SOCIAL CONSERVATIVES AND THE BOUNDARY OF POLITICS IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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University of Toronto

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2009

Abstract

This dissertation investigates social conservative activism in the American Republican Party and in four parties of the Canadian right: the Progressive Conservative Party, Reform Party, Canadian Alliance Party, and Conservative Party of Canada. While issues like gay and lesbian rights and abortion became politically contentious in both countries during the late 1960s, American social conservatives emerged earlier than their Canadian counterparts and enjoyed considerably more success. Understanding this contrast explains an important part of the difference between Canadian and American politics and explicates a key aspect of modern conservatism in North America.

The argument developed here focuses on different norms about the boundary of politics held in right-wing parties in the two countries. Norms are embedded components of institutions that codify the "logic of appropriateness" for actors within a given institution (March and Olsen 1989, 160) and both construct and regulate the identities of political actors (Katzentstein 1996). The recognition of norms has been an important development in organizational theory, but one that has never been applied to modern office-seeking parties (Ware 1996, Berman 1998).

Qualitative case studies establish that many Republicans understood both sexuality and appeals to religion as politically legitimate throughout the period under investigation. In Canada, alternatively, Progressive Conservatives saw such questions as being inappropriate grounds for political activity. This norm restricted social conservative mobilization in the party. It was only when the Reform Party upset both the institutions and ideology of Canadian conservatism that social conservatives began to gain prominence in Canadian politics. Since then, the success of Canadian social conservatives has been limited by Canada's political culture and institutions but they are now, as their American counterparts have long been, consistently recognized by other Canadian conservatives as partners in the conservative coalition.

Acknowledgements

Donald Forbes has been a wonderfully encouraging mentor and model as my supervisor. Rob Vipond and Linda White deserve thanks for reading (far too many) drafts as committee members. David Laycock and David Rayside were wonderfully insightful external readers. The project would not have been possible without the financial support of the University of Toronto's Department of Political Science and the School of Graduate Studies travel funding, as well as the Royal Bank Public Policy Fellowship. The Department of Political Studies at Queen's University provided both a congenial place to do much of the writing and funding for a final round of interviews. This project would have been impossible without the help of the many people who took the time to answer my questions and point me in the right direction during interviews.

I have been very lucky to make a wonderful group of friends during my PhD. I am much richer for the camaraderie of Victor Gomez, Celine Mulhern, Reuven Scholzberg, Luc Turgeon, Jenn Wallner, and Steve White. At Queen's Oded Haklai and Scott Matthews have been patient listeners while I've sought to balance teaching and writing. Craig Burrell, Jon Malloy, Michael Seibert, and Kevin Vaughan have all reminded me of the joys of the life of the mind at times when I'd forgotten it.

The support and encouragement of my parents, Bill and Jane Farney, has been priceless throughout my education. Janet and Ross Farney have always been understanding of their older brother's fascination with books while my grandfather, Harold Laycock, provided me with much support and an example. Most of all, I owe a debt of gratitude to my wife, Christina Attard. I would have never finished this work

without the joy she brings into my life, although it might have been finished more quickly had I heeded her advice, on our first date, to narrow my topic.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation's starting point is the observation that conservatives generally and social conservatives in particular have been more successful in American than Canadian politics over the last forty years. This observation goes to the heart of the political differences between the two countries and calls into question two classic works that are usually offered as insightful examinations of the differences between Canadian and American conservatism: Gad Horowitz's 1966 "Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation" and George Grant's 1965 *Lament for a Nation*. Both pieces argued that Canada was a more conservative country than the United States. Answering why our situation is different from the one that Grant and Horowitz described means dealing with two puzzles: how our definition of conservatism has changed over the intervening forty years and how the differences between Canadian and American politics influence the type of conservatism espoused by political parties in the two countries.

The first question – how the meaning of 'conservative' has changed since the 1960's – receives explicit attention in Chapter Two. It identifies a group of

conservatives, usually called social conservatives, who have emerged since the 1960s. They are distinguished from two older types of conservative: traditionalist conservatives and laissez-faire conservatives. For different reasons, both traditionalists and laissez-faire conservatives are hesitant to treat issues like same-sex rights or abortion as political or to allow explicit religious doctrine much role in the public square. Social conservatives, alternatively, argue that social change creates vital political questions. To them, it is entirely appropriate to address these questions from a religious perspective. To say that social conservatives represent a new form of conservatism that has contributed a great deal to our image of the United States as the more conservative country is important. But this observation, in turn, naturally leads to the question: why have they been more successful in the United States than in Canada?

This dissertation examines one aspect of the difference: the place that social conservatives have found in Canadian and American right-wing parties. Differences between the political culture and religion or political institutions of Canada and the United States are often used to explain such differences (Lipset 1990). Chapter One examines both of these claims and suggests that neither a cultural nor an institutional approach is completely satisfactory. Both political culture and institutions set important boundary conditions for politics, but a more nuanced account is needed to explain the different success of social conservatives in the two countries.

This dissertation argues that such a nuanced account should pay attention to the norms held in right-wing parties about what topics were appropriate for political debate and partisan endorsement, in addition to the broader cultural and institutional situation. The inductive development of this claim is a contribution to the study of political parties,

for the existing literature on political parties emphasizes the influence of institutions and material incentives but downplays the role of ideas, beliefs, and norms (Ware 1996, Wolinetz 2002). Chapter One explains how that the usual tools of comparative party analysis do not completely explain the differences between Canada and the United States. It then explores how the literature on ideas and norms, associated with neo-institutionalism (March and Olsen 1989, Peters 1999), presents a useful set of tools with which to overcome the shortcomings of the traditional approaches and examines the method by which such an argument can be made.

Chapters Three, Four and Five substantiate this claim in the case of the United States. There, conservatives were generally open to social conservative arguments from the time that social issues emerged as topics for contention in the mid-1960s. Chapter Three examines American conservatism from the Second World War until the late 1970s. As in Canada during this period, conservatives did not make social issues central to their self-definition. Unlike in Canada, and despite the American separation of church and state, conservatives generally accepted the social conservative concern with sexual morality and allowed that religious arguments had a place in the public square. Moreover, all sorts of conservatives shared the sense that they were outside the normal party establishment. This made them eager to build alliances between different types of conservatives so as to enhance their chances of political success as they competed with liberal Republicans (Rae 1989) for control of the party.

Chapter Four examines conservative mobilization in support of Ronald Reagan between 1978 and 1980 and the place of social conservatives in the Republican Party under Reagan and his successor, George H.W. Bush. It was during this time that social

conservatives first made their presence felt in the Republican Party in a significant way. Reagan confirmed that there existed a legitimate place for social conservatives in the party and the Moral Majority and similar organizations proved to be powerful social movement actors.

Chapter Five examines social conservatives in the Republican Party since 1993. The transition from social movement allies to co-partisans that occurred during this period allowed social conservatives to consistently keep their concerns among the positions taken by the Republican Party but has also greatly limited their independence (Wilcox 2006). It was during this organizational transformation that there was conflict, especially at the grass-roots level, over the place of social conservatives in the party. However, the early 1990s were also a period of general debate amongst American conservatives about the composition of their coalition, with foreign policy being another area where significant debates broke out. By the late-1990s these disputes seem to have been more or less resolved. Social conservatives moderated their policy demands and provided strong support for the party while other Republicans renewed their commitment to the recognition of social conservative concerns.

In Canada – at least until the late 1990s – the situation was quite different. Chapter Six examines the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. It finds that the party held a norm which defined social issues like abortion or same-sex rights as moral issues and, as such, improper subjects for political mobilization. This norm lasted from the emergence of social issues in 1968 until the collapse of the Progressive Conservatives in the 1993 election. Outside of party politics, the pro-life movement – which provided central organizations for social conservative activism during this period – was committed

to a non-partisan approach and was very internally divided, so it could offer little support to social conservatives in the party.

Chapter Seven examines the Reform Party. Here, the story is more complicated. Initially, the party's dominant approach to social issues (abortion still being the most prominent) was to declare them moral issues best decided by a referendum, not through partisan posturing by politicians. This populist preference for direct popular input affected social conservatives in a similar manner to the norm embodied in the Progressive Conservative Party. This changed during the mid-1990s, when same-sex rights replaced abortion as the dominant social issue and the party leadership's ability to enforce internal discipline declined (Ellis 2005). Reform then took a much more socially conservative position on same-sex rights than it had on abortion – a transition that marks the beginning of social conservative legitimacy on the Canadian right but also of substantial criticism.

Reform's populism and its Western roots prevented it from having a serious chance of forming the government. In an attempt to attract new supporters, Manning initiated the United Alternative project in the late 1990s. While successful in creating a new party (the Canadian Alliance) this process also made Manning vulnerable to a leadership challenge. Stockwell Day, who defeated Manning in the resulting contest, gained a significant part of his support from social conservatives. Day's downfall, the rise of Stephen Harper, and the pressures facing the Canadian Alliance and the Conservative Party of Canada are the topics of Chapter Eight. Despite the new parties' shared desire to form the government, and Day's rapid downfall, social conservatives enjoyed more prominence after the creation of the Canadian Alliance in 2000 than they ever had before. At least in part, this new prominence can be attributed to a change in the

beliefs of Canadian conservatives generally, for many on the right came to recognize the concern of social conservatives as politically legitimate.

This focus on the internal dynamics of parties is in no way to argue that questions of public opinion (and, by extension, electoral success) are unimportant. The particular religious culture of the United States is clearly an important reason for the greater success of American social conservatives than their Canadian counterparts. Similarly, any full examination of the question must deal with the much more porous organization of American parties and the resistance of the American party system to the entry of new parties (Young 2000). These considerations do not offer a full accounting of the situation, for they are of limited utility in explaining the way in which conservatives – particularly in Canada – have transformed themselves over time. To arrive at such a full accounting means incorporating some way of understanding how political actors interpreted their political opportunities and the structures within which they operate. The next chapter shows that there are good theoretical reasons to believe that examining the norms held by conservative elites will resolve these problems.

CHAPTER 1:

THREE APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Social conservative mobilization in the United States has helped to transform the Republican Party into a consistently conservative force on social issues and made social conservatism a central part of American politics. In Canada, social conservatives have been far less successful. They have not been able to achieve much in the way of policy change and, until the 1990s, were even unable to achieve much prominence within right-wing parties. This chapter sets out how the three standard approaches to the study of political parties – the sociological, the competitive, and the institutional – explain this situation (Ware 1996).

Neither the sociological nor the competitive approaches produce entirely satisfactory explanations for why social conservatism is more prominent in the United States than in Canada, though they both do explain a great deal. A better explanation is one that treats parties as bodies whose institutional form influences the directions they take within an environment defined by sociological and competitive constraints. The empirical chapters that follow establish that different norms about what topics were legitimately political are an important component to the different conservative reactions to the emergence of social issues in the two countries. Thus, a full explanation should be

rooted in a treatment of party organization that takes account of parties' informal 'ethos' (Drucker 1979), as well as its formal organizational form and the environment it finds itself in.

Such an approach to party organization draws on the 'new institutionalism' in political science (Peters 1999, March and Olsen 1984). This line of scholarship arose in response to the behaviouralism of the 1960s and 1970s, which placed a premium on quantitative analysis and generalizable theory building (Steinmo 2001). In response, scholars of international relations (Finnemore 2001, Wendt 1998) and comparative politics (Steinmo 2001) sought approaches that treated political events in their historical context and emphasized their practical significance. A renewed focus on political institutions was critical to this response and drew heavily on organizational theory developed in other disciplines (Olsen 2008).[1]

Despite its importance, this is an approach that has only rarely been applied to party politics (see Berman 1998, 2001) and never to large office-seeking parties in the era after the Second World War. Importing the nuanced understanding of organizations developed by scholars working in other parts of the discipline to the study of political parties allows for a robust and easily comparable understanding of party organization. The full version of this framework cannot be developed here, but some aspects of it – in particular, how to account for norms – are developed inductively and some of the advantages of such an approach illustrated.

[1] See, in addition to the above, Rhodes (2006), Thelen (1999), Hall (1993), and Hall and Taylor (1996) for useful overviews.

The Sociological Approach

The sociological approach to the study of political parties treats them primarily as the expression of underlying social groups and popular preferences. In the classic formulation of Lipset and Rokkan (1967, 5), parties: "help crystallize and make explicit the conflicting interests, the latent strains and contrasts in the existing social structure, and they force subjects and citizens to ally themselves across structural cleavage lines and to set up priorities among their commitments to established or prospective roles in the system." In Lipset and Rokkan's formulation, the social cleavages that are relevant to party politics are those between centre and periphery, state and church, owners and workers, and land and industry. In their 1967 essay, they find that these cleavages, many of which were most pertinent during the 19th century, underpin the party systems of European countries. Given the continued salience of such divides in Western Europe (Mair 2001), the sociological approach has continued to be vibrant there and has defined much of the comparative politics literature on political parties (Ware 1996).

In American politics the divides identified by Lipset and Rokkan – while not present with the strength of their European counterparts – are also seen to structure party politics. Divides between different parts of the country (especially between north and south) are critical. Class and the church-state divide have been relatively unimportant in the American party system, though one might well argue that race is the key cleavage in American politics.[2] In Canada, the key social cleavage has long been between central

[2] On the sociological approach and American parties see Dalton (2002) for comparative perspective and Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde (2003) for an up-to-date in depth study. Burnham (1970), Key (1955), and Sundquist (1973) are the classic sociological approaches to American parties. All of them emphasize how sociological change eventually leads to a 'critical election' and the creation of a new party system.

and peripheral regions.[3] Class conflict has been much weaker in Canada than in Europe (Brodie and Jenson 2007) and religious or occupational divisions have often been grafted onto regional dissatisfactions (Carty, Cross, and Young 2000).

One way to explain the difference between social conservatives in Canada and the United States is to focus on a social divide that emerged after the publication of Lipset and Rokkan's essay. It has been described in many different ways: as the rise of the post-industrial society (Bell 1973), as the emergence of moral politics (Smith and Tatolovich 2003), or as the emergence of a post-materialist cleavage (Ingelhart 1977). Ingelhart provides one of the most widely applied formulations of this shift. He argues that the industrialized world has been experiencing a change from an "overwhelming emphasis on material well-being and physical security toward greater emphasis on the quality of life" and that politics will be increasingly structured along these two dimensions (Ingelhart 1977, 3). In his formulation, this shift is caused by the generations born after World War II growing up in conditions free from economic scarcity or war and possessed of unprecedented levels of political skill. This causes them to hold different values than their forebears. He suggests that the emergence of post-materialism would produce cleavages in Western societies as significant as those caused by industrialization, secularization, or urbanization. The broad shift in values Ingelhart identified is linked to political controversy over the environment, feminism, and same-sex rights – the last two of which have been critical to social conservative mobilization.

As Nevitte has shown (1995), Canada is more post-materialist than the United States but more like the US than it is like any other country. Moreover, the rate of the

[3] On regional divides in Canadian party politics see recent works by Belanger (2004) and Henderson (2005), the literature on the Reform Party reviewed in Chapter 4, and classic works by Cairns (1968), MacPherson (1962), Siegfried (1966), and Smith (1985).

transformation from materialism to post-materialism is strikingly similar in the two countries. While the issues of concern to social conservatives are clearly linked to the post-materialist transformation, it is unclear how this transformation alone would be enough to explain the difference between Canada and the United States.

This is an example of a problem that most studies of post-materialism have encountered: that it is difficult to link the materialist/post-materialist cleavage to party politics in the same way that older social divides, such as the ones that Lipset and Rokkan studied, could be. In large part the problem is that the post-materialist/materialist divide does not easily correspond with the traditional left-right spectrum (Flanagan and Lee 2004). Rather, post-materialism should be seen as introducing a new political dimension to ideological space, as post-materialists can be found on both the left and the right of the standard political spectrum (Flanagan and Lee 2004). Understanding why some post-materialists would be on the right and some on the left in a particular country requires an analysis that assesses more than just political culture, but also contextual factors like the existing party system (Kitschelt 1994, 1995).

Kitschelt's work on the *Radical Right in Western Europe* (1995), which has set the framework for most subsequent attempts to deal with this problem, posits a useful solution.[4] He acknowledges that social changes create a demand in the electorate for new right ideas, but argues that the emergence and success of "new right" parties is dependent on "supply side" factors. These can include the response of other right-wing parties to

[4] Other important work in this vein includes Betz (1993, 1994), who takes a consistently sociological approach to the emergence of the New Right and Ignazi (2003), who links ideology and social structure. Norris (2005) finds, like Kitsheldt, a need to include party systems and party institutions in her account of the new right.

new demands, the political capacity of new right entrepreneurs, and the ability of a new right movement to expand beyond a single issue (Kitschelt 1995, 2).

Similar problems face another societal explanation, that the difference between Canada and the United States can be explained simply with reference to the different religious compositions of the two countries (cf. Adams 2003). In this account, the United States is a much more religious society than Canada and, so, there is a much larger part of the electorate that is amenable to socially conservative appeals.[5] Religious practice is always a difficult thing to measure precisely, but Canadians are one-half to one-third as likely to attend church on a given week as Americans (most studies put Canadian attendance at around 20% of the population) and far more Canadians than Americans are unattached to any organized religious body (Noll 2006, 247-249). Regarding the religious group most likely to be mobilized by social conservative appeals, Canada has far fewer evangelical Christians than the United States does – most estimates find that 10-12% of Canadians are evangelical Protestants while 25-33% of Americans are (Hoover et al. 2002, Reimer 2003). Hoover (1997) also established quite conclusively that American evangelicals are much more likely than their Canadian counterparts to hold right-wing views on both moral and economic issues – a fact that would make them much more likely to support the type of conservatism espoused by the Republican Party.

One reason to doubt that it is simply number of adherents that creates a favourable environment is the situation of Roman Catholics in the two countries. Canada has about twice as many Roman Catholics per capita as the United States does (approximately 40% versus 20%) (Noll 2006). As Cuneo (1989) has shown, even Catholic opponents of

[5] While the next chapter will show that it is not necessary to be religious to be socially conservative, it is true that most of the popular support for social conservatism does come from religious believers.

abortion have had great difficulty in mobilizing other Canadian Catholics to their cause. In the United States, by contrast, Catholic intellectuals and organizations have been very active on the right (Allitt 1993) and Catholics have slowly become more Republican over the last forty years at the mass level.[6] The reasons for this difference are complex and outside the scope of this dissertation (having much to do with Quebec's Quiet Revolution and the breakdown of the New Deal coalition in the United States), but the situation of Catholics does point to the fact that pre-existing political commitments and political structures have a powerful impact on how religious belief is translated into political action.

This does not take away from the simple fact that social conservatism, insofar as it is tied to religious belief, can attract far more voters in the relatively religious American electorate than it can in the relatively secular Canadian one. This is an important factor, but, as the situation of Catholics suggests, the situation is more complex than simply electoral composition. Just as tellingly, in the period just before social issues emerged – the late 1950s and early 1960s – Canada was as religious a country as the United States, if not slightly more so (Noll 2006). There were opportunities, albeit short-lived ones, for appeals like those of the religious right to be made in Canada, but they were not made. If it was simply a matter of beliefs in society being appealed to, the best opportunity for politicians to gain by making social conservative appeals in Canada was in the late 1960s, not in the early 2000s when the Canadian Alliance actually did make such appeals a central part of its strategy. In the United States, one would have expected a fairly constant pattern of social conservative mobilization since the 1960s – precisely what has

[6] Although this mass movement should be understood more as the result of the suburbanization and integration of the Catholic population from the 1950s onward rather than as a movement driven, in sum, by social conservatism (Wald and Calhoun Brown 2007).

occurred – so the question becomes how to explain how Canadian trends played themselves out and how consistent the American experience has been.

As with post-materialism, then, a straightforward contrast of religious sentiment does not fully capture the difference between the two countries – though it does capture much of it. The problems of incorporating religion and post-materialism are special cases of a problem that has long bedeviled students of North American parties. At least in contrast to Western Europe, where parties can often be identified as holding to one side or another of sociological divides, North American parties have tended to broker such differences (Epstein 1967).[7] As a result, scholars have tended to emphasize the influence that competition among parties for voters on both sides of the various sociological divides has had on the structure of party politics, rather than the presence of divides alone. As we will see below, this is not a completely satisfactory answer either, but it does take us much closer to a full solution.

The Competitive Approach

The difficulty in tying social groups to political parties has led those interested in North American parties to emphasize competition among parties, rather than sociological influences, in their efforts to understand political parties here.[8] Such accounts can be rooted in rational choice theory or not, but in either case they take the primary impetus

[7] Third parties like the Reform Party and New Democratic Party in Canada are a partial exception to this generalization.

[8] In Canada, much of the brokerage model can be seen as a competitive theory (Carty, Cross, and Young 2000; Brodie and Jenson 2007; and Clarke et al. 1980). For the United States see Aldrich (1995), Schlesinger (1991), Epstein (1967), and Pomper (1992).

behind party behaviour to be the desire to win votes and office.[9] Competition between parties is, of course, a feature of the other approaches too. In the sociological models reviewed above, competition between parties goes a long way towards explaining which divides are relevant and which are not. In the institutional models reviewed below, competitive pressures tend to force parties within the same system to converge towards similar organizational forms. Neither of these two approaches, though, claims that so much can be explained on the basis of the insight that parties compete with each other (cf. Downs 1957, Schlesinger 1991).

