ar, box 3, ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Thomas F. Johnson to Martin Anderson, January 7, 1969, ibid.
The presence of a large group of AEI-related senior appointees, however numerous, should not be taken to mean a drastic change in policy orientation during the Nixon administration. To a large extent, the profile of these individuals followed AEI's own outlook. Of all the AEI-related appointments, only Nutter and Ware qualify as firebrand conservatives and both were appointed to relatively junior posts. McCracken and Burns were, in academic terms, firm defenders of orthodox neoclassical liberal economics; but they were not evangelical true believers along the lines of Milton Friedman—although Friedman was close to both of them and had been a protégé and disciple of Burns. Similarly, Laird had been chairman of the Republican party during the Goldwater campaign of 1964 and belonged to the conservative end of the Republican spectrum. Yet, however friendly Laird might have been to conservatives, this was not the reason Nixon appointed him Defence Secretary. Laird had been chairman of the House Republican Conference for over a decade, and had always remained a man of the party, free from the apparent principled zealotry of conservative hard liners and willing to collaborate with other conservative-to-moderate Republicans such as Gerald Ford and George Bush Sr. It was in that capacity, as a 'professional Republican' and experienced political operative capable of dealing with a hostile Congress, that he entered the cabinet.

Nevertheless, the influence of these AEI-related conservative appointments was certainly felt within the administration, and the Institute could reasonably claim for itself and its associates to have had a certain impact on the policy-making process. For instance,

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130 Laird had chaired the 1964 Republican Platform Committee and, unlike other Republican grandees, remained loyal to Goldwater. According to the conservative movement's 'in-house' historian, Laird was a conservative-friendly 'well known hawk in Vietnam', who also made an effort to appoint conservatives to the Department of Defence, see Edwards, *Power of Ideas*, p. 191; John D. Saloma, *Ominous Politics. The New Conservative Labyrinth* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), p. 103.


Warren Nutter was put in charge of the powerful Pentagon Office for International Security Affairs (ISA). ISA, under the leadership men like Paul Warneke and John McNaughton, had acquired a reputation for vetoing hawkish military decisions (particularly in South East Asia) on political and diplomatic grounds. According to a senior Pentagon official, thanks to Nutter, ‘ISA just died’. For some observers that was evidence of Nutter’s ‘ineffectiveness’. But a glance at his statements disparaging civilian interference in military affairs and weak foreign policy clearly signalled him as, in the words of newspaper reports of the time, ‘a thinker of the hard-line school’ who complained about the government’s proclivity to ‘shy away from anything that carries any immediate risk’. The Washington Post, for one, fully realised the potential consequences of Nutter’s appointment and noted on its editorial page that an ‘intellectual zealot of the right’ like Nutter was an ‘an improbable choice’ to head the agency. Clearly, as some commentators at the time fully realised, neutralising the ISA was a quite deliberate action.

In the economic sphere, as early as 1968 and before the conclusion of the actual transfer of power to the White House, AEI’s economists were hard at work in the different advisory committees assisting the candidate and president-elect. These men, including Friedman, Burns, McCracken and a few others such as future Secretary of Commerce Stans can be considered directly responsible for designing an economic policy that went well beyond Eisenhower’s fiscal conservatism. On the advice of these men the Nixon administration used for the first time the principles of monetarism as the basic blueprint for economic management, and opted to break the gold window and thereby precipitate the end of the Keynesian international monetary system. Monetarism, up to a point the end of controls

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over the international circulation of money, and the demand for an aggressively hawkish foreign policy had traditionally been core elements of the conservative challenge to the post-war consensus. It was through AEI-connected appointees that these policies penetrated the organs of policy-making. Of course, Nixon’s monetarist enthusiasm evaporated as soon as it seemed to threaten his political prospects in the 1972 election, and no amount of extensive bombing could save an untenable position in Vietnam. Yet, conservative policy options were nevertheless implemented, preparing the way for a more solid adoption of similar options by subsequent administrations. Of these, as may have been expected, the Ford White House was particularly receptive to AEI’s imput. Not only had Ford been a long time acquaintance of Baroody Sr., but the latter’s son had replaced Colson as the Nixon administration’s liaison with external groups and was retained in the same capacity by Ford. Hence AEI could have their trustees received by senior Ford staffers in the White House, attract senior administration appointees to gatherings with conservative academics such as Friedrich von Hayek, as well as organise meetings with AEI-friendly intellectuals such Nathan Glazer and Martin Anderson in the Oval Office.137

On more practical grounds, Nixon’s demands forced AEI from the early days of the administration to ‘mov[e] ahead quite rapidly on our plans for the recruitment of the needed talent and resources’, while the sharp increase in funds allowed the Institute to afford the enlargement of its staff.138 Thus it was at the instances of the White House that AEI hired the prestigious Karl Brandt of Harvard University to head their academic council.139 Perhaps more rewarding for Baroody Sr. himself, he developed something of a relationship with Brookings through two of its presidents, Kermit Gordon and Bruce K. McLaurie, and by the mid-1970s AEI and Brookings were actually collaborating through joint seminars and get-


139 Charles Colson and Bryce Harlow to the President, April 30, 1970 f. American Enterprise Institute (f. 3 of 4), box Contested Documents (boxes 31 to 59) CC papers.
together sessions – although such friendliness did not prevent Baroody from ordering an examination of Brookings’ accounting to test the institution’s financial bona fides. In subsequent years a wary relationship evolved into another marked by the increasing traffic of employees between AEI and Brookings, while the status of the AEI grew to the point where even Jimmy Carter’s staffers resorted to collaborating with it.

Yet, if clearly gaining ground in the political mainstream from the early 1970s onwards, Baroody Sr.’s ideological orientation seems to have remained largely unchanged. Thus, in the aftermath of the Nixon presidency Baroody could simultaneously celebrate the Ford Foundation’s generosity while simultaneously lambasting progressive liberalism. It was to an audience of businessmen that the old conservative warhorse reminded potential donors that the ‘consumer protection movement’ and the ‘environmentalist movement’ were anathema to ‘the kind of civilisation common men create when they are given the power – which the market economy does uniquely give them – to shape the world in which they wish to live’. Still worse, the same liberalism that had bestowed its acceptance upon AEI through Ford and Brookings was, according to Baroody, responsible for stimulating ‘the progressive undermining of the attitudes towards the institutions of our society be they business, the government, the church, education or the courts’. As he had done in the 1950s, Baroody lost no opportunity to alert corporate donors to the fact that ‘in the intellectual arena business has been persistently losing because it has been persistently defaulting’. Yet, if Baroody’s discourse had not changed much in two decades, the attitude of his audience most definitely had. During the 1950s and 1960s, the corporate response to AEI’s appeals had been at best tepid, and Baroody’s most important donors had been individual conservative businessmen. From 1968 onwards, however, the business community began to suffer the effects of both the nation’s economic troubles and the intensifying anti-corporate mood propelled by the New Left. Accordingly, the ‘mainstream’ business community mobilised and became considerably

141 William J. Baroody Sr. to J. Dawson Ahalt, March 18, 1977, f. Ad–Ak, box 3, ibid.
more receptive to Baroody’s narrative and proposals – helped, needless to say, by the efforts of the White House.  

It should therefore come as no surprise that during the 1970s AEI also managed to employ its enhanced status to capture some of the leading conservative thinkers and publicists of the time, including Antonin Scalia and champion of supply-side economics Jude Wanniski, as well as neoconservative intellectuals like Irving Kristol – who specialised in appealing to the business community with a discourse virtually undistinguishable from Baroody’s – and his fellow neocons Midge Decter and Nathan Glazer. These men and women tended to have an attitude toward public policy and policy-making quite different from that which conservatives had displayed during the 1950s and 1960s. Unlike those around National Review, Kristol, Glazer and the others belonged to a different conservative family, the first generation of the so-called neoconservatives who, although sharing some of the scepticism towards government efficiency, had spent a considerable part of their professional careers commuting between academia and being part or at least collaborating with the federal bureaucracy. It should be no surprise that AEI became their natural home.  

As if to reinforce AEI’s status as the Nixon and Ford administrations left office, the Institute’s staff also incorporated many of the old Nixon-Ford senior appointees such as former Secretary of Commerce Stans, former presidential assistant William J. Baroody Jr., former Defence Secretary of Defence Laird, former chairman of the Council of Economic


Advisors Paul McCracken, and former President of the United States Gerald Ford, as well as an array of junior Nixon and Ford appointees.

It was quite natural then that during the 1970s Baroody would expand AEI’s field of activities. In a curious reversal, AEI devoted itself now to developing a vast outreach programme similar to those traditionally designed by more typical conservative organisations such as FEE, ISI or the Institute for Humane Studies. The AEI tried to influence the ideological atmosphere in the universities by organising seminars and disseminating ideas through several printed publications, as well as via television broadcasts. By April 1973, the Institute was releasing its ‘Rational Debate’ series through a nationwide network of 226 television stations; later that same year the network had expanded to 268; and a year later AEI boasted a 380-strong network capable of reaching as far away as Guam. In a return to its earlier history AEI also developed a programme of donations to hundreds of universities and colleges, which received printed material to establish so-called Centers for Public Policy Research to ‘contribute through educational institutions to the formation of attitudes and ideas’.

According to a rather alarmed political observer, AEI had managed to develop ‘the most effective campaign for disseminating political ideas that has ever been mounted’.

By the end of the Ford administration, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and even the *New York Times* had produced flattering profiles of AEI, which the Institute busily reproduced to further enhance its status as the conservative Brookings and the GOP’s very own ‘government in exile’.

CONCLUSION

The American Enterprise Institute, like other factions within the conservative movement such as the Southern Republicans and the neoconservative and the neoliberal...
intellectuals, enjoyed access to the upper echelons of political power for the first time during the presidency of Richard Nixon. In common with the wider conservative movement, AEI acquired the enhanced prestige and respectability that this proximity entails. To be sure, AEI’s closeness to political power demanded a degree of moderation in the manner it sold its conservative message, so as to make it palatable to an enlarged audience. But then, that had always been AEI’s strategy. It is no accident that Patrick Buchanan, Nixon’s ‘resident conservative’ did not believe that AEI ‘could fulfil’ its assigned roles as counterweight to Brookings and the liberal establishment. Buchanan’s sympathies and instincts were aligned with the National Review conservatives, themselves a lot less radical than thought of by liberal observers, and who as the Nixon years drew to a close were fast-losing their dominant role in a rapidly expanding and increasingly diverse conservative movement. The old conservative leadership would no doubt have agreed with a Washington Star headline of 1972, which emphasised that although in the past AEI’s conservatism ‘was perhaps more conspicuous than its scholastic eminence, now, the AEI’s aspirations have moved front and center more and more, its projects reflect an openness to all thoughtful viewpoints’. However, an examination of AEI’s staff clearly indicates that its ‘thoughtfulness’ was devoted to defending virtually the same principles it had been defending in 1964. AEI’s role in the conservative renovation during the Nixon years was that of an alternative clearing house for pre-existing conservative ideas and conservative activists, as well as for new activists with a readjusted conservative message on their way to prominence. As has already been noted, Baroody’s omnivorous taste nurtured the work of monetarist and supply-sider economists such as Milton Friedman and Jude Wannisky, neoconservatives thinkers like Irving Kristol and Midge Deeter, traditionalist legal scholars such as Robert Bork and Antonin Scalia and conservative Catholic theologians alike Michael Novak and Robert Nisbet. Those scholars and opinion makers who had left memoirs and recollections of their time at the AEI during this years have invariably emphasised the importance of the interaction that this set up favoured in terms similar to those employed by earlier

conservatives to describe their experience as young activists during the Goldwater campaign or reading the *National Review* during the 1950s and 1960s.\(^{150}\)

Nevertheless the Buckleyites were not alone in considering AEI too soft. In fact the perceived timidity of Baroody Sr. pushed some youthful conservatives then in the process of developing their own strategies quite independently of even the *National Review* conservatives into creating their very own think-tank. Morton Blackwell, who was then working at AEI, notes how the Institute would ‘not publish studies if there was some pending discussion about it in the Congress’. Apart from Baroody’s known reluctance to engage the AEI in open politicking, the main reason for such caution was the IRS investigation of AEI’s tax-exempt status in the aftermath of the 1964 elections. According to David Keene, the IRS ‘scared the be-Jesus of Baroody’ and, as Michael Baroody recalls, made his father’s life ‘hell for a couple of years’. Yet Blackwell and his associates belonged to a different generation free from the psychological scars of marginalisation and victimisation. Equally importantly, these Young Turks had become acquainted with the federal bureaucracy as junior members of the Nixon White House. Neither needing nor seeking the approval of the liberal establishment, and radicalised by their frustrating stints in the halls of power, these men proceeded to apply the organisational lessons that AEI had taught them to create a more aggressive and less compromising think-tank.\(^{151}\) Heritage certainly developed a markedly different character, stepped into aggressive ideological battling and was much more engaged in day-to-day politics, but the inspirational role played by the existence of the AEI as an example – however wanting – is undeniable.\(^{152}\)


\(^{151}\) Interview with David Keene; Interview with Michael Baroody; Interview with Morton Blackwell; Edwards, *Power of Ideas*, p.4. The most violent attack on how the AEI had lost ‘its sense of mission’ came out years later in *National Review* as consequence of the financial troubles into which the Institute ran during the early 1980s, see Todd Lencz, ‘The Baroody Bunch’, *National Review*, September 12, 1982.

\(^{152}\) Interview with Morton Blackwell; Edwards, *Power of Ideas*, pp.4-5; Interview with Lee Edwards.
In any event regardless of (indeed, at least partially because of) the increasingly fractious nature of the expanding conservative movement, by the mid-1970s no one failed to take AEI, and by default the principles it defended, seriously. Moreover AEI’s organisational character and focus on economics attuned the organisation closely with an increasingly evident change in the dominant zeitgeist. After Nixon’s ill-fated experiment with price and wage controls and the devastating effects of the oil shocks, the business community developed a sudden interest in an organisation which had spent the previous three decades denouncing the very same policies that business began to find intolerable. The emergence of the Business Roundtable and the reinvigorated activities of the National Association of Manufacturers were symptoms of a reversal in roles between AEI and its liberal-progressive counterparts. On the one hand, after the efforts of the Nixon administration AEI was no longer dependant on typical conservative donors. On the other, by the later years of the decade Brookings felt decidedly threatened by AEI’s newfound prominence and was forced to perform a switch to the right whereupon, to quote from Brookings chairman Robert Roosa, they had to ‘do some things on the conservative side too’. This phenomenon partially explains why the AEI succeeded in the 1970s where it had failed in previous decades. As with conservative Southern Republicans and neoliberal economists, the combination of careful pragmatism with the exhaustion of the existing liberal consensus contributed to the growing acceptance of conservative proposals, and of conservatives themselves into the political mainstream. Hence, the crisis of systemic proportions endured by the Great Society helped to propel the AEI into the place that Baroody Sr. had always envisioned for the Institute. It would however be a mistake to forget the crucial role played by agency. Just as Richard Nixon’s political short-term calculus helped Strom Thurmond restore the political power of the white South, the president’s self-interested support for AEI propelled the Institute and its conservative views towards the same status enjoyed by its more established liberal counterparts. After all, both Baroody and Nixon initiated their contribution to change the status quo before the eruption of stagflation, the more acute phases of the culture wars,

153 See Phillips-Fein, Invisible Hands and footnote 146 above.
and the pervasive extension of feelings of systemic failure on the part of public opinion.\textsuperscript{154} Conservatives have always been fond of remarking that ‘ideas have consequences’. William J. Baroody Sr. and his associates at the AEI proved that organisations do have consequences as well – and that, as Richard Nixon and his assistants fully understood, they can be central to the triumph or failure of ideas.

CHAPTER 6
‘WE WERE WILLING TO BE USED’: CLASSICAL LIBERALS, NEOCONSERVATIVES AND THE RISE OF THE RIGHT-WING POLICY-MAKER

Ever since the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, right-wingers drawn to the conservative movement had vociferously, but ineffectively, protested against the progressive policies espoused by successive Democratic administrations and maintained by Dwight Eisenhower.¹ This state of affairs changed during the presidency of Richard Nixon, when neoclassical liberals and neoconservatives became the two sub-families of the conservative community first capable of offering and experimenting with positive policy options from within the executive. Neoconservatives and neoliberals were undoubtedly (and largely remain) two fully independent social networks-cum-epistemic communities built around quite different philosophical assumptions and distinct socio-cultural environments. Therefore the two groups could (and still can) be found opposing each other as often as working together. Evaluating the work of neoconservatives and neoliberals in tandem is a useful exercise, however, for they shared two fundamental characteristics which also distinguished them from other conservatives. Firstly, they held a common behavioural or attitudinal characteristic: unlike NR conservatives, Southerners, or even the sort of right-wing partisan Republican who supported Richard Nixon, neither neoclassical liberalism nor neoconservatism ever developed or tried to develop a mass following. With a few exceptions, neoliberals and neoconservatives never became or seriously attempted to become a ‘movement’.² They instead aimed at implementing long-lasting changes upon the American polity by exercising influence over the upper echelons of political power. From that fact came the second quality shared by these two groupings, for neoconservatives and neoliberals developed a relationship with the Nixon administration entirely unique within the American conservative movement: they provided the bulk of conservative personnel capable of

undertaking managerial and policy work in the technocratic fields of welfare provision and economic management.

