

Pivotal to this conservative coalition was the emergence in the 1970s of a new, politicized evangelical religious movement. Led by people like Jerry Falwell and his "Moral Majority," and TV evangelist Pat Robertson, the religious New Right helped provide an organizational infrastructure for those devoted to preserving traditional values.

In this article, Lisa McGirr helps place all these forces into perspective, providing a context and analysis that illuminate the emergence of one of the most profound political and cultural movements of recent history. How did this movement become a national force, joining California suburbanites to rural southern farmers? Which parts of the new conservatism played the most critical role? And how might liberals have better answered the conservative assault?

World War II effectively ended the reformist spirit of the New Deal, but it also solidified the recast world of the New Deal Order by vastly expanding the role of the federal government bureaucracy in national life. The postwar world thus posed new challenges and new opportunities for conservatives. Conservative politicians within the Republican party had since the 1930s kept up their tirades against the New Deal, struggling on the side of "liberty against socialism." In 1946, building on public resentment toward rationing, high meat prices, and the Office of Price Administration, Republicans succeeded in recapturing Congress, bringing to Washington a group of influential conservatives. The "class of 1946" included Richard Nixon of California, William Jenner of Indiana, William F. Knowland of California, Joe McCarthy of Wisconsin, and John Bricker of Ohio. Resurgent Republicans allied with conservative Democrats in seeking to roll back wartime labor gains. They successfully contained the power of organized labor through the Taft-Hartley Act (1947), with devastating implications for the labor movement in the post-World War II era. Yet if Republicans believed that their victory in 1946 represented a mandate for *laissez faire* individualism and hostility to the New Deal, a mandate that would herald a GOP presidential victory in 1948, they were wrong. Truman's victory in 1948 and the Democrats' return to dominance in Congress that same year demonstrated that there was little electoral support for ending state benevolence. The old slogan "liberty against socialism" failed to galvanize more than a core constituency of conservatives.

The Republican party increasingly split into two factions. Its eastern internationalist wing sought containment of the New Deal, while the Republican "Old Guard," largely centered in its midwestern wing, demanded nothing less than rollback.

During these same years, right-wing intellectuals, convinced that Americans were falsely under the sway of liberal ideas, sought to alter the climate of debate. Working largely in isolation from one another, in fits and starts, these intellectuals sought to build a philosophical basis for American conservatism. They founded journals and wrote books navigating the new world that had come out of the 1930s and 1940s. No single person articulated right-wing concerns with this new order, especially the trend toward centralized state planning, as sharply

Piety and Property: Conservatism and Right-Wing Movements in the Twentieth Century

Lisa McGirr

As the new conservatism made its way across the country, it drew support from a variety of constituencies. In addition to those white Americans distressed by black demands for racial equality and a larger share of the national economic pie, conservatives appealed to the "silent" Americans Richard Nixon had galvanized—people who believed in law and order, "middle Americans" who earned less than \$40,000 a year and were fed up with protesting students and young radicals denouncing capitalism, traditional marriage, and the ethos of hard work.

The new conservatism, as McGirr shows, grew out of antistatist origins associated with the Republican Party of the late 1940s and early '50s. Intellectuals argued for libertarian policies and opposed the growth of the federal government. The John Birch Society seized on the nation's fixation with the threat of communism to suggest that anyone favoring a large federal establishment was suspect. The first stage of a resurgent conservatism came to a culmination with the nomination of Senator Barry Goldwater in 1964 as the Republican candidate for president. Arguing for reconsideration of Social Security, the possible use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam, and a return to *laissez-faire* individualism in the economy, Goldwater represented the essence of the Old Right.

But soon the Old Right was broadened to embrace new converts. In addition to those galvanized by George Wallace's attacks on racial liberals were a number of other groups. Of particular importance in this new coalition were those (women and men) who were profoundly alienated by feminism, the movement for an Equal Rights Amendment, and legal abortion—the demand that women be given the choice whether to continue a pregnancy. They were joined by straight Americans who were offended by the growing movement that called for gay rights, homosexual marriages, and the celebration of a "queer" lifestyle.

