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Politics in America: the American Right

We are witnessing a corporate assault on all the gains that have been made over decades to achieve economic and social justice for the middle class and working class. These gains were achieved through the government activism of the New Deal in the 1930s and the Great Society programs of the 1960s, along with the struggles of popular movements such as labor, feminist, environmental and civil rights. Collective bargaining rights are especially under fierce attack and laws that protect workplace labor standards are being undermined. The freedom of unions to exist is being challenged. This is the result of a determined, coordinated, long-term strategy by an ideological movement that seeks to eventually destroy labor unions and erase the gains made by all progressive movements.

This report traces the evolution of the American Right over the past few decades. It covers Right Wing ideology, the organizations of the Old Right, and the development of the more effective New Right beginning in the 1960s. This report also explains how the Right came to successfully exploit single issues and manipulate religious faith to distract and direct middle class and working class voters to support candidates who are a threat to their economic interests. Hopefully, this summary will inform a broad discussion on how to effectively challenge and defeat the American Right.

Prepared by:

Joanne Ricca
Legislative Research and Policy Director (Retired)
Wisconsin State AFL-CIO

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Outline of Report

Origin of the Term: Right Wing

World View: Ideology

Why the Labor Movement is the #1 Target of the Right

Old Right

Origin of the New Right

Call for Corporate Action: Lewis Powell Memo

New Right Infrastructure: Early Development (1973-1976)

New Right Strategy: Building an Electoral Base

Early Major Electoral Success

Single Issue Politics

Religious Front for the Corporate Right

Gun Control Issue

Grover Norquist

Summary

Sources

Politics in America: the American Right

There has always been an American Right. There has always been some form of archconservative political activity in this country. However, the Right Wing activism of the last few decades is different. It is important to understand that the political effectiveness of the Right is the result of decades of dedicated organizing and that the Right has not been systematically challenged up to this point.

Origin of the Term: Right Wing

The origin of the term is found in French history. When France was ruled by a monarchy, all of the nobility who came before the King had to bow to the King's *right*. The peasants were required to bow to the King's *left*.

After the French Revolution to overthrow the monarchy, the people created a National Assembly. Those who were elected to represent the wealth, power and privilege of the upper classes sat on the *right* of the Assembly hall. Those who were elected to represent the workers and peasants sat on the *left*.

Over time, the terms *Right* and *Left* began to be used throughout the world to represent the different economic interests of capital and labor, corporations and workers, the rich and the rest of us. These terms also represent opposing views about who government should serve. This ideological conflict concerning the fundamental role of government is the epic battle we are facing this very day.

World View: Ideology

So that we have a frame of reference, it is helpful to briefly summarize Right Wing ideology. An ideology is a set of beliefs on which political, economic and social policies are based. For the Right, the world of the future is the world of the past – the America of the late 1800s – when business was unregulated and the role of government was minimal, except to wage war and serve corporate interests. The main points of Right Wing ideology can be summarized as follows:

- **Survival of the Fittest.** The Right believes that anyone who does not succeed or prosper in the system lacks the necessary self-discipline, or was born with the wrong genes. There are no flaws in the system or in institutions; the flaws are in the individual. Because the term "survival of the fittest" sounds too cruel, the Right has popularized the concept of "personal responsibility". That means individuals are on their own to deal with retirement security, health care, and job loss due to unfairly negotiated international trade agreements, corporate mergers and the consequences of unregulated financial speculation on Wall Street. Those who achieve wealth and power are viewed as the most fit, the product of an economic natural selection known as Social Darwinism. As of 2010, the bottom 50 percent of American households held just 1.1% of the nation's wealth, while the top 10% held 74.5% of the nation's wealth during the same period.¹ This concentration of wealth enables the rich to increase their political power, making campaign donations to elect candidates who will further expand the privileged status of the top 10%. For the Right, this extreme income inequality is a perfectly acceptable consequence of the survival of the fittest ideology.
- **Government Should Serve Capital.** The Right believes that the forces of private enterprise should run the economy. It is opposed to regulations in the interest of workers, the environment, consumers, the elderly and the powerless. However, regulations that promote and protect corporate and investor interests are essential, such as international trade agreements like NAFTA that protect capital, patents and intellectual property. The Right hated the activism of government during the Great Depression of the 1930s when job programs were created to help the unemployed and regulations were imposed on banks and corporations. The Right especially opposed the Social Security program and collective bargaining rights for workers. The Right believes public services should be privatized (corporatized), including public education. Social programs should be minimal with church-based charity aiding those in need. The role of government is basically to provide a military defense, to protect and promote business and investor interests, and to structure the economy and tax system so that income and wealth concentrate at the top.
- **Property Rights Supersede Human Rights.** The Right is determined to protect the property rights of investors and corporate owners. Russell Kirk, a major conservative theorist who wrote *The Conservative Mind*, emphasized that property ownership is what separates humans from other animals so "the rights of property are more important than the right to life." For government to order business owners to behave a certain way – such as establishing labor standards (minimum wage, overtime rights, workplace health and safety laws) and laws to protect the environment – violates the right to control your own property. Kirk opposed the notion of worker "rights" and wrote that limiting working hours and requiring periodic holidays meant workers insisted on a "right to be idle".
- **Decisions Should Be Made By The Elite.** It follows then that those who accumulate the most wealth deserve to make the decisions. Contrary to its populist rhetoric, the Right believes that the masses of people have a basic incompetence. Its theorists often refer to democracy as "mob rule." Consistent with this view, the Right will oppose any policy to expand citizen participation and create a more informed electorate – such as the Voting Rights Act, the Freedom of Information Act, voter registration at the polls, and public funding for public radio, television and the arts. The nationwide campaign to suppress the vote (of those more likely to vote Democratic) by passing state laws

requiring a photo ID for voting is an example of obstructing democratic participation. The movement to defund public education and shift taxpayer support to private school vouchers reflects this lack of commitment to a broadly well-educated population. And the main target of the Right has always been the labor movement because unions are the most powerful mass-based, democratic organizations that give the average person an organized voice in their workplace and society.

Right Wing ideology, if allowed to evolve to its logical end, will destroy democracy and promote unlimited corporate power. The growth of private economic and political power to a point where it controls the state and usurps the democratic process is known as fascism.

Why the Labor Movement is the #1 Target of the Right

From the Right's viewpoint, there are good reasons why labor unions and their members are viewed as the main enemy:

- The Right represents the interests of corporations and wealthy individuals who are fundamentally opposed to unions. Unions provide the working class and middle class with organized power to make sure that the wealth they help create is fairly distributed.
- Union members are more informed about issues that will affect their well-being and that of their families. They can discuss the real agenda of the Right and the economic threat it poses to working families. They can interview, discuss and support candidates for public office. Non-union workers in any workplace rarely gather together independently, have the financial resources to fight for their rights, or the structure to work collectively to promote their economic interests. Unions also join with other progressive organizations (seniors, women, civil rights, LGBT, environmental and consumer) to create a powerful force to effectively challenge the Right.
- Unions are a major source of funds and door-to-door campaign mobilization needed to elect candidates who will truly represent the economic interests of working families.
- The members of union households vote at a significantly higher percentage than non-union households. Depending on the density of unionization in an area, union members can have a much greater influence on the outcome of an election.

For the Right to succeed in gaining total power, it must cripple and eventually destroy the labor movement.

The Old Right

In the 1950s, the corporate Right was represented by such organizations as the John Birch Society (JBS). It produced 30-page ideological pamphlets which were largely obsessed with fighting communism. One JBS leader even declared that Republican President Dwight Eisenhower was too liberal and really a communist. The Society maintained that the fluoridation of our water was a communist plot because it would numb the tissue on the left side of our brain which would then allow us to be dominated. They predicted that then Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev would take over the U.S. by 1973 and make San Francisco his world headquarters. The JBS was also virulently anti-union. (One of the founders of the John Birch Society was Fred Koch, father of David and Charles Koch of Koch Industries. The Koch brothers continue their father's ideological crusade by donating millions to support Right Wing candidates today, including Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, along with newer front groups such as Americans for Prosperity and the Tea Party.)

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Right lost the use of communism as a reliable fear and smear tactic (though they now use the word socialism to attack any progressive initiatives.) This made their new strategy to manipulate single issues and religious faith, described later in this paper, even more essential to their success.