It clearly matters a great deal to a party's behaviour how many competitors it faces and the relative ease with which new parties can enter the field. While simply counting the number of parties is to paint with a very broad brush indeed, it would suggest substantial similarity between the situation facing Canadian right-wing parties and the Republicans. Situations in which two major parties are competing for office will see each party converge on the median voter so as to attract the greatest possible number of adherents to their cause. Situations in which more than two parties are competing will see less striking convergence, but it will still occur to some degree (Downs 1957). While classification schemes differ, the Republicans, Progressive Conservatives and the new Conservative party all sought office in situations where the pattern of competition would be expected to led to convergence.[10] The Reform Party/Canadian Alliance, under this formulation, would behave differently from the other parties under consideration because,

[9] From the rational choice side, important texts include those of Downs (1957); Strom (1990); and Adams, Merrill, and Grofman (2005). For canonical non-rational choice works that stress competition see Kircheimer (1966), Sartori (1976), Duverger (1954), and Epstein (1967).
[10] See Ware (1996) and Wolinetz (2002) for reviews of this literature.

as a minor party, it would be expected to be more ideological than either the Republicans or either version of the Canadian Conservative party.

If it is easy for a new party to enter the system it can be expected that such entrants would be the vehicles through which change occurs.[11] This sort of change is precisely what happened in Canada with the Reform Party, but is almost impossible in the United States. As Flanagan (1995, 1998) has shown, it was existence of a particular set of circumstances that created the opening for the Reform Party to emerge onto the federal scene. There are usually strong barriers to third party success in Canada but a series of PC mistakes had left conservatively minded voters looking for an alternative in the early 1990s. Reform exploited this opening on the right to its fullest, dramatically changing the nature of conservatism in Canadian party politics.

Importantly, the opportunity for a successful third party did not create a group of conservatively minded voters and activists, it only gave them a more prominence than they could have had within the PC party (Flanagan 1995, 1998). Social conservatives – although not a constituency that drove the emergence of the new party – benefited greatly from this change. The strategic opportunity that granted Reform success as a new party entering the system also meant that it would be too weak become the government with its initial support base. Much of the story of Canadian conservatism in the decade after 1993 was sorting out to what extent conservatives were willing to dilute their ideology so as to win office after the initial shock of the Reform Party's entry transformed the Canadian party system. As we shall see, social conservatives managed to gain prominence on the Canadian right even as the organization they used as a vehicle became more moderate.

[11] The influence of new parties entering a party system has been the subject of much recent work from rational choice theorists. See Adams, Merrill, and Grofman (2005).

The history of the Reform Party, Canadian Alliance, and Conservative Party of Canada illustrates an important theme in the competitive approach to parties: parties can seek different goals. In Strom's (1990) formulation, parties can be seen either as seeking to win office, to garner votes, or to articulate policy demands. The parties that emphasize the first two goals will down-play ideological consistency and, instead, seek out the median voter and whatever the popular position is at a given time (Downs 1957). Parties that emphasize the latter goal, as many European parties do (but only the New Democrats have consistently done amongst major North American parties) will be less concerned with winning votes or taking office than with staying faithful to a set of ideas.

Such an approach is problematic because it is the major party Republicans and not the third party Reformers that have consistently taken socially conservative positions – that have, in other words, pursued an ideological strategy. Any explanation of the similarities in how social conservatives were received by the Progressive Conservatives and new Conservatives, situated in two two-and-a half party systems, and in the Reform Party, a third party in a two and two-halves party system, must also be able to account for the position of social conservatives in the Republican party.

Some of this accounting can be accomplished by acknowledging the electoral gains the Republicans stood to make by articulating social conservatism. Religious white Southerners were frustrated with Democrat policies on civil rights from the 1960s forward and distressed by the social liberalism of their traditional party from the 1970s onwards. The conservative wing of Republican Party had long had hopes of gaining ground in the South, where Republicans had been very weak since the Civil War. Social

conservative appeals directed to the South were key in transforming that area into a Republican stronghold.

Absent the entrance of a third party, there were fewer opportunities for social conservatives in Canada. Two areas of traditional Conservative weakness – Quebec and metropolitan centers – are the most socially liberal parts of the country, so there was no potential electoral benefit to such an appeals. A third group of voters that Conservatives have tried to attract through socially conservative appeals – new Canadians – might be more amenable to such appeals than Quebecers or other urban residents but, to date, have not responded in significant ways to social conservatism.

Making appeals on social issues, then, offered the Republicans considerable potential electoral gains. This seems less the case with Canadian conservatives, for the groups they sought to woo were unlikely to find social conservatism appealing. This, combined with the greater over-all religiosity of Americans, goes a very long way to explaining the difference between Canada and the United States. Like the sociological approach, however, it presents a somewhat static picture of the two countries. For the United States, this does not pose major problems – social conservatism in the Republican Party can be portrayed, accurately, as a consistent strategy to attract Southerners (and some white working class northerners) who became disaffected with the Democratic Party during the 1960s. Why the party would continue with such appeals once these groups became loyal Republicans is another matter, but one that can be accounted for by the need to encourage turnout or their strength in particular regions. It is less satisfactory as an explanation for the Canadian situation for, as with the sociological approach, it is

unclear why the mid-1990s were a more favorable time for social conservatives than the 1960s and 1970s.

At a theoretical level, the deeper problem is that this approach poses is that of treating parties – which are very large and diffuse organizations – as having clear and uncontested interests. While this may function as a reasonable assumption for construction of general models, it is a generally untenable basis for the examination of specific parties where much of the politics at play are debates over what actions are genuinely in the party's interest. Some competitive theories attempt to solve such problems by arguing that what is needed is an accounting of the competition within parties as different groups try to move the party in the direction that they prefer (Aldrich 1995, Schlesinger 1991). Especially for large office-seeking parties, an account that explains how a particular group or faction is able to assume leadership is clearly crucial. To make such a move, however, is to begin to treat parties not as unitary actors driven by sociological divisions or the competitive urge but as institutions in their own right. It becomes critical to understand, in a rich and nuanced way, how the institutions of a given party structure the actions of those who belong to it. This need brings us to the third, institutional, approach to parties and to the set of factors that shape the environment and goals of the actors inside them.

The Institutional Approach

A third approach to the study of political parties treats them as institutions in their own right. They are, of course, influenced by external factors such as popular opinion and the nature of the competition they face, but they are autonomous. Political parties are not monolithic actors but, rather, the institutional setting for debates and competition between different groups of partisans.[12] In this account, it is by understanding how a party is organized that we can come to understand better the way that it behaves within a given political culture and party system.

The American parties are similar to Canadian parties insofar as they are not mass parties (McSweeney and Zvesper 1991), but they differ with respect to almost every other organizational feature (Young 2000). Indeed, from a comparative perspective American parties sometimes scarcely seem to be organized parties at all (Katz and Mair 1994).[13] Organizationally they are "disparate, diffuse, [and] decentralized" (Eldersveld and Walton 2000). Members of Congress and Senators have a great deal of autonomy from the party's organization (Eldersveld and Walton 2000). Potential presidential candidates, in recent times, have generally drawn on those personally loyal to them rather than on members of the party establishment for support (Wattenberg 1991). Taken together, this reality has led some to argue that American parties are in clear decline as organizations (Wattenberg 1990) and that they are better treated as confederacies of many different ideologically and geographically defined factions (Katz and Mair 1994).

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[12] The sociological and competitive approaches also pay attention to party institutions, of course, but they tend to treat them as secondary factors. For comparative work that treats the institutional configuration of parties as central see Panebianco (1988), Katz and Mair (1994), Kirchheimer (1966), von Beyme (1985), and – in some respects – Duverger (1954). This approach originates with the work of Ostrogorski (1964) and Michels (1915).

[13] Though Ware (1996) cautions that the Republicans, from such a perspective, appear far more organized than the Democrats.

Such a statement of party decline and weakness can certainly be overstated (Coffrey and Green 2007). Events over the period examined here, especially from about 1980 onwards, pushed American parties back towards a more tightly integrated and disciplined model of organization. As a result, evaluating precisely where the Republicans are on a scale from loosely to highly structured at any given time is a real scholarly challenge.[14] What is important, though, is that the Republican Party is far less disciplined and far more porous than its Canadian counterparts. One indication of the weakness of its organization is that a good part of the cohesion of the Republicans is rooted not in formal organizational cohesion but in ideological agreement.[15]

This situation gives outside social movements and policy entrepreneurs considerable opportunities to gain influence within the Republicans. Not only do they have access, but – given weak party discipline – they can pursue a piecemeal strategy of winning influence over a member of Congress or a Senator one at a time. Such influence can be gained either through conventional lobbying or through organizing in an electoral district to gain control of the party organization in that district (Wilcox 2006). There is no need for outside groups to pursue an 'all or nothing' strategy and the party's leadership has only a very limited range of tools with which to control activity at the lower levels of the party.

Canadian parties are – at least in contrast to their American counterparts – centralized organizations.[16] They are tightly disciplined parties operating in a Westminster parliamentary system. This combination gives the party leader enormous

[14] For efforts see Maisel (2002), Herrnson (2002), and Cohen and Kantor (2001).
[15] On this point see Layman (2001), Skinner (2007), and Butler (2007).
[16] See Carty (2002); Carty, Cross, and Young (2000); Brodie and Jenson (1988); Perlin (1980); Wearing (1981); and Whittaker (1979).

power in decisions about personnel, policy, and strategy. This strength is compounded by the increasingly professionalized staff that supports the party leader but which is available to the rest of the party only in a much more limited way (Carty, Cross, and Young 2000). This disciplined parliamentary party is the only part of the party that can really be said to exist between elections, for the extra-parliamentary party is a short-lived campaigning device (Wolinetz 2002). The environmental pressures that cause convergence on this form of organization are great. Even the Reform Party, which initially sought to be less bureaucratic and less partisan, was eventually forced to conform to this model (Ellis 2005).

Viewed from below, Canadian parties seem only weakly attached to society. Partisan loyalty is quite weak[17]and there is only a limited connection between either partisanship or party organization between the provincial and the national levels (Blake 1985). This combination has led to Canadian parties being classified as cadre parties (Wolinetz 2002), as franchise parties (Carty 2002), and as brokerage parties (Meisel 1963; Carty, Cross, and Young 2000). For our purposes, the nature of Canadian party organization means that Canadian political parties are disciplined on questions of both office and policy, so that the views of the leader are critical to the position that the party takes (Carty (2002) following Epstein (1964)). The formal organization of Canadian parties, therefore, confronts groups like social conservatives with a clear challenge: the party's leadership has firm control of the agenda. Getting a social conservative position onto a party's agenda means convincing that party's leadership that it ought to be accepted. For, without that acceptance, only grassroots mobilization strong enough to unseat a leader could hope to put new issues on the party's agenda.

[17] On this point see Farney and Levine (2008), Kanji and Archer (2002), and Gidengil (1993).

This is not to say that Canadian parties are completely monolithic. As Perlin (1980) shows regarding the Progressive Conservatives and Ellis (2005) shows with respect to the Reform Party, such formal unity is sometimes not fully realized. Factions do sometimes form, leaders are sometimes challenged (if often informally), and issues are placed on the agenda against the wishes of the leadership or in the face of what seems the electoral self-interest of the party. The question becomes which factions, with what type of challenge, on what type of issues, successfully challenge the leadership and which (the vast majority) are only short-lived tendencies.

Answering such questions means that it is necessary to do more than classify a party as franchise, cartel, cadre, or mass party (to mention only a few of the classic distinctions). Rather, it is necessary to work within a framework that allows both comparative insights and a nuanced accounting of internal party dynamics. For the purposes of this work, the best way to achieve this is to adopt the some of the insights of those students of comparative politics engaged in 'the new institutionalism' to the study of party politics. This school of thought, though it has earlier origins, is most clearly expressed March and Olsen's work (1984, 1989, March 2008). Their project has been especially crucial in expanding our definition of organizational rules. For March and Olsen (1989, 160):

> Politics is organized by a logic of appropriateness. Political institutions are collections of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate behaviour in terms of relations between roles and situations. The process involves determining what the situation is, what role is being fulfilled, and what the obligations of that role in that situation are….When they [members of an institution] encounter a new situation, they try to associate it with a situation for which rules already exist.

This "logic of appropriateness" is contrasted to the "logic of consequence" inherent in rational choice theory which emphasizes calculation and the expression of preferences (March and Olsen 1989, 160-162). Instead, action within an institution is about questions of correct identity, obligations, shared assumptions, and duties. March and Olsen argue that the latter is far more common because the operation of a large institution depends on actors, most of the time, acting on the basis of a collectively held understanding of what their obligations and duties are. If actors in an institution stopped to consider the consequences of every one of their actions, very little would ever happen.[18]

Katzenstein builds on March and Olsen's ideas and differentiates between two ways in which norms can influence politics:

> In some situations norms operate like rules that define the identity of an actor, thus having 'constitutive effects' that specify what actions will cause relevant others to recognize a particular identity. In other situations norms operate as standards that specify the proper enactment of an already defined identity. In such instances norms have 'regulative' effects that specify standards of proper behaviour. Norms thus either define (or constitute) identities or prescribe (or regulate) behaviour, or they do both (1996, 5).

For our purposes, the central question in the reception of social conservatives concerns the appropriateness of their claims – were they asking political questions in an appropriate way, as membership in the Progressive Conservative or Republican parties (for example) implied. Social conservatives were rarely involved in full-scale debates with other conservatives about what constituted the political parties in which they were involved. Indeed, they seem to have taken the partisan organizations that structured their activity as given. What was important, though, was what they and other conservatives

[18] For a blunt critique of the idea of the concept of norms see Jackman and Miller 2004.

thought were appropriate topics for political parties to address. It is on this, regulative, effect that this dissertation focuses.

A point Katzenstein relegates to a footnote must also be brought to the foreground: "One of the main difficulties in making the sociological approach of this book attractive for scholars…lies in the intuitive equation of the concept of norm with morality." (1996, 5). To argue that an explanation rooted in norms necessarily puts interests and principle into conflict is to misunderstand the concept of norm in a profound way. Rather, what is argued here is that the norm about the boundary between politics and morality held in conservative parties both constituted the conservative identity and defined certain behaviors as appropriate for those holding that identity. They help to define the actors who have interests to be pursued and help to identify the constraints on how those actors can pursue their interests. Identifying these features helps us to understand how conservative leaders viewed mass beliefs and the nature of the competition they faced with other parties; it does not discount such factors. Indeed, one would hardly expect an institution to survive for long if the rules that defined it were too out of touch with its environment or weakened it in relationship to its competitors. At the same time, given the path-dependent logic inherent in this type of argument, norms may embody a view of what is in the actors best interest that is no longer entirely accurate.

It is important to note that norms are embedded in specific institutions. This differentiates them from a closely related concept that historical institutionalism refers to as 'ideas'. Ideas are seen as "abstract; systematic and coordinated; and marked by

integrated assertions, theories, and goals" (Berman 1998, 21).[19] Ideas, for historical institutionalists, interact with institutions and interests (Berman 2001; Blythe 1997, 2002). The claims of social conservatism encountered an already existing set of beliefs about what it meant to be conservative. These beliefs were often not "abstract; systematic and coordinated" (Berman 1998, 21). Rather, as we shall see, they were often rather inarticulate, unsystematic, and simply taken as given parts of particular institutions.

The contrast with ideas helps to clarify two other features about the nature of norms. Because the beliefs about the boundaries of politics examined here were embedded in institutions, moments of institutional change are also moments of transition in norms. These opportunities were tied to changes in leadership and to the questioning of existing organizations as much as to changes in beliefs. Second, the norms that this dissertation examines were fundamentally bound up with questions of appropriateness and legitimacy. Until the institutions of which they were a part of broke down, the norms that defined appropriate action within those institutions were not new notions trying to gain entry, but established parts of the status quo. Indeed, the argument is that, in Canada, the norm embedded in the Progressive Conservative party was a real barrier to social conservative mobilization.

Often not completely explicit but none the less apparent in party discussions and politician's reminisces, the existence of particular norms about the boundary between the personal and the political helps to explain differences in the timing and character of social conservative mobilization in Canada and the United States. Getting at these notions, though, is somewhat challenging methodologically. It is to the questions of how to

[19] See also Checkel (1997), Kacowicz (2005), and White (2002). For the roots of this work see Katzenstein (1996) as well as Goldstein and Keohane (1993). For a review of the somewhat different way in which sociologists apply the concept see Finnemore (1996).

establish the empirical influence of norms and the degree of certainty with which one can evaluate that influence that we now turn.

Methodological Considerations

There are good theoretical reasons to think that the beliefs held by party elites about the boundaries of politics are an important factor in understanding the different place of social conservatives in Canadian and American party politics. This is not to suggest that cultural cleavages or competitive pressures are not important, but that they are unable to fully explain the variation between and within the countries this study considers. The task of the rest of this dissertation is to move this argument from a condition of being interesting and plausible to one of being interesting and, if not proven (a difficult word for social scientists), at least substantiated. Planning how to undertake this process, for the writer, and evaluating whether it succeeded, for the reader, is bound up with questions of methodology.

The descriptive aspect of this dissertation is, in one sense, methodologically straightforward. It entails identifying moments when social conservatives attempted to influence party politics, describing the debates and interactions that occur around these episodes, and placing them in a sequence. While collecting data on some of these episodes is difficult – for how are we to know what really went on behind the scenes? – this task can be accomplished through a fairly standard political historian's combination of archival research, interviews, and the examination of relevant published materials.

The chronicling aspect of the study is methodologically uncontroversial but, in practice, quite difficult. And, it should be acknowledged in advance that gathering

information from these sources was not as completely successful as might have been hoped. In Canada, archival material was relatively plentiful, published material (especially Hansard) gave a representative selection of the views of major players, and a wide selection of actors were generous with their time and gave interviews. In the United States, by contrast, the relevant archival materials were widely scattered, as were the speeches and accounts of key players. Further, interviews with those inside the party were difficult to come by (though movement activists did offer many insights). This situation is unfortunate, though it has been partially rectified through the use of the very extensive secondary literature on social conservatism in the United States. As a result, the Canadian chapters offer a novel empirical investigation while the American chapters are in keeping with standard scholarly opinion on the topic.

By carefully comparing the narratives presented by interviewees with that constructed out of archival material and the work of scholars and journalists we can go a long way towards describing and understanding specific phenomena in discrete historical circumstances. Care must be taken to balance the biases inherent in the viewpoints of different sources, and no single source can ever be completely relied upon, but wherever the situation can be examined through overlapping sources (preferably of different types) there can be reasonable confidence in the resulting account.

On its own, however, this method is unable to evaluate the causes of those phenomena with the rigorousness or theoretical applicability now expected of social scientists – standards now so embedded in the discipline as to be seen as defining a good argument (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). Developing techniques for qualitatively grounded arguments to meet these standards has been the concern of a growing literature

in political science in the last decade. Many scholars, seeking to articulate something like a traditional approach, have defended what has been called causal-process observation (Collier, Brady, Seawright 2004; McKeown 2004) or process-tracing (George and Bennett 2005). They have established that causation can be examined not only by seeing variation between cases, but also by examining the mechanisms and historical processes within a given case over time.

As the preceding argument has attempted to show, comparison between the four cases under consideration can suggest some problems with existing theories rooted in culture and institutions and make plausible the conclusion that norms matter. However, the number of cases is not high enough nor the variations between them clear enough to allow causal claims of a stronger nature on the basis of between-case comparisons. Rather, a much stronger and more clearly specified account can be offered by examining the internal sequence of each case.

This is especially so because the most problematic aspect of the situation being examined here is not so much the difference between Canada and the United States – for which several explanations are possible – but arriving at an explanation for the difference that can also account for the evolution within the cases as time passed. Such an account must, necessarily, be historically driven. For example, it cannot treat the transition from the Reform Party to the Canadian Alliance as the change from one case to another, but as a historical transition that had effects on later conservative activism in Canada. This can only be achieved by paying attention to the internal dynamics of parties as they compete for office in a given social setting.

Conclusion

Arguing that understanding the norms that made up part of what it meant to be a conservative in Canada and the United States, at least in this case, is not meant to discount explanations rooted in the sociological or competitive traditions. Indeed, the historical treatment that follows shows that such an argument would be incorrect: the institutional power held by existing elites, the influence of public opinion, and the threat posed by competing (or potentially competing) parties all influenced the place social conservatives would find in the two countries. It is also the case that how key actors saw their situation, the meanings they attached to their actions, and whom they saw as legitimate political allies all also had an influence. To understand this latter set of factors is to understand the norms of appropriateness at work within conservative parties.