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as Friedrich Hayek. Hayek, an economist and émigré from Austria who fled after Hitler invaded his country, was hailed by many as the intellectual father of postwar libertarianism. Hayek's most important work, a small book named *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), argued that centralized state planning leads inevitably to totalitarianism. Lauding free competition and the market economy to maintain freedom, which in his eyes meant freedom from government constraint, Hayek argued that economic planning and social welfare in the hand of government would produce dictatorship. Journals ranging from *Human Events* (1944), *Plain Talk* (1946), and the *Freeman* (1950), while hardly influential voices, echoed Hayek's concerns and championed classical liberalism along with a virulent anticommunism.

At the same time that Hayek and libertarian conservatives developed their ideas, as historian George Nash has chronicled, Russell Kirk and a group of conservative "traditionalists" forged an ideology that was soon to become a distinctive segment in a burgeoning conservative intellectual movement. Kirk sought to debunk criticisms that conservatism in America was merely a defense of materialistic businessmen or the dogma of Manchesterian economics. In *The Conservative Mind* (1953) he argued, instead, for a philosophical conservatism grounded in religiosity, authority, traditionalism, and a rejection of liberal egalitarianism. Confined to the circles of academia, however, these intellectuals were scattered voices of protest against what seemed like a very real hegemony of vital center liberalism.

Despite the Right's sense of beleaguement, conservatives received a boost for a moment by the rising tide of anticommunism that swept the United States during the 1950s. Concerns over Communist gains internationally since World War II, especially the Soviet's Union's dominance in Eastern Europe, the "loss" of China in 1949, and Russia's obtainment of the atom bomb that same year, contributed to the rise of Senator Joseph McCarthy to national prominence during the early 1950s. Right-wingers who had hawked conspiracy theories since the 1930s found new audiences for their allegation of Communist infiltration into government, the mass media, unions, schools, and other vital institutions. Their audiences, moreover, went well beyond the core base of the Republican party. Catholic ethnics still linked to the New Deal, for example, found in Joe McCarthy, with his vigorous anticommunism and attacks on effeminate liberal elites, a hero.

McCarthyism, however, represented a phenomenon that went far beyond the man for whom the red scare was named. McCarthyism was not a mass movement with membership organizations or meetings but rather a political tendency rooted in popular anxieties of the postwar years generated by the cold war and broader social and cultural change. It was, moreover, a political tendency that had grave consequences for American public life in these years. Its targets were as often liberals, progressives, and civil libertarians as Communists. California's mini-House Un-American Activities Committee, for example, cast its net so widely that at one point it declared the American Civil Liberties Union a "communist front or

transmission belt organization." The same committee agitated against sex education in public schools, programs they accused of following "the Communist Party line for the destruction of the moral fiber of American youth." Yet, the all-consuming atmosphere of anticommunism in the late 1940s and particularly the early 1950s gained its strength in large part because it represented a consensus ideology shared by Democrats and Republicans alike. The marginal difference between soft and hard anticommunism was insufficient to stir the public at large to join conservative ranks and embrace its broader agenda.

Despite the stranglehold McCarthy put on the expansion of liberal goals in the 1950s, McCarthyism could not stem the historical tide that, for the moment, lay with the expansion of liberalism. The undercurrent of discontent that McCarthyism evinced with the world of the New Deal liberal state and the events of the cold war did not coalesce for political purposes. Conservatives once dominant in the halls of Washington and the nation were still playing a reactive role, seeking to stem calls for expansion of Social Security and public housing, and for civil rights and health insurance legislation. A broad segment of the American public still had a fundamental stake in New Deal social reforms.

Demonstrating the limits of conservatives' political influence even further was their loss of control over the Republican party. The political strength they had enjoyed during the early 1950s in the national Republican party through their champions Senator Robert Taft of Ohio and Senator Joe McCarthy of Wisconsin vanished by the mid-1950s. It was Dwight D. Eisenhower, not Robert Taft, who won the Republican party primary battle of 1952. Indeed, the death of Taft one year later and McCarthy's censure in 1954 left conservatives without powerful spokesmen in Washington. The triumph of liberalism was symbolically confirmed when Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren, appointed by Republican president Dwight D. Eisenhower, presided over *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. Supreme Court decisions in 1957, moreover, dismantled the remains of McCarthyism, limiting state activity against "subversion." As a result, by the late 1950s the New Deal Order with its commitment to an activist state and Keynesian economic policies seemed to be deeply embedded in the institutions of the American state and central to the nation's dominant political ideology. This seemed like a hopeless situation for the remaining critics of liberalism. Bereft of powerful spokespersons in Congress, the executive, and the media, the outlook for the Right's political success seemed bleak. It was indeed at this moment that liberal intellectuals like Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Richard Hofstadter dissected those remaining conservative impulses and organizations and described them as fanatics without a future.