In addition, those in the Old Right ranged from the conservative intellectual William F. Buckley, Wisconsin Senator Joe McCarthy, the anti-Semitic Liberty Lobby, the racist Ku Klux Klan and the anti-union National Right-to-Work Committee. The Right Wing extremist Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Arizona) tried to run for president in 1964 and wrote that conservatives "condemned unions because they sought to elevate the economic status of workers beyond that which their 'mortal souls' would warrant, and also infringed upon the property rights of company owners." (2)

However, the Right during this period was viewed as a bunch of fringe fanatics and ineffective at building a mass base to influence electoral politics. They had a nagging problem. How could the Right convince the middle class and working class to vote for its candidates when Right Wing ideology is a direct threat to the economic interests of working people – in fact, the interests of a majority of people in the country?

That is where the New Right was different. It was not new in extremist beliefs, but in strategy. It has taken the Right from isolation to power.

Origin of the New Right

The origin of the New Right can be traced to 1960. Young conservatives who had grouped around Sen. Barry Goldwater took his suggestion that they form a national youth organization to train new Right Wing leadership. They felt that most Republicans of that day were too liberal and unprincipled, and the Old Right leaders were ineffective.

Approximately 100 college students took that advice and met at the estate of William F. Buckley, Jr. and formed the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). At the time they admitted that business interests contributed a major portion of their budget.

According to a 1961 magazine article: "American conservatism has recently received a shot in the arm and American liberalism a kick in the pants. Administering both is a new and fast growing national organization called Young Americans for Freedom..... Is YAF a genuinely new political voice or merely a new political organization out to repeal the twentieth century?" (3)

It was YAF that provided the training ground for many leaders of the New Right such as Richard Viguerie, and Howard Phillips. In 1964, YAF members worked on Goldwater's campaign for president which brought together energetic young conservatives from around the country. After Goldwater's embarrassing defeat by carrying only six states, Richard Viguerie took the list of Goldwater's contributors and began a direct mail political operation that was a monumental step forward for the Right. The Old Right had written in elitist publications that few read. The New Right would recruit through direct mail.

The problem was that the Goldwater list included the usual Right Wing zealots and some country club Republicans. They needed to branch out beyond that and the opportunity came with the 1968 campaign of Gov. George Wallace of Alabama as an American Independent Party candidate. Viguerie volunteered to do fundraising for Wallace and in return keep the names of his contributors. For the first time, the Right began to collect names of blue collar workers and Democratic voters who were attracted to the populist and segregationist views of George Wallace, in reaction to the civil rights movement and other societal changes at that time. Those names were added to the Right's direct mail database.

The New Right tried to take over the American Independent Party and use it as a vehicle to create a new conservative majority party. That strategy failed and New Right leaders came to the conclusion that they had to dominate one of the two major parties.

Paul Weyrich, a key strategist for the New Right, said that in the early days:

"I sat in meetings with these guys (the traditional conservatives) for years. They would come up with actually brilliant ideas. Then the question would come up: what should be done about it? And then nobody would seem to know. We are different from previous generations of conservatives. We are no longer working to preserve the status quo. We are radicals, working to overturn the present power structure in this country." ⁽⁴⁾

Call for Corporate Action: Lewis Powell Memo

At the same time that these New Right leaders were reorganizing the conservative movement, a confidential memo ⁽⁵⁾ was sent to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 1971 by a corporate attorney named Lewis F. Powell, Jr. who served on many corporate boards and was respected in elite circles. Powell was shortly thereafter nominated by President Nixon to the U.S. Supreme Court. The lengthy memo was a reaction to the immense societal changes that had occurred with movements to oppose the Vietnam War, advocate for the rights of women and promote civil rights. Powell issued a call to arms to the corporate sector to do more to defend the private enterprise system, especially by exerting influence on education and the media. The Chamber should also use "more direct political action" because "political power is necessary" and it "must be used aggressively and with determination—without embarrassment and without the reluctance which has been so characteristic of American business." He observed that "the judiciary may be the most important instrument for social, economic and political change." This memo coincided with the extensive movement-building already underway by New Right leaders. Right Wing ideologue Joseph Coors of Coors Brewing Company said that the Powell memo persuaded him that American business was "ignoring a crisis".