The fact that not all conservatives are social conservatives is central to this argument. The next chapter analyzes modern conservatism and maps out three tendencies within it: traditionalist, laissez-faire, and social. Each of these types of conservative views the changes in social mores over the last forty years somewhat differently. Indeed, many laissez-faire conservatives and some traditionalists are quite opposed to the social conservative agenda, though their reasons for this opposition differ. Understanding these divisions – and examining how different groups of conservatives worked them out within political parties – requires the historical examination carried out in the rest of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

TRADITIONALIST, LAISSEZ-FAIRE , AND SOCIAL CONSERVATIVES

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the differing social divisions, party systems, and party organizations of Canada and the United States. It concluded that while a great deal of the difference between the situation of Canadian and American social conservatives is explained by these factors, a full understanding of the situation requires examining the internal dynamics of political parties. Such a treatment ought to pay close attention to norms about which topics are politically legitimate and which are not. In Canada, conservatives defined politics so as to exclude social issues until the mid-1990s, while most conservatives in the United States saw such topics to be legitimate from the 1960s forward. Since social issues are the critical political questions for social conservatives such differences had a strong impact on their success at organizing within conservative political parties.

Making this case entails establishing a typology of conservative ideology so that these differences can be clearly seen in a more coherent and explicit way than politicians often express them. Reviewing the scholarly literature on conservatism shows that attempting to define different conservative inclinations can produce almost as much

debate and disagreement as conservatives themselves cause. Such a typology, therefore, cannot claim to rigidly classify every conservative thinker into a single neat category or that the content of these categories has stayed perfectly consistent over time. The categories drawn here are historically contingent and contestable, but nevertheless do contain commonalities across time and place.[20] These limitations accepted, the literature on conservatism suggests three currents within Anglo-American conservatism are relevant when considering North American conservatives in the second half of the twentieth century: traditionalists, laissez-faire conservatives, and social conservatives.[21]

Alternative typologies are, of course, available. Most prominent in the study of political parties is the 'radical right' category pioneered by Betz (1994) and Kitschelt (1995) and applied to North American politics by, amongst others, Norris (2005) and Laycock (2001). It is rooted in a successful effort to capture the commonalities between various European right-wing parties that combined nationalism, populism, and – sometimes – free market economics and which emerged after the 1960s. This way of looking at conservatism has much to recommend it: it captures well the melding of populist and conservative themes on the modern right, links discontent back to post-war social and economic change, and explains why groups not traditionally conservative have come to support right-wing parties in recent times.

At the same time, it suffers from certain limitations that make it less than satisfactory as a treatment of the currents of thought within North American conservatism. As Ignazi (2003, 20-34) points out, both radical right parties and their scholarly analysts are concerned with differentiating this type of party from continental

[20] The most extensive effort to deal with these problems in the definition of ideology is Freeden (1996).
[21] See Pilbeam (2003) and Mickelthewait and Wooldridge (2004).

Europe's fascist past. This is not a concern of any of the groups under consideration here. English-speaking conservatism has also evolved out of a relatively co-operative relationship between crown, church, and liberalism – forces that have been in violent opposition in Europe. Finally, the radical right has always been clear that it is just that – a radical critique of the existing system. The North American parties considered here (with the partial exception of the Reform Party) are very much part of the status quo and, in the straightforward sense of the word, cannot be considered radical.

If we accept that English-speaking conservatism, while sharing certain similarities with its continental cousins, is different enough to deserve distinct treatment the problem remains of how to categorize the currents within it. Some choose to avoid the problem of definition by "designat[ing] various people either because they called themselves conservatives or because others (who did call themselves conservatives) regarded them as part of their conservative intellectual movement" (Nash 1976, xv). This solution has a certain empirical common sense to it and avoids the problem of seeking an essential definition of conservatism that, too often, leaves the author and only a few others standing as 'real conservatives' (e.g. Kirk 1953). However, even Nash, in his classic study of American conservatism, soon finds this retreat from definition unworkable and identifies three groups of conservatives: classical liberals, traditionalists, and militant anti-communists (1976, xvi).

A fuller treatment begins with the insight that conservatism is, at its core, a "mirror-image" ideology (Freeden 1996, 345). In Freeden's treatment, the core concepts of conservatism are its "1)resistance to change, however unavoidable, unless it is perceived as organic and natural" and "2) an attempt to subordinate change to the belief

that the laws and forces guiding human behavior have extra-human origins…" (Freeden 1996, 344). These two core concepts mean that conservatism is practically defined by its "reaction to progressive ideology", but that this reaction is "substantively flexible" as conservatives react to challenges from different progressive ideologies (Freeden 1996, 345). The advantage of Freeden's definition gives us is that it incorporates both the usual definition of conservatism as opposition to change and also explains why the political positions taken by conservatives vary so much in different times and in different places.

A treatment of conservatism that distinguishes between traditionalists, laissez-faire conservatives, and social conservatives builds on Freeden's work. Each of these traditions of thought is well established on the North American right and each is clearly conservative. At the same time, each identifies a particular aspect of change as the most dangerous and so emphasizes opposition to that type of change in developing its own positions. Traditionalist conservatives are concerned by the disappearance of a hierarchically ordered society, laissez-faire conservatives by a variety of threats to freedom, and social conservatives by changing mores about family and sexual life.

For the purposes of understanding the conservative reaction to social issues two elements of each sort of conservative are central: what the appropriate boundary of the political is and what the appropriate sources of authority for political action are. What is important is that only social conservatives whole-heartedly accept both that politics includes matters of sexuality or the definition of the family and, either because of their view of human nature or their religious beliefs, have a clear and unambiguous vision of what sexual or family life ought to look like. For traditionalists and laissez-faire

conservatives, political action ought not to focus on such concerns and the grounds on which to take a substantive position are less clear.

Traditionalists

If we set aside reactionaries who fear all change, it is the idea that the lived practice of one's ancestor's is a more valuable store of knowledge than abstractly reasoned ideology that is the root of traditionalist conservatism (Scruton 1984). While practicing respect for tradition is almost universal – witness the respect for elders in most tribal societies, the continuity of religious liturgy, or the scholarly penchant for citations – the self-aware articulation of such beliefs in politics begins with Edmund Burke. Burke's defense of convention, order, and history within a national tradition laid the intellectual framework for much of modern English-speaking conservatism. It is important to remember, though, that Burke was not on the right wing of his day. He was a Whig, not a Tory, and an enthusiast of Adam Smith's economics. It is also worth noting that Burke has not always been read as a conservative thinker and did not immediately found a conservative tradition. In fact, the 19th century saw Burke as a liberal very much in the tradition of Locke. In more recent scholarship, those who read Burke as a conservative, like Canavon (1960) and Kirk (1953), continue to be challenged by those like, Dreyer (1979) and Macpherson (1980), who stress his liberal side.

That Burke is difficult to classify is not surprising, for he seeks a framework that celebrates England's Glorious Revolution of 1688, defends the American Revolution of 1776, and condemns the French Revolution of 1789. Burke's treatment of revolutionary change is premised on the idea that it is foolish to talk about liberty, rights, or any other

good in the abstract (Burke 1988, 90). His goal is to celebrate England's ways of dealing with change and, by so doing, "illustrate the principles of a constitution already made" (Burke 1962, 99). Liberty, for Burke, is impossible without order and grows out of the experience of civil society (Burke 1962, 34). Rights do indeed flow from a contract, but because this contract extends through time as well as space, rights are hereditary and so naturally vary from place to place (Burke 1962, 109). One cannot speak of the Rights of Man, but only of the rights that Frenchmen or Englishmen inherit as members of a particular society. England's Revolution fits with these principles because it sought to restore the English state to its former order, just as the American Revolution sought to restore to the colonists the rights they had previously possessed as Englishmen.

France's Revolution did not aim to restore an already existing order, but to create a completely new one based on the rights of men as arrived at through abstract reasoning. As a result, it was doomed to fail. The French, or any other ideological revolution, must fail because ideologues over-reach themselves and believe that they can create *ex nihilo* the blueprint for a new and better society. Abstract thought cannot capture the knowledge necessary to remake the state, for there is simply too much to learn (Burke 1988). Much of the *Reflections* documents the failure of the French Revolution, a failure that Burke places at the feet of intellectuals giving directions about things they cannot know. Instead, he argues for political thought driven by the insights of a particular national tradition.

It was during the 19th century that 'Tory' (i.e. Conservative) practice came to match Burke's principles as the Whigs themselves disappeared (Ramsden 1998, McDowell 1959). Although Tories consistently lost political battles over issues such as

Church establishment and tariff protection for agricultural products (which benefited the landed gentry), they also showed an awareness of the flexibility of their tradition that allowed them to deal with change. Disraeli's extension of the franchise in 1867 is the best example of British conservatism's ability to slowly transform itself. British conservatism was also more than an aristocratic project. Rather, it was a cross-class one that was both a defense of traditional privileges and a defense of national identity. Change would take place – an empire would rise and fall, the franchise would be extended, and economic forms would change – but existing practice and traditions would never be radically broken from. It is Burke, read through this lens, that makes traditionalists like Kirk (1954) point to him as the first genuine conservative even if he frequently defended liberal notions like the free market in Parliament.

It cannot be stressed enough how influential British traditionalism was on English Canadian conservatives from Confederation until recently.[22] For English Canada, tradition meant a Burkean British heritage, Protestantism, and support for the British Empire. While the Canadian political reality prevented the entrenchment of a landed gentry or established church, the attachment to the British heritage remained a powerful one for as long as the imperial connection was politically viable. Even when the Imperial connection began to fade after the First World War, Canadian Tories continued to argue that Canada needed to pursue the idea of a traditional community modeled on Great Britain (Grant 1965). PC leader Robert Stanfield, in practical politics, articulated a form

[22] As Quebec has produced few conservatives in the period under consideration, and its pre-Quiet Revolution history left few intellectual influences on present-day Canadian conservatives, the complex relationship between English and French-speaking conservatives can be left aside here.

of conservatism that was Tory in its *noblesse oblige*, nationalism, concern with the common good, and preference for British models.[23]

In the United States it took longer for traditionalists to appear (Rossiter 1962, Nash 1976). Obviously, there were pro-business Americans, and the Confederacy was resolute in its rejection of individual rights for much of its population, but it is difficult to find traces of a self-conscious conservative tradition of any sort in the United States before the Second World War.[24] It was not until after the Second World War that an intellectual American conservatism began to emerge. Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* did more than any other work to turn Burke and other traditionalist thinkers into a conservative tradition for American consumption.[25] Kirk's list of six "canons" of conservative thought is as good a definition as any of the beliefs of American traditionalists:

> 1) Belief in a transcendent order, or body of natural law, which rules society as well as conscience. Political problems, at bottom, are religious and moral problems….2) Affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of human existence….3)Conviction that civilized society requires orders and classes, as against the notion of a 'classless society'….4) Persuasion that freedom and property are closely linked….5) Faith in prescription and distrust of 'sophisters, calculators, and economists' who would reconstruct society upon abstract designs. Custom, convention, and old prescription are checks both upon man's anarchic impulse and upon the innovator's lust for power….6)Recognition that change may not be salutary reform...(Kirk 1953, 8-9).

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[23] The only satisfactory overview of Canadian conservatism as an intellectual movement is Christian and Campbell (1996), Chapter 4. Horowitz (1966) offers both a useful definition of Tory and an influential exploration of the importance of the Canadian environment on ideological development. Berger (1970) is a useful starting place for understanding the importance of the British connection. Taylor (1982) and Massolini (2001) attempt to define the Tory tradition in Canada through collective biography. Ajzenstat and Smith question the existence of a strong Tory influence on Canada in *Canada's Origins: Liberal, Tory, or Republican?* (1995).

[24] Hartz's (1955, 1964) explanation, that the United States was a uniformly liberal society and, so, unable to develop ideological diversity still rings true. Horowitz (1966) and Wiseman (2007) have pointed out how much more ideologically diverse Canada's origins were. As the case of social conservatism shows, though, diversity at a country's origins may work itself out in consensus at a later time.

[25] See also Weaver (1948) and Burnham (1962). Nash (1976) is the standard history of conservative thought in this period.

These principles, or some variation of them, continue to define the traditionalist wing of American conservatism. In their very abstractness, though, they differ from British or Canadian traditionalist thinking. For British or Canadian traditionalists it is the defense of particular national practice that grounds their thought. Americans who desire to espouse traditional notions of society or hierarchy must argue for the importation of principles and ideas into the dominant tradition of their nation. This is a signal difference between the two sets of conservative ideas. In the 1950s and 1960s, British and Canadian traditionalists were being increasingly challenged by social and political change, but they could still look to their respective national pasts to defend their collectivist vision. American traditionalists, unable to turn to a conservative national past, were turning to European authorities for support in a nation where the mainstream was defined only by classical liberalism.

It also is worth noting an important silence in traditionalist thinking around the family and sexual life. Understanding the nature of this silence is of particular importance to understanding modern social conservatism, for it illustrates a crucial difference between modern social conservatives and their traditionalist compatriots and predecessors. For example, while some recent scholarship has pointed out a concern with family and extensive use of it as a metaphor in Burke's thought it is not a major focus of his work (Botting 2006).

This silence about family and sex in traditionalist conservatism is understandable: before the 1950s the traditional understanding of family was not a major topic of debate. To be sure, there was legislation governing divorce, homosexuality, reproduction, the age of consent, and other matters connected with traditional norms about sex and the family,

but no significant movement or ideology made much of such things. They were not a topic of political debate and so, to the substantial degree that traditionalist conservatism articulates its beliefs only as it reacts to the claims of its opponents, conservatives spoke and thought little about them (Freeden 1996, 340-347).

There is no particular reason that the transition to political activism on social topics should have been difficult for traditionalists. As the treatment of the Canadian Progressive Conservative Party below shows, however, neither was it necessarily true that traditionalists would accept the political salience of social issues. In fact, many of them seem to have prioritorized maintaining a more circumscribed boundary to politics over using political means to defend traditional social mores. This sort of reaction might seem simply the product of strategic calculation or the contamination of conservative ideas with liberal ones. However, it is also the product of a feature of traditionalist thinking on these topics that, when applied to modern politics, makes it appear almost contradictory. This is perhaps most evident in Roger Scruton's *The Meaning of Conservatism* (1984).

Scruton's work attends to traditionalist "dogma" (11) and makes clear that the natural enemies of traditionalist conservatives are liberals and their ideals of natural rights (15-16). He defines conservatism as an amalgam of three key elements: authority, allegiance, and tradition and seeks to defend an organic conception of the nation, as represented in two aspects: civil society and the state (27). Unlike many traditionalist conservatives, he attempts to make explicit the relation between religion and politics and between the family and politics. His portrayal of these relationships – if taken to

represent traditionalist thinking on these matters – shows why traditionalists are somewhat hesitant to take political action on social issues.

On the topic of religion, it is clear that Scruton is not overly concerned with the doctrines of whatever form of Christianity are established. This, he suggests, places him with such conservatives as Burke and Disraeli (170) who were similarly unconcerned with the details of theology. What is important about religion is that it reminds one of the transcendent in a powerful way (170-171) and, most of all, is established so as to "reinforce the attachment of the citizen to the forms of civil life, and which turn his attention away from himself as individual, towards himself as social being…..Be its fundamental doctrines true or false, it is nevertheless the most considerable of all political institutions whose identity is not identical with the authority of the state." (172) This vision of the role of the church is difficult to translate to North America – where religious diversity has long put establishment outside the realm of consideration – but it also makes it difficult for a traditionalist to turn to some particular religious truth as a grounding for political action. The church is to be outside the state and, to some considerable degree, to not concern itself with politics. The established church's role is not so much the promotion of specific religious doctrine as it is a prop to social stability.

Scruton's view of the family has some similar characteristics. He clearly desires to promote a conservative vision of the family (145). However, he does so because he believes that a model of family life centred on the care of children is the natural one, and, as such, families arise "spontaneously, simply to do the peculiar and often indefinable things that they do, [so] it is impossible to lay down by fiat that they should incorporate as soon as formed. The law is forced nevertheless to recognize them (146)." If the role

of the law is to recognize what emerges spontaneously, on what grounds would a traditionalist conservative argue against the recognition of different family structures, provided that the structures being recognized had been occurring for some time? The answer, at least as provided by social conservatives, can come either by more directly applying religious belief to politics or by finding a single model of the 'natural' family that conservatives ought to promote. Neither of these moves, however, is implicit in the position taken by Scruton or by the sort of traditionalist conservative whose beliefs his work makes explicit. Indeed, such a political move would seem to run against their major substantive claim – that religion and the family are autonomous institutions whose ends are distinct from those of political life (Scruton 1984, 141-160).

Traditionalism plays an important part in the story that follows for, insofar as traditionalism influenced the Canadian Progressive Conservative party, this indeterminacy on social and religious questions was an important source for the more limited Canadian vision of politics. However, it is also a form of conservatism that became less important as the twentieth century progressed. Its grounding in authority, allegiance, and tradition placed it increasingly out of step with popular sentiment (Scruton 1984, 27). The newer forms of conservatism that supplanted traditionalism in Canada and Britain and made conservatism politically important in the United States were more amenable to these country's increasingly liberal societies. Laissez-faire conservatives claim to be essentially classical liberals and, to the extent they are conservative, are so because liberalism has declined from its 19th century peak. Fearing that human freedom is threatened by the growth of government, laissez-faire conservatives seek to make the state smaller and less invasive. Of particular concern to

them has been government control over the economy. Social conservatives, our special focus, pay less attention to the promotion of individual autonomy and more to the maintenance of social virtue but do so in a way different from traditionalist conservatives, for they portray religion and the family as questions of fundamentally political import.

Laissez-faire Conservatives

Laissez-faire conservative is a useful term for describing those adherents of classical liberalism who find themselves described as conservatives in the second half of the twentieth century. They defend not the liberties of a particular way of life, but abstract rights to freedom and property that they see modern developments threatening. Some go so far as to describe themselves as Whigs so that they are not identified with traditionalist conservatives, whom they see as unprincipled defenders of whatever the existing situation is (Hayek 1964). They desire a continued emphasis on the protection of 'negative' liberties from the state rather than state action to insure 'positive' liberties, believe that moral problems ought to be left up to the individual to decide (Friedman and Friedman 1962), and that personal and political freedom cannot exist without economic freedom (Hayek 1944). While laissez-faire conservatives are a very diverse group, most share two important reasons for moving to the right.

First, totalitarianism, especially communism, showed itself to be a grave threat to liberty in the 20th century. Many then questioned whether the price to be paid for pursuing positive freedoms was too high and, as an answer to that question, moved to the

right.[26] Both before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, such conservatives were concerned with foreign policy. The promotion of freedom through foreign policy has been a mostly American pre-occupation because that country's superpower status gives it the capacity to have a muscular foreign policy. Canada's middle power position, preference for multilateralism and the strong element of anti-Americanism in Canadian conservatism have prevented foreign policy from being as important a unifying factor for Canadian conservatives.

Second, this group sought to protect freedom by promoting the free market. This argument has been tremendously successful and now forms the dominant economic idea globally. Adam Smith is generally portrayed as the grandfather of this linking of economic freedom and human freedom in general. Smith's attack on mercantilism has been influential because he provides both a strong argument against any form of government planning and an alternative mechanism by which the economy can be ordered in an efficient way (Smith 1961).[27] Smith's defense of *laissez-faire* policies founded modern economics and has always remained an important part of economic thinking in the English-speaking world. During the 19th and early 20th centuries Smith's followers were usually liberals fighting against conservative mercantilist tendencies and an emergent socialism. In the English-speaking world, liberal economic thought was the mainstream by the early 20th century. The old arguments for a mercantilist policy to protect agriculture faded in Britain and the United States, while protectionist, was a free

[26] For some, the major danger was Socialism or Communism. Others, most notably Hayek (1944), saw the threat to liberty as coming from all forms of totalitarianism. While the threat from the Left was the most pressing one during the period under consideration, memories of Fascism did play an important role.
[27] While many who espouse laissez-faire liberal economics also espouse traditional family values, this is a combination of two traditions rather than a natural articulation of classical liberalism. For the most self-aware combination of the two see Novak (1982).

market domestically. Canada was more prone to state intervention, but was still mostly a free market state.

This liberal consensus was subject to ever-stronger criticisms from the left about its inability to alleviate the plight of the working class or to prevent economic shocks like the Great Depression. It was especially during the turbulent period between the two World Wars that the liberal economic consensus seemed unable to meet the challenges facing Western democracies. In the Soviet Union, Italy, and Germany government direction seemed both fairer and more productive than capitalism. These foreign examples, combined with the failure of free-market advice to solve the Great Depression, caused many to question the wisdom of a capitalist system at all.

Ultimately, the effective defense of the free market came not from a *laissez faire* economist but from the interventionist model of John Maynard Keynes. His idea that the unstable business cycle could be moderated by government intervention seemed vindicated by the American and British experience of high government spending during the Second World War. When concerns about another Great Depression dominated economic thinking after the war, Keynesianism became economic orthodoxy. The mix between government planning and free market economics that resulted would, it was believed, prevent the economic instability that had caused so much suffering and political instability before the war. When combined with the theoretical dominance of Keynes amongst economists, these practical successes facilitated the expansion of the state in the economy.