How is it that history turned out to be so different from what most reasonable observers expected in the late 1950s? How did these marginalized conservatives turn themselves into a viable political movement that only some thirty years later would bring Ronald Reagan to the White House? It was a combination of changing social and economic conditions fueled by the New Deal state itself and conservatives' own strategies that eventually brought them back into political power.

For one, the late 1950s and early 1960s saw a revitalization of a newly reform-liberalism. Democrats substantially increased their majorities in both houses of Congress in 1958, and John F. Kennedy's election to the presidency in 1960 symbolized the triumph of an assertive, internationalist liberalism that had a strong faith in the ability of the federal government to manage capitalism in order to solve social as well as economic problems. This newly assertive liberalism also championed a new set of individual and personal freedoms. While the student movement antiwar protests had yet to heat up, the civil rights movement made its first mark on the national scene already in the 1950s with the Montgomery bus boycott (1956) and Little Rock school crisis (1957). By the early 1960s, with sit-ins across the South and freedom riders' journeys into the heartland of segregation, change beckoned on the horizon. While the Right had already been dissatisfied with the moderate Republicanism of Eisenhower, the election of a liberal Democrat to the presidency and the deepening penetration of liberal ideas into the nation's schools, churches, and communities created a sense of urgency, encouraging conservatives to organize against what they perceived with increasing alarm as dangerous developments.

Businessmen and intellectuals were the first to act. Perceiving their weakness within the halls of power in Washington, as well as in the Republican party, they saw the need for new strategies to make their influence felt. Some sought to effect a revolution of ideas, and the burgeoning number of conservative books and journals testify to their efforts. William Buckley began publishing *National Review* in 1955 to help usher in a "new era of conservatism." Russell Kirk followed in 1957 with the more scholarly quarterly *Modern Age* to "forthrightly oppose... political collectivism, social decadence and effeminacy." While the journals began an effort to formulate a set of conservative ideas and policies, a spate of national organizations followed suit to translate ideas into politics. In 1958 conservative Republican party politicians and business leaders created Americans for Constitutional Action to help repeal "the socialistic laws now on our books." A group of conservatives meeting in Indiana in December of the same year founded the John Birch Society. And finally, in 1960 William F. Buckley together with a group of conservative students founded Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) in 1960 to provide a vehicle for conservative youth to work for "economic freedom," "state rights," and "the destruction of international communism." Older groups also grew by leaps and bounds. The Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, conceived in 1953, held its first week-long "Anti-Communism Schools" in 1958. On the upswing in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it doubled its receipts each year. In 1961, sparked by its successes in places in the Southwest, where sympathizers were able to back their support with money, the Crusade took in over one million dollars.

These organizations, along with the resources that backed them, invigorated a grass-roots movement that had begun to mobilize in local schools and communities to reverse the tide of liberalism. In the booming Sunbelt, most especially, in places like Southern California, Arizona, and Texas, middle-class men and women organized study groups, opened "Freedom Forum" bookstores, filled the rolls of the John Birch Society, entered school-board races, and worked within

the Republican party, all in an urgent struggle to safeguard their particular vision of freedom and the "American heritage." The high-tech suburbs of Southern California, in particular, proved to be a hotbed for conservative activism in the 1960s. Here, the largely white-collar, educated, and often technologically skilled women and men embraced right-wing politics not least because they saw their own lives and the booming communities where they made their homes as tributaries to the possibilities of individual entrepreneurial success. Regional business leaders, moreover, promulgated a staunch libertarian ethos that helped to lead citizens to an unabashed celebration of the free market. At the same time, the men and women who had come to the burgeoning Southland were often steeped in a strident nationalism, staunch moralism, and religious piety that was part of the woof and weave of the communities from which they hailed. While this cultural conservatism had been tenored by an earlier linkage to New Deal reforms, it took on aggressive new meanings in the places they now made their home, sharpened by their new affluence and their discomfort with the prevalent liberalism in state and national politics in the 1960s.