New Right Infrastructure: Early Development (1973 - 1976)

The key infrastructure of the New Right began to develop outside of the Republican Party in the early 1970s. Their strategy moved forward on multiple fronts:

- **Develop Independent Funding.** Key financial support for the infrastructure of the New Right came from Joseph Coors along with Richard Scaife, an heir to the Mellon Bank fortune. This early funding from Right Wing ideologues outside of the Republican Party structure provided vital seed money for the New Right.
- **Dominate and Direct the Public Policy Debate.** Create "think tanks" outside of the universities (which were considered too liberal) to produce research to legitimize and actually promote Right Wing ideology. The Heritage Foundation was formed for this purpose, to produce studies that support the elimination of labor standards, encourage the privatization (corporatization) of public services, attack the effectiveness of Social Security and Medicare, and oppose meaningful environmental protection. Almost 40 years after its creation, the Heritage Foundation continues to have major influence on the direction of public policy. As the Right became more effective in paralyzing legislative action at the federal level, they knew that progressive activism would shift to the states. So Right Wing think tanks at the state level have been encouraged and funded over the decades as well, such as the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute. The American Legislative Exchange Council was formed to push pro-corporate legislation at the state level.
- **Build Conservative Legal Activism.** Create groups such as the Mountain States Legal Foundation, Washington Legal Foundation, Landmark Legal Foundation, the Institute for Justice and the Federalist Society to gradually shift the legal system to reflect a pro-corporate viewpoint. They would use lawsuits to roll back labor, consumer and environmental protection laws and promote conservative judicial appointments. They would begin to privatize public education by promoting the constitutionality of diverting public money to private schools through taxpayer-funded vouchers. The Institute for Justice has been particularly active in challenging the Davis-Bacon Act, a labor standard which protects the wages of construction workers on publicly-funded construction projects.

- **Actively Train and Support Candidates.** Create a network to select, train and support Right Wing candidates to begin to seriously engage in electoral politics. The Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (CSFC) was formed in 1974 and headed by Paul Weyrich. It evolved into the Free Congress Foundation, but has been supplanted by countless other groups over the years. Sample fundraising letters from CSFC in the 1970s said:

"... in less than 120 days before the 1974 elections, CSFC raised and distributed \$194,000 to 71 conservative Congressional candidates in 37 states, many of whom would have lost to liberals and labor unions without CSFC emergency help...If we don't act now, liberal pro-union legislation could severely cripple our free enterprise system. Your contribution is needed now to help save our country from this liberal threat." ⁽⁶⁾

"Please send a check to the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress today. We can't delay any longer if we are to defeat the Big Labor politicians in time for the 1978 elections. If we don't act now, liberal pro-union legislation could severely cripple our free enterprise system." ⁽⁷⁾

- **Attack Liberal Incumbents.** Create "hit lists" of liberal, pro-worker incumbents and run so-called "independent" negative ads against them. The National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) was formed with the assistance of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina). Some early targets included Democratic Senators George McGovern (South Dakota), Frank Church (Idaho), Frank Moss (Utah), Birch Bayh (Indiana) and Dick Clark (Iowa)—all with exceptional pro-worker voting records. NCPAC would run ads attacking these Senators as "baby killers", distorting their position on abortion, but at the same time claim that NCPAC was not supporting their opponents. Terry Dolan (now deceased) headed NCPAC and he said at the time:

"We can elect Mickey Mouse to the Senate. People will vote against the liberal candidate and not remember why."

A fundraising letter mailed by NCPAC in 1978 said:

"The union bosses will have their troops out on election day digging up derelicts, vagrants and anyone else who will take a dollar to cast a vote...George Meany's henchmen will just drive them to the polls like a herd of blind cattle...We must stop these villains from seizing total and final control of our elections." ⁽⁸⁾ [Note: Meany was president of the national AFL-CIO at that time.]

The Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (CFSC) groomed and supported a Right Wing candidate while NCPAC attacked the liberal incumbent, with voters unaware of the connection. NCPAC and CSFC have long since been replaced by other groups, but this early tactic was critical to the defeat of a number of strong, pro-worker, liberal members of Congress in the late 1970s and 1980s—and still continues to be used.