The success of Keynes and his followers displaced free market economics as the consensus position at the centre of the political spectrum. Free market economists

increasingly were seen as belonging to the political right. This shift is exemplified by the career of F. A. Hayek. Before World War II Hayek was a prominent member of the Austrian school, a group of free traders who saw themselves as descendents of 19th century liberals. They believed that a free market approach could have prevented the economic problems that plagued Austria in the 1920s. Hayek moved from Vienna to the London School of Economics in 1931, where he became the most prominent critic of Keynes' technical economic work. Over the course of the 1930s, though, Hayek lost his argument with Keynes over the desirability of government intervention in the economy and seemed destined to fade into obscurity (Caldwell 2004).

His 1944 book *The Road to Serfdom* gained Hayek notice outside the economics profession. It is both a classic defense of the free market and an example of the powerful role that fear of totalitarianism played in moving many free-market liberals towards conservatism. Central to Hayek's argument is a distinction between classical liberalism, with its guarantee of economic and personal freedom, and collectivism, a genus of thought of which Nazism, Communism, and Keynesianism are only species. Hayek's argument rests on the assertion that, both historically and logically, political and social freedom is unattainable without economic freedom. For him, though the desire for significant government intervention in the economy often originates from praise-worthy motives it is indefensible because of the threat to freedom it poses.

Hayek's arguments bridged the concerns of those focused mostly on economic freedom and those interested in protecting freedom more generally.[28] Hayek's impact was limited by his inability to come up with a technically viable alternative to

[28] Hayek's creation of the Mount Perlerin society in 1947 to promote free-market ideas internationally was also an important, but more practical, contribution to making these linkages.

Keynesianism. Until such a solution came forward, *laissez-faire* economists could express concerns, but could not offer an alternative set of economic policies to those produced by the Keynesians.

Milton Friedman and other Chicago School economists provided such an alternative with their monetarist theories. An American one generation younger than Hayek. Friedman's most important contribution was the creation of technically sound models that supported the free market position (Friedman and Freidman 1998, 1964; Freidman and Swartz 1965). Friedman's models claimed to solve problems such as stagflation which Keynesianism seemed unable to prevent by the 1970s.

Britain, Canada, and the United States had each pursued government intervention in the economy to a different degree during the Keynesian era and each faced difficult economic challenges during the 1970s and 1980s. Their different historical legacies meant that the outcome of attempts to implement more free market policies in the three countries have been different but free market ideas have gained ascendancy across the political spectrum in each country. Beginning with Margaret Thatcher's victory in 1979 and followed by Ronald Reagan's 1980 election win, the rhetoric (if not always the reality) of small government and low taxes defined the mainstream of a successful English-language conservative resurgence. The 1990s saw the continued strengthening of this economic consensus so that even 'third-way' leaders of the centre-left (like Jean Chrétien, Bill Clinton, and Tony Blair) pursued the economic policies of their conservative predecessors. For our purposes, it is also worth noting that this type of conservative has been very successful at linking intellectuals to practical politics and policy. Through think-tanks like C.D. Howe Institute and the Fraser Institute in Canada

or the American Enterprise Institute and Cato Institute in the United States, laissez-faire conservatives in both countries have successfully linked their economic theories to policy recommendations.

The desire to limit government power has made it easy for laissez-faire conservatives to make common cause with other sorts of conservatives on many issues. However, it has also meant that they have been hesitant to engage in conflicts over social issues. To many liberty-seeking conservatives, family and sexual matters are moral issues best left to the free choice of individuals. State action in such areas represented a grave infringement on liberty. In their view other problems – be they of foreign policy or of domestic economics – ought to be the focus of conservative activism. They are often quite concerned that the boundary between church and state is being ignored by social conservatives (Sullivan 2007). Others argue that the trend away from traditional mores is the result of state intervention and – were that intervention removed – a shift back to "natural" patterns of family life would occur (Frum 1994, Novak 1982).

Laissez-faire conservatives – whatever alliances they can form with social conservatives – seek to insure that government is uninvolved in social matters. It should stay uninvolved in society, just as it ought to avoid involvement in the economy, because individuals making their own decisions will result in the optimal outcomes in both areas. For laissez-faire conservatives what is important is that government maintains its position of noninvolvement and follows appropriate policy in areas that are genuinely political, such as foreign policy. This means that the best social conservatives can hope for from their laissez-faire counterparts is an ambiguous concern with excessive state intervention

in society. At worst, the underlying philosophical differences suggest the possibility of considerable conflict.

Social Conservatives

This dissertation focuses on the third, and newest, group of conservatives. Most frequently called social conservatives because resisting social change has been the focus of their political activity, their conservatism is defined by its desire to protect what they believe to be traditional sexual morality and family structure. In its concern with tradition and social order, social conservatism can sometimes seem simply a variety of traditionalism. On social conservatives differ from traditionalists on two very important points. First, social conservatives believe that conservatives ought to use the state to defend their substantive positions on such matters as abortion, homosexuality, pornography, euthanasia, and what they refer to as "radical feminism". They do not forgo the defense of their substantive positions for the sake of keeping civil society and the state separate. Second, while there are secular social conservatives who envision the social role of religion in very similar terms to traditionalists, much of the movement is made up of religious believers who argue for the direct application of religious teaching to politics. This, as we shall see, leads to social conservatives giving religion a very different political role than the non-doctrinal establishment envisioned by traditionalists.

In making these political moves, social conservatives make at least one of two philosophical claims. The first, perhaps best put by Michael Novak, is that liberal democracy and capitalism must be underpinned by "certain moral strengths, rooted in institutions like the family" (Novak 1982, 156). Prudential in form, this argument holds

that the traditionally defined family and (more or less) traditionally circumscribed sexual life are necessary for healthy human communities and individuals. Treating family values as instruments for the pursuit of other goals has been an important point on which social conservatives and other types of conservatives can agree. This is important because it gives social conservatives a way to find common cause with other sorts of conservative as well as a way for social conservatives themselves to meld their social concerns with their generally conservative positions on other political issues.

The second claim – and one that leads to substantial disagreement – has been succinctly described by British literary critic Robert Grant:[29]

> relations between persons are the stuff of morals; and morals, through the shared concept of 'justice', seek dramatic confirmation and support in law (not to enforce them is to make the good look like fools). Moreover, law and culture reinforce each other: culture is underpinned by law, and law, at bottom, is simply culture in the guise … of necessity. Sexuality, then, … is intimately bound up with matters that are ultimately political. (Grant 2000, 88)

This is a much stronger claim, for it posits that the state has a duty to promote traditional morality and means that social conservatives agree with progressives that family and sexual life are ultimately political. In the social conservative view what is wrong about the progressive stance is not the territory that it covers but the substance of the claims that progressives make. In bringing the state into such areas, social conservatives break with their laissez-faire conservative and traditionalist counterparts.

In making either of these philosophic claims, social conservatives have had to take certain, contested, traditions of what the good society is and politicize them. Social conservatives argue that this politicization must occur because progressives have brought state power to bear so as to change social mores around sexuality and the family.

[29] While Grant is clearly on the right, it has been difficult to ascertain his precise political position.

Particularly irksome for social conservatives has been the use of the courts by progressives to promote the their agenda when, as in most cases, democratically elected legislatures would not support progressive demands. Just as importantly, social conservatives have been willing to make political action on social issues a political priority. While allowing that the issues other conservatives are concerned about are also important, social conservatives see changes in family structures and social mores as particularly dangerous developments.

Though often portrayed as being solely a position held by religious believers, one can be secular and espouse socially conservative principles. A good example of a secular social conservative is the Canadian writer William Gairdner. Gairdner's first book, *The Trouble with Canada,* articulated a frustration with the size of government and taxation shared by many populists and fiscal conservatives in the late 1980s and early 1990s (1990).[30] It was his following book, *The War Against the Family* (1992), that best represents both his own social conservatism and that of people who pursue a conservative vision of social virtue based on secular, rather than religious, principles.[31] Defending a vision of society based on freedom, family, and free enterprise, Gardiner argues for a political order that recognizes that politics is based on the individual but that the social order is founded on the family (Gardiner 1992, 585). In Canada, this social order was protected by English common law and traditional social mores. However, it has been threatened by an elite collectivism and totalitarianism rooted in the ideals of the French Revolution and embodied in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. While Gardiner admits

[30] Though it also included a chapter on 'Radical Feminism'.
[31] Gardiner thinks that religion is important to society, but denies that Christianity plays any direct influence on his thinking and, in personal life, describes his position as a non-observant Christian (Gardiner 2005).

that much of the culture now deviates from the standards he espouses, he believes that what he argues for has historically been shown to be the only path to a healthy society.

Those who are social conservatives for religious reasons are usually conservative Roman Catholics, evangelical Protestants, or fundamentalist Protestants. While politically active American evangelicals (the Religious Right) have received the most attention, Catholics have also provided important personnel, financial, and intellectual resources to key social conservative causes. Despite a good deal of distrust between Catholics and Protestants, they share a belief that religious truth can be brought to bear on politics.[32] This belief, moreover, seems to be accepted by their more secular counterparts. Religious conservatives usually downplay the social justice teachings of Christianity — which argue for restrictions on the free market — and emphasize its implications for family and sexual life (cf. Novak 1982). The debates that have gone on around the political implications of Christian doctrine mean that many who articulate a conservative Christian position on, for example, sexual ethics, have difficulty describing themselves as conservatives because they see an expansive welfare state as the best way of meeting Christianity's traditional teachings of a duty towards the poor. Rather than equating all religious positions with conservatism, it is more accurate to think that those conservatives who are religiously inspired emphasize certain parts of their religion over others.

An excellent introduction to religious conservatism in North America is the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" statement signed by fifteen prominent theologians

[32] While social conservatives have tried to use their positions on marriage, same-sex rights, abortion, and education to build bridges to Muslims, Hindus, and Jews, it is only with the latter group, and only with a small minority within it, that they have met with any degree of success.

from both sides of the denominational divide.[33] The statement begins by emphasizing the unity of their faith in Christ, the importance of Scripture, and a shared affirmation of Christian doctrine as expressed in the Apostles Creed. It then expresses a hope that "our unity in the love of Christ will become ever more evident as a sign to the world of God's reconciling power" (Colson and Neuhaus 1995, xx), despite a list of significant theological differences. The bulk of the statement focuses on politics. Acknowledging that the basis of their thinking is Christ and his cause and a recent realization of the public responsibilities of their faith, the authors "contend for the truth that politics, law and culture must be secured by moral truth" (Colson and Neuhaus 1995, xxiii). This must be contended because too many now "deny that securing civil virtue is a benefit of religion" (Colson and Neuhaus 1995, xxiii). It celebrates religious freedom, but expresses concern that that freedom is threatened by how the American constitution is now interpreted. An equally important problem in the law is legalized abortion, described as "the leading edge of an encroaching culture of death" (Colson and Neuhaus 1995, xxv). The statement wants to see "schools that transmit to coming generations our cultural heritage, which is inseparable from the formative influence of religion" (Colson and Neuhaus 1995, xxv), seeks to defend the free market, and argues for action to knock down barriers of religion, race, ethnicity, sex, and class. The statement concludes by setting some ground rules for evangelization in areas of the world where the two traditions compete with each other for converts.

[33] The statement and a number of useful essays on both the reasons for and barriers to Evangelical Protestants and Catholics cooperating politically are contained in Colson and Neuhaus (1995).

One of the instigators of this document, Richard John Neuhaus, is probably the most prominent social conservative intellectual of a religious bent.[34] His views on religiously motivated political action (taking abortion as the issue most in need of intervention) were expressed most fully in 1984's *The Naked Public Square.*[35] Neuhaus argues that American political institutions were founded with religious motivations and cannot function without a religious underpinning. He also claims, as a normative matter, that politics is a cultural activity and that religion is at the heart of culture. Religious arguments and institutions have a place in political debate and, equally important, the boundaries of what is political and what is not are quite blurred (1984, 27, 165). The problem, Neuhaus argues, is that religious organizations and viewpoints have been pushed out of political life by secular humanists who, while only a minority, are the leading members of the culture- and opinion- shaping new class. Nowhere for him is the damage this shift has done clearer than in the changes *Roe v. Wade* caused to American abortion law. Not only is the situation in the United States regarding abortion immoral – for it allows for the large scale killing of human beings – but it is also deeply undemocratic, for it is opposed by a majority of Americans (1984, 25-27). Such problems can only be resolved if religious arguments and actors are allowed back into the public square.

In Neuhaus's view, such a position is not a threat to the separation of church and state because what this separation entails is not the removal of religious arguments or

[34] Though his insistence that the United States is a "force for good in the world" (1984, 72) might not be very well received in his native Canada.

[35] Neuhaus was a prolific author and, as editor of the journal *First Things*, active in both the practical and the intellectual sides of political questions and a leading figure in Protestant-Catholic-Jewish ecumenical efforts. Much of *Catholic Matters* (Neuhaus 2006) is an autobiographical account of his activities while Linker (2006) provides a critical, but insightful, account by a former associate. See Neuhaus (1997) for his description of his place in the inter-conservative debates of the mid-1990s.

religious believers from the public square but the separation of religious institutions from political ones. For him, the separation of church and state is meant to do is insure mutual institutional autonomy, not remove religion from public discourse. For Neuhaus, and for many other social conservatives, such a sanitizing is both dangerous and impossible.

Whether they draw on religious or secular reasoning to support their position, social conservatives have been able to agree (generally) on a set of programs for the promotion of their cause. Their most important concerns have been the decriminalization of abortion and the various ways in which acceptance has been extended to homosexuality. Pornography, euthanasia, and more radical forms of feminism have also been issues of serious on-going concern for them.[36] It is important to remember that social conservatives do not believe themselves to be pushing an agenda forward but as reacting to an undeserved and surprise attack on the virtues that they hold dear by those enraptured by the opportunity for the "radical restructuring of society through centralized social engineering of the most insidious kind" (Gairdner 1990, 272). This understanding of their virtues accounts for much of the stridency with which the family values agenda is articulated, but its importance goes much deeper than this. Because they feel that the family is under direct political assault by progressives, social conservatives feel that they must make a political response.

It is in this area of conservative thinking that we see the largest gap between the United States and Canada. As we will see, social conservatives were better at fitting into existing conservative structures in the US than in Canada. They have also done far better as an intellectual movement. Important early American conservative thinkers, like

[36] Although it is also fair to surmise that a significant motivation for many social conservatives is not so much a concern with feminism's more radical fringes as the sense that the claim that women have a rightful place outside the home is a threat to the traditional family.

Russell Kirk and William F. Buckley, were very sympathetic to social conservatives. Neo-conservatives, like Irving Kristol, James Q. Wilson, and Gertrude Himmelfarb came to share many of their concerns. This co-operation opened up important avenues for social conservatives, most notably the pages of the *National Review.* They have also been able to support substantial intellectual periodicals like *First Things* in their own right. This stands in marked contrast to Canada where, aside from a few pro-life broadsheets, there are no substantial social conservative periodicals. Moreover, while there are socially conservative intellectuals in Canada (like William Gardiner or Daniel Ceres), they have formed nothing akin to the American network in either numbers or intellectual weight. They have also had fewer and weaker connections to practical politics than their American counterparts. This is an important differentiation between social conservatives and laissez-faire conservatives, as the later have been intellectually and politically successful on both sides of the border.

A final point to note about social conservatism is that its adherents rarely hold it in a pure form. As Gardiner and Neuhaus both illustrate, social conservatives find it relatively easy to blend their social conservatism with other types of conservative thinking. Especially notable has been their acceptance of the free market commitments of laissez-faire conservatives. Whatever the problems this creates theoretically, it is nevertheless true that social conservatives feel that they are being consistent in holding these positions.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined three different orientating points in conservative thought. While these orientating points are not mutually exclusive – indeed, most conservatives feel drawn to at least two of them – they do provide a way of understanding the different arguments and intellectual traditions from which North American conservatives now draw. Moreover, this typology identifies two important features of social conservatives that sets them apart not only from progressives but also from other conservatives. Particularly important has been how, in response to the challenges posed by progressive thought, conservatives have rethought the relationships between state and market (the traditional public realm), sexual and domestic life (traditionally private), and civil society institutions. More than other conservatives, they are willing to accept a fairly direct application of religious truth to politics as a way of defining the substance of mores.

This change in the relationship between the political, the private, and civil society – as expressed in debates around social institutions like the family and sexuality – posed different challenges to each type of conservative. Traditionalists were caught in a difficult conceptual bind by social change. Many of them supported the traditional order of family life but saw it as defined naturally and by civil society institutions like churches. They agreed that these were areas of public concern, but denied that they should be areas of government interest and were hesitant to turn to theology for solutions. More perceptive ones realized that the liberalization of society would prevent this position from being maintained for long, but hoped for some shift in the cultural winds (e.g. Grant 1998, 4-12). More politically involved traditionalists – many Canadian

Tories, for example – simply refused to acknowledge that a shift was occurring. Given that traditionalists had never fully expressed what the relationship between the state and the family ought to be, this refusal appeared as a norm that government leaders should not discuss social issues.

Laissez-faire conservatives have, by and large, followed a similar path. They, in keeping with the traditional liberal argument, have held that the government should refrain from interfering in the private lives of citizens. This is often matched with an argument that government action in any sphere of life ought to be restricted, so they can consistently argue that the government should have no role in the definition of marriage, for example (eg. Sullivan 2007).

Social conservatives, in contrast, have accepted that the sexual and domestic has become the grounds for government action and political mobilization. They have refused to accept older conservative norms that sought to keep the these aspects of life out of politics. Instead, they have reacted to the supplanting of civil society by enlisting government to protect their version of family life – a vision they often define in explicitly theological terms. Many would prefer that domestic life still fell under the jurisdiction of civil society institutions but, given the choice between preserving their preferred vision of the family and not using the power of government to promote their agenda, have chosen political action.

Social conservatism is defined not only by the political defence of traditional ideas of family and sexual life, but also by a deep antipathy towards those who challenge these norms. Whether the program social conservatives articulate is rooted in religious belief or in a vision of what a healthy society looks like, they agree that the feminists and

same-sex rights activists who challenge their views are undercutting the very foundations of society – the family. Against claims that family structures are time-bound social constructions, social conservatives have defended what they see as the natural family definition of the family, a husband, wife, and their children, and the right to life of those children.

CHAPTER 3:

AMERICAN CONSERVATISM BEFORE REAGAN

Introduction

The next three chapters examine the rightward movement of the Republican Party from the post-war period to the present. The struggle between liberal Republicans and conservative Republicans to control the party during the 1960s and 1970s shows that there was a great deal of debate over whether or not the party should be a conservative one. However, social conservatives – when they emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s – were full members of the conservative coalition that was struggling with liberal Republicans for control of the party. While this account stresses the importance that the legitimacy of social conservatives amongst other conservatives played in the rise to prominence of social conservatives in the party, other factors were certainly at work. At the party system level, the dealignment of the South from the Democratic Party presented an opportunity that Republicans had been trying to exploit since the Eisenhower Presidency (Reinhard 1983). Moving right was a way both to appeal to Southern voters and, as those appeals worked, meant that more conservative Senators and Congressmen

were being elected, further increasing conservative influence in the party.[37] Similarly, reforms in party organization and finance rules during the 1970s – introduced with the goal of increasing internal party democracy – gave grassroots movements (which tended to be conservative) key institutional and financial advantages over the Eastern and liberal elites that had previously controlled the party's presidential nominations (Rae 1989).[38]

It is also important to recognize that the conservatism of the 1960s in America was a mixture of two groups that were initially quite separate. One, made up of Republican Party loyalists, is generally referred to as Old Right Republicans. During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s they formed the Congressional mainstay of the party. Generally from the Mid-West, they opposed New Deal economic policies, 'internationalist' foreign policy, and Communism. While successful congressionally, they could not be said to be the dominant current in the party, for liberal Republicans controlled the party's presidential nomination and much of its national organization.[39] In terms of the typology of Chapter Two, the Old Right were laissez-faire conservatives with strong beliefs in small-town American values.

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[37] It is not possible to over-emphasize that 'social problems' had and continue to have a double meaning in the United States that they lack in Canada. In both the United States and Canada, social issues include issues like the definition of marriage, same-sex rights, and abortion. In the United States, however, the deeply divisive civil rights struggle of the 1960s underpinned many of these issues with questions of race. Activism on other issues often carries echoes of the struggle over civil rights in the background. See Carmines and Stimson (1989) for the defining examination of this phenomenon.

[38] See Epstein (1967) for the classic comparative treatment and Beck (2004) for the standard textbook treatment of American political parties. The changes to party organization in the 1970s have created a large literature arguing over whether or not American party organizations, already weak, are in decline or not. Wattenberg (1990, 1991) is the chief standard-bearer for the decline of party thesis, Bibby (1998) and the papers in Maisel (2002) are good representations of the argument that American parties are not in decline, but rather have passed through a period of substantial change. See also McSweeney and Zvesper (1991). For a fuller review of the American literature on political parties, see chapter 1.

[39] Rae (1989) and Reinhard (1983) are the best examinations of the place of liberals and conservatives in the Republican Party during this period. Brennan (1995) and Himmelstein (1990) are also useful, as are the more specific treatments examined below.