Nevertheless, the history and outlook of neoconservatives and neoliberals under Richard Nixon displayed characteristics which were shared by the other sub-families of the conservative community. Like the Buckleyites and the Southern conservatives who came to support Nixon because the Californian was the one electable – or 'centrist' – candidate who would listen to them, classical liberals and 'neocons' who worked in the White House between 1968 and 1973 consciously sought to effect change on a relatively modest – or moderate – scale. In common with other conservatives, they would find soon enough that their proposals were first attempted – or seemed to be attempted – only to be subsequently dropped by a president for whom the one overriding interest always remained re-election. In other words, as far as their immediate aims and objectives were concerned, neoconservatives and neoliberals miserably failed to alter the overall direction of policy-making. Still, the Nixon years significantly changed their relationship vis-à-vis the conservative hard core operating from the offices of National Review, and hence the subsequent make-up of the conservative movement after the president's demise. For, whatever their immediate success within the Nixon White House, neoconservatives and neoliberals did succeed in drastically altering both the language used by policy-makers, and the framework within which they operated.

After 1968, the limits of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programmes were widely acknowledged, as was the fact that alternative forms of welfare administration and economic management deserved at least a hearing. Among those policies gaining increased credence were the proposals put forward by neoconservatives advocating a reduction in direct federal involvement in welfare administration and a greater emphasis on certain cultural mores.

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Similarly, the specific prescriptions of monetarism – that is, of one of the remedies proposed by neoclassical liberalism to manage a modern economy – jumped from the realm of academic symposia to occupy the thoughts of officials at the Federal Reserve and the Department of the Treasury. As a consequence, during the following decade and a half, as two British scholars writing in the late 1980s put it, ‘conservative capitalism has changed the fundamental symbolic parameters of politics’, even if ‘achieving decidedly mixed results from its policies’. 4 This chapter will examine how Nixon’s choices during and prior to his ascent to the White House were as critical in bringing around that result as ‘structural’ economic developments which were not totally understood in the late 1960s and early 1970s, or actually occurred subsequent to Richard Nixon’s earlier policy initiatives. Events such as the implosion of Keynesian economics into intractable, simultaneous increases in the inflation and unemployment indices – the famous stagflation that bedevilled politicians and economists for nearly a decade – or the seemingly uncontrollable expansion of welfare entitlement costs wildly beyond the estimates of their creators certainly help explain the sustained drift rightwards of public policy in the post-Nixon era. Yet it was Richard Nixon who launched the conservative policy proposals that would later dominate policy-making into the public arena before those developments permeated the public consciousness, and hence helped bring about their eventual re-adoption by subsequent administrations earlier and more smoothly than would have otherwise been possible.

A further shared aspect of the neoconservative and neoliberal experience under Richard Nixon was fatalism in the face of the unknown. From 1969 onwards the administration faced a number of radically new developments, against which both neoconservatives and (most) neoliberals consciously adopted a modest, even fatalistically pessimistic attitude towards their own – or anybody else’s – knowledge of the workings of socio-economic processes, and therefore towards the capacity of government in general to achieve effective social change. Compared with the boundlessly optimistic outlook exuded by the Kennedy and Johnson

administrations, only that change was tantamount to 180 degree volte face. These president’s men knew and deliberately emphasised that difference.

In order to examine the evolution of both neoconservatism and classical liberalism and the impact that the Nixon years had upon them this chapter is divided into three sections. The first two sections evaluate the origins of both conservative sub-families and their relationship with the National Review cluster prior to Nixon’s 1968 presidential campaign, while the final section discusses their travails as part of the administration and the tensions that conservatism at large endured as a consequence of the ascent and decline of neoliberal and neoconservative influence through two specific policy proposals: the Family Assistance Plan and monetarist ‘gradualism’ as a tool for controlling inflation and unemployment.

1. CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

In strictly philosophical terms the post-war American conservative movement was constituted by two distinct ideological narratives: traditionalism and libertarianism or classical liberalism. The core of the former’s social vision was the creation of a ‘virtuous society’, in which it is the state’s responsibility to make active use of its law-making and enforcing functions to foster certain ‘virtuous’ patterns of social behaviour grounded on, as the leading traditionalist Russell Kirk had it, the ‘divine intent’ which forges ‘an eternal chain of right and duty which links great and obscure, living and dead’, as well as ‘respect for established usage and longing for continuity’. Needless to say, Kirk believed that ‘political problems, at bottom, are religious and moral problems’.

On the other hand, the heart of the libertarian social vision was (and remains) the free interaction of individuals in the market place. From the neoliberal perspective, the main (sometimes the only) mechanism of coercion appropriate to the good society is social sanction imposed through the market process. Any

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6 Ibid., p.7.
expansion of state activity beyond its essential functions (defence, law and order) constitutes a violation of the fundamental social good. According to the standard description of American conservatism first put forward by historian George H. Nash, between the mid-1950s and the late-1960s the movement was an uneasy marriage between these two ideological traditions brought together by the Herculean efforts of synthesis carried out by the Buckleyites at National Review – most notably Frank Meyer, the first and most articulate proponent of ‘fusionism’ between classical liberalism and traditionalism – and held in place by a shared anticommunism.

This is a useful and illuminating narrative as long as one focuses, as Nash did, on the development of the intellectual conservatism proposed by the hard core in the pages of the Review. Not so much, however, if one expands the object of analysis to the entire movement. In the first place, although this perspective acknowledges that classical liberalism was an older branch of the American right than the Buckleyites’, it obscures the fact that after 1945 it had been developing a rich intellectual, political and organisational life fully independent and frequently at odds with that of the Review. It also tends to overemphasise both the weight of classical liberalism within the philosophically hybrid nature of the modernised conservatism developed by the hard core and the novelty value of the debate. After all, a significant wing of the Republican party variously labelled as ‘Stalwarts’, as belonging to a ‘republican virtue

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tradition’, or quite simply as ‘conservatives’ never had any trouble combining a deep commitment to a small federal government with minimum economic regulatory powers with an equally deep attachment to traditional mores in the cultural sphere. In this sense at least, the men of National Review simply readjusted and rationalised trends of thought and attitudes already existing within the GOP. Besides, up until the second half of the 1960s the traditional mores championed by the Buckleyites had not been significantly challenged. Pornography, abortion, the basic goodness of American society, the recreational use of drugs and all the debates that made up the cultural wars which broke out during the second half of the 1960s were quite simply not controversial and not part of the public debate when Buckley and his associates first elaborated on the role of government as upholder of moral values. Their self-appointed task was instead a rather abstract struggle to save the Christian soul of the nation and to preserve the role of God in the public sphere.

Moreover, the debates that took place within NR about the proper equilibrium between a ‘virtuous’ society in which public authorities exercise a vigorous role, and a ‘free’ society in which the state abdicates any interference with the behaviour of the individual beyond bare minimum public order matters seemed to have had remarkably little impact upon the libertarian community. Rather than ‘fusing’ traditionalism and classical liberalism, the Buckleyites proved to be more adept at excommunicating the latter from National Review conservatism. In general terms the label classical liberalism included an array of philosophical sub-families which shared strong reservations about both the ethical quality and efficacy of government regulation, but diverged in the degree and the manner in which they advocated government reduction. At its most extreme end ‘anarcho-capitalists’ defended

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radical individualism and the complete withdrawal of public authority to bare minimum functions such as the higher courts, some police capacity, and defence against foreign aggression. Anarcho-capitalists had their most successful champion in Ayn Rand, a Russian emigré and writer with no formal training in economics who turned blind faith in radical individualism and the unfettered market into the stuff of successful cult novels. Rand’s radical secular individualism, together with the cult-like mentality she fostered, were summarily dispatched from the pages of National Review by no less than Whittaker Chambers as early as 1957. The leading libertarian Murray Rothbard suffered a similar fate, despite attempts to reach some accommodation. Traditionalist Russell Kirk proscribed Rothbard as a ‘loony’ author of ‘doctrinaire benthamism’ and ‘Manchesterian outpourings’, and declared collaboration with such people ‘a foolish thing’. A year later, William F. Buckley reminded his fellow conservatives that it was ‘an empirical question... whether a Western nation can pursue a truly effective pro-Western policy while adhering to conventional libertarian attitudes’. According to Buckley, it was a ‘tragedy’ that the American right could be ‘frozen in in-action’ by the ‘lofty and other-worldly pronouncements of John Stuart Mill’. Rothbard and his acolytes resented such ‘contemptuous’ treatment and returned the compliments in spades, denouncing National Review’s ‘foreign interventionism’ and ‘authoritarian tendencies’ as the results of the hard core’s status as the ‘servant of dollar imperialism’. Throughout the 1960s and beyond, radical libertarian individualism held little significant influence within the senior ranks of Buckleyite-dominated American

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conservatism. Yet it continued to retain a noticeable degree of influence within the universities and the youth segment of the movement. According to National Review correspondence, a substantial segment of the right-wing youth thought that conservatives such as 'Old Foggy Kirk' were more attuned to 'housemothers' than to the type of student determined to 'invest his libido where he wishes'.\textsuperscript{14} Besides the benefits of an open mind towards the sexual revolution, another libertarian advantage in the campuses was their refusal to accept Cold War anti-communism as a proper reason for government expansion, including the draft.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, even if in the process they exacerbated the centrifugal forces within the movement on issues such as Vietnam and Cold War strategies, libertarians at least helped to keep conservatism alive in the campuses. Moreover, this triggered rather surprising effects during Richard Nixon’s tenure in the White House: it was Milton Friedman’s neoclassical influence and counsel over Nixon, together with the evident popularity of the initiative, that moved the candidate to first include the ending of the draft in his programme, and to subsequently fulfil that promise when in office.\textsuperscript{16}

In practical terms, National Review traditionalism was therefore always the dominant ideological half of the tandem, almost to the point of asphyxiating classical liberalism – or at least remanding it to an entirely subordinate role within the respectable American right.\textsuperscript{17} As William F. Buckley himself expressed, he was a partidario of classical liberalism, but he was not ‘engrossed’ by it: National Review he simply defined as ‘more traditionalist than

Certainly, some libertarians remained irritating – as in 1969 when the split between traditionalists and libertarians nearly caused the youth organisation Young Americans for Freedom to implode – and occasionally able to embarrass the Buckleyites – as when their exploits reached the press – but this remained largely restricted to campus antics. Yet the persistence of classical liberalism in the campuses and in the outer reaches of the conservative movement signalled a crucial aspect of classical liberalism which would have an impact during the Nixon years. As numerous campus activists found out, libertarianism went beyond a mere defence of free markets and could not be equated merely with ‘providing the rationale and policy recommendations that benefit big business’. Throughout the 1960s, classical liberalism’s main significance derived from its emphasis on individual freedom, rather than from its economic policy recommendations, and not least from its opposition to the military draft as an infringement of basic liberties. From the viewpoint of the internal dynamics of conservatism, neoliberals contributed to National Review’s ambivalence, or even paralysis, towards certain aspects of the culture wars, such as when Buckley favoured the legalisation of marijuana and contraception, or when the journal had to resort to a public debate in order to make up its mind on abortion.

Yet the libertarian sub-family also included a relatively small number of economists who opposed what they perceived as the ‘overexpansion’ of government activities post-New Deal, and who put forth a strictly technical case against both Keynesian economics and the welfare state, which would be translated into policy-making during the Nixon administration. By the mid-1960s Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek had without doubt become the

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18 Interview with William F. Buckley, July 25, 2005, New York City (Spanish in the original: the young Buckley was cared for by a Mexican nanny and was fluent in Spanish. During the interview the author and Buckley weaved in and out of English and Spanish).
two intellectual leading lights of neoliberalism. When his *The Road to Serfdom* was published in 1947, Hayek had become the first writer to successfully publicise on a large scale the anti-statism and market-centred individualism of classical liberalism, while also emphasising the risks that the ever expanding state posed to individual freedom. During the 1950s and 1960s we can distinguish two academic schools within scholarly liberalism. In the first place, the Austrian School, whose principle representative is Hayek, and in second place, the Monetarists or Chicago School economists, whose best known advocate was Milton Friedman.

Friedrich von Hayek was an Austrian émigré to England who had received his education in turn-of-century Vienna, and was the brightest scion of the Austrian school of economics family. He jumped to prominence at around the same time as Richard Nixon launched his first blasts against California Democrats, as a consequence of the *The Road to Serfdom*, in which he developed his continuing but academically cordial disputes with John Maynard Keynes. Hayek’s work has been rightly credited with providing the most impressive moral and philosophical justification for free markets and minimal government intervention in the economy. Yet, as was customary in Austrian economics at the time, Hayek moved on towards the kind of philosophical speculation that had little immediate use for policy-makers and most professional economists alike. He was, however, instrumental in the consolidation of a small group of like-minded economists from Europe and the United States who first met in 1946 in the Swiss village of Mont Pelerin. That gathering became the inaugural meeting of the eponymous organisation, which would in turn become one the foundation stones of a growing network of academics, policy-makers and politicians devoted to demolishing the political and economic arrangements of the post-war world. At first, however, Mont Pelerin

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served to gather a relatively small number of academic economists who still retained faith in the prescriptions of classical liberal economics that had dominated the profession until the colossal worldwide economic collapse of the 1930s.

The post-war world was dominated by Keynesian ‘new economics’. From a domestic perspective Keynesianism’s basic proposal was to favour selective government intervention, variously labelled as ‘fine-tuning’ or ‘stop-go’, upon demand in order to prevent, or at least cushion, downturns in the business cycle. John Maynard Keynes’s initial prescription recommended an increase in levels of public spending accompanied by stable or decreasing taxation levels in downturns as the ‘go’ phase, followed by a ‘stop’ phase of decreasing public spending accompanied by rising taxes in order to correct the predictable public deficit as the economy recovered. By the 1960s, Keynesian economists had largely rejected Keynes’s fiscal prudence. Basic welfare state measures such as unemployment insurance and old age pensions were, in Keynes’s schema, ‘automatic stabilisers’ designed to stimulate demand by providing liquid money to those more needy and likely to spend it. Yet in a world dominated by what were by previous standards highly expanded war-states – and in the United States one which also happened to be both victorious and in the process of engaging in another war – the combination of Keynesianism with the increased influence of social-democratic ideas provided even greater impetus for governments to maintain large wartime bureaucracies, enhanced regulatory powers and ever-increasing welfare responsibilities towards the needy. According to the neoliberal critique, instead of engaging in ‘stop-go’ (bad in itself as that would have been) the federal government had, since the war, engaged in a continuous ‘go’ aimed at creating artificial economic prosperity, and which had climaxed with the Great Society. In international terms, Keynes himself played a major role in setting the tightly-regulated international monetary markets of the Bretton Woods system, which were devised to favour international trade generally and, more specifically, to avoid the

26 For a similar evaluation see Smith, Right Talk, pp. 102–103.
disastrous beggar-thy-neighbour competitive devaluations that had worsened and expanded the 1929 crisis.27

The men who met in Mont Pelerin flatly refused to accept either that the inter-war years' crisis had been provoked by market malfunctions, or that extensive government action could improve economic performance. As a consequence they were almost universally regarded by the economics profession as either quaint relics of the past or as simply reactionaries. Reflecting on the status of laissez faire economists Milton Friedman, a prominent attendee to the conference, thought that the Mont Pelerin Society was important because it showed classical liberal economists working in isolation within departments dominated by Keynesians that they 'were not alone'.28 Curiously enough, Friedman himself was one of the attendees with less reason to complain, since he was based in the University of Chicago's department of economics, already famous for being the cradle of Monetarism. The quintessentially American Friedman was in very many ways the exact opposite of Viennese Hayek. Diminutive where Hayek was portly, Friedman would also become an active Republican partisan and the kind of vigorous debating opponent with whom 'everybody loved to argue provided he wasn't there', while the timid Hayek was 'polite to a fault'.29 Besides his trenchant debating skills, Friedman also happened to be endowed with enough academic talent to receive a Nobel prize and the disseminative capacity to turn economics into the stuff of blockbuster books, a widely read regular column in Newsweek, and a successful TV series. By 1969 Milton Friedman had become to neoclassical liberalism what William F. Buckley was to hard core conservatism. Unlike Buckley, however, Friedman possessed the kind of skills and knowledge that were useful for policy-makers. Monetarism, the school of economics led by Friedman, had by the mid-1960s constructed a ready-made

28 Interview with Milton Friedman, May 4, 2004, San Francisco.
29 Ibid. Interview with John Blundell, April 1, 2004.
policy model designed to fix the present (and, as it turned out, the future) ills of an advanced economy.30

According to Monetarism, instead of engaging in ‘fine tuning’, re-distributing wealth and regulating markets, governments should concentrate on one basic function: to provide a stable, predictable supply of money. Friedman’s academic work had led him to believe it had been government’s failure to follow this rule that had caused the Great Depression. In Friedman’s view – which by the 1960s was increasingly accepted – in 1929 the Federal Reserve had slashed the flow of money excessively and for too long, hence starving the markets of liquid and provoking a severe deflation from which recession followed.31 Friedman believed that during the 1960s the opposite was happening, and that in order to stimulate the economy, the Fed had spent years continuously increasing the quantity of money circulating in the economy faster than the amount of goods and services being exchanged had expanded. Like all classical liberals, he believed that the threat to post-war prosperity was therefore inflation.32 Unfortunately for Friedman, as the moderate, fiscally-conservative Eisenhower was succeeded by John Kennedy and then Lyndon Johnson, nobody else seemed to be listening. As Richard Nixon moved to New York and began to prepare his presidential run, classical liberals were regarded at best as Cassandras and at worst as dinosaurs.