New Right Strategy: Building an Electoral Base

The Right needed to build an electoral base among middle- and working class voters in order to take power, so they developed a "bait and switch" strategy:

(1) Create issue groups, especially around the gun control and abortion issues, to manipulate voters to support Right Wing candidates against their own economic interests. The American Life Lobby, Gun Owners of America, Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, Conservative Caucus and many, many others were formed - and continue to be created. An example of the hostility to unions is in a letter sent by the Conservative Caucus in the late 1970s:

"With access to millions of union dollars, the liberal Big Union bosses can and do buy elections. That's why we have forced busing, government subsidy of gay liberation, food stamps for students and strikers, furloughs for convicted rapists and murderers, higher taxes and more inflation." ⁽⁹⁾

(2) Create a religious front to manipulate peoples' faith in support of Right Wing candidates. Some examples over the years: Christian Voice, Moral Majority, Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, Traditional Values Coalition, Concerned Women for America, and Family Research Council. [See "Religious Front for the Right"]

Early Major Electoral Success

Using their new strategy and infrastructure, the New Right elected Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) in 1976, defeating the liberal incumbent Sen. Frank Moss (D) who had a 90% pro-worker voting record, according to the AFL-CIO. Hatch was key to the defeat of labor law reform in 1978 when the AFL-CIO almost succeeded in passing legislation that would have made the right to organize a union under the National Labor Relations Act much more balanced and democratic. Sen. Hatch led a determined filibuster against the legislation and, along with others elected by the New Right, forced the bill back to committee where it died—and fundamental labor law reform has not been enacted to this day. Sen. Hatch also helped defeat a bill that would have strengthened the right to picket for building trades union members on construction sites, which was also a labor priority during the 1978 Congress.

The legislative defeat of two labor priorities demonstrated to Corporate America that it was a new day. The New Right had developed a sophisticated infrastructure that could deliver at the ballot box and in the Congress. So corporations and conservative foundations really began to fund an expansion of that infrastructure on a massive scale.

Single Issue Politics

Candidates of the Right cannot run openly and honestly on their goal of corporate domination so it is necessary to use other tactics. One tactic is to encourage voters to make decisions based on single issues to distract from the larger picture. This is a dramatically different strategy than used by the old John Birch Society.

The following comments by Paul Weyrich, a founder of the New Right, explains:

- "In the past we conservatives paraded all those Chamber of Commerce candidates with Mobil Oil signs strapped to their backs. It doesn't work in middle-class neighborhoods. Instead, we talk about issues that people care about – like gun control, taxes and crime. Yes, they're emotional issues, but that's better than talking about capital formation." ⁽¹⁰⁾
- "In truth, a lot of people who voted for the Republican candidates positively despise the party. These voters were drawn into the political process because of their beliefs in certain issues which overrode their party preference. Of these, the three most effective for us in unseating liberal incumbent senators have been the Right-to-Life, Right-to-Work and Gun Control groups."
- "Elections are not won by a majority of people. As a matter of fact our (the Right's) leverage in the elections goes up as the voting populace goes down."

During Reagan's presidency, Weyrich said:

- "We can't win by defending Reaganomics. We can only win by pushing those populist / conservative anti-elitist themes which real people support. I am not going to ...try to explain trickle down to an unemployed steelworker in Birmingham. But that same steelworker if asked to choose between our desire to see hardened criminals punished and the liberals' defense of soft-headed judges, will be with us. That's where it's at." ⁽¹¹⁾

On a 1982 U.S. Senate race where the Right had targeted Democratic Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia for defeat:

- "Let me tell you, frankly, there are those rural people in West Virginia who don't understand Reaganomics and who are being hurt by Reaganomics and who wouldn't like it if they did understand it. If those people aren't hearing the issue of prayer in the schools in the West Virginia Senate race, then Bobby Byrd is going to be back in the U.S. Senate."

On the real agenda:

- "The alliance on family issues is bound to begin to look at the morality of other issues such as...the unjust power that has been legislated for union bosses." ⁽¹²⁾

Now the Right could distract workers into voting against their own economic interests by manipulating their concerns about certain issues. So the strategy around single issue politics was absolutely key to building the electoral base that the Right had always lacked.

Religious Front for the Corporate Right

The second part of their strategy relied on the formation of the religious arm of the New Right. This, too, is very different from how the Old Right operated. Concerning the development of the Christian Coalition and other Religious Right groups the same Paul Weyrich said:

- "This alliance between religion and politics didn't just happen. I've been dreaming and working on this for years." ⁽¹³⁾

Although a few evangelical Christian leaders have histories of Right Wing involvement, the vast majority of fundamentalists had not been involved in politics and their beliefs are not any different today than in the past. In fact, in the past fundamentalists were told that the road to salvation lay in the Bible, not in the ballot box – that to mix the secular with the sacred was sinful. They were to practice a personal morality, not a political one.