The most vigorous organized expression of this conservative resurgence was the rise of the extremist John Birch Society. Its rapid growth evinced that not one but two variants of radicalism characterized the 1960s. Though derided by liberals and the national media, the organization gained strength, developing into one of only a few conservative political vehicles concerned with developing a mass base. Candy manufacturer Robert Welch, a man long active in Massachusetts Republican party politics and in the leadership of the National Association of Manufacturers, had founded the organization in December 1958. Disillusioned with the moderate leadership of the Republican party, Welch saw the need to build an organization to thwart the growth of "socialism" and "communism"—which, in his eyes, included all aspects of the welfare state whose progress, he claimed, was rooted in Communist conspiracy. He sought to develop a national mass membership organization of dedicated anti-Communist patriots who would work to shift the political direction of the nation. Choosing the name "John Birch Society" after a Baptist missionary killed by Chinese Communists, Welch linked the society to cold war events, a link that would inform its activities throughout the decade.

The Birch Society, originally an organ of an older midwestern conservatism, mushroomed in the South and West and, especially, in the rising Sunbelt. Eight years after its founding, the society drew approximately 80,000 to 100,000 members (exact membership has always been kept secret). Indeed, at its height it rivaled the peak membership strength of the Communist Party U.S.A. during the Popular Front period. Moreover, like the Communist party, the John Birch Society flourished in supportive ideological waters of "fellow travelers." In 1962 Welch stated that the society was growing fastest in the Southwest, contrasting this area with his home state of Massachusetts, where it encountered much less favorable terrain. Its members, solidly middle-class men and women, were often active in broader conservative circles. They played important roles as both rank-and-file volunteer activists and leaders of the Goldwater movement.

The John Birch Society linked an older and a newer Right. Inheriting the language, targets, and symbols of McCarthyism, the society's mission was increasingly fueled by concerns over the social and cultural changes of the 1960s. The organization profited from anxieties over social and cultural change by establishing a "Task-Force on Civil Disorder," programs to "Impeach Earl Warren," and campaigns to "Support Your Local Police." Indeed the growing number of adherents by mid-decade suggests that these appeals bore fruit. Not only were the society's set of concerns or the geographic areas that fueled its growth novel, but it also embraced a pluralist religious appeal, something the old Christian Right had refused to do. In contrast to the Right prior to World War II, the John Birch Society sought to curb the anti-Semitic tendencies its members sometimes evinced. More important, the society drew not only conservative Protestants to its ranks but a significant number of Catholics. Indeed Robert Welch, the leader of the society, claimed that 40 percent of its members were Catholics.

The John Birch Society embraced a fusionist variant of conservatism that linked libertarian economic ideas, a moral traditionalism, and virulent anticommunism. Although propelled in no small part by conservative concerns with the ever more assertive civil rights movement, it distinguished itself sharply from the "racist right" of the White Citizens' councils, States' Rights parties, and Ku Klux Klan. These organizations also flourished in the wake of civil rights gains. The first White Citizen Council, for example, was established in Indianola, Mississippi, in the wake of the *Brown* decision in 1954 and expanded rapidly thereafter. Integration, in the eyes of the Citizens' councils, represented regimentation, totalitarianism, communism, and destruction. The revived Far-Right Ku Klux Klan embraced violence and terrorism against African Americans and civil rights workers to achieve its goals. These organizations tapped into a long tradition of populist racism in the South. This politics of white supremacy flourished in the Deep South where race had been a determinant marker of populist politics through the twentieth century. While these organizations mirrored northern and western conservatives' hostility to federal control and liberal elites, their overt racism, for the most part, did not resonate beyond the Deep South. Acknowledging the narrow regional appeal of the movement's shrill racist messages, the broader conservative movement, even the conspiratorial John Birch Society, wrapped its hostility toward civil rights in a language of anticommunism, opposition to federal control, and fear of collectivism. It was this more muted and thus supposedly more respectable opposition to enabling African Americans to obtain their constitutional rights that carried the day in the conservative movement during the 1950s and 1960s.

If the formation of *National Review*, Young Americans for Freedom, and the John Birch Society were signs of a revival on the Right in the realm of civil society, conservatives were well aware that to exert significant political power they would have to gain influence over the institutions of the state. And this influence could best be exerted by gaining control of the Republican party. During the 1960s, an amalgam of conservatives contributed to the effort "to take back" the party. Utilizing the networks and experiences forged in the grassroots mobilizations

earlier in the decade, a new generation of conservative Republicans with a strong southern and western regional bent challenged the eastern wing for control of the party. And they won. In 1964, backed by powerful new centers of regional capital in the rising Sunbelt and by the deeply segregationist sentiments of white Southerners, they succeeded in capturing the Republican party for their standard bearer, Barry Goldwater, in 1964. This "takeover" signified a historic power shift in the party. The party of Lincoln, now captured by southern and western interests, would in the decades to follow become the party of evangelical Christians and cowboy capitalists.