Rare exceptions to this rule were the inhabitants of National Review’s offices. William F. Buckley had been influenced since his youth by a number of maverick libertarians who had been friends of his father: men such as Albert Jay Nock, Frank Chodorov and the editors of the early conservative-libertarian journal The Freeman.33 This group espoused a kind of

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32 Milton Friedman to William F. Buckley, February 13, 1962, f. 12, box 37, Milton Friedman papers, Hoover Institution, Palo Alto CA (hereafter MF papers, HI).
radical libertarianism temperamentally closer to the Austrian, philosophically-minded tradition and quite different from that of Friedman – who only became familiar with it during the 1960s - and his group, in the sense that it was wholly un-academic and relatively disengaged from the technicalities of economics policy-making. Nevertheless, the hard core’s commitment to classical liberal dictums regarding small-government was limited. As the editors of National Review consolidated themselves as leaders of a reconstructed, aggressively anti-communist, conservative movement, The Freeman stopped engaging with foreign affairs and shifted towards less polemical waters. Still, as Buckley led National Review’s readjustment of the conservative credo, this libertarian background firmly aligned the hard core with Friedman’s own stand. Both men had known of each other since at least 1962 and after a long epistolary relationship got along famously. Although Friedman never became a regular National Review contributor, the journal occasionally carried his articles, and in contrast with the experience of the Rothbard style anarcho-capitalists, Friedman was eventually acknowledged as the hard core’s ‘economic oracle’. In the process, by the early 1960s the Chicago professor had also become a major conduit – although not the only one – between the libertarian circles operating around organisations such as the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, the Foundation for Economic Education and the Mont Pelerin Society, and the hard core conservatives. A further development cementing goodwill and friendship between Friedman and the hard core was the foundation of the Philadelphia Society in the early 1960s. Modelled after the Mont Pelerin Society, the PA gathered all the shades of thought deemed acceptable within the American conservative movement. Equally importantly, Friedman’s first serious entrée in national politics took place in support of Barry

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34 Henry Regnery to Milton Friedman, January 19, 1966, f. 15, box 23, Henry Regnery papers, HI (hereafter HR papers); Friedman to Regnery April 14, 1966, ibid. It should be noted that Friedman’s awareness of the Austrian’s work also seems to have been somewhat superficial, see Friedman to Regnery, January 11, 1967, ibid.; Interview with Milton Friedman.

35 See Milton Friedman to William F. Buckley, February 13, 1962, f. 12, box 37, MF papers; Buckley to Friedman, February 23, 1962, ibid.; Interview with Milton Friedman; Interview with William F. Buckley.

36 James Buckley to Milton Friedman, July 19, 1972, f. 12, box 22, MF papers.

37 Russell Kirk, of all people, seems to have performed a similar role, see Milton Friedman to Don Lipsett, March 13, 1961, f. 25, box 28, ibid.; Charles Heetherly to Friedman, March 16, 1966, ibid.; Friedman to Heetherly, April 14, 1966, ibid.; Leonard Read to Friedman, September 11, 1957, f. 2, box 32, ibid.; Friedman to Read, September 18, 1957, ibid.; Bettina Bien to Friedman, September 7, 1961, ibid.

Goldwater’s 1964 presidential race. Friedman was drafted into the Goldwater effort by William J. Baroody Sr., the head of the American Enterprise Institute (which was devoted to translating free-market principles into position papers and analyses useful for politicians and policy-makers). Baroody Sr., in turn a distant friend of Buckley, had enlisted Friedman in 1956 as a member of the AEI’s Academic Advisory Board.39

Friedman had already tried to arrange an appointment between Goldwater and a group of Chicago economists as early as 1960 (the senator initially refused), and had subsequently, even if initially informally and intermittently, offered his advice until a full personal relationship blossomed between the two men.40 Simultaneously, Baroody Sr.’s good offices ensured that Friedman, together with a number of his disciples and fellow economists, would figure prominently within Goldwater’s 1964 team of economic advisors.41 Friedman and his acolytes provided the bulk of Goldwater’s economic policy prescriptions, gained political experience and participated directly in what became the great rite of passage for almost all members of the conservative community, bar the neoconservatives. As the political tempo towards the 1968 election quickened, Friedman was therefore not only the informal leader of a significant conservative family made up of classical liberal economists; he was also a member in good standing of the conservative movement with relationships with its anarcho-capitalist and organisational wings, as well as with the hard core.42 Moreover through William J. Baroody Sr., the member of the conservative coalition best connected with Washington’s political life, Friedman and his fellow liberal economists also became acquainted with a group of Republican officeholders such as Melvin Laird, Gerald Ford and Donald Rumsfeld, all of whom would later serve in one capacity or another, under Richard

39 Ibid., p. 344.
40 Milton Friedman to Barry Goldwater, December 12, 1960, f. 24, box 27, MF papers; Goldwater to Friedman, ibid.; Friedman to Goldwater, April 12, 1966, Milton Friedman Uncataloged papers, HI (hereafter MF papers [uncatalogued]).
41 Friedman, Two Lucky People, pp. 367–73;
42 Seemingly, not even Erik Voegelin or Russell Kirk could resist the personal charm and professional standing of Friedman, see Milton Friedman to Erik Voegelin, July 23, 1983, f. Milton Friedman, box 13, Eric Voegelin papers, HI (hereafter EV papers); and footnote 11 above.
Nixon 43 Nixon's neoliberals included two distinct generations of economists: the youngest was made up of firebrands such as Martin Anderson and Warren Nutter (Friedman's first PhD student in Chicago), while the older included former Eisenhower staffers such as Paul McCracken and Arthur Burns (Friedman's mentor and intellectual father figure), who displayed the considerably more technocratic and moderate attitude commonly associated with the general's administration. After 1966 they would not be mere occasional advisors to the presidential candidate as they had been to Goldwater. They first staffed Richard Nixon's economic team during the election, and subsequently moved into the White House, the Department of the Treasury and the Federal Reserve.

By the mid 1960s, classical liberals still regarded themselves as something of a maverick minority within both the American conservative movement and the economics profession. Yet, as happened within conservatism, their status within the latter had distinctly improved from the low point of the interwar and immediate post-war years to a level of acceptance reflected by Friedman's selection to preside over the American Economic Association in 1966. Hayek, on his part, would become a Nobel laureate in 1974. Tellingly, the Austrian's award was given in tandem with Swedish social-democrat economist Gunnar Myrdal. Two years later, however, Friedman received his Nobel in solitary. In the meantime classical liberals had also developed a constituency within the youth wing of the conservative movement and a set of ready-made, relatively simple policy prescriptions which had become accepted by conservatives of almost all stripes. Monetarism had therefore been added to traditional conservative economic preferences for balanced budgets and low taxation. As Richard Nixon prepared to enter the White House, conservatives stood ready to implement them.

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2. NEOCONSERVATISM

If classical liberalism had always been part and parcel of the American right-wing tradition, neoconservatism constituted the latest addition to the conservative ideological milieu. Both neoconservatives themselves and the growing literature analysing their evolution have tended to focus on how the rapid cultural changes unleashed during the 1960s, and the concomitant internal struggles within the Democratic party formed the environment within which neoconservatism emerged. According to the standard account, neoconservatives were a group of predominately Jewish literary intellectuals such as Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz; social scientists such as Nathan Glazer and James Q. Wilson; and political operators who had belonged to the liberal intelligentsia associated with the Democratic Party’s progressive wing such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Senator Henry ‘Scoop’ Jackson. The ‘neo’ in ‘neoconservative’ refers therefore to individuals who ended up as new recruits to the conservative cause during the late 1960s and 1970s. According to the neoconservative self-image, this fracture within liberalism and the neoconservatives’ own collective road to Damascus was not triggered by their shift to the right, but by the drift of their fellow liberal intellectuals toward the counterculture and the New Left. Norman Podhoretz and Irving Kristol, the two most prominent early neoconservatives, have been particularly clear about this aspect of their political evolution. Kristol, often termed the ‘godfather’ of the neoconservatives, was keen to emphasise that neoconservative ‘dissidence’ from liberalism ‘accelerated’ as a direct consequence of the counterculture and as ‘the spectrum of liberalism became even narrower’, and ‘even more dogmatically left-lean ing’.

Norman Podhoretz, Kristol’s fellow-traveller-to-the-right and long-time editor of the prestigious Jewish cultural journal Commentary, labelled himself a ‘centrist’, and explained in his memoirs how American progressivism had sustained itself as a force ‘against

radicalism’ up until the 1960s, when it was ‘captured’ by ‘radicals’. Be that as it may, the sharp turn to the right of Podhoretz’s positioning in the political spectrum was indeed representative of the whole group. Within the five years between 1967 to 1972, he moved from believing that ‘as long as we still have men like’ George McGovern ‘in the Senate, we may yet salvage something out of the [national] mess’, to brutally eviscerating the senator when he became the Democratic presidential candidate. Another member of the group, sociologist Nathan Glazer was, as early as 1971, also particularly clear regarding his stand towards political developments within the democratic-progressive camp. In a famous article published in Commentary, Glazer pointed out that the cultural wars did not set conservatives against liberals, who shared certain basic values with one another, but pitted both groups against the ‘radicals’ of the New Left who ‘wanted to change everything by revolutionary means’. It would be a mistake however to believe that all who were associated with neoconservatism necessarily agreed on most issues, or even that neoconservatism possessed in any way a fixed set of principles to which all neoconservatives subscribed. On the contrary, they engaged in remarkably lively political and public policy debates, and their individual views have varied over time. Kristol for instance, liked to say that he had been ‘moving consistently to the right’, and admitted to considerable inconsistencies in his views over the long-term. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that a relatively cohesive group of thinkers and academics coalesced between 1965 and 1968 around The Public Interest, edited by Kristol, and Commentary edited by Podhoretz, even if one of the most frequent

51 Kristol, Neoconservatism, p. ix.
collaborators with these journals – the philosopher Sydney Hook – continued to label himself as a ‘socialist’, no less, notwithstanding his active collaboration with the Nixon White House’s efforts against the student New Left.  

Similarly, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, a young Democrat until the early 1970s, recalled that she was ‘puzzled’ when she was first labelled a ‘neoconservative’, since she had never seen herself as a conservative, neither new nor of any other sort. Glazer, on his part, remained a steadfast supporter of the New Deal and, according to an active conservative Republican activist of those years ‘probably never voted Republican’. Thus, it is no accident that Podhoretz would entitle his memoirs *Breaking Ranks*. Neoconservatives, disgusted by the counterculture and the attitude of their fellow liberals (or ‘old friends’ as Podhoretz put it), found themselves increasingly on the conservative side of political debate, often after a personal catharsis which was, as in Kirkpatrick’s case, long and sometimes, as in Sydney Hook’s and Nathan Glazer’s cases, lifelong.

Despite the rise of the New Left and of the new politics which it set in motion, the emergence of neoconservatism as a cohesive political and intellectual group, their story – as well as its parallels and links with that of the hard core’s – went back to the 1940s and 1950s, when the agonies of anticommunism, the Hiss case and the antics of Joe McCarthy convulsed the nation long before Vietnam, civil rights and the sexual revolution. Neoconservatism’s origins were located within the New York intellectual milieu that formed in the campuses of New York’s City College and Columbia University in the midst of the sectarian struggles between assortments of Fabian, Stalinist, Trotskyite and freelance anti-Stalinist socialist groupings. A first, and frequently obviated, point of connexion between neoconservatives and a substantial number of *National Review* right-wingers was the shared intellectual

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54 Interview with Jeffrey Bell, August 29, 2005, Washington DC; Interview with Norman Podhoretz.


56 A crucial character of this period was Max Shachtman, see Heilbrunn, *They Knew They Were Right*, pp. 35–39.
starting point in the far reaches of the political left, and the equally common volte-face to a
vigorous anti-communism. Thus, National Review was first a twinkle in Willi Schlamm’s
eye, a German journalist who left the Communist party after some veteran cadres offered him
the offices of a prostitute and who could be found speaking at the first public meeting of the
Congress for Cultural Freedom – the anticommunist organisation run by the same then-social
democrats who would later became known as neoconservatives.57 Other National Review
editors and collaborators such as Will Herberg, journalists Eugene Lyons, Max Eastman,
Ralph de Toledano and, above all, James Burnham, were also linked with both National
Review and the left-of-centre New York intellectual circles inhabited by the men later to be
known as neoconservatives.58 Unsurprisingly, as the Hiss case and McCarthyism unfolded,
both the emerging hard core conservatives and the would-be neoconservative community
suffered traumatic splits and divisions that would resurface years later when the Vietnam war
became the ulcer in the nation’s political and cultural landscape.59 Podhoretz, for instance,
echoed hard core viewpoints when he emphasised how looking into New Left ranks ‘one kept
coming upon scions of what could be called the First Families of American Stalinism’.60 A
further element of ideological communion was contributed by Chicago philosopher Leo
Strauss, who is rightly considered as both one of the leading influences in the creation of
neoconservatism, and was a prime member of the conservative intellectual community of the
1950s and 60s. Not accidentally, Strauss happened to be a subscriber to only one journal:
National Review.61

Throughout the entire post-war period, both the hard core and the New York
intellectuals also displayed a commonly-held vein of cultural elitism, accompanied by an
equally vigorous disdain for those members of the intellectual elites placed beyond their own

58 Ibid., pp. 254–56; Gary Dorrien, The Neoconservative Mind: Politics, Culture, and the War of Ideology
(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), pp. 19–67; Heilbrunn, They Knew They Were Right, p. 49; Nash,
60 Podhoretz, Breaking Ranks, p. 253.
61 Heilbrunn, They Knew They Were Right, p. 26.
circles – even if during the 1950s and early 1960s this included one another.\textsuperscript{62} An identical manifestation of such elitism was a vigorous cosmopolitan, internationalist vein and strong anglophile tendencies, which had been buttressed by stints in British educational and cultural institutions, and which were coloured by varying degrees of longing for a highly idealised British past and a proportional distaste for the Fabians.\textsuperscript{63} Sharing similar outlooks, the hard core and the neoconservatives also displayed near-analogous patterns of behaviour and strategies for gaining influence through journals which aspired to the highbrow. Hence, by the late 1960s to the hard core’s \textit{National Review}, neoconservatives opposed Kristol’s policy-oriented \textit{Public Interest} and Podhoretz’s literary and politically-minded \textit{Commentary}.\textsuperscript{64} Since both groups during the late 1960s and early 1970s were essentially made up of journalists, writers and academic-minded policy-makers, their activities in sectarian politics – with a few exceptions such as William Rusher and Barry Goldwater for the hard core as well as Senator Henry ‘Scoop’ Jackson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan for the neoconservatives – tended towards the dilettante and were marked by a rather sorry record of failure. The 1964 disaster of Barry Goldwater mirrored how the intra-Democrat struggles from 1968 to 1972 seemed to result in the complete collapse of neoconservative influence within that party, and even Richard Nixon’s in the 1968 Republican primaries was a testament to the limits of the hard core’s (admittedly growing) strength.\textsuperscript{65} Thus, even if in retrospect and with the benefit of hindsight, it is not surprising that William Buckley thought quite on the mark Milton Friedman’s dictum that both neoconservatives and hard core conservatives belonged to the same ‘New York type’ of right-wing American.\textsuperscript{66} Yet, Friedman missed the most important difference between the hard core and the neoconservatives, for the latter possessed experience in both evaluating and implementing specific policy making proposals. Whereas the hard core was temperamentally opposed to most forms of government action and rarely


\textsuperscript{63} All senior \textit{National Review} editors had studied in British institutions, as also had Podhoretz. Kristol helped to run the Congress of Cultural Freedom from London, where he became fast friends with journalist Peregrine Worsthorne, also a good friend of Buckley, see William F. Buckley to Peregrine Worsthorne, October 17, 1961, f. Peregrine Worsthorne, box17, WFB papers; Worsthorne to Buckley, November 8, 1961, ibid.

\textsuperscript{64} Gerson, \textit{Neoconservative Vision}, pp. 5–6.