All that changed in the late 1970s. New Right leader Paul Weyrich saw the potential of expanding the Right's base among white, middle-class fundamentalists. Weyrich helped create an organization called Christian Voice (now defunct) which made its headquarters at the Heritage Foundation. Christian Voice developed a so-called "morality rating" for members of Congress based on certain votes they cast. This morality rating included the following issues that the Right opposed: the Panama Canal Treaty, voting rights for the District of Columbia, the Salt II Arms Treaty and collective bargaining rights for teachers. And some that the Right supported: recognition of Taiwan as the government of China and elimination of the Federal Election Commission.

Clearly this is a rating of Right Wing ideology, not Christian theology. And it resulted in some interesting morality ratings. Fr. Robert Drinan, a Catholic priest who was then a Democratic member of Congress, received a 0% morality rating. Two other Democratic members of the clergy in Congress also received very low morality ratings. However, Rep. Richard Kelly, a Republican who was indicted in the ABSCAM bribery scandal of that day, received a 100% morality rating, along with another who was censured for having a

sexual relationship with a teenage page.⁽¹⁴⁾ The AFL-CIO Voting Record at that time showed Fr. Drinan with an 88% pro-worker record; Richard Kelly was at 8%. The real agenda was politics, not piety.

Moral Majority

In 1979 Jerry Falwell was invited to a meeting with Paul Weyrich, Howard Phillips (who went on to head the extremist Constitution Party, formerly the U.S. Taxpayers Party) and Richard Viguerie. Falwell and other fundamentalist preachers had grown alarmed at two developments. One was a decision by the IRS to investigate their southern Christian academies due to charges of racial discrimination that could threaten their tax-exempt status. The other was an investigation by the Federal Communications Commission of a TV broadcast of one preacher who had been particularly virulent in his attack on homosexuals to see whether action against the station should be taken. The New Right leaders said they had a mutual interest in limiting government. Out of this meeting came the Moral Majority -- the name suggested by Weyrich. Jerry Falwell was the public voice for the group but Weyrich appointed Robert Billings, a trusted New Right leader, to be executive director.

A *New York Times* article in 1980 that chronicled the rise of the "religious right" said:

"The new political activism of conservative Christians arises in large part from the growth of TV evangelists....But the organization of the movement largely took shape in Washington, in the hands of men like Mr. Weyrich -- a small group of tacticians composed of former businessmen, (private) schoolmasters and professional strategists from the far-right hallways of politics." ⁽¹⁵⁾

Now they could use scripture to mask Right Wing ideology. Now they could convince sincere middle- and working class people to vote against their own economic interests by manipulating their religious faith. Now they would be beyond criticism. They could attack anyone who tried to expose the real pro-corporate, anti-democratic agenda as being anti-Christian.

They also created an umbrella organization called the Religious Roundtable to coordinate activities between the secular and religious arms of the Right. According to Ed McAteer, a Colgate Palmolive salesman who helped arrange the Falwell / Weyrich meeting, the Roundtable was funded mainly by "some gifts from businessmen." Since that time many other coordinating groups have been created.

The preachers-turned-political leaders then urged people in the pews to become politically active, that the road to salvation lay in the Bible *and* the ballot box. Paul Weyrich himself commented about this development:

- "We are sort of operations people. It has been our job to tell them [religious leaders] 'Okay here is what to do'." ⁽¹⁶⁾

Over time, the following leaders of the Religious Right have made statements which reveal the true agenda:

Rev. Jerry Falwell (now deceased)

- "Labor unions should study and read the Bible instead of asking for more money. When people get right with God, they are better workers." ⁽¹⁷⁾
- "I think we ought to take the shackles off business and get rid of outfits like OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration]." ⁽¹⁸⁾
- "We need a hundred Jesse Helms in the U.S. Senate. If a determination were made that we're going to have a benevolent dictatorship and only one person could run it ... I wouldn't have to think twice, I'd say Jesse Helms." ⁽¹⁹⁾

The Republican Senator from North Carolina, Jesse Helms (now deceased), voted to support pro-worker legislation only 10% of the time during his long tenure in the U.S. Senate, according to the AFL-CIO Congressional Voting Record.