During the mid-1950s, the Old Right were reinforced by a set of much more doctrinaire movement conservatives. Initially a group of intellectuals centered on the *National Review*, this movement would expand so that by the late 1970s it included many grassroots activists, becoming both a formidable intellectual and organizational force. Here, too, a laissez-faire conservative concern with domestic free enterprise and foreign Communism was dominant. This group frequently spoke in terms of tradition, articulating a belief in the importance of religious institutions for society and a willingness to turn to religious truths for answers. This was to provide a crucial point on which social conservatives could ground themselves in the American conservative mainstream when social issues became contentious.[40]

Initially somewhat separate, these two groups cemented their alliance during Barry Goldwater's failed presidential bid in 1964. This chapter establishes the nature of their co-operation and examines how social conservatives, who emerged in a series of grass-roots movements during the early 1970s, fit into it. As we will see, other conservatives accepted social conservatives as legitimate partners. Other conservatives did not always agree with the priority social conservatives gave to social issues, but they did see concerns about such issues as legitimate and were willing to allow religious beliefs a place in politics. Opposition to these changes came, unlike in Canada, from the 'liberal' group within the Republican Party – a group that was in severe decline by the late 1970s and was the shared opposition of all conservatives (Rae 1989).

[40] There is far more written on these intellectual conservatives than on their partisan colleagues. Nash (1976) is the classic treatment and Bjerre-Poulson (2002) is a useful recent overview. Andrew (1997) and Schneider (1999) emphasize the youth side of the movement. Blumenthal (1986), Rusher (1993), Hodgson (1996), Edwards (1999), and Micklethwait and Woodridge (2004) are useful overviews that pay careful attention to this period. Gottfried (1993) and Frum (1994) are evaluations from two perspectives within American conservatism. Biographies of the major players are also useful, especially Judis's (1988) study of William F. Buckley and Smant's (2002) treatment of Frank S. Meyer.

Conservatives in the Republican Party

The oldest part of what became the conservative coalition was a group known as the Old Right or Taft Republicans (Reinhard 1983, Rae 1989).[41] Their leader in the decade after the Second World War, Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio, typified them in his

> ferocious loyalty to his party and distrust of the eastern financial establishment, which he suspected of collaboration with the New Deal and encouragement of intervention overseas. Taft further feared that the New Deal's centralization of government and intervention in economic affairs would stifle America's exceptional 'individualism' (Reinhard 1983, 29).

During the 1940s and 1950s, when the Republicans were the minority party in Congress and the South was a Democrat preserve, the conservatives of the rural Midwest and Northeast provided much of the Republican Party's representation in Washington. They could trace their roots back to earlier mid-Western populist movements but, in the 1940s, were most notable for their opposition to the New Deal and concern that the United States was becoming excessively entangled abroad (Reinhard 1983, Rae 1989).

While they maintained their distrust of the Eastern Establishment and big business, conservative Republicans underwent one important change during the late 1940s and early 1950s that would make them more politically successful. Even during the Second World War, some important figures in this part of the party maintained a strident isolationism. At the start of the Cold War, many had seen the primary communist threat as a domestic one and some had been supporters of Senator Joe McCarthy and his Committee on Un-American Activities. The world-wide spread of

[41] The reader should be alerted that specific conservative or Republican groups in the United States – the Old Right, the Religious Right, the New Right, ect. – are referred to in the historical literature by names that seem to claim ideological distinctiveness for them. This is not the case. Ideology will be referred to by the typology developed in Chapter 2. Otherwise, terminology describing different types of conservatives refers to groups of activists and politicians.

communism, combined with the failure of McCarthy to find much evidence of domestic Communist subversion, made isolationism less and less popular amongst right-wing Republicans (as well as amongst the population at large). Instead, right-wing Republicans began to call for an aggressively anti-communist foreign policy. They believed that the United States should not just contain Communism but roll it back wherever possible (cf. Burnham 1962). Intervention to prevent or roll-back the spread of communism abroad would prove to be a very important point on which all conservatives could agree in the decades to come (Ehrmann 1995).

While successful in Congress and the Senate, the conservative wing of the party was consistently defeated by the liberal, or establishment, wing in contests for the presidential nomination. These establishment Republicans preferred internationalist candidates who were also friendly towards the New Deal. Their support saw Wendell Wilkie (in 1940) and Thomas Dewey (in 1944 and 1948) win the Republican nominations. Eisenhower's 1952 and 1956 victories pointed to a successful formula: a Republican presidential candidate should not threaten what the New Deal had established domestically, but should maintain the trust of big business and stay committed to an internationalist foreign policy (Reinhard 1983).[42] Eisenhower's success also cemented the hold of the liberal wing on the party, for his time in office was book-ended by his defeat of Robert Taft in 1952 and Nelson Rockefeller's (the quintessential liberal Republican) role as kingmaker in Richard Nixon's 1960 nomination victory (Rae 1989).[43] Eisenhower, with his links to the liberal part of the party and his tendency to treat the

[42] see Reichley (1981) for a slightly different, four-part typology of Republicans during this period.
[43] As we shall see below, in the discussion of his presidency, Nixon is very difficult to typify ideologically. He is probably best understood as a party loyalist who was willing to move to whatever position seemed most electorally attractive at any given time.

Presidency as an administrative rather than a political office, was extremely popular. Until his term of office ended in 1960, there was little that conservative Republicans could do to win the Republican nomination for a candidate more to their liking (Reinhard 1983).

This situation changed in 1960, when Eisenhower stepped down. Eisenhower's vice-president, Richard Nixon, won the nomination but there were efforts by conservatives to draft Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater.[44] Goldwater refused, having already pledged his support to Nixon, but this attempted draft represents the first important sign of modern conservative organization within the Republican Party. Deeply involved in the group that tried to draft Goldwater in 1960 were individuals – like Clifton White and Brent Bozell – with close ties to the conservative intellectual movement that had emerged during the 1950s.

In 1962, conservative activists, headed by Clifton White, were already organizing to insure a conservative candidate ran for the nomination in 1964. White's fellow organizers invested a great deal of effort in quietly insuring that conservatives would be selected as delegates to the Republican nominating convention. They were successful in the many states where delegates were selected by caucus and also raised considerable sums of money to fund a conservative's campaign (Middendorf 2006). This group hoped Goldwater would front their organization, but they believed that – even if he did not agree to run – he would help them bring conservative activists from all over the country

[44] On Goldwater see his autobiography *With No Apologies* (1979), as well as Goldberg's (1995) and Edwards (1995) biographies. Kessel (1968) is a careful study of the coalition that supported him within the party. Perlstein (2001) and Middendorf (2006) offer two different views of the importance of the campaign. Middendorf's is particularly interesting, for he was the campaign's treasurer. For a contemporary, though critical, view by an astute journalist see White (1965). For a focus on what the campaign signified for American liberals see Donaldson (2003).

together, laying the groundwork for future victories. Throughout 1962 and 1963, though, Goldwater kept this group at arm's length. One of the attractions of 1964 to Goldwater, that of running the campaign as a cross-country debate with his friend John Kennedy, disappeared in November of 1963 when Kennedy was assassinated (Rae 1989).

Kennedy's assassination also removed any chance of a Republican winning the 1964 Presidential election (Rae 1989). Despite this, Goldwater agreed to run for the nomination in January of 1964, seemingly because he did not want to disappoint conservatives within the party and because he saw the campaign as an opportunity to move the party to the right.[45] Goldwater won the Republican nomination handily – at least in part because of the effort that White and other conservative activists had put into organizing the grassroots of the party to support Goldwater. Rather than reaching out to liberals in the party, his acceptance speech called for ideological purity, claiming that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." (Goldwater, as quoted in Reinhard 1983, 196). Goldwater followed up this rhetoric by insuring that key positions in the party's hierarchy went to conservatives and by choosing a fellow conservative, William Miller, as a running-mate. As a result, Goldwater fought the election without the support of a powerful part of his party and with significant vulnerability to Johnson's charge of extremism. Goldwater lost the presidential election in one of the biggest landslides in American history. After his defeat, liberals in the party took the opportunity to purge his appointees from the party organization (Reinhard 1983).

[45] White (1965), Middendorf (2006), Perlstein (2002), and Brennan (1995) are all good accounts of the campaign.

Strident, at times disorganized, and ultimately unsuccessful, Goldwater's 1964 campaign nevertheless represents the emergence of modern American conservatism. Goldwater's principles are an excellent example of mainstream Republican conservatism in the mid-1960s. They also illustrate that, while Goldwater stressed laissez-faire themes, his way of doing so left open room for religious appeals and for conservatives to be concerned with society.[46] The introduction to his campaign book, *The Conscience of a Conservative,* sets out the ideological underpinnings for his position:

> The root difference between the conservatives and the Liberals of today is that Conservatives take account of the *whole* man, while the Liberals tend to look only at the material side of man's nature. The Conservative believes that man is, in part, an economic, an animal creature; but that he is also a spiritual creature with spiritual needs and spiritual desires. What is more, these needs and desires reflect the *superior* side of man's nature, and thus take precedence over his economic wants. Conservatism therefore looks upon the enhancement of man's spiritual nature as the primary concern of political philosophy (1964, 10-11, italics in original).

From Goldwater's point of view, taking account of men as whole creatures means that "*only a philosophy that takes into account the essential differences between men, and, accordingly, makes provision for developing the different potentialities of each man can claim to be in accord with Nature*" (1964, 11, italics in original). Man, in the conservative view, "cannot be economically free … if he is enslaved politically" and that "every man, for his individual good and that of his society, is responsible for his own development" (1964, 12). These three founding principles mean that the conservative "looks upon politics as the art of achieving the maximum amount of freedom for individuals that is consistent with the maintenance of the social order." (1964, 13).

[46] While language like this illustrates the openness of American conservatism to religious views, it is true that Goldwater's fundamental commitment was to individual freedom. Most famously, by the 1980s he was openly pro-choice on abortion and of the opinion that "every good Christian ought to kick Falwell right in the ass. I get so damned tired of these political preachers telling me what to believe and do" (Goldwater as cited in Goldberg 1995, 315).

Goldwater departs from the more traditionalist conservatives in the conservative movement in his judgement about the relative balance been order and freedom. In his judgement, which illustrates the laissez-faire nature of his conservatism:

> In our day, order is pretty well taken care of. The delicate balance that ideally exists between freedom and order has long since tipped against freedom practically everywhere on earth…..Thus, for the American Conservative, there is no difficulty in identifying the day's overriding political challenge: it is *to preserve and extend freedom.* As he surveys the various attitudes and institutions and laws that currently prevail in America, many questions will occur to him, but the Conservative's first concern will always be: *Are we maximizing freedom?* (1964, 14, italics in original).

He also called for a defense of state's rights (27), spending cuts and lower taxes (65), attacked what he referred to as 'welfarism' (85), and argued that the goal of education was not to promote progress but to transfer a tradition (86). Abroad, he called for a strategic offensive against the Communist bloc based on clear military superiority (125) and caution in dealings with the United Nations (114).[47] In speeches during the primaries he called for a voluntary social security scheme and for a nuclear weapons policy that (under some circumstances) would release control over those weapons to theatre level commanders.

Although his concern that local control over education and state control over questions of race be preserved points to commonalities with social conservatives later social issues had not yet emerged at the time of Goldwater's campaign. What is more important is that Goldwater's laissez-faire conservatism allowed a distinctive place for religious beliefs in politics: conservatism involves the realization that man is a "spiritual creature" (1964, 11). This openness to religion is more apparent with the movement

[47] It is worth noting that, general principles and the discussion of education aside, there is little in the *The Conscience of a Conservative* that suggests social conservatism. Importantly, Edwards (1995) argues that Goldwater was, at heart, a libertarian and that his 1964 campaign was in keeping with those principles.

conservatives discussed in the section below, but Goldwater's language and co-operation with figures like Brent Bozell[48] makes it clear he gave such beliefs a place in the conservative coalition.

Goldwater's campaign did produce two important changes on the American right. Most immediately, Goldwater's campaign brought together party Republicans of the Taft variety with the movement conservatives who gathered around figures like Russell Kirk and William F. Buckley. This co-operation between party operatives and an intellectually engaged conservative movement would become one of the hallmarks of American conservatism and would provide the organizational environment in which social conservatism emerged (Nash 1976).

Goldwater's campaign also marked the first significant Republican success in the Deep South since the Civil War. Republicans had tried during the 1950s to break into the South, but without much success (Rae 1989). Goldwater's success was the result of a combination of the discontent of many white southerners with the civil rights programs of the Democratic Party and Goldwater's firm espousal of state's rights in response. For many Republicans, this success pointed towards the possibility of breaking the close alliance between southern voters and the Democratic Party. Republicans soon became adept at using socially conservative appeals to convince white southerners that it was now the Democrats that threatened the Southern way of life. White southerners, in return, found these arguments very convincing.[49]

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[48] Bozell served as Goldwater's speechwriter and was William F. Buckley's brother-in-law. A devout Roman Catholic, he would go on to stage the first pro-life sit-in at an abortion clinic and, for a time, live in self-imposed exile in Franco's Spain.

[49] Black and Black (2002) is the standard treatment of this swing, while Aistrup (1996), Mason (2004), and Lublin (2004) are also very useful. Layman (2001) offers a sophisticated account of how regionalism was reinforced by religion in this transition. Phillips (1969) and Scammon and Wattenberg (1970) are two treatments of this change that were very influential on Republicans in the 1970s.

While this appeal to white southerners benefited Goldwater's campaign and would pay big dividends late in the next decade, it also put the Republicans into a very difficult position on questions of race and Civil Rights. Theirs had traditionally been the anti-segregation party. This status had been taken away from them by the Civil Rights initiatives of Kennedy and Johnson. This problem deepened when a series of race riots swept major American cities in 1965 and 1967.[50] The Republican response to these riots – that the nation needed more of an emphasis on law and order – was to be a persistent theme for them over the next forty years. At the same time, it offered them a way to deal with many of the policy problems that followed from the racial divide in American life without having to deal explicitly with the question of race itself.[51] Many working class whites in the North (traditionally Democrats) found this stance very appealing.

In the short and mid-term, Goldwater's defeat was a setback for conservative Republicans. While California Governor Ronald Reagan did run in 1968 as an out and out conservative, most conservative Republicans (including Goldwater) supported Richard Nixon as the most conservative candidate who was likely to win. Not as desirable for conservatives as a figure like Goldwater or Reagan, Nixon was much preferable to likely liberal candidates like Gerald Ford or, worst of all, Nelson Rockefeller. Conservatives were also somewhat satisfied by the willingness of Nixon's first Vice-President, Spiro Agnew, to articulate conservative positions on some of the

[50] In 1967 and 1968, polling found these riots to rank with the Vietnam War as the most important issue in the minds of Americans (Flamm 2005).
[51] Flamm (2005) is an excellent treatment the dynamic of these issues within the party, while Carmines and Stimson (1989) is the classic treatment of the transition within the electorate.

emerging social issues and by the Presidential candidate's hawkish foreign policy positions.[52]

Nixon himself is best understood as a party loyalist who, on domestic issues, was willing to situate himself wherever seemed best for the Republican Party and his own career. He had entered the party in the late 1940s, supported the Civil Rights Act of 1957, and, during the 1950s, argued that the party ought to pursue African-American votes by being progressive on civil rights questions. In office as president, he supported the Equal Rights Amendment, instituted wage and price controls during the oil crisis of the 1973, and oversaw a considerable growth in social services (Critchlow 2007). On foreign policy, Nixon was a consistent anti-Communist who was nevertheless willing to pursue a policy of detente with the Communist Chinese and Soviet Union – initiatives that won him hostility from conservatives in the party (Mason 2004).

This pragmatism meant that there were occasionally tensions between Nixon and conservatives both inside and outside the party. Even when relations were good, he was certainly not the favorite of the right that Goldwater and Reagan were. That said, he did pursue a number of initiatives that conservatives favoured and worked hard to build good relations with them. He won significant credit with conservatives by being the most senior figure in the party who campaigned vigorously for Goldwater in 1964. Most importantly he pursued a 'Southern Strategy' in 1968 and 1972 that sought to follow up the opening that Goldwater's candidacy and civil rights had created for the Republicans in the South. It sought to appeal to Southerners without falling into the trap of an outright

[52] On Nixon a good short introduction is Morgan (2002). Mason (2004) is an excellent overview of his relationship with the Republican Party. The definitive biography is Ambrose's three volume work (1987, 1989, 1991). On the place of conservatives in his administration (and Ford's) see Reichley (1981). Nixon's own memoirs (1978) are extensive, though also clearly exercises in reputational rehabilitation.

appeal for renewed segregation (Morgan 2002, Reichley 1981). In doing so, Nixon was influenced by arguments like those of Phillips (1969) and Scammon and Wattenberg (1970) that the turmoil in the South represented a great opportunity for the Republican Party.[53] Some of these appeals were on what we now call social issues, like law and order, that also appealed to some working class Catholics in the North – another traditional Democrat base that seemed amenable to Republican appeals (Critchlow 2007, Mason 2002). By 1972, Nixon added opposition to abortion rights and support for parochial schools to his repertoire in a further, successful, effort to appeal to Catholic voters (Critchlow 2007, 136). While this strategy of appealing to the 'silent majority' was clearly pursued for pragmatic reasons when combined with Nixon' relationship building with Republican conservatives, it constitutes a recognition of the legitimacy of conservatives, including social conservatives, by the party's most powerful centrist.

Agnew's resignation over tax evasion and the far bigger scandal over the Watergate break-ins ended Nixon's presidency. Initially, the elevation of Vice-President Gerald Ford to the presidency – and his selection of Nelson Rockefeller to be his Vice-President – made it seem that conservatives would be shut out of the new administration. Looking more deeply into his appointments and policies, however, Reichley (1981) concluded that Ford was in a very similar position to Nixon, a party stalwart whose ideology consisted of: "belief in the free enterprise system; support for strong national defense; wide latitude for local and state governments to make their own decisions; and minimum government interference in business-labour relations and the conduct of individual lives" (287).

[53] As well as above, see Dent (1978) for a first-hand account, as well as Black and Black (1992, 2002) and Aistrup (1996) for its long-term effects.

Ford, as much because of his moderate reputation as because of his policy commitments, was repeatedly attacked by the Republican Right. On foreign policy, he continued Nixon's strategy of détente and kept Henry Kissinger on as Secretary of State, Ford was criticized by conservatives for being insufficiently anti-communist. On economics, his continuation of Nixon's Keynesianism made him few friends amongst conservatives. Ford also faced intense pressure to move right on social issues. His ability to do so was complicated by his wife Betty's very public activism in pursuit of the Equal Right's Amendment and openly pro-choice position on abortion. Ford himself supported the ERA while in Congress and, initially, put White House support behind the campaign for ratification in the states. On abortion he initially equivocated but eventually instructed his solicitor general to support the Hyde amendment restricting federal funding on abortion before the Supreme Court. On all of these issues, Ford was struggling against the growing strength of conservatives in the party – strength that only became fully apparent at the 1976 Presidential nominating convention (Critchlow 2007).

While conservatives were gaining ground in the party, the aftermath of Watergate called into question the Republican Party's very viability. 1974 and 1975 saw it at record lows in public opinion and very weak showings in the mid-term elections. By 1975, some conservatives believed that forming a third, explicitly conservative, national party would be the best solution to this crisis (Reinhard 1983, 225). This project fizzled because the activists most interested in it (a group around Richard Viguerie) were unable to interest any nationally prominent politician in fronting their efforts. They had hoped that Ronald Reagan, the governor of California, would lead their new party. He made it

clear that he preferred to remain a Republican, even if it meant staying in a party headed by Gerald Ford.

Reagan had first come to prominence after a rousing speech at the 1964 Republican convention in support of Goldwater.[54] Winning the governorship of California in 1966, he became the leading conservative presidential hopeful. He had run for the Republican nomination in 1968 but was defeated by the well-organized Nixon effort. His 1976 campaign was stronger and helped by his solid record as governor. He lost the nomination only narrowly to Ford in 1976. This was the last time that a conservative would run with support based solely on the intellectual conservative movement and the old-guard right wing of the Republican Party.[55] By the time of his successful 1980 campaign, Reagan was supported by new groups – the New Right and the Religious Right – that proved able to mobilize significant numbers of voters by highlighting the concerns of many with changes in American society. While Goldwater and Nixon had both benefited from the mobilization of these groups, it was in 1980 that these new groups really became close allies of the Republican Party. The next chapter will examine how this coalition came together in advance of Reagan's nomination. For now, it suffices to say that these new groups were treated as legitimate by other conservatives both inside and outside of the Republican Party.

[54] On Reagan before 1980 see his official biography, Morris (1999) as well as the two detailed biographies by Cannon (1982, 2000). Hayward (2001) is a useful study of the political environment of the day.
[55] 1976 was also the last time that a Republican platform would include support for the ERA, as a conservative plank to rescind the traditional plank in support of the amendment did not make it out of committee. Conservatives did, though, manage to pass a platform plank calling for the "enactment of a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children" (as quoted in Critchlow 2007, 150).