\textsuperscript{66} Interview with William F. Buckley; Interview with Milton Friedman.
engaged in policy analysis, the neoconservatives – even if adopting a highly critical posture – specialised precisely in devising and analysing policy programmes.

The important elements of neoconservatism can be divided in two categories, the first being a series of ethical and moral arguments aimed at preserving a range of traditional values which were virtually indistinguishable from the traditionalist maxims of *National Review*. From the foregoing analysis stemmed the second aspect – a set of technocratic recipes aimed at correcting the perceived mistakes of the Great Society in areas ranging from civil rights to welfare assistance and education. The former placed neoconservatives on the same wavelength as their traditionalist-minded and right-wing Catholic hard core counterparts such as ‘old foggy’ Russell Kirk and Will Herberg. Needless to say, it also put them at loggerheads with both *National Review* libertarians and the Rothbard types. Neoconservatives also shared with the Buckleyites a strong vein of anticommunism, in itself a continuation of the Democratic Cold War stance that had guided presidents Truman, Kennedy and Johnson, and which would be maintained during the early 1970s by figures such as Jeanne Kirkpatrick and Democratic Senator Henry ‘Scoop’ Jackson.67 At first, neoconservatives took pains to emphasise that despite the pro-Soviet activities of a few such as Alger Hiss, and the perhaps excessive, for American standards, left-wing impulses of very many liberals such as former Vice-President Henry Wallace, progressivism from the late 1940s up to the 1960s had, contrary to hard core denunciations, remained firmly within the vigorous anti-communist consensus. However, virtually all neoconservatives reacted against the subsequent Vietnam-induced New Left critique of American society, and in this they found themselves in full alignment with the *National Review* conservatives. After the Tet offensive of 1968, individuals like Podhoretz and Kristol freely admitted (as, at least privately, did men such as James Burnham and William Rusher), that the war in South East Asia ‘didn’t work’, had been a terrible mistake, and was quite possibly irremediably lost. Yet they flatly refused to admit that, as the counterculture claimed, the horrors of Vietnam were a

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symptom of the nation's moral bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{68} It was post-McGovern Democrats, neoconservatives argued (and Buckleyites agreed with them), who were reproducing the behaviour of the fellow travellers of yore, reverting to isolationism as a consequence of their lack of faith in American (or Western) civilisation. As Norman Podhoretz asserted, neoconservatives were not in favour of the war, but 'against the movement against the war'.\textsuperscript{69}

Much as anticommunism was the hard core’s proxy for attacking liberalism, the matter agitating these intellectuals was actually ‘not the Soviet Union’ or any other foreign adversary, but ‘the United States’ itself, or rather the forces of the left operating within the nation.\textsuperscript{70} That is, echoing Whittaker Chambers’ remarks about the ‘jagged fissure’ opening between the liberal establishment and the rest of the nation a generation earlier, neoconservatives bemoaned both the New Left and the inability of the liberal establishment in general to vigorously defend itself. As had happened with Hiss and McCarthy, according to the neocons the liberal intelligentsia had again proved itself unable to provide an adequate moral framework to legitimate what Kristol called the ‘capitalist-bourgeois’ American system.\textsuperscript{71} Thus, Kristol, Podhoretz and all the other neoconservatives had reached a conclusion similar to that of Buckley, Willmoore Kendall and the rest of the hard core in the aftermath of McCarthyism: notwithstanding the threat presented by Communism and the New Left, the real issue and the real problem was the liberal consensus itself. Liberal ideological tolerance and liberalism’s implicit readiness to engage with the ideological premises of its adversaries represented, for conservatives new and old, a fatal built-in weakness vis-à-vis Communism in the 1950s and the New Left in the 1960s. William F. Buckley was perhaps clearest among the \textit{National Review} conservatives when, in 1962, he wrote that ‘the profound question at issue is whether the open society can tolerate an unassimilable political minority if it is in league with great and powerful foreign forces’.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{69} Interview with Norman Podhoretz.
\textsuperscript{70} Podhoretz, \textit{Breaking Ranks}, p. 190.
Buckley was referring to ‘communists-at-large’, but his critique was directed principally towards ‘woolly headed’ or ‘starry eyed’ liberals. As the 1960s moved on, the statement might have referred to Black Power or student violence, but the actual object of derision would still have been mainstream liberals and their tolerance of dissent.

Increasingly, neoconservatives came to ask similar questions. According to both Buckleyites and neoconservatives, liberal toleration of dissent led towards increasing acceptance of left-wing arguments, whether of a Soviet or Stokeley Carmichael variety, and a consequent deterioration of the nation’s moral fibre. By the late 1960s, Norman Podhoretz was reproducing almost verbatim the same views that Willmoore Kendall, James Burnham and the other National Review editors had been hammering out for some 30 years when he declared that ‘even if we were safe from Soviet military domination, we would be extremely vulnerable to the pull of their political culture...’ According to Podhoretz, there were signs that this was already taking place, ‘the main one being a new tendency to dismiss liberty... as unimportant in comparison with rival values like equality and community.’

In 1967 Irving Kristol was also clear to point out who, exactly, was to blame for such a state of affairs. Echoing National Review’s attacks on the intellectual community who opposed, for instance, the candidacy of Barry Goldwater (including a number of later-to-be neoconservatives), Kristol noted that it was ‘among the intellectuals’ that ‘extreme dissatisfaction, sometimes extremist dissatisfaction, is rife’. As the Buckleyites had tirelessly remarked since the days of Whittaker Chambers, Kristol also believed that the repudiation of American values ‘affects only a minority’, but was ‘nevertheless a most serious matter’. This massive traïson des clercs had the obvious and straightforward effect of ‘enfeebling the determination of our statesmen and undermining our policies’, as for instance would happen with the Vietnam War, a war that, for Kristol, the general public had, unlike the educated elites, ‘borne with greater patience than might have been expected’. In 1962, long before Kent State, William

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73 Podhoretz, Breaking Ranks, p. 348.
74 Kristol, Neoconservatism, p. 86.
75 Ibid., p. 86.
F. Buckley had bluntly denounced the ‘criminal delinquency of the intellectuals’ and ‘the academic profession, which has failed to put its enormous intellectual resources to work on the problem of how to craft sensitive answers’ to radical dissent. As 1968 approached, neoconservative restlessness increasingly lent ideological weight to the most powerful right-wing populist arguments since McCarthy. It is not strange that Richard Nixon’s sensitive political antennae would pick up on the growing electoral pull of juxtaposing what one could call the ‘silent majority’ against the intellectuals, journalists and academics blasted by the right.

However, for all the similarities between neoconservatism and the stance of the National Review conservatives, there remained a number of distinctive characteristics that set the former apart from the hard core. As happened with all right-wing subfamilies, neoconservatism and Buckleyite conservatism were as much a matter of personal affection and social networks as they were of ideology. It is not surprising, then, that the main crisis between neoconservatives and their National Review counterparts was triggered by the race between incumbent New York senator James Buckley (brother of William F. Buckley) and neoconservative champion Daniel Patrick Moynihan — a scenario almost impossible to imagine between say Goldwater and Reagan, or Scoop Jackson and Moynihan. Similarly Frank Meyer once famously stormed out of Philadelphia Society paper being delivered by Kristol while shouting ‘you are nothing but a Tory socialist’, again a scenario difficult to imagine, at least in public, between Meyer and his less libertarian-minded National Review editors. On ideologically substantive terms, perhaps the most important difference was the neocons’ remarkable ability to produce specific policy ideas: the first publication clearly identifiable as neoconservative, Kristol’s The Public Interest, was exclusively devoted to the analysis and proposal of domestic policy initiatives. Its pages gathered the work of men such as politician Moynihan, sociologist Nathan Glazer and public-policy-wonk-cum-scholar

76 Interview with Norman Podhoretz; Interview with William F. Buckley.
77 Interview with Norman Podhoretz; Interview with William F. Buckley.
James Q. Wilson. The personal trajectories of Moynihan and Wilson are both good examples of technocratic neoconservatism. Both men had left academic life to work within Johnson’s Great Society, Wilson in crime prevention and Moynihan in race-related issues and the fight against poverty; both suffered a similar disenchantment with the apparent lack of improvements and the violent fashion in which the poor, and particularly blacks, seemed to be venting their frustration (Moynihan’s own home was attacked by radicals); and both wound up working for Richard Nixon, espousing proposals highly critical of liberal ‘softness’ towards delinquency and favouring a greater emphasis on ‘individual responsibility’ and ‘self-reliance’. The path followed by these two men also reflects quite nicely neoconservatives’ taste for proximity to power, and the crucial part played by the decade between 1963 and 1973.

Their experiences as managers of the Great Society also drove these men toward the basic conclusions that would distinguish neoconservatives from liberal-progressives, classical liberals and the Buckleyites. At first, by the late 1960’s neoconservatives, like the hard core, had adopted certain theses developed by neoclassical liberals such as Milton Friedman, Friedrich von Hayek and Henry Hazlitt. Thus, they accepted that state action could not solve all problems, and that in some cases public policy actually worsened the situation, but unlike the neoliberals, neoconservatives always remained stubborn supporters of the New Deal (which they opposed to the excesses of the Great Society), and they continued to grant a relatively large role to the state in assisting the needy. Race relations were a case in point during the late 1960’s. During his years within the Johnson administration, Moynihan had used Labor Department statistics to demonstrate that one of the main obstacles to the emergence of a black middle-class was, of all things, government assistance to mono-parental

79 Interview with Norman Podhoretz; Stelzer, Neocon Reader, p. 19. One of the most recent examples has been the confrontation between the neoconservative-leaning ‘compassionate conservatism’ adopted by the Bush Jr. administration and neoliberalism, illustrated in the political memoir of George W. Bush staffer Michael Gerson, Heroic Conservatism: Why Republicans Need to Embrace America’s Ideals (And Why They Deserve to Fail If They Don’t) (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).
families. According to Moynihan, financial subsidies to single mothers had the ‘unintended effect’ of stimulating the break up of the family unit, because they favoured the ‘expulsion of the man’. Hence a measure designed to provide short-term support for the poor actually contributed to the creation of long-term damage by trapping poor blacks in a cycle of broken families.

A second ‘unexpected effect’ was the emergence of a ‘new class’ made up of the bureaucrats necessary to design and manage government policy. According to the neoconservative critique, indistinguishable from the views expressed by Friedman in his *Capitalism and Freedom*, this new bureaucracy, however well-meaning, would soon become more concerned with protecting its own interests than those of its protégées. Not only that: like the Buckleyites before them, neoconservatives were also quick to note that civil servants working for the welfare state were mostly white and middle class graduates from the same universities. It was no accident, neoconservatives claimed, that the main bastions of social democracy were also the places that produced the personnel that manned the large bureaucracies that the welfare state produced and needed. As Kristol argued, the American working class was actually ‘far less consumed with egalitarian bitterness or envy than are college professors or affluent journalists’. Along similar lines thinker Seymour Martin Lipset also emphasised how the ‘ideological slope’ of American academia was consistently toward radicalism, to a point where college professors were ‘well to the left’ of even ‘the main body of college graduates’. If race and poverty were the issues of the day, neoconservatives applied the same analysis to virtually every aspect of the welfare state, from health care to crime and the environment, and have ever since insisted on the need to channel public funds through ‘private, group, voluntary and non state’ organisations, which they

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82 Kristol, *Neoconservatism*, p. 173
believe are closer to the actual beneficiary and therefore more efficient and less prone to
generate negative unintended effects.\textsuperscript{84}

It is however important to emphasise that neoconservative hostility towards the negative
aspects of the Great Society never quite provoked a conversion to hard core conservatism.
National Review conservatives such as writers Russell Kirk and James Burnham abhorred
‘modernity’ to the point of denouncing the emergence of sociology (Kirk also thought the
radio and the electric light bulb suspect contraptions), and instead hankered after an idealised
image of a rural, pre-modern past. Neoconservatives however, far from attacking the social
sciences or technological advances \textit{per se}, were professionally engaged in ‘public service’
sciences and had a more guarded take on scientific progress.\textsuperscript{85} Furthermore, neoconservatives
always, and with some grounds, blamed the relatively narrow appeal of Buckleyite
conservatism on its ‘aristocratic’ and ‘foreign’ to the American tradition (more specifically as
too ‘British’ or ‘European’) tendencies. They therefore self-consciously aimed at generating
arguments more closely attuned to the American public: instead of looking back to an
idealised Middle Age, neoconservatives defended a revival of the considerably more familiar
1950’s, a decade described in \textit{Commentary} as ‘an oasis of stability and rationality in Western
affairs’.\textsuperscript{86} Similarly, unlike libertarians and neoclassical liberals, neoconservatives never
seriously contemplated the ‘minimal state’ nor disputed the need for public assistance as
such. In fact, neoconservatives proposed a relatively paternalistic and authoritarian state
ready to provide the needy with assistance and willing to actively protect certain traditional
values. As Kristol expressed it in one of his famous dictums, they were only willing to
proclaim ‘two cheers’ for capitalism.\textsuperscript{87} In more pragmatic terms, neoconservatives also
recognised very early on, and were willing to state publicly, that any proposal to dismantle

\textsuperscript{84} An early example of the neoconservative stand on domestic policy matters may be found in Nathan Glazer,
‘Paradoxes of American Poverty’, \textit{ibid.}, fall 1965, pp. 71–82, here p. 82; see also Irving Kristol, \textit{Two Cheers for

biographical sketch of Russell Kirk, see Garry Wills, \textit{Confessions of a Conservative} (New Garden City NY:

\textsuperscript{86} John Mander, ‘In Defence of the 50s’, \textit{Commentary}, September 1969, pp. 63–68, here p. 64; Interview with Norman
Podhoretz.

\textsuperscript{87} Kristol, \textit{Two Cheers}, pp. ix–x.
the welfare state was tantamount to political suicide. And politicians, they knew, were vital to the exercise of power and influence. Thus, in response to the collapse of Keynesian economics neoconservatives did not offer the recipes of monetarism and across-the-board contraction of domestic state action sponsored by most neoliberal economists. They instead sought to reconstruct the liberal welfare state according to an alternative conservative-leaning philosophical framework.

3. NIXON’S MEN

Despite their differing evolution, neoconservatives and neoliberals gravitated towards the Nixon presidential bandwagon at around the same time, and in a somewhat similar fashion: relatively late in the campaign and in a technocratic capacity. Unlike Southern Republican conservatives and those Buckleyites who had been with Nixon since 1966, the neoconservative alignment with the candidate began considerably later, and was altogether divorced from direct political campaigning. Nevertheless, neoconservatives and neoliberals turned out to be the two driving forces behind the crucial domestic policy initiatives taken by the Nixon White House. The following pages are focused on two of them; the Family Assistance Plan and the cluster of measures that surrounded the breaking of the gold window.

The earliest contact between neoconservatives and the Nixon campaign took place in September 1967, when a speech by Daniel Patrick Moynihan to Americans for Democratic Action captured the attention of Leonard Garment, a liberal-leaning Nixon campaign staffer and workmate in the Wall Street law firm that had been the candidate’s lair since 1963. Garment in turn passed the speech on to Richard Whalen (a National Review-type conservative), and both took it to it to Nixon himself. At around the same time, two other

88 Kristol, Neoconservatism, pp. 212, 282; Interview with Norman Podhoretz.
Nixon aides – Raymond Price and Martin Anderson – were also recommending Moynihan.\textsuperscript{91} Nixon on his part claimed that he had by then read ‘several’ of Moynihan’s articles, and that he thought his thinking ‘refreshing and stimulating’.\textsuperscript{92} Nixon’s claim is plausible. Moynihan had first jumped to public prominence early in 1965 when, while working as assistant secretary of labor for the Johnson administration, fragments of what was later known as the ‘Moynihan Report’ \textsuperscript{90} which pinpointed enhanced assistance to mono-parental families as a structural malfunction in welfare provision that encouraged male family abandonment. According to Moynihan’s neoconservative viewpoint, federal policy was therefore actually detrimental to the stability of black families and hence to the achievement of black socio-economic equality.

Although Moynihan still remained an advocate of the Great Society, civil rights activists and most of his fellow liberals interpreted the report as ‘blaming the victim’ while, to Moynihan’s own astonishment, \textit{National Review} was about the only opinion journal openly supporting his conclusions.\textsuperscript{93} The ADA speech that caught the attention of the Nixon men was another manifestation of Moynihan’s slow evolution towards the right, and was welcomed by William F. Buckley as a ‘Magna Carta for liberals’.\textsuperscript{94} Like virtually all neoconservatives at the time, Moynihan still broadly supported public assistance for the needy, but he also fully concurred with certain \textit{National Review} mores. The nation was, according to Moynihan, exhibiting ‘the qualities of an individual going through a nervous breakdown’, and he proceeded to explain such a deplorable fact by developing on conservative themes such as bureaucratic inefficiency, disaffected educated classes and rising expectations that men such as Buckley or Friedman had been repeating for a generation.\textsuperscript{95}

Most importantly, Moynihan concluded that liberalism’s main interest lay in ‘the stability of the social order’, and he therefore advocated ‘a much more effective alliance with political conservatives’.\textsuperscript{96} Never one to miss an opportunity to hurt his Democratic adversaries, Nixon’s reaction to the speech was not dissimilar from that of his right-wing Buckleyite supporters: he happily obliged. Throughout the rest of the campaign Moynihan maintained a regular stream of written advice to the candidate.