Rev. Pat Robertson

Pat Robertson used the Christian Coalition and his 700 Club television program to promote the Right's agenda among white fundamentalist Christians. When questioned by a reporter about his strong support for U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), who is a Mormon, Robertson said:

- "We may differ on some important spiritual issues... but that does not keep me from making an alliance with Senator Hatch on the major political issues confronting our nation. When he was appointed chair of the Senate Labor Committee (in 1981), I wrote him a letter and said 'Thank God you're there!' and I really meant it."²⁰

Senator Hatch is still in Congress, though he was recently challenged by a Tea Party candidate in a Republican primary. Today, even Orrin Hatch is not sufficiently Right Wing, though he has supported pro-worker legislation only 13% of the time during his long tenure in the U.S. Senate, according to the 2011 AFL-CIO Congressional Voting Record.

Christian Coalition

Under Robertson's leadership, the Christian Coalition developed a political training manual which declared:

- "Christians have a responsibility to submit to the authority of their employers since they are designated as part of God's plan for the exercise of authority on the earth by man."²¹

The Christian Coalition strongly attacked any candidate who supports abortion rights saying this fundamental moral principle cannot be compromised. During an appearance by Pat Robertson on CNN, he was asked about his support for a stronger trading relationship between the U.S. and China, even though that country has been said to promote forced abortion as a means of population control. Robertson responded that he would not agree with such a policy:

- "But at the same time, they've got 1.2 billion people, and they don't know what to do. If every family over there was allowed to have three or four children, the population would become completely unsustainable. So I think that right now they're doing what they have to do."²²

The real pro-business agenda of the Christian Coalition was revealed. Abortion is used as an issue when it serves the larger purpose - to defeat pro-worker candidates. And it is conveniently overlooked when it serves the global trade interests of Corporate America.

The Christian Coalition was also involved in the anti-union "paycheck protection/deception" ballot initiatives. In Oregon it was paid to collect signatures on petitions.²³ These initiatives would create laws in each state to effectively silence unions and their members in the political process. The complex paperwork requirements placed on unions to use any money for political action would make it administratively impossible to raise the funds needed to communicate with union members on legislative and political issues and elect pro-worker candidates.

Ralph Reed

Ralph Reed served for several years as executive director of the Christian Coalition. Reed had been a Republican political operative on the staffs of Congressmen Jack Kemp and Newt Gingrich and Senator Jesse Helms.²⁴ When questioned about the use of issues in elections such as support for public school prayer and opposition to abortion, Reed said:

- "They are the bridge that gets you to constituencies that aren't with you on the economic issues."²⁵

This is a bold admission that the Right manipulates voters by exploiting single issues and religious faith. After serving seven years with the Christian Coalition, Ralph Reed left and formed his own consulting firm. He advised the campaign of George W. Bush, acts as liaison to the religious arm of the Right and is a corporate lobbyist.

Gun Control Issue

The Right also sees the gun control issue as a means to divert workers from voting according to their economic interests and that of their families. The Right sees it as a particularly clever way to prevent workers from following the candidate endorsements of their union, which are made based on economic interests of the members. Neal Knox, a former head of the National Rifle Association (NRA), said as much:

- "[The gun issue] is the one thing that will spin the blue-collar union member away from his union."²⁶

The NRA conducted a massive get-out-the-vote effort to elect President George W. Bush. Chuck Cunningham, a former director of voter education for the Christian Coalition, led that effort for the NRA. Before working for the Christian Coalition, Cunningham was executive director of the anti-union New England Citizens for Right-to-Work.⁽²⁷⁾

Charlton Heston, former president of the NRA, supported the National Right-to-Work Committee in 1994 when it lobbied Congress to defeat S.55 / H.R.5 Anti-Strikebreaker Bill. This would have prohibited employers from permanently replacing striking workers (an act which is illegal in other industrialized countries). Heston appealed to union members to "put freedom first" and support NRA-endorsed candidates, and yet the right to strike is a most basic and essential freedom. Heston personally appealed to members of Congress to defeat pro-worker legislation that would prohibit strikebreakers and produced a video on behalf of the National Right-to-Work Committee, which called him their "world famous ally."⁽²⁸⁾

In 1996, Charlton Heston championed the most serious threat to the very existence of labor unions. He assisted the National Right-to-Work Committee in a \$260,000 ad campaign to lobby Congress to pass a National Right-to-Work Bill which had been introduced.⁽²⁹⁾ Right-to-Work legislation would prohibit unions from negotiating any union security clause in their contracts. Union membership would be voluntary, though all workers must receive the wages and benefits negotiated in the union contract and they must be legally represented in any grievances. It has nothing to do with a right to work, but is part of a larger corporate strategy to deprive unions of the financial resources needed to effectively represent workers. Now deceased, Heston was a very effective spokesman for the NRA in distracting workers from the Right's real agenda.