The Conservative Movement

The Republican Old Right had been a long-established force in American politics. The end of the Second World War saw the emergence of a new group of American conservatives – the conservative intellectuals – and of a set of organizations associated with them. While having some precursors in groups like the Southern Agrarians[56] and individuals like Albert J. Nock (1943), the network of conservative thinkers that grew up around the *National Review* after the mid 1950s gained unprecedented influence in the Republican Party. This network promoted a self-conscious fusion of two of the tendencies examined in chapter two: laissez-faire conservatism and traditionalism. What brought these two groups together was a shared sense that, regardless of whether the primary political good was liberty or order, the growth of the state domestically and of communism abroad threatened the American polity. The conservative intellectuals of the 1950s provided both the organizational and ideational kernel of what was to become a very extensive set of conservative organizations. These organizations had great influence inside the party because of the porous boundaries of American parties. Initially, the conservative movement provided conservative Republicans with intellectual credibility and policy advice. As it grew the movement would also become a vital source of grass-roots activists and financial support (Micklethwait and Woodridge 2004). Importantly, their understanding of conservatism allowed room for the arguments of social conservatives when the later group emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

While there had been conservative journals of opinion before, the popularity of the *National Review* (founded in 1955) and the prominence of its editor, William F.

[56] See Murphy (2001) for both a first-rate examination of the Southern Agrarians and an analysis of their influence on later conservatives.

Buckley, made its pages the practical definition of American conservatism for many years. Buckley was quite willing to use this power to rid the movement of what he saw as dangerous or mistaken elements, most notably members of the John Birch Society. The group around Buckley came to be known as fusionists and sought to promote a reasonable and moderate ideology upon which both traditionalists and libertarians could agree.

The beliefs and agenda of this group are best expressed in a collection of essays published in 1964, *What is Conservatism*. This collection articulated the diversity of conservative thinking at the time, spoke to why conservatives of different varieties could expect to work together, and identified the specific policy concerns of movement conservatives. Meyer, the editor, identifies two types of conservatives, both of whom draw on the Western tradition and both of whom are deeply opposed to 'Liberalism'. His division is one

> between those who abstract from the corpus of Western belief its stress upon freedom and upon the innate importance of the individual person (what we may call the "libertarian" position) and those who … stress value and virtue and order (what we may call the "traditionalist" position) (Meyer 1964a, 8).

Meyer and other fusionists argued that these were not fundamentally different starting points but merely differences in emphasis. So long as both sorts of conservative needed the other if they were to fully represent the Western tradition – and Meyer and his contributors argued that they do – they could live in a creative tension.

Importantly, in his contribution to the volume, William F. Buckley identified the fundamental openness of the fusionists to religious reasoning. In a discussion of the

resignation of one of *National Review*'s editors, an atheist who felt it against his principles to remain involved with the journal, Buckley states:

> Can you be a conservative and believe in God? Obviously. Can you be a conservative and not believe in God? This is an empirical essay, and so the answer is as obviously, yes. Can you be a conservative and despise God, and feel contempt for those who believe in him? I would say no….If one dismisses religion as intellectually contemptible, it becomes difficult to identify oneself wholly with a movement in which religion plays a vital role (Buckley, 1964, 222-223).

As with Goldwater, religion was not the focus of *National Review*. To be sure, its editors and contributors included a number of deeply religious (often Roman or Anglo-Catholic) figures. At the same time, as Buckley acknowledges, it also included a number whose views on religious questions were deeply at odds with such religiousity. What is important is that the fusionist intellectuals were open to religious influences and believed that this attitude distinguished them from their 'liberal' opponents.

Their compromise probably worked best in the area of foreign policy. While disagreements did sometimes break out over questions like the Vietnam War, both wings of the conservative movement were strongly anti-communist. After the mid-1950s most conservatives could agree that an outward-looking American foreign policy was necessary if communism was to be stopped. In economics, they were opposed to government intervention in the economy. There were disagreements between libertarians and traditionalists as to whether or not unfettered capitalism was entirely a good idea in theory, but, as a matter of practical policy, both groups agreed that the free market was the best solution to economic problems. The final leg of the fusionist compromise was a belief that tradition, especially religious tradition, was important for society. At the time,

this last set of principles was most often expressed with regard to educational standards and prayer in schools.

During the 1950s, the fusionists had few ties to party politics. This changed in 1960 when a group associated with William Rusher, the publisher of the *National Review,* formed a committee to draft Barry Goldwater for the Republican presidential nomination. Unsuccessful in 1960, the links formed by this committee allowed a close alliance between Goldwater and movement conservatives in 1964. Buckley's brother-in-law, Brent Bozell II, ghost-wrote Goldwater's campaign book and some of the other movement conservatives served as speech-writers during the campaign.

Also associated with the Goldwater campaign was an organization formed by some of the younger movement conservatives in 1960, the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). This campus organization distributed conservative publications to students and was a significant forum in which young conservatives organized and networked. While often torn by ideological discord, especially between libertarians and traditionalists, the YAF would provide significant numbers of foot-soldiers for conservative campaigns during the next twenty years. An outgrowth of the YAF, the American Conservative Union, was founded after Goldwater's 1964 defeat to provide a similar forum for conservatives too old to remain active in what was essentially a student organization (Schneider 1999, Andrew 1997).

The conservative movement grew during the 1960s, but new issues emerged that would both threaten to divide the movement and offer it new opportunities. Particularly divisive were debates over the Vietnam War, with some student conservatives of libertarian leanings eventually joining left-wing anti-war groups. Moreover, significant

figures like Russell Kirk, Milton Friedman, and Barry Goldwater publicly opposed the draft while supporting the war (Schneider 1999, Smant 2002). However, most conservatives opposed questioning of the war effort and called for all-out offensives against the North Vietnamese.

The other major challenge facing the country was race, but conservatives rarely addressed the issue directly.[57] The common position in the movement was to defend the state's rights position, but to deny that the freedom of the states to make their own decisions should be used to enforce segregation. Conservatives argued against federal action to protect the civil rights of African Americans in Southern states not because they were opposed to the extension of civil rights (which they were not) but because such federal action was in violation of the division of powers set out in the Constitution.[58] As the conservative wing of the Republican Party became the only group to argue for the sorts of policies on race favoured by white southerners, and as the Democratic Party took stances on race that those same voters deeply opposed, the South began to switch partisanship.[59]

During the Nixon period conservatives appealed to those with such concerns, not by treating questions of state's rights or by addressing race explicitly, but by focusing on problems of crime and disorder in the nation's cities. The 'silent majority' (Nixon's memorable phrase) was deeply concerned by the disorder that plagued many major American cities in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By calling for action to insure that order was maintained, conservatives tied together their concern about the nation's youth

[57] There has been little scholarly work done investigating the reaction of the fusionist movement to racial questions. Probably the strongest analysis is that of Carter (1995, 1996). See Polsgrove (2001) for a view on how intellectuals as a whole responded to the problem

[58] See Smant (2002), Flamm (2005), and Crespino (2007).

[59] For an influence period analysis of this phenomenon see Phillips (1969).

with worries about race. This law and order message became a dominant strain in American conservatism for the next forty years (Flamm 2005).

The campus unrest of the late 1960s and early 1970s, often initiated by student opposition to the Vietnam War, soon carried over into demands that curricula be changed and students given more voice in the running of universities.[60] Campus unrest, and the growing youth 'counter-culture', made conservatives concerned that American education was failing. Campus unrest and racial strife also moved the group that became known as the neo-conservatives to the right.[61] While not all neo-conservatives were Republicans (Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who became Democratic Senator for New York, is perhaps the best example), the 1960s and 1970s saw this group of intellectuals slowly become more and more a part of the conservative movement. Usually with backgrounds in the politics of the intellectual left, the neo-conservatives preferred social scientific techniques to the philosophical or historical argumentation favoured by other conservative intellectuals. Their position on race, for example, was very much driven by the Moynihan Report's argument that the welfare state hurt African-Americans more than it helped them by inflicting further damage on family structures in that community. Neo-conservatives claimed to take a similarly steely-eyed look at American foreign policy and argued that the country mis-understood its power in comparison to the Soviet Union and could, and should, take a harder line in the Cold War (Ehrman 1995).

[60] For conservative reactions to these changes see Robert Bork's *Slouching Towards Gomorrah* (1996) and Alan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* (1987).

[61] The literature on this first generation of neo-conservatives is both large and of generally high quality. Aside from their own extensive writings on the subjects of concern here see, for overviews of the movement see Blumenthal (1986), DeMuth and Kristol (1995), Dorrien (1993), Friedman (2005), Frum (1994), Gerson (1996), and Kristol (1995).

The early 1970s was a period of quite dramatic growth and change for the conservative movement as a number of grass-roots conservative movements, motivated by social issues, emerged. The liberalization of abortion laws and the Equal Rights Amendments were the changes that motivated these groups the most, but schooling and same-sex rights also ignited local contention from time to time. These movements emerged at the grassroots level in reaction to concern that the traditional values (alternatively, the family values) of the man and woman on the street were under attack by liberal elites. All of these grassroots movements also had strong ties to different religious communities.

Despite their considerable commonalities, it would not be until the late 1970s that these different groups would really coalesce and join together to support the Republican Party, but, when they did, they provided the organizational basis and activist numbers to promote social conservatism within the party.[62] Their entrance into the party will be examined next chapter, but it is worth noting that they voiced, even if often more stridently, a set of concerns that had been circulating amongst other conservatives for some time. Their fairly direct importing of religious belief into political practice did not cause other conservatives much concern. It would – as at the 1976 and 1980 Republican conventions – face opposition from liberal Republicans but, by that time, this was a much weaker group in the party than the conservative bloc taken together.

[62] Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2007) and Wilcox and Larson (2006) each have very useful chapters explaining the religious background to these movements, as well as thorough and up-to-date bibliographies. Crawford (1980) is also a useful, book-length look at how these different movements came together while Liebman and Wuthnow (1982) is a set of essays offering different perspectives on how conservatives came together.

The largest of these grassroots networks emerged in reaction to the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision on abortion in 1973.[63] The abortion issue had surfaced at the state level during the late 1960s as some states began to pass laws that decriminalized the procedure. Debate at the state level was largely an elite affair framed in public health terms, without a great deal of public involvement.[64] Nixon had used the issue in 1968 and 1972 as a way to detach Catholic voters from the Democratic party but, as it was an issue decided at the state level before *Roe v. Wade*, there was little in the way of a national pro-life movement or pro-life organization the national Republican party could ally itself to.[65]

Roe v. Wade, which effectively overturned most existing abortion laws, initiated a very strong popular backlash. It made abortion a national issue and encouraged national mobilization on both sides of the question. While heavily Catholic in composition at its beginning, the movement became more ecumenical as many Evangelical, Fundamentalist, and Pentecostal Christians and Jews also came to see abortion as the major moral issue facing America. Opponents of expanded abortion rights pursued several different strategies at the national level after the Supreme Court's decision (Craig and O'Brien 1993). Some tried to insure that Medicare and Medicaid could not be used to pay for the procedure. Others tried to pass restrictive laws at the state level that would meet the requirements of *Roe v. Wade*. Others – like the Catholic bishop's conference – focused on initiating a constitutional amendment in Congress that could undercut the

[63] The literature on abortion politics in the United States is a vast one, but for useful histories of the first twenty years of the debate see Saletan (2003), Blanchard (1994), Craig and O'Brien (1993), and McKeegan (1992). Adams (1997) is the best study of the parties' initial response in Congress. Tatalovich (1997) is a useful overview and contrast with Canada. Interviews with Donald Devine (2006), Richard Land (2006), and Gary Jarmine (2006) were also very helpful.

[64] In many ways, this state level debate paralleled, in regards to both the groups involved and the language used, the debate over the abortion provisions of the omnibus bill in Canada in 1968.

[65] In contrast to Canada, the American Catholic hierarchy took a strong stance against abortion quite early. See Byrnes (1991) on the American response and Cuneo (1989) on the Canadian.

legal reasoning behind the decision.[66] Finally, some activists campaigned within both parties (but most successfully within the Republicans) to make a pro-life stance party policy. Social conservatives succeeded in this goal at the 1976 Republican convention, when a pro-life plank was part of the party's presidential platform. Their success at this convention, as at the conventions that followed, can be attributed to their ability to mobilize a very dedicated cadre of activists that had access to considerable organizational resources.

Debates over abortion continued in the United States for the next thirty years. Often triggered by Supreme Court decisions and appointments, a pro-life position on abortion became a critical litmus test for Republican presidential candidates and – in many areas – for Republicans aspiring to lower offices. It would also prove to be a very important uniting issue for social conservatives of different religious backgrounds. While Baptists and Catholics might have different views on alcohol, for example, activists from both traditions saw in abortion sufficient evil to unite them against it. Once active together on abortion they soon discovered the benefits of working together on other issues like pornography or same-sex rights (Devine 2006, Land 2006, Jarmine 2006).

While pro-life activism provided the long-term grounding for social conservatism, the anti-Equal Rights Amendment movement was more immediately noticeable (and ecumenical). Between them, the two largest anti-ERA organizations (Phyllis Schalfly's STOP-ERA and the Women Who Want to be Women) mobilized many women who had never before been politically involved. While the leadership in these organizations

[66] William Buckley's brother James, a Conservative Party Senator from New York, was an important figure in this early attempt at amending the constitution. Another Buckley relation, brother-in-law Brent Bozell II, undertook the first militant pro-life demonstration when he and the Sons of Thunder, an ultra-right Catholic organization, occupied a Washington D.C. abortion clinic in May of 1970 (*Time* magazine March 29, 1971).

tended to be Republican, they pursued a non-partisan strategy at the state level to stop the ratification of the Amendment. Mostly made up of women, these groups were opposed to what they saw as the feminist attack on women's traditional roles and privileges. As Brown points out, "the real threat of the ERA was not the specifics of unisex washrooms or drafting women…but the broader threat of government interference with the right of families to raise their children in ways prescribed by their religion" (Brown 2002, 16) and a "concern that America was being destroyed from within by a decline in moral standards" (Brown 2002, 81). In their state-level activism, anti-ERA organizations identified these fears and put forward what was already a common theme among conservatives: that ordinary, grassroots people could combine to halt the changes foisted upon them by a distant liberal elite.[67]

Two other issues emerged in the 1970s whose impact at the time is hard to measure, but which certainly helped mobilize social conservatives. In an episodic fashion, successes by gay rights activists often led to local counter-mobilization, like Anita Bryant's 1974 campaign in Dade County, Florida or the Brigg's proposition in California. Unlike the other impetuses for social conservative mobilization, opposition to same-sex rights did not generate a single set of leaders or a coherent national campaign in the 1970s. While conservatives saw the growing social and political acceptance of homosexuality as deeply problematic, it was not until the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s

[67] Brown points out that the leaders of both Stop-ERA and Women Who Want to be Women were included in Paul Weyrich's coalition building efforts in the late 1970s. Rymph (2005) and Critchlow (2005) are useful sources on how feminist and social conservative forces competed with each other within the Republican Party during this time. Mansbridge (1987) is an insightful and fair-minded history of the debate over the ERA.

and wider debates in 1990s about gays in the military and same-sex marriage that same-sex rights became a focus for social conservative mobilization.[68]

Social conservatives were also motivated by federal efforts in 1978 to insure racial desegregation in private schools by removing tax exempt status from those schools that did not have a percentage of minority students proportionate to the size of the minority population in their area. This change threatened the existence of a large number of private Christian schools, especially in the South.[69] The Carter Administration's efforts convinced many that they could not even withdraw their children from the public school system, for 'secular humanists' would even seek to deny them the ability to educate their children in a manner of their choosing.

The emergence of these issues created important changes in the willingness and ability of evangelical Christians to get involved in politics. Since the Scopes trial of 1925, most evangelical, fundamentalist, and Pentecostal Christians had avoided political involvement. Instead, they channeled their energies into the building up of a separate Christian subculture. It included a sizable network of Christian schools and institutions of higher education, a large print media industry, and a rapidly growing network of churches. It also, thanks to changes in broadcasting laws, grew to include very sizable

[68] See Diamond (1995) for an overview of this period that pays close attention to controversy over same-sex rights. Rimmerman (2002) is a good overview of the same-sex rights movement during this period, as are the essays in Rimmerman, Wald, and Wilcox (2000). Bull and Gallagher (1996) presents the interesting argument that, in their origins, social conservatives and the same-sex rights movement parallel each other. Herman (1997) is somewhat spotty and far more partial, but does include an interesting chapter tracking the evolution of evangelical attitudes, from the 1950s to the 1990s, towards homosexuality within the pages of *Christianity Today*. Herman (1994) and Rayside (1998 and 2008) both contrast the American with the Canadian situation.

[69] This debate had been prefigured by a bitter debate in Kawartha County Kentucky over the treatment of evolution and creationism in public schools in 1974 (Page and Clelland 1978). However, while bitter and an early example of many debates over religion and education that would occur over the next 40 years, the Kawartha country battles seem not to have led directly to any long-term mobilization.

electronic media ministries. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the most prominent figures in this network were televangelists like Oral Roberts, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson.[70]

These groups were strongest in the southern states, which had been solidly Democratic since the Civil War. Naturally, when evangelicals became politically active again during the 1970s, many supported the Democratic Party, especially when Jimmy Carter ran as an openly evangelical candidate in 1976. However, they soon became dissatisfied with the relatively progressive agenda of Carter's administration on civil rights and feminism. The last straw was when the Internal Revenue Service changed the tax code to the detriment of private Christian schools.

Rather than retreating to an isolationist mentality, however, evangelical Christians swung to the partisan right. Their activity, together with that of the established conservative movement and grass-roots social conservative activism, was in support of Ronald Reagan in 1980. It was the recruitment of televangelists Jerry Falwell and Bob Billings by New Right leaders Richard Viguerie and Paul Weyrich in 1978 that is usually taken to mark the emergence of the Christian Right from their previous isolationism.[71] Organizations like Christian Voice, the Moral Majority, the National Christian Action Coalition, and the Religious Roundtable all set out to use the religious media networks for political mobilization and activity.

The integration of these movements into the Republican Party by the New Right and by Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign will be examined in detail next chapter. For

[70] On this transition in evangelical attitudes see Bruce (1988), Martin (1996), Oldfield (1996), Wilcox and Larson (2006), and Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2007).
[71] The New Right (see Crawford 1980) was a short-lived group of conservative activists that provided a key linkage between religious right activists and the Republican Party. They were also notable for their innovations in political fundraising, especially their extensive use of direct mail. Their role in the 1980 election is examined next chapter.

now, it suffices to identify that they all shared a language and set of concerns that could easily be integrated into those expressed earlier by conservatives in the Republican Party and by the fusionist conservatives around the *National Review*. The pro-life movement, the anti-ERA organizations, those opposed to same-sex rights and educational change, and the nascent Religious Right all focused on social issues. As Himmelstein says in *To the Right*, these groups:

> took typically conservative stands on all issues, but its distinctive emphasis was a moral traditionalism….Its leaders decried American weakness in the face of the Soviet Union and the decline of free enterprise, but underlying this they saw America afflicted by what Jerry Falwell has called a 'tide of permissiveness and decay' brought about by a denial of God. Once man replaces God at the center of life, they argued, all moral absolutes disappear, existence loses all meaning, and human life all respect….Moreover, once human beings no longer believe that God controls their affairs, they turn to the 'superstate' instead (1990, 97-98).

The success of these organizations depended a great deal on their ability to mobilize voters and funds. It is clear, though, how their beliefs could easily be integrated into existing American conservative ideology. Members of the new socially conservative movements, like other conservatives, were anti-Communist and pro-free-enterprise. By concerning themselves with social issues, and taking religiously motivated positions on these issues, the various social conservative groups of the late 1970s were taking specific positions on the basis of a principle that many other American conservatives had long shared – that ignoring the religious grounding of moral and political life was a very serious error indeed. What was different about them was their style of organization and emphasis on social issues, not that they allowed a place for religion in politics or a place for politics in social or moral life.

Conclusion

By 1978, conservative Republicans had recovered from the Goldwater campaign and were united behind a single presidential candidate, Ronald Reagan. Those active inside the Republican Party had the support of a number of other groups, from the intellectuals around the *National Review* to state level social movements. Social conservatives were an integral part of the new coalition. They, too, could mobilize activists and had built up impressive organizations. However, unlike other conservatives, they were largely untested in national-level partisan politics.

The 1980 presidential campaign, and the Reagan administration that followed it, saw the first emergence of social conservatism in national politics in a major way. Throughout the build-up to this campaign social conservatives were generally accepted by other conservatives. Social conservatives – when they emerged in the early 1970s – were able to build on themes that had long been a part of American conservatism. Their leaders were also able to build very strong organizational ties with other American conservatives. Social conservative activists, when they were opposed in the Republican Party, were opposed by the party's liberal wing, not by other conservatives. The defeat of this part of the party by conservatives meant greater prominence for conservatives, including social conservatives.

What was untested was the ability of social conservative appeals to attract voters to the Republican Party. While there had been talk since 1964 that such appeals would attract Southerners to the party, no Republican leader had successfully made permanent gains in the South. This changed with Reagan as white Southerners swung dramatically to support Reagan, fulfilling the promise that some had seen in Goldwater's 1964 results.