Yet ironically, Goldwater's nomination almost doomed conservatism as a national movement. After all, Goldwater went down to monumental defeat in November of 1964. The election was in many ways a debacle for conservatives: Goldwater lost by 15,951,220 votes. Johnson won the greatest number of votes, the greatest margin, and the greatest percentage any president has ever drawn from the American people, confirming that most citizens in 1964 optimistically embraced the possibilities of the liberal promise in a period of national affluence. Goldwater, in effect, had failed utterly to reach beyond his core constituencies in the Deep South and the Southwest. And even in the Deep South, the strength of Goldwater's vote was due to his strong states' rights stance rather than his broader conservative agenda. In all, his strident anticommunism, pronouncements on "conventional nuclear weapons," and "low-yield nuclear bombings" shocked a nation already anxiously living under the threat of nuclear warfare. His unmitigated hostility to the welfare state and to Social Security failed to resonate in an era of affluence. Goldwater's rhetoric, indeed, not only failed to appeal to a broader constituency, it scared many people outright. "When in all our history," prominent historian Richard Hofstadter asked only weeks before the election, "has anyone with ideas so bizarre, so archaic, so self-confounding, so remote from the basic American consensus, ever gotten so far?" In a similar vein, one prominent Republican branded "Goldwaterism" a "crazy-quilt collection of absurd and dangerous positions." The respectable political spectrum in the 1960s shared a consensus that the federal government was needed to resolve problems that free-market capitalism could not. In a decade of liberal achievements, right-wing pronouncements on turning back the welfare state and conservatives' belief that the government had no place in redressing social and economic inequities were considered among liberal Democrats, moderate Republicans, and the left alike as "extremist," so farfetched and radical did they seem.

Moderate Republicans, as well as Democratic liberals and the Left, frequently characterized the conservative movement in the 1960s with reference to its most extremist component: the conspiratorial John Birch Society. Yet, it is misleading to equate the movement as a whole with the society. Conservatives within the Republican party certainly had beliefs that meshed well with those of the John Birch Society—virulent anticommunism, laissez faire economics, and a staunch moralism. But many right-wing proponents were repelled by the conspiratorial aspects of the Birch philosophy, and felt that Welch's erratic leadership of the

society had damaged the movement as a whole. Whereas some conservatives criticized the society's conspiratorial vision, on the other hand, conservatives from William Buckley to Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan were quick to distinguish between its leader and its members whom they considered to be "some of the solidest conservatives in the country."

Still, the "Birch" or "extremist" tag hounded the conservative movement through the mid-1960s, a constant reminder that the movement's ideas lay outside the bounds of respectable political discourse. And indeed, the rhetoric of the John Birch Society and the ideas expressed in their journal, *American Opinion*, were, despite some conservatives' claims to the contrary, extreme. At their more radical edge, they evinced a mixture of blood-and-soil nationalism and traditionalism with an antidemocratic free-market ethos. The Birch Society's calls to "impeach Earl Warren" moreover, its "scoreboards of Communist conquest," exposes of "treasonous networks in the state department," calls for "getting the U.S. out of the U.N.," and tirades against what one *American Opinion* writer asserted was the liberal "goal" of "one world, one race," "one world, one government," smacked of a zaniness that was easily lampooned by liberals. Taken together, it contributed to marginalizing the conservative movement in these years.

How would the Right be able to leave their ghetto behind and expand their influence? Two factors contributed to conservative ascendancy in the second half of the 1960s. First, cultural, social, and political changes played a major role. And second, the Right itself, by muting its own rhetoric and rethinking its strategies, picked up on these new opportunities, transforming itself into a viable electoral contender by decade's end.

A sign of the conservative reorientation in the wake of Goldwater's defeat and the new opportunities provided by the social and cultural upheavals came when a b-rate movie actor named Ronald Reagan ran in 1966 for the governorship of California, the most populous state of the nation. Reagan scored a clear victory for conservatives. Importantly, in the wake of Goldwater's defeat Reagan and other conservatives had refashioned their discourse, moving away from tirades on socialism and communism and toward attacks on liberal "permissiveness," "welfare chisellers," and "runaway spending." Reagan, a man attuned to package himself for his public, was able to sustain a right-wing politics while at the same time attracting a broader group of constituents whose loyalties were up for grabs.