Grover Norquist

Grover Norquist embodies much of the Right's ideology. He heads a group called Americans for Tax Reform and has been a leader in the anti-union "paycheck protection/deception" ballot initiatives throughout the country. During a ballot campaign in California, Grover Norquist declared:

- "We're going to crush labor as a political entity" and ultimately "break the unions."⁽³⁰⁾

He is the architect of the pledges that many Congressional Republicans have signed not to raise taxes under any circumstances, which will deny necessary funding for public programs and services.

- "My goal is to cut government in half in twenty-five years to get it down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub."⁽³¹⁾

In describing the effects of the first massive Bush administration tax cut which went mainly to the rich, Norquist bragged that the Right had put all the Democratic interest groups in a glass bottle. He said:

- "They will now have to fight each other because they think there is only a little money left. While we unite, they will fight each other. Every tax cut will make them fight each other more." He went on to say that the Right has the Left exactly where they want them, in a glass jar like fireflies. ⁽³²⁾

SUMMARY

- The American Right is determined to repeal all the progress made by the working class and middle class since the 1930s. This is when President Franklin Roosevelt vastly expanded the role of government to serve the people during the Great Depression, especially in response to a vocal movement on the Left. The first legal framework for union organizing and collective bargaining was created through the National Labor Relations Act. Reliable economic support programs such as Social Security were created and the business sector and the banks were regulated to protect the common good. Ever since, the Right has been on a campaign to demonize government and erode public confidence in its ability to have a meaningful impact in their lives. This is because the people are defenseless in the face of corporate power without government as a strong ally to protect their interests.
- Over the last 50 years the Right has been transformed from small fringe groups of John Birch Society zealots and ineffective Goldwater-type politicians, into a powerful anti-worker, anti-progressive movement to promote corporate power. The American Right of today has an extensive political infrastructure that is immensely more sophisticated and well-funded than any other period in our country's history.
- Though the modern Right developed independently of the Republican Party, it now dominates that party. This meets a major goal of the New Right set five decades ago. The Tea Party is a more recent example of a group that functions both in and outside of the Republican Party to challenge Republicans who do not embrace the radical Right agenda..
- Corporate America could care less about gun control, traditional family values or abortion (or the latest useful single issue-of-the-day), nor does it feel totally comfortable with the extremism of the religious front for the Right, but the overall movement serves corporate economic interests perfectly.
- The Right has developed an extensive infrastructure of national and state-level think tanks, legal advocacy groups, magazines, columnists, social media, its own Fox TV network and conservative commentators. They are magnified by the numerous conservative radio talk shows. All together they create an "echo chamber" that gives the false impression of a large mandate for Right Wing policies.
- The Religious Right defends its actions as the right of Christians to be involved in politics. This makes it easier to intimidate anyone who challenges its activism on behalf of the secular Right. It did not develop spontaneously out of concern for traditional values, but rather is the result of a calculated electoral strategy by the secular, corporate-backed Right.
- The opinion of any individual on a given issue should be respected. However, unions have a duty to represent workers' economic interests and inform members of any threats to those interests. Members must be alerted to the Right's "bait and switch" tactics. All voters must understand that it is dangerous to make a decision about a candidate based on a single issue, given that a movement hostile to middle class and working class economic interests is cynically manipulating emotional issues and religious faith.

- The strength of the Right should be kept in perspective. Often Right Wing candidates win by a tiny margin in close votes due to their tactics. Voters are unaware of the true agenda and often would not support the candidate if they fully understood the undemocratic goals of the Right and its goal of corporate domination of the U.S. economy and society.
- Ideas have consequences. The Right aims to repeal decades of progress in improving labor standards, civil rights, environmental and consumer protection, women's status, gay rights, public education and economic support programs (Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, etc.). The very existence of unions as effective organizations to represent the economic interests of working families is threatened. This is a sophisticated, determined, corporate-funded Right Wing movement that will not automatically be swept back by some hoped-for political pendulum. It will not dissipate on its own. It needs to be challenged and defeated.

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