Less flamboyant neoconservative and classical liberal characters also found their way into the Nixon camp through the campaign’s efforts to enlist academic and intellectual support headed by Alan Greenspan. Greenspan was the campaign’s domestic policy coordinator charged with organising around a dozen task forces meant ‘to focus sharply on legislative and executive actions of 1969’, and deal with a range of issues that went from the ‘budget’ to ‘education’ through ‘international economic policy’ and ‘manpower policy’. Two patterns that later continued emerged from the reports produced by these committees.\textsuperscript{97} Firstly, the campaign held a sincere but limited commitment to pluralism: hence ‘support of the Republican Party or of Mr. Nixon’ was ‘not to be a requirement’ for members of the task forces.\textsuperscript{98} In practice, the effort translated into a roster which included virtually all the sub-families of the conservative community. After Nixon’s victory in the Republican National Convention, a number of men who Raymond Price still called ‘new liberals’ and would later be re-labelled ‘neoconservatives’ such as Irving Kristol and James Q. Wilson found their way into the various task forces and advisory committees organised by Nixon’s men, and others such as Seymour Martin Lipset and Ben Wattenberg joined up, even if informally, later on.\textsuperscript{99} The task forces also included a fair share of classical liberal economists such as Greenspan himself– a close friend and disciple of no less than Ayn Rand – as well as Mont Pelerin Society founding members Fritz Matchlup, George Stigler and Karl Brandt.\textsuperscript{100} Given the

\textsuperscript{96} Ehman, \textit{Rise of Neoconservatism}, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{97} Memorandum Alan Greenspan to Paul [McCracken (?)], August 23, 1968, and attachment ‘Task Forces’, MF papers (uncatalogued).
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.; Herbert Stein to Richard Nixon, November 18, 1968, and attachment ‘Management of the Budget’, MF papers (uncatalogued).
genuine variety of opinion, squabbles inevitably broke out. At this early stage the most telling
difference was not however between men belonging to different philosophical families –
although a ferocious struggle between Moynihan’s ‘new liberals’ and the administration’s
classical liberal economists would ignite as soon as Nixon took office – but within the
neoliberals, who engaged in a two-front debate that turned out to have determinant effects
upon the future of the administration.

First, the report of the Commission for Economic Policy revealed a rift between the
majority opinion defended by those economists, led by Milton Friedman, who advocated the
United States’ unilateral withdrawal from the Bretton Woods international monetary system –
specifically, a suspension of the commitment to sell gold at the price of $35 an ounce while
removing ‘all restrictions on the use of dollars to buy foreign goods or currencies’ – and a
minority led by Nixon’s old friend and Friedman mentor Arthur Burns, who advocated
working within the existing system.101 Nixon at this early stage remained non-committal, but
leaned towards a progressive liberalisation of capital flows that went right against the spirit
and practice of Bretton Woods. Most importantly, the economic language employed by the
candidate took on a distinctly Friedmanesque rhetorical style, with frequent reference to the
need for ‘re-establishing the integrity of our fiscal and monetary policies’, and a promises to
end ‘self defeating controls’ on economic (and monetary) activities.102 The second matter of
early disputation among classical liberals was Friedman’s vigorous advocacy of an overhaul
of Great Society welfare programmes, and their substitution by a negative income tax which,
in short, would replace most welfare provisions with direct cash transfers to the poor.103
Friedman’s negative income tax was first discussed when Friedman who, together with
another six economists led by Arthur Burns had accepted membership of Nixon’s advisory

101 Milton Friedman to Bryce Harlow, December 5, 1968, MF papers (uncatalogued); Milton Friedman, ‘A Proposal
and William Fellner to Paul McCracken, November 19, 1968, ibid.
Removal of Foreign Investment Restrictions’, ibid.; see also ‘Economics: Nixon-Humphrey Debate’, Business Week,
September 28, 1968.
103 Milton Friedman, ‘New Approaches to Welfare’, and comments [undated], MF papers (uncatalogued).
group, delivered a paper with his proposal. Unlike the task forces, the advisory group enjoyed more direct access to the candidate and was meant to provide advice 'primarily based on political considerations'. On May 19 1968, the group met in the New York Metropolitan Club and Friedman developed upon his welfare plans. Martin Anderson, a fellow classical liberal economist thought the idea, in a foretaste of things to come, tantamount to 'giving money gratis from someone else who has earned it to a person who hasn’t been doing a damned thing'. Arthur Burns was more specifically horrified by the prospect of 'hippies' who 'get their support from their middle class-families' being instead 'supported by Uncle Sam'. Peter Flanigan, who was present at the meeting in his capacity as Nixon’s deputy campaign manager, and hence as 'political' representative, saw things differently: he was 'fascinated' by the proposal.

As Nixon took office he became quite fascinated himself, although this time the idea was not proposed by Friedman, who remained outside the administration, but by Moynihan. As the campaign went on, Moynihan’s ADA speech had continued to propel its author towards Republican circles. Like Friedman, Moynihan became an informal Nixon advisor and was recruited by Representative Melvin Laird – Nixon’s future secretary of defence – to contribute a chapter to an edited book exploring the GOP’s main philosophical tenets, which also included a chapter by Friedman on the Negative Income Tax as an alternative to the constellation of Great Society programmes. Moynihan took the proposals to his neoconservative friends around the Public Interest, who in turn reacted with enthusiasm. Friedman’s realistic expectations about the plan’s potential effects did not extend to a Johnson-like eradication of poverty, but a reduction in hardship to a level 'at which it can best be taken care of by private charitable agreements', while the curtailing of inefficient

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104 Peter Flanigan to Milton Friedman, May 9, 1968, MF papers (uncatalogued); Nixon for President Committee Press Release, May 23, 1968, ibid.; Flanigan to Friedman, July 31, 1968, ibid. The other members of the group were Pierre Rinfret, Alan Greenspan, Maurice Stans, Don Paarlberg and Paul McCracken. Although not listed as a member of the group, Martin Anderson was also present.
107 Peter Flanigan to Milton Friedman, May 20, 1968, ibid.
bureaucracies was bound to appeal to likes of Irving Krisol. Unlike Friedman, Moynihan eventually became a fully-fledged and rather prominent member of the administration. In January 1969 Nixon appointed him head of the newly-created Urban Affairs Council from which position he would be able, the president led him to believe, to reshape the collapsing Great Society welfare system. What Nixon neglected to mention was the creation of another new position, that of counsellor to the president, to which he appointed Arthur Burns with the specific aim of balancing Moynihan’s ‘liberalism’ with a conservative economist’s input.

As happened in the task forces during the campaign, Nixon seems to have genuinely desired the exposition of contending ideas — hence the Burns-Moynihan balance. Unfortunately for the president, the actual result proved to be no-end of squabbles between two men coming, according to an insider, ‘from irreconcilably opposed positions’. The story of the Burns-Moynihan policy warfare is amply documented and well-known. Moynihan appears to have taken up Friedman’s original Negative Income Tax plan in collaboration with Robert Finch — a liberal-leaning California Republican and old Nixon associate then about to start a thoroughly miserable stint as secretary of housing, education and welfare. Burns, for his part, was meant to occupy his special counsellor position only as a temporary placement until his appointment as chairman of the Federal Reserve. Given the determination of sitting chairman William McChesney Martin to see through his term, that opening kept being delayed. Moynihan continued to press upon the president a plan that Burns had been dead-set against during the campaign, with a resultant turf-war between these two experienced Washington operatives soon unfolding. To the irritation of White House Chief-of-Staff Bob Haldeman, Nixon’s informal domestic policy supremo John Ehrlichman and, eventually, the president himself, between Nixon’s swearing in in January 1969 and Easter of that same year, both Moynihan and Burns developed parallel staffs and engaged in a

109 Milton Friedman to Arthur Seldon, January 7, f. American Correspondence, box 330, Institute of Economic Affairs papers, HI (hereafter IEA papers).
111 Whalen, Catch The Falling Flag, pp. 234–35.
turf war of manoeuvres and counter-maneouvres to compete for presidential attention and block one another’s moves.\textsuperscript{113} The situation degenerated to a degree that, when black radicals threatened to burn Moynihan’s house down after yet another incendiary leak – this time recommending a period of ‘benign neglect’ on civil rights matters – his wife believed the leak to have originated within Burns’s staff.\textsuperscript{114}

Yet arson aside, by mid-1969 Moynihan seemed to have carried the day over Burns when, at a meeting in San Clemente, the president decided to override most of the latter’s objections and adopt Moynihan’s proposal – originally known as the Family Security System, by then as the Family Assistance Plan (FAP) – with the addendum that it include a substantial work requirement from the recipients.\textsuperscript{115} At a very basic level, Moynihan’s success can and should be explained as a consequence of the actors’ characters and personalities. The president proved to be bored and occasionally irritated by Burns’ professorial, near-condescending style.\textsuperscript{116} Moynihan, \textit{au contraire}, enjoyed one of those honeymoons that Nixon periodically engaged in with certain members of his staff – the most prominent example being the one with future Secretary of the Treasury John Connally – buttressed, this time, by the charms of flamboyance, competence and, not least, willingness to administer flattery where necessary.\textsuperscript{117}

At deeper level, however, Moynihan satisfied a number of the president’s political and ideological needs, which were in turn also reflected in the grand pack of welfare financing reforms dubbed ‘new federalism’ by speechwriter William Safire.\textsuperscript{118} According to Moynihan’s neoconservative viewpoint, the FAP would reduce the number of civil servants

\begin{itemize}
\item \textquote{Hodgson, \textit{Gentleman from New York}, p. 159.}
\item \textquote{Ehrlichman, \textit{Witness to Power}, pp. 246–47.}
\item \textquote{Safire, \textit{Before the Fall}, pp. 491–92.}
\item \textquote{And towards which conservatives were less than enthusiastic, see Safire, \textit{Before the Fall}, pp. 223–29.}
\end{itemize}
administering welfare provisions and, perhaps more importantly, their capacity to interfere with the lives of the poor. Hence it would also diminish the damage to recipients' self-esteem and the possibility of unintended negative effects. The FAP was therefore squarely based on the type of classical liberal assumptions deeply ingrained in the president's own beliefs. Since the plan aimed at replacing welfare services provided by the federal government and the states with direct cash transfers, it was therefore designed to remove or at least to bypass redtape, while eliminating what was deemed by Nixon's men to be the ballooning and inefficient welfare bureaucracy. Of course, these were also the reasons that Milton Friedman had proposed it in the first place and, ironically enough, why conservatives such as Martin Anderson and Burns opposed it. For as the former explicitly acknowledged, an FAP-type project was bound to be more efficient that the existing array of measures, but then again, the Great Society's cumbersome inefficiency was, according to Anderson, the most powerful obstacle in the way of further welfare expansion. In other words, given its comparative simplicity, the cost of FAP would be more difficult to keep under control in the face of the predictable pressures for expansion likely to arise in the future. Friedman had already acknowledged that this was a problem with his idea. Later on, Moynihan would too. Derived from and complementarily to the preceding, from a political viewpoint FAP allowed the president to present himself as a bold reformer, yet one anchored to firmly conservative principles. This was perhaps the aspect of the program where Moynihan's and his neoconservative circle's minds were closer to Nixon's heart. Once the programme incorporated a work requirement from the recipients, Nixon could go to the electorate - and, he hoped, the history books - and claim to have provided voters with enhanced public services that still respected what Garry Wills perceptively described as the president's 'Horatio Alger ethics'. Moynihan seems to have sensed and exploited Nixon's yearnings,
and to have introduced the idea of Nixon as a new and all-American Disraeli, capable of re-adjusting right-wing mores to a modern world.\textsuperscript{123}

Unfortunately for Moynihan, the impulses of Richard Nixon's heart rarely interfered with the dictates of his political brain. Nixon chose to override the concerns of his classical liberal advisors regarding the cost of FAP; but as soon as the plan sank amidst sectarian politicking in Congress, the president lost both interest and the will to invest political capital in a costly battle which, by any measure, had descended into a farcical and politically unproductive spectacle as soon as it had arrived to Capitol Hill. Legislative liberals thought the FAP insufficiently generous and the work requirements too draconian; conservatives reproduced Burns's and Anderson's objections. All saw the programme as an excellent opportunity for pork-barrelling.\textsuperscript{124} Nixon eventually realised that his Disraelian daydreams would not come to fruition in the face of both liberal and conservative opposition. He thus chose to let the plan die a quiet death in the Senate, and Moynihan resigned in consternation.\textsuperscript{125} Interestingly, however, in his own account of the FAP drama, the latter exonerated Nixon's wavering behaviour from much of the responsibility for the plan's ultimate failure, and went beyond blaming congressional sectarianism, torpor or lack of foresight. He blamed, quite specifically, liberalism itself.\textsuperscript{126}

In the case of the FAP, Arthur Burns and the administration's classical liberals lost an internal battle which they went on to win, by accident, on the Hill. As 1971 approached, they became entangled in yet another struggle, and one with certainly more lasting consequences, among themselves. After January 1969, the economic performance of the nation had led towards progressive increases in both inflation and unemployment. These twin enemies threatened to destroy the president's electoral chances in 1972 just as, according to Nixon, the economy had defeated him in his 1960 presidential race. The administration's way of

\textsuperscript{123}Ehrman, \textit{Rise of Neoconservatism}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{124}Hoff, \textit{Nixon Reconsidered}, pp. 129–32.
\textsuperscript{125}Wicker, \textit{One of Us}, pp. 537–38.
confronting economic troubles was identical to its strategy towards welfare provision on two accounts. Firstly, it was dominated by a sense of 'lack of knowledge', as had been the case with Moynihan and the neoconservatives, who by the second half of the 1960s were ready to admit that they knew 'almost nothing' about the effects of government action. Economists, or certainly the type of right-of-centre economist working for Richard Nixon, were about to confront the uncomfortable fact that the economics of the 1970s were, as Nixon's CEA chairman Paul McCracken put it, enveloped in 'a good deal of mystery'. Arthur Burns, Nixon's chairman of the Fed was a bit more straightforward when, as the president moved to destroy the international monetary system in 1971, he openly admitted that 'the rules of economics are not working the way they used to'.

Secondly, the FAP had been Nixon's attempt to maximise satisfaction across the ideological spectrum through a right-of-centre inspired welfare reform. The programme ultimately failed when the president realised that the proposal was actually achieving the opposite effect of triggering maximum dissatisfaction from both liberals and conservatives. Nixon's most important economic policy decision – the combined suspension of gold convertibility and imposition of wage and price controls in the summer of 1971 – was yet another attempt at a similar strategy. Like FAP and Nixon's school desegregation policy, his economics were not so much a succession of ideological zigs to the left and zags to the right, but the implementation of both at the same time and in the same place. Moynihan's Disraeli flattery was successful because, as Garry Wills correctly realised, it truly responded to Nixon's genuine desire to re-structure liberal policies according to conservative mores and principles. With the FAP, Nixon tried to improve welfare provisions – a liberal notion – while reducing inefficiency and the weight of the welfare bureaucracy through increasing the autonomy of the recipient – a most conservative set of objectives. Similarly, in the school desegregation matter he tried to defuse the issue through a combination of right-wing rhetoric.