The next chapter examines both the prominent place of social conservatives in the 1980 campaign and their more muted success at influencing a friendly administration.

CHAPTER 4:

RONALD REAGAN, GEORGE H.W. BUSH, AND SOCIAL CONSERVATISM

Introduction

Social conservatives in the United States, the previous chapter argued, started from a very different place than their Canadian counterparts. Their legitimacy was never widely questioned by other conservatives or by those in the Republican Party who were not self-described liberals. Republican moderates like Richard Nixon made socially conservative appeals even before grassroots social conservative networks had emerged. Moreover, a place for religion in the public square was generally recognized in conservative thought. Since American social conservatives gained public prominence during the 1980 election campaign, they have continued to operate under this overarching umbrella of legitimacy. There have been changes in the prominence of social conservatives within the party, as well as their electoral contribution to it, but that their recognition as a key part of the Republican coalition has remained constant. Following Wilcox (2000), this chapter and the next divide the activism of social conservatives within the Republican Party into two periods. The first, which lasted from 1980 until the early 1990s, saw social conservatives organize predominantly outside of the party and

attempt to influence it through links between the leaders of social movement organizations and the President. This period is examined this chapter. After the early 1990s, as chapter five examines, social conservatives were far more integrated into the grassroots of the party and exercised their influence within it.[72]

This diversity in the ways by which social conservatives could influence the Republican Party reinforces that the party's openness to outside influences was an important factor in the success of social conservatives at influencing it. The ability of socially conservative appeals to sway large numbers of voters has also been consistently important. Their consistent prominence, in spite of the changes in how they organized or the issues of the day, has been supported by the place American conservatism has recognized for questions of religion and morality in political life. This consistent recognition becomes clear as an important factor when the situation facing American social conservatives is compared with that of their Canadian counterparts, who faced fairly closed political parties, less favorable electoral circumstances, and considerable hostility to their ideas.

[72] To be clear, this is not to argue that social conservative social movement organizations and interest groups have disappeared. Focus on the Family is only the most prominent example of a group that grew significantly in importance after this transition. Rather, the claim is that the balance of mobilization shifted from that of the movement trying to influence the leadership of a party to that of a network of party activists working state by state and office by office. This picture is substantiated in the next two chapters and is in keeping with literature that American social conservatism during this period. See Wilcox (2000), Rozell (1997), and Guth (1997).

The Conservative Movement from 1980 to 1992

During the early and mid 1970s social conservative activists organized themselves in grass-roots social movements. Abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment to the constitution were their major concerns, but questions about education and the extension of same-sex rights were also important. After 1976, these reasons for action were reinforced by a general dissatisfaction with Jimmy Carter's administration.[73] Carter had originally been welcomed by many, especially evangelicals, for the openness with which he articulated his Baptist faith. By allowing the IRS to re-examine the charitable status of private Christian schools and by supporting a White House Conference on Families that included feminists and lesbians, Carter soon seemed less Christian to many voters and activists. These specific flashpoints, combined with the economic problems and foreign policy reverses that many blamed on him, created an environment where socially conservative appeals were being made to Democratic voters who already had reasons to consider voting Republican (Moen 1989).

The dissatisfaction with Carter was part of a broader feeling on the Right that American politics and society were headed in the wrong direction during the 1970s. Within the Republican Party, this dissatisfaction aided the growth of the conservative part of the party and, eventually, Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign. Outside of the party, this dissatisfaction saw the existing conservative movement joined by two new groups: the New Right, a network of lobbyists and direct mail organizations, and the Religious Right, a set of organizations that mobilized conservative Protestants.[74] These

[73] For the backlash against him amongst religious voters see Busch (2005).
[74] It is important to distinguish between the New Right used to describe the specific social movement treated here from its frequent use as an ideological descriptor for modern conservatives of one sort or another (most often those with some element of populism in their thought). Organizations that are usually

two groups were closely inter-related with each other and had strong ties with conservative Republicans (although they also maintained some links to conservative Democrats as well).

The New Right existed before the Religious Right and, while members of the New Right often made socially conservative claims, it was generally secular in orientation and lobbied on a wide range of issues. It originated in the mid-1970s with a group of conservative activists and fund-raisers who felt that conservatives to that time had paid insufficient attention to political organization and the translation of their ideas into policy. As one of the most visible leaders of the New Right described its contribution to American conservatism:

> the Old Right had emphasized the economic issues and anti-communism while the New Right added social issues to the mix, but there really wasn't much outright *disagreement* between the two groups on issues. Their key differences were in temperament and operational style – in short, they implemented different types of activism….the New Right was younger, more impatient, and more aggressive, or proactive. For them the goal was winning campaigns and gaining power….the Old Right took a rather lackadaisical approach toward political organizing, while the New Right planned and organized at a feverish pace. (Viguerie and Franke 2007, 127, italics in original).

Other studies have agreed with Viguerie about the substantial commonality between the existing conservative movement and the New Right in ideological terms and that its significant contribution was organizational (Crawford 1980). Some, like Gottfried (1993), point out that by integrating movements and activists concerned with social issues into the growing conservative-Republican alliance the New Right also increased

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described as New Right, in the social movement sense, included the Conservative Caucus, the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, the National Conservative Political Action Committee, and – in its origins – the Heritage Foundation (Gottfried 1994, 97). Wilcox (1996, 2000) distinguishes between these secular organizations and the Religious Right groups who made their appeals in religious terms. On the New Right Crawford (1980) and Peele (1984, 1990) are useful overviews, while Whitaker (1982) and Viguerie (1980, 2004) give insightful insider accounts of the movement.

the emphasis on populist themes in American conservatism. This is likely true, but a note of right-wing populism does not represent a fundamental departure from the fundamentally laissez-faire underpinnings of American conservatism.

The primary contribution of the New Right was organizational. Its two most visible activists, Paul Weyrich and Richard Viguerie, each spear-headed a different approach to making conservative organizations more effective. Weyrich, supported by the money of the Coors brewing family, set himself the task of building a right-wing network of activists and think-tanks in Washington centered on his Committee for a Free Congress. He was remarkably successful in this project during the late 1970s, when he made key linkages between conservative movement activists and party leaders. In particular, Weyrich greatly improved the conservative capacity to lobby Congressional leaders and generate policy proposals (Crawford 1980). Just as important were the fundraising efforts of his collaborator Richard Viguerie, who used then innovative computer controlled direct mail technology to fundraise for conservative organizations through large numbers of small donations rather than through a few large donors. This gave the New Right a sizable advantage over other political groups because post-Watergate changes to campaign finance laws limited the size of individual political donations to parties and candidates (Peele 1984).

It is important to emphasize two features of the New Right's organization. First, the primary loyalty of its leadership was to conservatism, not to the Republican Party. Indeed, Viguerie had made a serious effort to win the presidential nomination of the American Independence Party in 1976, when he – and the New Right leadership in general – despaired of their chances in influencing the Republican Party. After this, the

movement refocused its efforts on the Republican Party and, during the elections of 1978 and 1980, put significant support behind the campaigns of Senate and House challengers that it judged to be conservative (Crawford 1980). Second, the New Right was a fairly short-lived phenomenon that had largely disappeared by 1984. In the late 1970s and early 1980s it was well-funded and very influential, but its success at moving the Republican mainstream to the right diminished the need for distinctive organizations promoting a conservative agenda. It was also hurt by business setbacks that key New Right leaders – most notably Richard Vigiurie – suffered during the early 1980s (Peele 1990). The most long-lasting contribution of the New Right was its integration of social conservatives into the broader conservative alliance. As last chapter established, there were existing themes in American conservatism that were amenable to social conservatism, nascent integration between the party and social movements, and strong electoral incentives for Republicans to make social conservative appeals, but it was the New Right that acted on this potential.

This organizational integration was supported by the emergence of evangelical and fundamentalist Christians from political quietism. The legalization of abortion, a general sense that public education was accelerating moral decay, and court decisions about education and charitable status that eroded the ability of religious Americans to create separate spheres of life for themselves all contributed to this new involvement.[75] At the root of these problems, for members of the Religious Right, was a:

> godless society that had replaced firm moral standards with a system of relativism….Underlying the challenges to orthodox Christian values, some leaders of the movement argued, was a doctrine called 'secular humanism'…..Although definitions of that concept varied from one critic to

[75] The most influential intellectual articulation of this sense of crisis was Francis Schaeffer. See his *How Should We Then Live* (1976)and *A Christian Manifesto* (1981)

> another, social conservatives generally agreed that at its core lay a belief in the supremacy of humanity rather than of God. According to the advocates of traditional social values, the doctrine of secular humanism had become entrenched in the government, schools, media, and other institutions that molded public perceptions. (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007, 213).

On some occasions, most notably the 1988 and 1992 presidential primaries, this strident attitude would lead to the Religious Right over-reaching and triggering substantial conflict in the party. It would also cause conflict at the grassroots level, again most often during the early 1990s.[76] Importantly, though, this period was one in which the meaning of conservatism in the United States as a whole was being re-evaluated, for the end of the Cold War meant the end of an important commitment (anti-communism) that all conservatives had shared.

The growing influence of the Religious Right in the Republican Party was no doubt also due to its ability to mobilize voters, especially in the South. Over time, this mobilizing power would mean that religious conservatives and social conservatives would form about one-quarter of the delegates to the Republican national convention and control the Republican party organization in 18 states (Wald and Calhoun Brown 2007, 239). To assume that this power was in play from the beginning of their mobilization is, however, to confuse the end of the story with its beginning. Rather, the electoral possibilities were only potential and, as we shall see below, the organizational forms by which voters could be mobilized were immature in the 1980s. What was present, in full force, was the notion that these were voters and issues that Republicans could legitimately appeal to.

It was the Religious Right that turned this potential into Republican votes in 1980. The Moral Majority, Christian Voice, and the Religious Roundtable each tried to

[76] These grassroots debates are examined later in this chapter and in the next.

convince religious voters that they ought to support the Republican Party. Jerry Falwell, Robert Grant and Richard Zone, and Ed McAteer (the respective leaders of these groups) built on extensive contacts in different sectors of the evangelical community to build up these organizations.[77] The Moral Majority drew on independent Baptist and fundamentalist churches, Christian Voice on Pentecostals, and the Religious Roundtable on the Southern Baptist convention (see Martin 1996 and Wilcox 2000). While each made efforts to reach outside their denominational bases, none were successful at mobilizing Catholics, Jews, or mainline Protestants.[78]

Until after the 1980 election, these groups were quite dependent on the advice of New Right activists. Paul Weyrich's advocacy of political mobilization by believers was a crucial catalyst for the founding of these groups. He is even credited with creating the name of its most visible single organization, the Moral Majority (Oldfield 1996, 101). Weyrich and other New Right activists had the knowledge about Washington and the ties to Republican elites that religious groups needed if they were to be politically effective. Once the religious groups gained Washington experience, they soon surpassed their tutors. This was not merely a result of the very sizable numbers of Pentecostal and Evangelical Christians motivated by religious appeals, but also of the very substantial organizational capacities of Religious Right organizations. Each of the three major organizations could boast ties to Christian media networks, fairly extensive networks of

[77] Interviews were conducted during 2005 with Gary Jarmine (then of Christian Voice), Richard Land (of the Southern Baptist Convention), and J. Donald Devine (then a Republican Party activist) that confirmed these details. Each of them had been active at a high level in the social conservative movement during the late 1970s.

[78] Roman Catholics provided a substantial part of the conservative movement's leadership and were one of the groups that Republicans hoped would be attracted to the party by appealing to their sense of social order. As voters and activists, however, they did not move in large numbers towards the Republicans and the religious right organizations until the late 1990s (Appleby 1997).

pastors linked to the national leadership, and considerable autonomous fundraising ability. [79]

During the 1980 nomination race and campaign, the Religious Right organizations concentrated on mobilizing religious voters for the Presidential contest. In this they were quite successful. However, they were also operating in a very favorable environment. Later analysis suggested that most evangelical voters would have voted for Reagan in 1980 anyway because of the state of the American economy.[80] The New Right groups – perhaps because of their greater experience – took advantage of shifting partisan alignments to attack a range of political opponents, targeting liberal figures in the Senate such as Frank Church, Birch Bayh, and George McGovern at the same time as they helped Ronald Reagan. Here too, however, it is easy to overstate the impact that outside mobilization had on the outcome of the general election, given the vulnerability of many Democrats in 1980 anyway (Mann and Ornstein 1981).

By the 1984 Presidential elections, the New Right had largely disappeared as a distinct movement (though some of its leaders would remain active in politics for a long time). The Religious Right was more resilient, but was less decisive in its intervention in 1984 than it had been in 1980. [81] In part, this was because its intervention was expected and was in support of the sitting President (Hunt 1985). It was also due, though, to the capturing of the New Religious Right by the party. On some key issues – judicial appointments for example – leaders like Jerry Falwell agreed to simply support 'their'

[79] On the Moral Majority and the other groups of the New Religious Right see Moen (1992), Wilcox (1992), Guth (1983), Liebman (1983) and – for an examination of the rhetoric of the Moral Majority – Snowball (1991).
[80] Layman (2001), Ranney (1984), Wilcox (1996), and Busch (2005).
[81] On the religious right in the 1984 election see Pomper (1985), Jones (1985), and Hunt (1985) and the discussion in the following section of this chapter.

president, rather than criticizing his selection of moderate Republicans unlikely to do much to address their concerns (Moen 1989). Many social conservatives later rejected this uncritical attitude. It has been attributed to political inexperience, but it was also the case that – having thrown its support so decidedly behind the Republican Party and having received symbolic recognition in return – the Religious Right had nowhere else to turn (Wilcox 2000).

Things would grow worse for the Religious Right organizations as the decade progressed. In fact, by 1987 both the Religious Right and the televangelists who provided its more visible leadership were in serious trouble. The Bakker and Swaggert sex scandals discredited televangelists and the resulting decline in contributions forced major figures like Jerry Falwell to focus more on their preaching and less on politics. The Moral Majority was shut down officially by 1987, by which time most of other major organizations of the first wave of the Christian Right had been reduced to letterhead status (Moen 1992).

At the time, some predicted that these problems meant the end of the Religious Right as a political force in the United States (Bruce 1988). Instead, the fading away of the first generation of Religious Right organizations triggered a change in actors and a change in strategy. Pat Robertson's 1988 campaign for the Republican presidential nomination (discussed in more detail below) helped precipitate this change. The campaign itself could perhaps be taken as the last example of social conservatives trying to influence the party by effecting a direct transformation at the national leadership level. After his defeat in the nomination contest, Robertson changed his strategy and used the organization that he had built up during the campaign as the basis for the Christian

Coalition, the organization that would carry the mantle of the Religious Right until the mid-1990s.[82] The Christian Coalition marked a real change from the Religious Right groups of the 1980s, for its "rhetorical appeals are more moderate sounding; the issues appeals are more broad based…and the new organization ha[s] buil[t] impressive grassroots networks" (Rozell 1997, 237).[83]

Led initially by Robertson, and then by Ralph Reed, the Christian Coalition launched what Reed referred to as stealth campaigns to promote social conservative candidates at all levels of politics (see Oldfield 1996, Watson 1997). While the Coalition's prominence did not last past Reed's departure from the organization in 1997, it did play a critical role in melding the grassroots of the Republican Party together with the grassroots of the religious right (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2004, Oldfield 1996). In its focus on influencing the political grassroots, the Christian Coalition marked an important change in the relationship between social conservatives and the Republican Party, the results of which only became fully apparent in the mid-1990s.

While the New Right and the Religious Right were the most prominent social conservative actors during the first half of the 1980s, it is important not to underestimate the role other groups played in mobilizing social conservatives. In particular, the pro-life movement was a powerful force during the 1980s. Court cases like *Webster* (in 1989) and *Casey* (in 1992) kept pro-life activists engaged and mobilized.[84] While the single-issue pro-life groups continued to be officially non-partisan, they developed closer and

[82] Pat Buchanan's 1992 campaign was as much populist as socially conservative and, in any case, did not garner significant support.
[83] See also Guth (1997) and Wilcox (2000) on this point.
[84] On the American pro-life movement during the 1980s the best single work is McKeegan (1992). See also the essays by pro-life leaders in Wagner (2003). Doan (2007) and Solinger (1998) are useful overviews.

closer ties to the Republican Party (Brown 2006). This was both because of the Republican's move to the right on social issues and the increasingly consistent pro-choice stance taken by the Democrats.

The late 1980s and early 1990s also saw a change in the issues that most concerned social conservative activists. After the Equal Rights Amendment to the constitution lapsed in 1982 the issue of formally entrenching equal rights for women in the constitution faded rapidly in importance. Instead, social conservatives were increasingly concerned by the growing acceptance of homosexuality. The set of questions tied up with the recognition of homosexuality had been the subject of episodic, often local or state, conflict during the 1970s. Such issues were thrust into the political limelight by the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the mid-1980s. Soon, the question of judicial and political recognition of same-sex rights became a major issue in and of itself. By 1992, the question of whether or not openly gay and lesbian personnel could serve in the military was a major election issue.

The implication of these changes in organizational form and the central issues of concern were very important to the nature of social conservatism in the 1990s and 2000s. For the moment, though, it suffices to identify that social conservatives during the 1980s went through several organizational changes, each of which linked them to the Republican Party in slightly different ways. The dramatic shift in their organizational form occurred during the early 1990s, when they increasingly organized as a party faction. Importantly, this organizational shift seems to have had little effect on the type of recognition they were granted by the party or in its pursuit of the policy changes they desired. Part of this must be due to the recognition that many voters could be appealed to

through socially conservative appeals. Part of it, though, seems to have been due to a consistent recognition by Republican Party elites – even when social conservative support was not critical to their victories – that such appeals were central to American conservatism.

Social Conservatives and the Republican Party 1980-1988

The emergence of the Religious Right and the New Right did much to mobilize voters for the Republicans. As these voters were often leaning Republican anyway their real importance – for our purposes – was that these social movements successfully placed social issues onto the Republican Party agenda. There had been considerable action on these issues within the party before, but it was the 1980 election that cemented the political links between social conservatives and the Republican Party and firmly placed the Party on the conservative side of the political spectrum on social issues. This change was most visible and important at the Presidential level, where rhetoric about traditional values and highly visible linkages with social conservatives became staples of Republican presidential politics.[85]

Central to this transformation was the candidacy of Ronald Reagan.[86] Despite his popularity with social conservatives, it would be a mistake to see Reagan unequivocally one of them. His roots in the party pre-dated the emergence of social conservatism and his own views were not very conservative on social issues. Even on abortion, perhaps the

[85] Since it was not until the early 1990s that social conservatives settled on an organizational strategy that focused on grass-roots of the Republican Party, rather than the Presidential level, this chapter focuses on the Presidential part of the party.

[86] For different views of Reagan's relationship with social conservatives during his presidency see Crawford (1980), Edwards (1999), Frum (1994), Schneider (2003), Ranney (1980), as well as the biography by Cannon (2000).

issue on which he came the closest to the social conservative point of view, Reagan had a mixed record. As Governor of California, he had signed into law one of the country's most permissive abortion laws in 1969. It was only after this, according to Reagan, that he changed his mind and declared himself pro-life (Busch 2005). Reagan's own ideology put him closer to *laissez-faire* conservatives than social conservatives.[87] His politics was rooted in strongly anti-communist beliefs about foreign policy and a firm defense of the domestic free market. What Reagan did offer social conservatives was the recognition that they had a place in the Republican Party. Rhetorically, Reagan's campaigns can be summarized in his famous comment to a Dallas meeting of the Religious Roundtable in August of 1980; "You can't endorse me, but I endorse you" (as cited in Martin 1996, 217). Similarly, Reagan's call for a "Morning in America" was easily tied into social conservative rhetoric about traditional families (White 1990). He also developed public relationships with prominent Religious Right leaders like Jerry Falwell.

While Reagan clearly reached out to social conservatives, he was more concerned with insuring that the fiscal and foreign policy conservatives he was close to received a prominent place in the Republican Party and his administration. Reagan's choice of George Bush as his Vice-President, for example, upset many of Reagan's social conservative supporters. Social conservatives perceived Bush to be an establishment Republican who was too soft on key issues like abortion. Reagan's response was to make it plain to the social conservatives that he was satisfied with Bush and that party unity was more important than ideological purity. At the same time, Reagan made it clear to

[87] Unlike many other conservatives, though, Reagan addressed these themes in a sunny and optimistic way. Similarly optimistic was his shift of rhetoric around social issues. No longer was the focus on ills like abortion or crime, but on creating a new morning in America that included stronger families (White 1990).

Bush that support for the pro-life and anti-ERA planks in the Republican platform was essential to the latter's nomination (Greene 2000).

More removed from the moderating influence of a very popular candidate, the committees charged with writing the party's platforms for 1980 were quite divided. Reagan, and the leadership of the Republican National Committee, entered the platform process focused on economic and foreign policy issues (Malbin 1981). Social issues, they felt, were too divisive and would not reach out to the working class Democrats and white-collar suburbanites they hoped to attract. However, Reagan also needed to maintain the support of the energetic conservative grassroots activists, many of whom were concerned about issues like abortion and the ERA. This strategic puzzle meant that drafting the party's platform was a difficult task.