Reagan succeeded not only by embracing a repackaged conservatism, but also because large-scale cultural and social changes made it easier for him to attract voters critical of the New Deal Order. The boiling cauldron of concerns about morality, law and order, and race generated in the two years between Goldwater and Reagan's campaign played into their hands. In effect, just as the Right was moving into the respectable mainstream, the mainstream moved toward them.

Reagan's victory exhibited most of the elements that have come to characterize conservatism since the 1960s. It symbolized, for example, the growing importance of the Sunbelt and West to modern conservatism. Moreover, it showed that conservative support came most easily from the newly affluent suburbs of the

region. In these places, highly skilled men and women, many of whom worked as engineers, doctors, and dentists, fueled the right-wing upheaval. Embracing modern lifestyles, these newly mobilized men and women were far removed from the status-anxious conservatives left behind by modernity that Bell and others had described. They forwarded a virulent brand of cultural conservatism linked to a staunch economic libertarianism sustained and deepened by regional business leaders.

Importantly, the increasing tilt of the Republican party Right toward the South and West amplified the unambivalent statist posture the Right had adopted in terms of defense. An older Taftite conservatism had tenored its anticommunism with concerns over state spending, including military spending. By the 1960s, however, such qualms disappeared, not least because conservatives drew their strength from a region where lives were closely linked to the cold war military-industrial complex.

The social and cultural upheavals that benefited Reagan presaged the rise of a majoritarian conservatism that would make itself felt on the national scene in the 1968 presidential election. National political contenders like Nixon and Wallace picked up on the discourse of "morality," "law and order," "welfare chisellers," and "liberal permissiveness," and rode a tide of popular middle- and lower-middle-class resentment toward the social changes of the decade. While neither Nixon nor Wallace represented quintessential Republican conservatism—Wallace with his southern segregationist, harsh antelitist rhetoric, and Nixon with his conservative pragmatism and internationalist centrism—both put forward their own brand of conservative populist lingo that spoke to some, if not all, of right-wing concerns.

By the late 1960s, the Right had made important political gains. Ronald Reagan, an unabashed right-wing ideologue, had won a resounding victory in his run for governor. Richard Nixon, a centrist Republican who courted the Republican's right wing, had gained his party's presidential nomination with the strong backing of conservatives and had won the election through an embrace of a new middle-class conservatism. And George Wallace, a law-and-order populist, had garnered 13 percent of the national vote on a third-party ticket. In effect, by the late 1960s the Right refashioned itself and gained new political respectability. News of antiwar protests, hippie youth culture, and riots in the nation's inner cities filled the evening news, and the conservative critique of liberalism resonated with an increasing number of Americans.

Already in the 1960s, the conservative revival had been propelled in no small part by cultural and social issues. A series of Supreme Court decisions that took prayer out of schools and expanded personal rights and freedoms, a growing youth culture, and women's liberation generated anxieties among cultural conservatives about the preservation of family values. By the early 1970s these concerns became ever more prominent. In March 1972, the Senate overwhelmingly passed the Equal Rights Amendment, and in 1973 the Supreme Court legalized abortion in its famous *Roe v. Wade* decision.

The rise of a new social issues conservatism had an uneven impact on the Right. On the one side, older organizations that had been so critical to the mobilizations

earlier in the decade experienced decline. On the other side, new conservative initiatives sprang up. These initiatives moved the center of activity away from the anticommunism that was so much a part of the mobilization in the early 1960s and instead embraced new single-issue campaigns as well as a newly politicized evangelical Christianity. As a result of this reorientation, the John Birch Society, an organization that had played such an important role in channeling grass-roots activity earlier in the decade, experienced the greatest decline. Despite the social upheavals of the decade, the society was running into trouble. In the wake of the conservative reorientation after their monumental defeat in 1964, the John Birch Society, with its apocalyptic utterances and its belief in a Communist conspiracy, turned into more of a liability than an aid to the conservative movement and it was increasingly marginalized.