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128 Safire, *Before the Fall*, p. 491.
129 For a similar point see Matusow, *Nixon's Economy*, p. 4.
with a genuine push for desegregation, even if one generally handled according to the needs of the Southern white community. In economics too, Nixon combined a drastic liberal-progressive solution – wage and price controls – bound to horrify conservatives, with a neoliberal-leaning decision – breaking the gold window – so radical that it was even firmly opposed by some members of his own right-of-centre economic team. To compound it, after the 1972 election Nixon also took pains to put the same neoliberal economists – such as Milton Friedman’s friend George Shultz and Shultz’s protégée William Simon – who happened to be dead-set against government intervention in the economic arena, in charge of both planning the workings of the controls and heading the bureaucracy meant to implement them.130

Initially, the most significant of those two characteristics was lack of knowledge. During the 1968 election, Nixon had surrounded himself with a relatively small coterie of typical Republican economists who had gained executive experience during the Eisenhower administration and who, bar a few exceptions such as the youngsters Alan Greenspan and Martin Anderson, tended to continue to display the same broadly cautious conservatism that had dominated the general’s policies.131 Being professional economists, these men – unlike the general public – were aware of the financial stresses generated by the combination of a large military presence overseas (the Vietnam War in particular) combined with expansive domestic policies.132 In 1968 federal profligacy had translated into inflation indexes in the region of five per cent – the highest since the Korean War, but far from critical and certainly nothing that would lead one to imagine the then-unthinkable double digits of the 1970s. Most importantly, relatively high inflation was matched, as conventional wisdom dictated it should be, with record low-levels of unemployment running at just over three per cent of the workforce.133

131 Ibid., pp. 139–40.
133 Stein, Presidential Economics, pp. 150–51; Matusow, Nixon’s Economy, p. 56.
The main problem faced by Nixon as he took over the economic reins had been to fine tune the economy, Keynesian style, in order to push inflation down by perhaps a percentile and a half, while preventing unemployment from rising by more than a percentile. Moreover, coinciding with Moynihan and the neoconservatives, Nixon’s economists believed the president could actually finish off the expensive quagmire in South East Asia. The resulting ‘peace dividend’ could therefore by used to finance neoconservative welfare experiments such as the FAP or for relieving, as neoliberals argued, a main source of pressure on both the price index and the federal budget – other considerations such as what to do with former servicemen joining the ranks of job-seekers were then put aside.\textsuperscript{134} The debate within the White House during the first half of 1969 was whether the expected mild recession necessary to cool-off the economy would last long enough to hurt Republican politicians in the 1970 mid-terms. However, unfortunately for Nixon and his advisors, the known tools for economic management and forecasting had by then become outmoded. The financial savings of the slow disengagement from Vietnam presided over by Nixon and Kissinger were swallowed – became ‘evanescent’ according to a horrified Moynihan – by larger increases in welfare entitlements than had been calculated.\textsuperscript{135} Inflation on its part kept creeping up \textit{at a pace with unemployment} and economic stagnation. Since inflation and stagnation were supposed to cancel each other out, they were not meant to occur at the same time.\textsuperscript{136} Hence McCracken’s ‘mysteries’.

Yet, in early 1969 the broadly optimistic White House consensus leaned towards believing that inflation could be tamed without triggering the feared hike in unemployment levels, and the predictable collapse of political support for the president.\textsuperscript{137} Optimism was led by no less than Milton Friedman, and supported by a recently resuscitated brand of economic analysis: Monetarism. According to Friedman, fiscal prudence was certainly highly

\textsuperscript{136} Gamble, \textit{Free Economy and the Strong State}, pp. 2–3, 47.
\textsuperscript{137} Satire, \textit{Before the Fall}, p. 215; Stein, \textit{Presidential Economics}, pp. 142–43; Bosanquet, \textit{After the New Right}, p. 58.
advisable, but it was neither the root cause of inflation, nor the key to staving off rising prices. In one of his famous sentences, he maintained that ‘inflation was always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon’ or, in other words, a problem caused by increases in the supply of money substantially above the actual increase of goods and services being produced and exchanged. According to this view, deficit spending was a deplorable habit that helped the federal government to print and put into circulation more money than it should, but the ultimate lever for controlling inflation (and deflation) was neither the White House nor Congress but, as he took care to inform Nixon, the agency which governed the influx of money into the banking system: the Federal Reserve.138

Once that assumption was accepted, the monetarist remedy seemed reasonably simple enough: ensure that the Fed continue increasing the money supply by the correct fixed amount and all should be well. Since that rate was inferior to those of the Johnson-Kennedy years, the first effect of a mild withdrawal of available liquid would inevitably be an equally mild recession, followed by a stabilisation of inflation rates, followed by economic recovery. Unemployment ought also to follow a similar pattern. During the first phase it should have increased above desirable rates, followed by a drop and then stabilisation around what Friedman called its ‘natural rate’, or in other words, the rate of unemployment triggered by normal market malfunctions, such as lack of information on the part of job seekers, or simple plain facts of life such as the unwillingness or inability of some people to get a job – which White House economists mistakenly put as only slightly above the abnormally low unemployment rate of 1968.139 Given the growing prestige of Friedman’s scholarly work, it was perhaps not surprising that Nixon’s men, who also happened to be Friedman’s mentors, sympathisers or protégées, were willing to go along with Monetarism. Since Nixon’s instincts were naturally receptive to Friedman’s classical liberal views and Nixon’s personal interests were about as far removed from economics as they possibly could be, the president went along with his advisors’ counsel.140 Of course, this is not to say that the administration

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implemented a revolution in financial policy-making. Not quite. As McCracken famously put it, the administration had not become ‘Friedmanite’, it was instead ‘Friedmanesque’. In other words, Monetarism did not replace the accepted rules of combating inflation through fiscal constraint and public spending reductions: it was added to that conventional wisdom.\textsuperscript{141}

In practical terms from early 1969 to 1971 the Nixon White House tried to implement a policy variously known as ‘gradualism’ or ‘steady as you go’, which consisted of both continuous monetary constraint and a balanced federal budget, with the hope that the remedy would take effect with minimum damage to the political fortunes of the president.\textsuperscript{142} The main supporters of this approach within the White House were George Shultz, then secretary of labor, and Friedman himself, who regularly visited and wrote to the president.\textsuperscript{143} Other members of Nixon’s economic staff such as McCracken, Burns and even Herbert Stein (yet another Mont Pelerin attendee-cum-CEA member) also went along with the plan, but with thinly-disguised trepidation.\textsuperscript{144} The first problem for advocates of the ‘Friedmanesque’ approach was their complete lack of control over the precise lever they needed to implement ‘steady as you go’, for the Fed was chaired by William McChesney Martin, a Truman appointee whom Nixon blamed for, perhaps deliberately, causing the 1960 recession that the president believed had caused his razor-thin defeat at the hands of Kennedy. By no means a ‘reckless’ Keynesian, the trouble with Martin was the opposite of what could be expected from the caricature tax-and-spend Democrat of the conservatives’ imagination. To Friedman and Nixon’s despair, the Fed reacted – or more accurately overreacted – to inflation by reducing the outflow of money to zero. To make matters worse, Martin refused to resign his chairmanship until the end of his tenure and the markets refused to believe that, as long as he remained chairman, the Fed would actually follow through with the policy of monetary tightness. Expecting an ease, market actors continued to maintain the rate of borrowing,

\textsuperscript{141} Wicker, One of Us, pp. 548–49; Matusow, Nixon’s Economy, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{142} George Shultz Address to the Economic Club of Chicago, ‘Prescription for Economic Policy: Steady As You Go’, April 22, 1971, f. 15, box 33, MF papers; Safire, Before the Fall, p. 512.
\textsuperscript{143} Mason, Quest for a New Majority, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{144} Stein, Presidential Economics, pp. 133–35, 139–40; List of Invitees for the incoming gathering of the Mont Pelerin Society, f. 7, box 86, MF papers.
spending and price increases, leading Friedman to fear a sudden shock and a more severe recession than was necessary once the full effects of liquid starvation were actually felt in the marketplace.\footnote{Milton Friedman to Richard Nixon, March 13, 1970, MF papers (uncatalogued); Matusow, \textit{Nixon's Economy}, pp. 24–27.}

In February 1970, Martin finally relinquished his post, but a new problem subsequently emerged. Nixon’s new chairman Arthur Burns, never too convinced of the effectiveness of Monetarism, turned out to be only slightly more amenable to White House pressure and, worse still, began to lean progressively towards alternative forms of action. During the following year and half the chairman of the Fed lobbied, with increasing vigour, for the one policy which was anathema to both classical liberalism and Richard Nixon: the imposition of controls over prices and wages as a means of curtailing inflation.\footnote{Ehrlichman, \textit{Witness to Power}, pp. 250–53, 256; Safire, \textit{Before the Fall}, p. 490.} To his credit, the president became ‘very distressed’ (enough to order the leaking of false, embarrassing stories about Burns) and stubbornly resisted a policy that he genuinely did not believe in.\footnote{Jonathan Aitken, \textit{Charles W. Colson: A Life Redeemed} (New York: Waterbook Press, 2005), pp. 222–23.} As the effects of inflation began to be felt and the public joined the Fed in demanding executive action congressional Democrats, in the full knowledge of Nixon’s economic instincts and not expecting a reversal, increased the pressure on the White House by granting special powers to the president to impose wage and price controls. Nixon rightly saw the move that as ‘a ploy’ designed to ‘put the ball politically in my court’.\footnote{Nixon, \textit{RN}, pp. 516–17.} By early 1971, Nixon faced in the economic realm a problem similar to that which he had confronted regarding the Family Assistance Plan. A comparatively bold and innovative policy with strong conservative undertones was under attack from both the liberal left (in the form of congressional Democrats) and the conservative right personified by no less than his own classical-liberal chairman of the Federal Reserve – with the Council of Economic Advisors wavering, if at least discreetly, in the same direction.\footnote{Wicker, \textit{One of Us}, p. 552; Safire, \textit{Before the Fall}, p. 512.} As with the FAP, the ubiquitous Friedman seemed to
be about the only knowledgeable economic voice defending the White House during the early months of 1971.

While Richard Nixon agonised over the twin troubles of inflation and rising unemployment, the American economy suffered another sourced of distress from overseas. According to the Bretton Woods system, the US dollar, and the willingness of the US government to exchange dollars for gold on demand and at fixed price, was the anchor for all other major international currencies. The arrangement had worked for 30 years of steady, sometimes spectacular growth, to the extent that European governments had happily accumulated large dollar reserves instead of gold. By 1971 however, international bankers could see the problems of the US economy about as clearly as the president himself. Furthermore, they also recognised that that a devaluation of the dollar was both a relatively easy way of stimulating the export-oriented sectors of the American economy, and of reducing the kinds of imports that threatened less competitive American companies such as those textiles manufacturers situated in Strom Thurmond’s South Carolina.\footnote{Maurice H. Stans, \textit{One of The President’s Men: Twenty Years with Eisenhower and Nixon} (Washington DC: Brassey’s, 1995), pp. 152–54, 162–63.} Of course, a significant devaluation also implied a downwards adjustment of the dollar gold value, and hence a potentially drastic reduction of the value of the national reserves of those countries that had accumulated dollars in place of gold. Theoretically speaking the solution for national bankers was easy enough: force the Fed to honour its Bretton Woods commitments and exchange all those greenbacks for metal before devaluation. Except that the memories of the 1930s still endured. As a British scholar presciently put it, the entire Bretton Woods system was supposed to be designed precisely to withstand crises like the one developing in early 1971. Faith in the dollar and international coordination between bankers was intended to prevent a descent into the chaotic competitive devaluations that had worsened and extended the 1929 crash.\footnote{Blyth, \textit{Great Transformations}, pp. 127–29.}
However, as the summer of 1971 approached Richard Nixon came to see things differently. Milton Friedman, again, offered the president a way out of the conundrums of international finance. In pure libertarian fashion the Chicago economist advised a unilateral suspension of the dollar’s convertibility into gold, an elimination of the myriad of controls over international monetary exchanges that maintained its exchange rate, and a policy of permitting the greenback’s value to be established by market mechanisms. As with the FAP and inflation, the reception of Friedman’s advice within the White House was mixed. Nixon’s other economists, mirroring the views of most bankers and financiers elsewhere, objected in principle to government controls and restrictions over monetary exchanges. Those with living memories of the Great Depression such as Arthur Burns had, however, even stronger objections to the vacuum that ending the Bretton Woods system would leave in international finance. Yet, as the British government began to press for a ‘guarantee’ of American gold for British-held dollars, Paul Volker, the treasury under-secretary who most strongly advised closing the gold window, modified his previously cautious views. ‘All my life I have defended [fixed] exchange rates’ he stated, but a jump into the unknown was what was ‘needed’.152

And thus did Richard Nixon effectively kill the Bretton Woods international monetary system. After an agonising, week-long series of meetings with senior economic staff, the president announced to the nation a ‘New Economic Policy’, which consisted of the suspension of gold convertibility and the imposition of price and wage controls to stave off inflation. As with the Family Assistance Plan and school desegregation, Nixon opted for a simultaneous move to the right and the left, but one cloaked in conservative populist rhetoric, and accompanied with a pyrotechnical bang of presidential boldness. In his ‘The Challenge of Peace’ address, he first established the administration’s economic priorities, linking together two unrelated issues: unemployment/inflation and the dollar exchange rate.153 Nixon called

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congressional Democrats’ bluff and emphasised how breaking the gold window and imposing controls were the actions of a president who was ‘going to take action – not timidly, not halfheartedly, not in piecemeal fashion’. Subsequently, in true Nixonian style, he located an enemy arrayed against ‘American workers’: this time around the ‘pinks’ of yesteryear had become ‘international money speculators’ and ‘international money traders’. Nixon’s message was undoubtedly aimed towards the blue-collar and suburban middle-class voter that he had identified as his constituent between 1968 and 1970, yet it should also be noted that, since the bogeyman was both unnamed and ‘international’, the American worker employed by Wall Street financial firms presumably belonged to the same category as, say, the average New York hard-hat. Moreover, once the point was made, the president did not get carried away and also took pains to exonerate the, also unnamed, ‘responsible members of the international banking community’.154

If rhetoric was finely tuned in order to avoid offending any member of the Nixonian ‘new majority’, policy was both aimed in the same direction and constituted a masterful combination of Keynesian interventionism and classical liberal economics. On the Keynesian front the administration created a brand new Cost of Living Council to monitor a 90-day freeze on prices and wages, to which Nixon’s men added a 10% across the board surtax on imports. Both were aimed, according to the president, to ‘improve our balance of payments’ and ‘increase jobs for Americans’. Neoliberal Nixon on his part, was also careful to create a toothless council which was supposed to rely on ‘voluntary cooperation’ on the part of both workers and employers. Indeed, it should be noticed that the main rationale for breaking the gold window had been Paul Volker’s scepticism about the chances of international bankers voluntarily cooperating; thus Nixon seemed to think George Meany more likely to self-sacrifice on behalf of American business profits than would international government economists on behalf of one another.155 The surtax, the president emphasised, was ‘temporary’ because ‘to put the strong, vigorous American economy into a permanent

154 Ibid.
155 Treaster, Volker, p. 44.
'straitjacket' would 'stifle the expansion of our free enterprise'. The very breaking of the gold window had of course long been a Friedman goal.\textsuperscript{156} Nixon's Keynesianism not only remained sceptical and un-committed, but was also accompanied by further tax cuts, as well as a 4.7 billion reduction in federal spending, which included a five per cent cutback in government personnel and the official postponement of the administration's welfare reforms, including the FAP. Nixon may have declared himself a Keynesian and may have been forced to adopt the ultimate Keynesian tool for economic management, but still he was determined, like all classical liberals, to 'welcome competition,' to 'nurture and stimulate competitive spirit' in economic affairs, and to slash welfare spending.\textsuperscript{157}

In policy-making terms, Nixon's strategy was, as he well knew, bound to fail over the mid-term, even though nobody could have predicted the hyperinflation of the early 1970s. As ever, Nixon's objective was neither located in the realm of policy-making, and nor did it extend much beyond election night, November 1972. And as far as electoral politicking went, this time the combination of conservative-leaning, tepid Keynesianism with vigorous neoliberal and populist rhetoric worked wonders. At first, even controls seemed to function, and the White House engaged in an unpublicised expansion of public spending that helped to keep unemployment from skyrocketing.\textsuperscript{158} The neoliberals led by Friedman had always maintained that moderation in price increases was the predictable result of previous monetarist policies, and vigorously deplored the existence of controls (which Friedman considered to be useless), but they were forced to celebrate the end of the Bretton Woods, hence blunting criticism to a point where Friedman was even willing to defend Nixon's financial intentions to his influential overseas friends.\textsuperscript{159} The Buckleyites on their part were at first equally stunned. Predictably, the controls included in the NEP (correctly dubbed by \textit{National Review} as Nixon's 'New Electoral Policy') eventually triggered as much irritation

\textsuperscript{156} Milton Friedman to Bryce Harlow, December 5, 1968, MF papers (uncatalogued); Friedman to Maurice Stans, March 3, 1969, f. 29, box 33, MF papers; Stans to Friedman, March 7, 1969, ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} Nixon, 'The Challenge of Peace'.
\textsuperscript{159} Milton Friedman to Alan Greenspan, October 2 1972, MF papers (uncatalogued); Friedman to Greenspan, October 12, 1972, ibid.; Friedman to Sam Brittan, October 8, 1971, f. 33, box 21, MF papers; Friedman to George Shultz, September 25, 1971, ibid.
as the FAP and Détente, but in the end, as the president anticipated the shadow of Nixon’s Democratic rival forced them to come to terms.\(^{160}\) The New Economic Policy marked therefore the high point of the kind of political funambulism around which Nixon had based his entire first term in office, and indeed much of his political career. Between August 1971 and the presidential election, the economy gave the president a respite and, even if it could not be used as an electoral badge of honour, the administration’s economic team had at least succeeded in neutralising the issue. For the following months Nixon’s economists designed three subsequent ‘phases’ which failed to facilitate a painless disengagement from price and wage controls, but succeeded in consolidating support for the president on the part of the unionised working voter then gravitating away from the Democratic party.