Yet it was many of the men and women who had been foot soldiers in the Goldwater mobilization who now turned their wrath against "secular humanism." Phyllis Schlafly, who had been a prominent Goldwater supporter in the 1960s and who wrote *A Choice Not an Echo* to generate support for his presidential run, now turned her attention to the increasingly assertive feminist movement. In 1973, Schlafly created a national network to oppose ratification of the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment). In 1975 she changed the name of her "Stop ERA" campaign to the "Eagle Forum." Her organization represented one of the opening battles of a Right increasingly focused on family and reproductive issues.

The concern over sexual permissiveness, women's liberation, homosexuality, and threats to the "traditional family" that propelled the Eagle Forum also fueled the politicization of conservative evangelical Christians and their reentry into politics. Religious conservatives saw the deep social changes of the 1960s and 1970s as an assault on their values and beliefs, propelling their reentry into politics. Yet while the new crusades of the Religious Right drew upon the ideological inheritances of their evangelical forbears in the 1920s, they were also distinct in important ways. The militant fundamentalists in the 1920s were strongest in the rural and small-town Midwest and South—but in the 1970s and beyond it was the affluent suburbs of the Sunbelt and West with their huge corporate-like megachurches that would drive fundamentalism into its newly assertive political posture.

The prominence of evangelicals in politics by the late 1970s drew strength from the growth of evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity nationally. Beginning in the mid-1960s, the number of adherents in mainline Protestant denominations declined, while theologically conservative churches flourished. Many of these churches became the organizational bastions for the Christian Right's political mobilizations. Eventually, these religious conservatives succeeded not least because they built powerful institutions that disseminated their message. The Moral Majority, the Christian Voice, and Concerned Women for America, all of which were established in the late 1970s, brought their vision of religious traditionalism and a staunch economic conservatism to the halls of Congress and the White House.

The Religious Right's new prominence in Republican party politics was also boosted by a group of politically experienced conservatives who saw the social conservatives as natural allies in building a broad-based electoral coalition. A small coterie of influential conservative political operators including Richard Viguerie, Howard Phillips, and Paul Weyrich sought to capitalize on the importance of new social issues. In doing so, they tried to distinguish themselves from traditional Republican conservatives who had emphasized economic issues and anticommunism. This group, which adopted the "New Right" label, exaggerated the newness of their politics for strategic purposes. Their mobilization represented a repackaged fusion of anticommunism, libertarianism, and traditionalism. Its core organizers, moreover, had first delved into politics in the conservative revival of the 1960s. Indeed, it is interesting to note that the term *New Right* had first been used by Lee Edwards in 1962 when he proposed a conservative platform for Young Americans for Freedom. Still, the New Right's use of the term did reflect the new prominence of the organized Religious Right within the conservative coalition. Indeed, Kevin Phillips popularized the term to refer to the new prominence of social conservatives on the Right in 1975.

But the success of the Right in the 1970s cannot only be explained by the preferences, aims, and aspirations of its rank-and-file constituency nor by a group of politically savvy conservative operators in Washington, D.C. At least as essential for the new prominence of the Right in American life in the 1970s was the reorientation of American business. A segment of conservative business leaders had long been central to conservative causes. Among them, wealthy millionaires like J. Howard Pew backed such policy organizations as the American Enterprise Institute, in the early 1960s, at a time when few businessmen offered such support. He also provided significant backing for the evangelical flagship journal *Christianity Today* and journals of opinion ranging from *Human Events* to *National Review*. But in the 1970s, driven by sweeping economic changes, a much broader segment of the business community mobilized to assert their recast political interests. New conservative think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation began their work, and older ones like the American Enterprise Institute and the Hoover Institution saw vast infusions of money. The AEI, for example, which had a budget of less than 300,000 dollars in 1960, expanded dramatically in the 1970s. By 1977 it boasted a budget of five million dollars, and four years later that number had doubled, backed by six hundred corporate donors.

This new expansion of conservative institutions earned the Right increasing visibility and helped to bring antistatist ideas into the mainstream of American intellectual life and policy discussions. Additionally, a broader middle-class economic preservationism, symbolized best by California's Proposition 13 tax revolt, encouraged an increasing number of Americans to move away from an embrace of the liberal project and to search for a new political home. Suddenly, *laissez faire* ideas seemed to make as much "common sense" to many Americans as the New Deal Order had during the 1950s and 1960s.

The reorientation of the conservative movement, then, along with the social, cultural, and economic changes that marked the 1960s and 1970s, transformed conservatism from a marginal movement preoccupied with communism into a