In the last instance, Richard Nixon’s White House had become the bully-pulpit from which a new generation of policy-makers and right-wing technocrats first tried to change (if not reverse) the course of domestic and international economic management in issues ranging from welfare provision to fiscal and monetary measures. As conservatives of all stripes were aware, Nixon himself was neither a brave politician nor their ideological champion. Circumstances, however, together with the president’s undeniably classical liberal-leaning instincts and anti-bureaucratic phobias, provided neoconservatives and neoliberals with their first opportunity to actually engage in substantial reform. Of course, monetarism was abandoned, as was the Family Assistance Plan. Yet as Paul McCracken and Arthur Burns openly admitted, and even the ever-confident Friedman had to acknowledge, the troubles faced by the administration were ‘beyond’ the economics profession’s ‘present capacity’.\(^{161}\) The failure of Nixon’s monetarist economics was therefore as much due to the economists’ lack of knowledge – as happened with FAP and Moynihan – as to Nixon’s lack of ideological backbone. Even if Nixon had actually listened to Friedman’s advice as he pretended to do, between 1969 and 1971 even monetarists themselves could not agree on which definition of ‘money’ should be employed to measure the rate of supply.\(^{162}\) Similarly, after announcing the


\(^{161}\) Milton Friedman to Richard Nixon, December 21, 1971, MF papers (uncatalogued).

suspension of gold convertibility, Nixon’s economists could not tell the president what to do subsequently, or whether the suspension should be temporary or permanent — provoking a nervous Friedman to warn Secretary Connally against being ‘misled by the pressures of foreign bankers’ apparently bent on ‘desperately keeping’ their ‘undue influence over our policy’. Moreover, failure is not necessarily a bad thing for the committed ideologue. As Ralph Harris, a close British friend of Friedman, ‘rationalised’ when Ted Heath replicated Nixon’s economic u-turn, ‘our economic policy is so much on the wrong lines that only a major crisis brings any prospect’ of change. The events of 1971 were very much the ignition of such a crisis in the United States. For after Nixon’s fall, the blame for his administration’s economic troubles was not laid on monetarism, but on the failed experiment with wage and price controls — hence, Friedman’s continuing advisory role with President Ford. During the presidency of Richard Nixon, the age of Keynesian ‘new economics’ was indeed drawing to a close, and with its end came the dawn of a new, neoliberal-leaning consensus in policy-making.

Richard Nixon’s role in that transformation was not merely reactive. As the acid of Watergate slowly dissolved the administration, classical liberals and neoconservatives went through the same catharsis as all other members of the conservative community. Arthur Shenfield, yet another British acquaintance of Friedman, put it in particularly clear terms: ‘How do you explain the character of our defenders against the disrupters of the left’, he pondered, ‘first McCarthy and now the scoundrels of Watergate?’. Along with most conservatives, Shenfield could not help wondering ‘why are our good men confined to the world of ideas and out of the world of action?’. Right-wingers should be excused for despairing of Richard Nixon’s leadership, and of the shame his administration brought upon the conservative community — shame that drove Daniel Patrick Moynihan to sorrowfully admit that neoconservatives had been ‘willing to be used’ by Nixon in exchange for access to

163 Milton Friedman to John Connally, September 30, 1971, f. 15, box 33, MF papers.
164 Ralph Harris to Milton Friedman, January 31, 1974, f. 2, box 87, MF papers.
165 Milton Friedman to Alan Greenspan, September 7, 1974, MF papers (uncatalogued); Gerald Ford to Friedman, October 23, 1976, f. 3, box 27, MF papers; Ford to Friedman, October 14, 1976, ibid.
166 Arthur Shenfield to Milton Friedman, August 8, 1973, f. 12, box 86, ibid.
executive power. Yet even if at the time it was difficult to discern, the actions of his administration were as decisive as circumstances in the shift to the right in policy-making initiated under Nixon’s watch. As campaign memoranda show, Nixon’s men began to plan a move towards significantly more conservative forms of government action than had been the norm during the post-1933 era. And they did so before knowing the full extent and depth of the crisis they faced. The disappearance of the ‘peace dividend’, the persistence of inflation and the sharp increase of unemployment were, quite simply, entirely unanticipated in 1968 and 1969. A few classical liberals, like Friedman and Hayek, as well as Buckleyites Henry Hazzlit and Roger Freeman, had been fretting about inflation and government inefficiency for the entire post-war period. As the Goldwater campaign had painfully showed them, these men were both perceived as right-wing Cassandras and rejected for their pains. After 1968, thanks to Richard Nixon, they had the opportunity to re-enter the political and policy-making battlefield. After 1973, regardless of Watergate, no serious political actor could dismiss their claim to national leadership.

CONCLUSION

With regards to the inner workings of the conservative movement, neoconservatives and neoliberals emerged from the Nixon years both fortified and better equipped to operate independently from the Buckleyites. Although a number of neoconservatives (including future New York democratic senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan) still tried to remain within the post-McGovern Democratic party and rallied around senator Henry ‘Scoop’ Jackson and the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, the failure of the CDM ultimately propelled most of them into the arms of the GOP and the conservative movement. In organisational terms both neoconservatives and neoliberals found refuge throughout the 1970s and early 1980s in the American Enterprise Institute, a small think tank in 1968 that had become, thanks in part

to the efforts of the Nixon administration, the main locus of right-wing policy-making. It was in the AEI that both neoliberals and neoconservatives gained a platform that was entirely independent from and more powerful than National Review. Moreover, as economic problems began to seriously hurt the interests of the business community, neoliberal and neoconservative thought gained greater credence (and henceforth funding) from a previously sceptical audience. The AEI became a well-funded operation and a base from which neoconservatives and neoliberals continued to influence and battle one another. In economic terms, it was in the AEI that neoconservatives managed to generate an alternative form of economic management which, although partially inspired in classical liberal thought, was frontally opposed by virtually all classical liberal economists. The neocons adopted the formula defended by Nixon’s appointee and Shultz protégée, Arthur Laffer, and popularised (thanks to a year-long AEI scholarship) by Jude Wanniski: supply-side economics. Free from the constraints of actual professional economics, Kristol and his fellow neoconservatives managed to produce an economic formula that allowed politicians to defend a freer, more market-oriented economy without the politically inconvenient downsides — deflation and unemployment — inherent in monetarism and fiscal prudence. Friedman always remained ‘skeptical’ of supply-side ‘calculations’, and most his fellow classical liberals opposed supply-side economics with about as much vigour as Arthur Burns and Martin Anderson had opposed the FAP.

If neoconservatives managed to produce a brand new, politically palatable form of free-market economics, they also became more closely attuned to the incoming culture wars than the Buckleyites were. An article written by neoconservative Jeanne Kirkpatrick after the 1972 presidential campaign abstracted quite graphically the main moral tenets that guided traditionalist-leaning conservatives of all stripes. According to Kirkpatrick, the 1960’s had unleashed a ‘cultural revolution’ which would ultimately come to a head in the 1972 clash

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170 Interview with Jude Wanniski.
171 Kristol, Neoconservatism, pp. 102–103; Interview with Norman Podhoretz; Interview with Jude Wanniski.
172 Interview with Milton Friedman; Milton Friedman to George Shultz, February 12, 1971, f. 15, box 33, MF papers.
between Richard Nixon, who was by then running under a conservative, or at least explicitly anti-New Left banner, and George McGovern, who, according to Kirkpatrick, had captured the Democratic nomination with an anti-war, New Left-leaning platform. McGovern was, in Kirkpatrick's eyes, the 'candidate of the counterculture' and of the 'Triple A: Acid, Amnesty and Abortion'. The Democratic candidate certainly became the bête noire of an increasingly restless group of still-Democratic stalwarts: if Richard Nixon's victory in 1968 marked the beginning of a consistent shift to the right in presidential politics, McGovern's nomination in 1972 highlighted, at least according to neoconservatives, the corrosion of the Democratic party which had begun with the maverick candidacy of Eugene McCarthy in 1968. According to Irving Kristol, McGovern's candidacy 'sent us a message that we were now off the liberal spectrum'.

Kirkpatrick's 'Acid' and 'Abortion' represented the neoconservatives' hostility towards what they saw as the rampant 'hedonism' of the 1960's, reflected in the expansion of the recreational use of drugs such as marijuana and LSD. To neoconservatives, that hedonism had its roots in the 'shallow, escapist' and 'simplistic' attitude of the 'new sensibility' manifested during the decade by some of their fellow intellectuals.

Still worse, according to the neoconservatives the cultural zeitgeist of intellectuals' irresponsibility eventually translated itself into a widespread challenge to any form of established authority, ranging from basic norms of courtesy to the collapse of academic standards and repeated instances of public disorders. As early as 1968, Nathan Glazer described student protesters as 'luddite machine smashers' bent on a 'scorched earth' policy against the universities. Hedonism was also closely related to the demise of 'Victorian values' which had resulted from the 'sexual liberation movement' - a phenomenon equally deplored by neoconservatives. In 1972, when Kirkpatrick was writing, the Roe decision was yet to legalise abortion, but neoconservatives were already convinced that the counterculture, aided by medical

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174 Kristol, Neoliberalism, p. 32; Podhoretz, Breaking Ranks, pp. 343–44.
developments such as the pill, was in the process of destroying the norms that had traditionally regulated family life and sexual practices. According to this view, ‘free love’, and some radical forms of feminism, had posited the family as an oppressive institution designed to repress individual freedom, in particular that of women and the young. Against the traditional family, the counterculture offered alternative models which went from hippie communes to, at least since the Stonewall Riots of 1969, a defence of gay family models. Under the epigraph of ‘abortion’, Kirkpatrick gathered a vigorous defence of traditional values regarding sex and the family, both of which were regarded by neoconservatives as the roots of ‘Western civilisation’, and which would subsequently lead them to propose increasingly drastic measures such a censorship of pornography and the return of women to the ‘true freedom’ of the domestic sphere snatched from them by radical feminism.\footnote{John Thompson, ‘Pornography and Propaganda’, \textit{Commentary}, August 1969, pp. 54–58, here p. 58; Doubtlessly, the better known article on these matters by a neoconservative is Irving Kristol’s ‘Pornography, Obscenity and the Case for Censorship,’ in Stelzer, \textit{Neocon Reader}, pp. 167–180; Midge Decter, ‘The Liberated Woman’, \textit{Commentary}, October 1970, pp. 33–45, here pp. 44, 45.}

Free from the libertarian influences still present with the \textit{National Review} camp, neoconservatives moved to the right in cultural and sexual matters earlier and less equivocally than the Buckleyites, while at the same time constructing a new form of free-market economics that provided them with a way out of discredited Keynesianism without falling on hard, politically unpopular Monetarism. They also acquired an operational base in the American Enterprise Institute, which was added to their already influential \textit{Public Interest} and \textit{Commentary} journals. As was the case with classical liberals and the New Right Young Turks, they were after 1973 part and parcel of a new expanded conservative movement, a movement ready to leave behind the past dominance of the \textit{National Review} hard core and to move on towards an assault on the political soul of the nation. And yet, peculiarly enough, the most radical departure from the \textit{status quo ante} Nixon – the breaking of the gold window – had not been adopted as part of a strategy to liberalise the economy, but rather as a panicky response to external pressures which was more influenced by Nixon’s short-term political interests than by his classical liberal advisors attachment to the free flow of money.
Nevertheless, as with *National Review*'s blasts against liberalism and the Southern conservatives' post-1968 resistance to civil rights legislation, neither neoconservatives nor neoliberals actually tried to overturn the existing consensus. Instead, as the experience with the Family Assistance Plan clearly shows, most members of both conservative subfamilies attempted to implement incremental reforms to bring the existing policy-making framework closer to their ideal views.
CONCLUSION

Henry Kissinger once famously wondered how great a man Richard Nixon would have been if someone had ‘shown him some love’. Conservatives could have asked a similar question regarding what would have happened had Nixon been possessed by the sort of self-confident valour that normally marks the kind of political leader determined to implement truly transformative change. Given Nixon’s unquestionable intellectual gifts and truly remarkable skill for reading and anticipating the changes in the political wind, he could have belonged, as he certainly aspired, to the same category as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan and, after his own fashion, Lyndon B. Johnson. Instead Nixon, the arguments of revisionist historians notwithstanding, occupies the position of the ultimate political bogeyman in the collective American psyche. For Richard ‘I am not a crook’ Nixon still embodies today all that is wrong and can go wrong with politicians and in the modern political system of the United States.

Yet for nearly three decades Nixon remained a fixture of national political life, and a hero for the significant sector of the electorate which was never entirely comfortable with New Deal economics and which became increasingly alarmed by rapid cultural changes during the 1960s. Nixon sensed and located very early on in his career where the soft, vulnerable belly of the Democratic-led consensus lay. He mercilessly proceeded to stab his adversaries using what have since become the standard shibboleths of the American right for well over half a century. Weak, aloof liberal intellectuals; meddling, faceless, self-interested bureaucrats; arrogant, out-of-touch pressmen and academics populated the Nixonian bestiary of bad Americans. By 1968, young Nixon’s class-based resentments and evident social insecurities would blossom into thinly-disguised fear and loathing of what the more mature Nixon believed to be with the full concurrence of most American conservatives a

hostile, contemptible cultural and political class that had set the *zeitgeist* of mid-century America. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, at the same time as he identified a set of enemies which would accompany him throughout the rest of his career, Nixon also articulated the conservative intellectuals’ new, internationalist, and vigorously anti-liberal canon in a language understood by the average voter. He did so better than conservatives themselves, and that even before the then-infant conservative movement had consolidated itself as a coherent organisational and political force. In the process, Nixon’s careful balancing of right-wing populism and political respectability – which mirrored the conservative leadership’s own behaviour – also helped to solidify the firm association between the conservative movement and the Republican party. Nixon had been firmly attached to the fortunes of the American right since his very first political campaigns. After his narrow 1960 defeat at the hands of John Kennedy, and his insincere but nevertheless enthusiastic campaigning for conservative hero Barry Goldwater in 1964, he became about the only senior Republican politician firmly connected with the expanding, increasingly well-organised corps of right-wing grassroots activists that soon came to control the middle and lower segments of the national Republican party structure.

Nevertheless, as the conservative intellectual leadership fully realised, Nixon refused to become the political champion of conservatism. Aware of the weakness of the conservative

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wing of the GOP and of the electorate’s general aversion to drastic political change, the man from Yorba Linda opted instead to skilfully employ his own appeal to right-wing voters to make himself useful to the still dominant Eastern-liberal wing of the party that had sustained the moderate Eisenhower candidacy and presidency. Nixon thereby avoided the fracas that had befallen all conservative Republicans in presidential politics from Taft to Reagan (until 1979) through Goldwater and Senator William Knowland. Yet the leadership of the conservative movement fully recognised his strategy and reciprocated the lack of political and philosophical commitment.7 Amidst much agony and disputation, between 1952 and 1968 the Buckleyite conservatives who led the movement from the pages of National Review lambasted every instance of what they regarded as Nixon’s ideological wavering – from the conscious defence of the Ike’s most un-conservative initiatives to the spectacular 1960 bowing to Eastern Republicans known to conservatives as the ‘American Munich’.8 Yet, Ideological fireworks aside, conservatives also used Nixon about as much as the latter had used them. In 1960, 1968 and, under different circumstances in 1972, the Californian became the acceptable vehicle for fortifying conservatives’ shaky credentials as a respectable intellectual and political force. In all those instances, Nixon’s acceptability within the conservative community helped the more pragmatic conservative leaders such as Reagan, F. Clifton White and, in practice, the bulk of the Buckleyite faction, to keep the movement within the GOP and, hence, away from the options favoured by the most radical elements such as Robert Welch and the John Birch Society.

Most other conservative sub-families followed a similar pattern of moderation in then pursuit of influence. Of these, Southern Republican conservatives constituted the most influential and best organised political faction within the conservative movement. As was the case with the Buckleyites, pragmatism was the main reason why between 1966 and 1968 these Southerners led the rest of the movement towards a quid pro quo with Richard Nixon.

Defeated by the national Democratic party and sensing the growing dissatisfaction with public disorder and civil rights advancements beyond strict *de jure* issues, Southerners shifted from frontal opposition to civil rights legislation to a less confrontational strategy. In keeping with their new-found flexibility, the Southern Republicans chose to support a non-member of the conservative movement like Nixon, whom they also allowed to pursue relatively liberal initiatives outside the areas of foreign policy and racial integration. The short-term effect of the Southerners' strategy was to allow Nixon, unlike Goldwater, to harness right-wing grassroots energy without triggering outright rejection on the part of either moderate voters or the still-important senior liberal Republicans. In exchange, as Harry Dent openly concluded, Southern conservatives regained their waning influence over federal policy, and were able to adjust with greater ease to new electoral realities such as the expansion of the black electorate and the increasing reluctance of white voters to countenance racial stridency.9

The Nixon's administration handling of the race matter was, needless to say, the latest example of Nixon’s funambulism between the populist radicalism of the right and political respectability. For the first time, the president of the United States openly used the language of conservatives regarding racial integration in order to de-legitimate affirmative action efforts to put an end to *de facto* segregation. The administration, as a comparison between the utterances of senior officials and the correspondence sent to the White House from white conservative cadres clearly shows, fully colluded with the new strategy of ostensibly non-race based and strictly legal obfuscation combined with manipulation of local resources to maintain the existing *status quo* in Southern schools. To be sure, the administration’s deliberate soft-pedalling of federally-sponsored efforts for further integration successfully decreased racial tensions both on a national scale and within the conservative community. Nixon’s careful use of classical liberal arguments such as shielding segregated schools behind defences of ‘quality education’ and opposing forceful enforcement as an instance of deplorable ‘federal interference’ with local responsibilities fully reflected (and reinforced) the

A conservative shift away from ostensible racism and towards more respectable arguments. A significant sector of the academic literature has interpreted these developments as a symptom of Nixon's liberal leanings. Yet even if racial tension did decrease and most Southern children no longer attended technically 'segregated' schools, both developments took place on terms that reflected the needs of conservative white Southerners. Civil rights activists, Southern conservatives and senior federal staffers of every political stripe all agreed in identifying Nixon's policies and their effects as being at the service of the conservative white South. With President Nixon, openly opposing racial integration ceased to be outside the realm of respectable politics to become, if articulated through the right rhetorical devices, part and parcel of mainstream national political discussion.

The Southern wing of the conservative movement was not the only right-wing sub-community to rally behind Richard Nixon. Despite his evident manipulative tendencies, between 1966 and 1968 Nixon attracted a considerable number of Buckleyite conservatives to his ranks. Some – including Buckley himself – followed a pragmatic reasoning not far removed the Southerners': Nixon could win. Others responded to the same old emotional ties that Nixon had built during his early campaigns and the Hiss case. As ever, a third group – conspicuously led by William Rusher – could still not bring themselves to stomach him. As has been amply documented, the moderate elements within the movement successfully reined in the rebellious impetus and the latent (and growing) dissatisfaction of the less accommodating conservatives during the 1968 primaries and the first two years of the administration. After the 1970 mid-terms however, once Nixon's reasonably conservative policies and rhetoric became increasingly overshadowed by a marked shift to the centre, a significant sector of the right erupted. Yet the conservative dissatisfaction that coalesced...

11 See Hoff, Nixon Reconsidered, pp. 88–89.
behind John Ashbrook's maverick primary challenge merely served to dramatise the debilitating divisions that Nixon provoked among the different elements of the conservative community. Its political wing, led by Ronald Reagan, Barry Goldwater, Strom Thurmond's Southerners and the significant number of conservatives within the administration miserably failed to follow their more hot-headed National Review brethren and remained – at least formally – behind the president. In the end the Democrats' sharp shift to the left helped conservatives to again reunite in support of Nixon during the 1972 election. Yet the events that divided the movement between the 1970 mid-term elections and the 1972 Democratic national convention served also to highlight the early symptoms of National Review's weakening position within the movement, and the concomitant raise of the younger, more aggressive generation of conservatives such as Howard Phillips, Richard Viguerie and David Keene who would eventually form the 'New Right.' These 'Young Turks' shared little of their elders' desire to gain acceptance on the part of the liberal establishment. Moreover, neither Nixon nor the established conservative leadership grasped the extraordinary political potency of the nascent cultural wars. In a shift as important and significant for the conservative movement as that led by the Buckleyites during the 1950s, after (in part because of) the Nixon presidency it would be the new righters who would adjust more quickly and more aggressively to these new fields of national controversy. Doubtlessly, the peculiar dynamics between the Nixon administration and the established conservative leadership helped the Young Turks in their way towards eventually leading a revamped conservative movement.

In the meantime, the assistance lent by Richard Nixon towards the advancement of conservatism did not cease with racial matters, but also included welfare provision and economic management. As the Californian approached the White House, the economic affairs of the nation threatened to collapse in the face of three simultaneous and interrelated, but independent pressures: the uncontrollable, unprecedentedly sharp increase in inflation; the crumbling of the Bretton Woods international monetary system that had sustained post-war prosperity for nearly three decades; and the burden of an evidently malfunctioning and
expensive welfare system. Firstly, in the domestic sphere the Great Society’s swathe of social-democratic measures designed to redistributed wealth, reduce poverty and increase economic equity and prosperity according to Keynesian mores unravelled. The skyrocketing costs of these measures, coupled with the long-term strains of ever-expanding Cold War and Vietnam expenditures at a time of economic stagnation, created unprecedented inflationary pressures which in turn defied the economics profession’s established wisdom. Economists had traditionally contemplated inflation and unemployment as inversely proportional phenomena but Nixon’s advisors were, for the first time, faced with ‘stagflation’, or the coexistence of rising inflation and increasing unemployment against a background of economic stagnation. Nixon became the first president to openly repudiate Keynesian economics and to embrace the prescriptions of classical liberalism. Nixonomics lent renewed weight to a group of economists who, led by Milton Friedman, had been part and parcel of the conservative movement since its inception and who, accordingly, had endured thirty years of marginalisation by their Keynesian counterparts. Nixon’s economists advocated typically Republican economic prescriptions in favour of balanced budgets and the contraction of federal economic activities (particularly in the area of welfare). Yet most importantly, the president openly went beyond those recipes and also experimented with the more innovative brand of neoliberal economics defended by the monetarist or ‘Chicago School’ economists.

The subsequent (and predictable) fiasco of the wage and price controls adopted during Nixon’s 1971 ‘U-turn’ became the last proof of Keynesian inefficiency, and opened the door for the unstoppable ascendancy of classical liberal economics that would subsequently characterise academic economics and public policy.

As the administration’s economists tried to ascertain how best to deal with inflation without provoking a politically calamitous rise in unemployment, they also confronted the

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first severe strains upon the international monetary system set up after 1945. The Bretton Woods system was designed to foster cooperation between all major national bankers so as to achieve the monetary stability necessary for freer international trade and prosperity. The system, based on Keynesian principles, anchored all major international currencies into fixed exchange rates against each other and the dollar, with the latter as reference currency freely convertible into gold. To maintain those artificial values frozen called in turn for heavy government interference with international flows of money. At heart, the whole system sprung out of, and was designed to avoid a repetition of, the catastrophic competitive devaluations and rising protectionism of the 1930s. Bretton Woods worked smoothly for 25 years of unparalleled growth in the United States. As Nixon reached the White House, he faced both stagflation and stocks of greenbacks being held by America’s partners that surpassed US gold reserves. Inevitably, the market value of the dollar (or rather, estimations of such value) sharply decreased vis-à-vis the official rate. Since the system was based on mutual trust, the situation called for a round of conversations between the Federal Reserve and its counterparts so as to re-adjust the dollar exchange rate. Nixon instead opted to follow the classical liberal instincts of some of his advisors, devalued unilaterally, suspended the dollar’s convertibility into gold, and prepared to free up international monetary exchanges. Although little appreciated by public opinion at the time, Nixon’s decisions in international economics were the most fundamental change in this area since 1945. As his classical liberal advisors fully understood, freeing up monetary flows from government ‘interference’ meant the death, sooner or later, of the entire Keynesian system and the dawn of new age in economic management.

While the president’s neoliberal-leaning economic advisors struggled to understand the changing dynamics of the American and international economies, another set of conservative aides developed a parallel attempt to adjust federal welfare provision to the new realities. Unlike classical liberals and Southern conservatives, this group was made up of newcomers to the conservative movement. Led by men such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, these neoconservatives had emerged from the ranks of the liberal
Democratic progressive elite which the conservative movement (and Richard Nixon) had excoriated and been excoriated by ever since the early 1950s. As Nixon entered the White House, however, these men were in the process of abandoning the ranks of liberalism to become a new family within the conservative community. Neoconservatism resulted from disillusionment with the Great Society, growing hostility towards civil rights activism and deepening dissatisfaction with the New Left that briefly dominated both the Democratic party and a significant segment of the nation's intellectual life. However, unlike the Buckleyites, the Southerners and the neoliberals, neoconservatives had been associated with and had defended the post-war liberal consensus, and could not therefore be dismissed as reactionaries or eccentrics. Neoconservatives, in short, forced liberals to confront the conservative critique because it was not peddled by conservatives. By the same token, as neoconservatives increasingly adopted conservative criticisms of liberalism, they served to lend weight to some of the basic tenets of the right-wing canon which had been developed by the hard core during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Some but not all: neoconservatives also infused the conservative movement (at least initially) with an explicit, if partial, acceptance of the existing policy making status quo. In 1968 conservatives rejected welfare provision on principle, while neoconservatives merely rejected certain forms of federal assistance to the needy on the grounds of what they regarded to be the deleterious practical consequences. The latter provided the American conservative movement with a way out of flat nay-saying, in much the same way that Nixon's civil rights policy provided Southern conservatives with a dignified way out their race-induced political cul-de-sac. Neoconservatives also bequeathed to American conservatism a corps of experienced technocrats accustomed to holding public office and experienced in the dark arts of designing, implementing and evaluating policy. On the whole the hitherto marginalised American right had conspicuously lacked such skills. The neoconservatives' activities and neoconservative journals such as The Public Interest added the muscle of policy-making expertise and of specific proposals to National Review's relatively abstract lucubration and ideologically-driven philosophising.
The one partial exception to the foregoing was of course the neoliberals. Nevertheless, even if in policy-making terms the neoliberals had mostly circumscribed themselves to economic affairs – ending the draft was the conspicuous exception to that rule only because it had across-the-board support from the right and the left– the clash with the neoconservatives swiftly followed Nixon’s accession to office and signalled the beginning of a never-ending quarrel that, during the Californian’s tenure in office, led to mutual negation and paralysis. For in the end, as the sorry fate of the Family Assistance Plan clearly shows, the continuous infighting between neoliberals and neoconservatives by default strengthened the liberal status quo. Yet, if Nixon’s conservatives were unable to effect significant alterations in actual policy, their critique of the Great Society and their attempts at welfare reform did succeed in altering the regnant policy discourse. After Nixon, accepted assumptions and the direction of policy inertia switched from the expansionist impetus of Lyndon Johnson’s day towards cutting and limiting federal assistance.

Both Richard Nixon and the conservative movement were well aware that changing the dominant climate of opinion required more than short-term tinkering with the activities of the federal government.15 As George McGovern’s Democrats threatened to, a new administration could revive affirmative action, replace military spending with expansions in welfare provision, and perhaps even resuscitate Bretton Woods. The American right-wing had invested most of the post-war years bemoaning the existence of a powerful class of intellectuals, senior civil servants, university professors and journalists responsible for the hegemonic dominance of liberal assumptions. By 1968 conservatism’s adversaries were, according to Nixon, his own to-the-death enemies. Therefore, as president he set out to change what he and conservatives regarded as a deplorable state of affairs. The main beneficiaries of Nixon’s longer-term plans were the conservatives gathered around the American Enterprise Institute. Between 1969 and 1972 the administration set up remarkably

secretive and immensely successful arrangements to channel funds, provide gravitas and enhance the influence of the only conservative organisation devoted to connecting conservative advisors and analysts with serving federal office holders. Nixon’s inner demons drove the president to personally sponsor an all-out effort to transform a previously half-dormant, rather inefficient outfit into an organisation capable of rivalling the Brookings Institution – which had long obsessed both Nixon and conservatives. Initially the administration’s efforts focused on persuading the existing stable of conservative donors towards supporting the AEI and away from rival outfits, and this effort subsequently expanded to include other non-ideological corporate donors. To be sure, the administration’s efforts greatly benefited from the sudden interest in the proposals of American conservatism on the part of the business community, which had hitherto exhibited bland contentment with liberal arrangements. As Nixon navigated through stagflation and civil unrest, businessmen and corporate managers began to feel the pain of both economic contraction and the intensification of attacks from the left: as a consequence corporate America turned to the right.17

As well as business’s disquiet, the success of Nixon’s initiatives was notably helped by the Institute’s own stand and style. As was the case with all the established conservative sub-families and the neoconservatives, AEI’s objectives and strategy had steered well away from conservatism’s usual stridency and outspokenness. The marginalisation of conservative mores and AEI’s own relatively modest scale had nearly led to its dissolution as Dwight Eisenhower reached the White House in 1952. The Goldwater debacle of 1964, with which the Institute was intimately associated, resulted in considerable discredit and, still worse, threatened AEI’s very existence once again by placing it on the receiving end of tax investigations. In 1969 AEI opted to rehabilitate the placidly technocratic imprimatur that its director, William J. Baroody Sr., had desperately tried to acquire before Goldwater’s

17 For an excellent recent survey see Kim Phillips-Fein, Invisible Hands: The Businessmen’s Crusade Against the New Deal (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010).
intoxicating success in the 1964 primaries. Baroody's combination of sectarian loyalty and emphasis on the appearance of technical, non-ideological policy analysis suited both the Nixon administration and potential non-conservative business donors. By Nixon's downfall the AEI's activities had ballooned into assisting more federal officers and elected officials than it could initially cater for, as well as into nationwide out-reach activities. The Institute also flourished as the acknowledged Republican 'government-in-exile' and, at long last, could rival Brookings in influence, gravitas and resources. In national terms, as Baroody expressed it, Nixon's initiatives certainly succeeded in widening the terms of public policy debate to include conservative proposals. As far as the conservative movement was concerned, AEI became the pioneer institution in a growing network of conservative think-tanks that helped to translate the conservative canon into policy and 'scientific' critiques of liberal proposals.

A collateral effect of AEI's rise upon the development of the American conservative movement was the Institute's new-found capacity to act as a right-wing centre of gravity. Up until 1968 the sages at National Review had consciously acted as the acknowledged leaders of respectable conservatism, but as AEI obtained new sources of funding it also acquired the capacity to attract conservative activists and to produce its own set of conservative proposals. By the mid-1970s the Institute had moved from being a relatively modest pro-business organisation to a rather omnivorous outfit capable of accommodating neoliberal, traditionalist and neoconservative activists who, in turn, moved quite beyond defending the narrow short-term interests of the corporate community. The phenomenon was particularly relevant in the case of the neoconservative faction. Neoconservatives and AEI staffers shared a rather distant, cool relationship with the Buckleyites, who tended to consider the neocons as interlopers with suspect sympathies for New Deal style government interventionism, and never quite forgave Baroody Sr. for snatching away the running of the 1964 Goldwater campaign. With the assistance of the Nixon (and later Ford) administrations, AEI and the neoconservatives mutually reinforced their relative weight vis-à-vis other conservative sub-families; and managed to break National Review's monopoly as spokesman for conservatism.
Tellingly enough, supply-side economics – which merged the neo-classical liberals’ taste for business-friendly regulation and tax reductions with neoconservative preference for selective government welfare spending, and which would became the basis for ‘Reaganomics’ – emerged in the AEI with virtually no participation from Buckleyite circle.\(^\text{18}\)

While *National Review* conservatives slowly faded from leading the movement and into the, otherwise magnificently rewarding, position of heroic elders, Richard Nixon fell into disrepute and universal repudiation. Needless to say, the Watergate scandal was not so much an explanation of Nixon’s fall as another symptom of the Californian’s shortcomings. Nixon endured a generation-long political career punctuated by remarkable upheavals and dark periods in the wilderness, during which he read his political obituaries before bouncing back to political prominence and triumph. His remarkable capacity for rancour and even greater capacity to generate contempt eventually killed him as a public person. Nonetheless, his role as a midwife in conservatism’s ascendancy should not be underestimated. It was the Nixon administration that first opened the doors of power to conservatives, and it was under President Nixon that conservatives threw the first shovels of sand which would bury the post-war liberal consensus. Richard Nixon, who was possessed by the kind of all-consuming ambition and thirst for what he called ‘the arena’ that are pre-requisites for truly successful politicians, was also endowed with the political intelligence and skill necessary to resurrect himself from the political graveyard to become the elected leader of the nation in the thick of a momentous crisis. And yet, Richard Nixon, as William Rusher cleverly, if indirectly, realised, did not want to lead. He wished to reach a leadership role following, rather than setting, the dominant political currents. He thus reflected voters’ New Deal fatigue and Cold War anxieties during the 1940s and 1950s. He again followed the voter’s mild contentment during the Eisenhower administration and the early 1960s. Between 1964 and 1968 Nixon successfully reined in the forces propelling the nation to the right, so as to serve his own short-term political objectives. He sought to manipulate and accommodate conservatives and liberals throughout his entire career. Only at the very end, on the verge of the precipice, was

\(^\text{18}\) Interview with Jude Wannisky, August 14-15, 2005, email.
Richard Nixon willing to follow his deeply-held conservative instincts, do away with party loyalty and attempt to re-shape the national political landscape. Where biographers and the beaux arts may see a tragic tormented Hamlet, conservatives rightly identify a Falstaff. For three decades Richard Nixon remained the unwelcome companion of the American right. He translated conservatism into the kind of common-folk populist rhetoric that made it an electable language first and a presidential discourse later. But he lacked the political bravery to turn those tremendous achievements into anything beyond piling up a few more votes. It was left to Reagan to lead the forces that Nixon had merely played with.
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Interview with William Rusher, March 21, 2006, telephone

1 Tapes and transcripts of all interviews conducted by the author are in his possession and can be made available for consultation.
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