Abortion was an especially delicate topic. In 1976, the party had taken a moderately pro-life stance by positioning itself as the party that takes "a position on abortion that values human life" within the series of positions it took of concern to families (1976 Republican Platform, as reported in the Congressional Record). Pro-choice groups found this too strong a stance and hoped to see the recognition of a woman's right to choose in 1980. Pro-life Republicans, most of whom were Reagan supporters, found the language of 1976 too weak. Both sides in the debate mobilized prior to the 1980 convention through their respective single-issue groups. The subcommittee charged with dealing with abortion was made up of activists from both sides, but eventually came to the conclusion that social conservatives wanted:

> There can be no doubt that the question of abortion, despite the complex nature of its various issues, is ultimately concerned with the equality of rights under the law. While we recognize differing views on this questions among Americans in

> general – and in our own party – we affirm our support of a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children. We also support the Congressional efforts to restrict the use of taxpayers dollars for abortion. We protest the Supreme Court's intrusion into the family structure through its denial of the parents obligation and right to guide their minor children. (Republican Platform 1980).

Also an issue in 1980, though not later in Reagan's presidency, was the ERA. While opponents of both abortion and the ERA were social conservatives, and opposition to both fueled later social conservative mobilization, there were important differences between the activists concerned with each at the 1980 convention (Malbin 1981). Many pro-lifers at the 1980 Republican convention would have been moderate to liberal Democrats, had it not been for a sense that they could accomplish more on abortion by working through the Republicans than through the Democrats. Those opposed to the ERA were otherwise conservative Republicans comfortable with taking right-wing stances on economic and foreign policy issues as well as on social issues (Malbin 1981).

Those delegates trying to preserve Republican support for the ERA (which went back to the 1940s) represented most of the leading female figures in the party. However, these Republican feminists were unable to mobilize the same number of convention delegates as their conservative opponents. Reagan himself had quietly promoted a position that would see a platform plank calling for the party to support a number of specific pieces of legislation meant to promote gender equality, but to take a states' rights position on the ERA. However, he and his staff put so little effort into making this position public that committee staff neglected to signal his support of such an amendment when it did come up. The end result was a plank that stated:

> We acknowledge the legitimate efforts of those who support or oppose ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. We reaffirm our Party's historic commitment to

> equal rights and equality for women….We oppose any move which would give the federal government more power over families. Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment is now in the hands of state legislatures, and the issues of time extension and rescission are in the courts. The states have a constitutional right to accept or reject a constitutional amendment without federal interference or pressure (1980 Republican Platform).

Though the platform then goes on to support the needs of women in the work force, the inclusion of language that the party "reaffirm[s] our belief in the traditional role and values of the family in our society" made it clear to many of Republican feminists that their's was a position no longer much supported in the party (Republican Party Platform 1980). It also marked the party as willing to take clearly socially conservative stances on two important issues.

Having won the Republican nomination and put together a platform that pleased both the candidate and most of the party, the Republicans and Reagan were well organized for the 1980 presidential race. In Jimmy Carter they faced an unpopular Democrat who was blamed for poor economic performance and some significant problems in American foreign policy – most notably the hostage crisis in Iran. Both parties focused on the election and the economy during the election. The Democrats argued that Reaganonomics would hurt the working class and that Reagan would create a trigger-happy foreign policy; the Republicans blamed Carter for the recession and the decline of American prestige abroad (see Hunt 1981 and Busch 2005). Reagan made some significant early appearances – most notably at the Dallas meeting discussed above – that identified him with the Religious Right and stressed his commitment to family values. His appearances making specific links to the Religious Right diminished as the campaign went on. They were replaced by his characteristically sunny promises to renew

America and strengthen families (White 1990). Despite this, religious leaders like Falwell worked hard to support Reagan throughout the campaign.

The 1984 Presidential campaign was run on a similar pattern – social conservatives were fairly prominent at the Republican convention in Dallas but were displaced, at least in the rhetoric of Reagan and most leading Republicans, by a focus on economic recovery and foreign policy considerations as the campaign progressed. The prominence given social conservatives at the convention, moreover, was remarkably uncontested. As Pomper (1984) explains, this was because the party had become almost exclusively a conservative one and so each part of the conservative coalition got its time in the limelight. The rump of liberal Republican faction could protest the party's movement to the right, but the only significant tension at the convention concerned who from among the Reagan wing of the party would lead it in the 1988 election.

Reagan's early comments in support of the Religious Right during the 1984 campaign raised social conservative hopes that he would move on their policy agenda during his last term in office. Some social conservatives had been disappointed by the lack of action on their issues during Reagan's first term (Hunt 1985). Reagan soon retreated from these appeals, though, and focused more on his successful record as president and his sunny vision of America's future.[88]

Reagan did give important signs of support to social conservatives, particularly on abortion. Concern about it was the single strongest motivator for social conservatives during the Reagan presidency. Reagan had insisted in 1980 that his initially pro-choice

[88] There was some debate over abortion during the 1984 election for a number of Catholic bishops attacked the Democrat vice-presidential nominee, Geraldine Ferraro, for her openly pro-choice stance. This did create a real debate over the boundary between church and state in American politics. It was a debate, though, that does not seem to have had much effect on the behaviour of voters or a long-term organizational influence.

Vice-President clearly signal a pro-life position (Greene 2000). In 1984 he published *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation*, a book that made the standard social conservative arguments against abortion. He also made it a practice to address, albeit by television feed rather than in person, the annual March for Life in Washington.

These symbolic shows of support for the movement were very important. They gave it legitimacy and engendered an strong (and lasting) loyalty to Reagan amongst pro-life activists. His administration's record on implementing pro-life policy change was more limited, as was Reagan's willingness to use his political capital to support such change. Most notably, Reagan did not make the opinions of prospective Supreme Court justices on *Roe v. Wade* central to his selection of judicial nominees, as social conservatives demanded. Reagan's first appointment to the Supreme Court, Sandra Day O'Connor, was a moderate on the abortion question. Reagan appointed her over the protests of religious right leaders like Jerry Falwell in 1981.[89] Antonia Scalia, his second appointment, was a conservative on abortion as well as just about every other issue that might come before the courts. After the Senate's defeat of vocally conservative and pro-life nominee Robert Bork in 1987, Reagan's last appointment to the court, Anthony Kennedy, was a moderate. Kennedy and O'Connor both generally upheld the principles of *Roe,* even if occasionally allowing some state limitations on abortion rights.

Probably more effective were efforts by Reagan appointees to limit abortions through bureaucratic means (Blanchard 1994). The Surgeon-General, Secretary of Health and Human Services, and head of the Office of Personnel Management – all prominent pro-lifers before their appointments – did everything within their discretion to

[89] On Reagan's Supreme Court appointments see Yarbrough (2000), Maltz (2003), Bork (1990) and Bronner (1989).

limit the number of abortions that the federal government paid for and limited the type of family planning programs that federal money would support. However, such efforts did not require Reagan to spend much political capital in their support and he seems to have done little to direct their efforts (Devine 2006).

Abortion continued to be the central concern of social conservatives during the 1980s, but a new issue, same-sex rights, replaced feminism as the second major concern of social conservatives towards the end of the decade. While the modern same-sex rights movement had begun in 1969 with the Stonewall riots, same-sex rights became a mainstream topic of political discussion during the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s (Rayside 1998). Federal reaction to the epidemic caused some consternation amongst social conservatives.[90] Reagan's Surgeon-General, widely respected on the right for his opposition to abortion, worked to encourage sex education as the best way to combat the disease. For several prominent social conservatives such education amounted to a government endorsement of both homosexuality and pre-marital sex and was therefore unacceptable. Reagan, though, continued to show strong support for Koop throughout the controversy (Koop 1991).

Given the focus of Christian right organizations on influencing the Presidency during the 1980s, it is perhaps not surprising that the situation of social conservatives at lower levels of the party showed more variation (Wilcox 2006). Certainly, socially conservative Senators like Jesse Helms and Orrin Hatch repeatedly introduced legislation (consistently defeated in both cases) to restrict access to abortion and, in the process, became heroes to social conservatives (Link 2008). As Layman (2001) and Adams

[90] Though the great delays in the administration making a response to the epidemic can likely be laid at the foot of social conservative activism.

(1997) have pointed out, this period saw a convergence to the pro-life position amongst Republicans in both the House and the Senate. As Koopman argues in his study of the House Republicans, social conservatives preferred to follow the president's lead on social issues and wielded less influence than their numbers would suggest (1996, 103). Socially conservative members of Congress enjoyed few links with movement conservatives and seemed to come by their views as a result of Southern political culture rather than as a result of activist lobbying from the emergent social conservative movement (Moen 1989, 1992).

At the state level, the effort to defeat the ERA depended on Republican representatives, though anti-ERA groups often also often gained support from conservative Democrats (Mansbridge 1986). The focus of the ERA's opponents on state-level parties was something of an exception during the 1980s. The period did see some social conservative activism in state and local level Republican parties – as with the mobilization of pro-life delegates to the national convention in 1980 – but such activism did not become significant or generalized until the Bush era, when activists mobilized by the Christian Coalition made this level of party organization the target of their efforts (Wilcox 2000; Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2003).

Social Conservatives and the Republican Party 1988-1992

George H. W. Bush, Reagan's vice-president, was not ideologically motivated and did not have a very good relationship with conservatives in the Republican Party. His conservative credentials were especially weak on social issues. While Reagan made it clear that he believed that Bush was conservative enough to be his successor, this

endorsement was not enough to calm the fears of some on the right that Bush was too liberal to be trusted. Bush did try to limit his vulnerability in this area by selecting Dan Quayle as his running-mate in 1988 and having his son, George W. Bush, act as a personal emissary to the Religious Right. Neither strategy seems to have done him much good among worried conservatives. Still, some conservatives believed that Bush was the best candidate they were likely to get and so were willing to support him (Greene 2000).

Others decided that a candidate of their own was the best guarantee that their concerns would be addressed (Greene 2000). This resulted in the most significant example of social conservative over-stretch in American politics: the candidacy of Pat Robertson in the 1988 Republican primaries.[91] Robertson (a Pentecostal televangelist) had stayed aloof from the earlier efforts to mobilize religious voters, arguing that ministry and not politics was the proper place of the clergy. He had a change of heart in the mid-1980s and entered the race for the Republican nomination in the fall of 1986. He ran a straightforwardly conservative campaign that emphasized his social conservatism and religious beliefs. Robertson's campaign was rooted in the Pentecostal Christians who watched his television network. In this regard, its appeal was limited, for other Christians, even Evangelical Christians, were suspicious both of Pentecostals and of Robertson. As a result, much social conservative support splintered to other candidates like Bob Dole, Jack Kemp, or even Bush himself (who received Falwell's endorsement) (Oldfield 1996). Moreover, Robertson's appeal was limited because all the major contenders were officially pro-life, opposed the equal rights amendment, and favored allowing prayer in schools (Oldfield 1996, 145). The other candidates varied greatly in

[91] See Oldfield (1996), Martin (1997), Moen (1992), and Wilcox (1992) for the campaign. See Clifton (2004) and Wilcox (2006) for its long-term effects on the Republican Party.

how important they believed such issues to be, but the rhetorical espousal of social conservatism by all played against Robertson's attempt to use those issues to define his campaign. After some initial successes in states that selected delegates through a caucus process, Robertson lost the nomination quite dramatically to Bush.

Robertson's candidacy was unsuccessful, but it led to some important changes in how social conservatives organized themselves in the United States. Robertson had concentrated his efforts on controlling the Republican Party organization in those states that selected delegates for the national convention through activist caucuses rather than through primaries. This strategy made sense because he had sizable numbers of very committed activists but only a limited ability to reach beyond this base. This attention to the details of local campaigning inside the party marked a real change for social conservatives, who had previously tended to ignore state and local organizations in favour of building strong relationships between movement leaders and the presidential candidate. It laid the groundwork for the Christian Coalition, which would continue this strategy of mobilizing activists to take over the party's grassroots organizations for most of the decade.

During 1988 general election itself, Bush was able to overcome Robertson's challenge and bring conservatives of all stripes together with moderate Republicans. A weak Democratic challenger no doubt helped the cause of party and movement unity. This unity did not last long, however, and the Bush presidency saw significant cracks develop in the conservative coalition. It would be difficult to place the blame for this at Bush's door. Rather, a series of events during his presidency posed significant

challenges to the terms on which conservatives built their coalition leading, in turn, to considerable controversy over what it meant to be conservative.

Most importantly, Bush oversaw the peaceful ending of the Cold War. This was a real success, but it also removed the one point on which all conservatives had previously been able to agree: that the communist threat demanded a significant role for the United States abroad. Within the conservative movement, bitter battles erupted between neo-conservatives arguing for an interventionist foreign policy and paleo-conservatives arguing for a more protectionist and isolationist stance (see Frum 1995 and Gottfried 1993 for these respective positions). The resulting debates over foreign policy were at their most heated over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), with many conservatives arguing that the threat to American jobs from cheap labour in Mexico was too great to allow the Agreement to pass. Conservative concern over NAFTA was crucial to the 1992 presidential candidacy of right-wing populist Ross Perot, as well as Pat Buchanan's 1992 challenge to Bush for the Republican nomination (Pomper 1993, Ceasar and Busch 1993).

Another problem for conservatives was Bush's tax increase of 1991. While the need to raise taxes can be fairly directly linked to Reagan's inability to balance the federal budget, conservatives were deeply upset by Bush's reneging on his promise that taxes would not be increased (see Greene 2000, 79-89). They would have preferred to see domestic spending cuts instead (Frum 1994). While there was little debate that tax increases were bad things, they were taken as further evidence that Bush was not really a conservative and could not be fully trusted.

On social issues, Bush proved willing to veto any congressional motion that would extend access to abortion (Greene 2000). Moreover, one of Bush's two Supreme Court appointments went to Clarence Thomas, a justice who is conservative on just about all fronts, but is especially critical of *Roe v Wade* (Yarbough 2000). Despite this, Bush never saw his popularity amongst pro-lifers increase. Instead, his presidency saw battles over abortion break out anew as court decisions, especially *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, re-energized both sides of the debate. *Webster* was seen by many as an opportunity for the Republican appointed majority on the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (Blanchard 1994). This the court declined to do. The decision gave states more room to restrict abortion than they had previously enjoyed but explicitly upheld the basic logic of the 1973 decision.[92]

Nowhere were these tensions more apparent than at the 1992 Republican Presidential convention (Frum 1994). While Bush won the nomination of the party handily, social conservatives played a far more vocal role at the convention than they ever had before. Most observers credit the prominence given to social conservatives at the convention to a deliberate decision on the part of the Bush team to recognize and mobilize them (Frum 1994, Oldfield 1996). This resulted in a platform that continued the party's opposition to abortion and made more of its opposition to same-sex rights. The convention also saw some inflammatory speeches by prominent conservatives – most notably Pat Buchanan's declaration that the United States was in the middle of a "culture war" (Oldfield 1996). These outbursts at the party's convention – and the controversy

[92] Aside from the question of gays serving in the military emerging during the 1992 campaign, the Bush presidency seems not to have been much engaged in questions of same-sex rights. This was even as the issue was becoming increasingly important to social conservatives and was percolating at lower levels of the judiciary and government. See Rimmerman (2002).

they caused – only provided another drag on a party and a leader that already was not doing well in the polls. A weakening American economy produced a great deal of voter discontent, while the populist Perot campaign threatened both of the existing parties. Attacked from both flanks, the Republicans lost the White House to a Democratic campaign that focused on voter's economic concerns (Green 2000).

The divisions in conservative ideology and the contention at Dallas found echoes in the party's grassroots during this period. Particularly important for our purposes is that struggles broke out in state party organizations between social conservatives – in general organized by the Christian Coalition and Robertson's 1988 campaign – and party activists more interested in fiscal policy, foreign policy, or simply winning office. There is considerable diversity in the outcomes of these debates, but by 1994 the Christian Right was perceived to have a strong position in 18 state parties and to be of moderate influence in 13 more (Conger and Green 2002).[93]

This integration into the party's grassroots had important implications, for it cemented the relationship between social conservatives and the Republican Party. The often divisive struggles that accompanied this change do raise questions about how acceptable social conservatism is to Republicans in general and the importance of favourable norms in facilitating their success. As Green, Rozell, and Wilcox (2003, 15) observe, opposition at the state level

> appeared in three guises. Many Republican activists held more liberal or moderate religious views, reflecting mainline Protestant backgrounds and higher levels of education. Other Republicans were libertarians, opposing government regulation in both economic and social realms. And important elements of the business community were opposed to the Religious Right.

[93] Their influence continued to grow during the 1990s, so that by 2000 the Christian Right was a strong influence in 18 states and had a moderate influence in 26 (Conger and Green 2002).

At times, they also find that the Religious Right and social conservatives were divided amongst themselves. Case studies of state level activism also point out that many of the struggles between different Republican factions had an element of 'professional' versus 'amateur' in them in addition to ideological differences: established groups in the party wanted to insure electoral success, which entailed moderating ideological claims, while social conservatives wanted to maintain their ideological purity. In some states – like Virginia – experience led to social conservatives moderating their stance during the 1990s and, as a result, becoming an important but not divisive party faction (Rozell and Wilcox 2003). In others, like Kansas, a continued insistence on ideological purity by social conservatives has meant continued conflict in the party (Cigler, Joslyn, and Loomis 2003).

While it is difficult to generalize across all fifty states, that there was an increase in the influence of social conservatives in state parties during the 1990s suggests that the first outcome was the more common one. It is also important to recognize that conservatives of all sorts were suffering from severe internal debates at this time. The bitter grassroots struggles social conservatives became involved in had parallels in the debates over fiscal and foreign policy. Additionally, the prominence that social conservatives were accorded at the 1992 convention by a nominee who was not terribly close to them gives a significant signal as to their recognized place in the party.

Conclusion

The Reagan and Bush years were important ones in the development of American conservatism. During this time social conservatism changed from being a movement, parts of which had a history of being aligned with the Republicans and parts of which did not, to being an integral part of the Republican Party. Social conservatives shared in the general success of the conservative coalition, though the payoff for them was more often in the coin of symbolism than that of policy. One source of conservative success during both Reagan's campaign and his administration was that the conservative coalition was reasonably unified. While social conservatives, for example, occasionally criticized the administration for not being aggressive enough on the abortion issue, they were generally satisfied with Reagan's success at making the reassertion of American pride and prestige a central goal of his presidency.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw significant cracks develop in this coalition, as different types of conservatives argued about what, precisely, their alliance stood for. Foreign policy, which had long been an important point of agreement for all conservatives, led to deep divisions amongst them after the fall of the Soviet Union removed the primary communist threat. President Bush's fiscal policies were not warmly received by conservatives. Finally, the candidacy of Pat Robertson in 1988 and the militancy that social conservatives displayed at the 1992 convention suggested that social issues could be a critical fault line in the party. These multiple fractures were no more than a momentary crisis in the alliance, as the next chapter shows. By 1994, conservatives had regained ground by organizing a revolution in Congress that established the Congressional Republicans as a bastion of conservatism. The 1990s

would also see the conservative movement, including social conservative organizations, merge with the regular Republican Party. This did not mean the disappearance of autonomous social conservative organizations – Focus on the Family would become a major player during this period, for example – but it did entail a significant shift in their activities. This change cemented the conservative-Republican alliance. It was also the basis for a series of successful campaigns in the later 1990s and 2000s that saw all members of that alliance co-operate effectively.

CHAPTER 5:

SOCIAL CONSERVATISM AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY FROM 1992 TO THE PRESENT.

Introduction

The 1992 election was a low point for American conservatives. It was the first time since 1980 that they did not have a friendly President in the White House and they were internally divided over foreign, economic, and social policy. The winner of the 1992 Presidential election, Bill Clinton, embodied many of the trends that they opposed in American politics. So bad did the situation seem that conservatives were debating if their moment had passed and whether the movement should simply disband (Frum 1994).

By the end of the decade, conservatives had made a complete recovery. This recovery began 1994, when the Republicans formed a majority in House of Representatives for the first time in half a century and also won a majority in the Senate. This 'Republican Revolution' focused mostly on fiscal matters, but renewed the party and presented a brighter future than conservatives had anticipated only two years before. In 2000, George W. Bush was elected President. He made much of his links to social conservatives and to the Religious Right and they, in turn, have been his most loyal

supporters. While the Republican defeat in the 2008 elections has caused questions to be raised about this coalition's continued electoral viability, it is possible to overstate these concerns. After all, conservatives – especially social conservatives – underpinned a striking Republican success in 2004.

Behind these electoral successes the shift in how social conservatives and the Republican Party related, begun with Robertson's 1988 campaign, continued. During the 1980s, social conservatives were most active in independent social movements that mobilized voters and tried to influence the Republican Party by influencing the party's leadership. After about 1988, with the Christian Coalition providing much of the impetus, social conservatives shifted more of their energy to work within the party so as to influence whichever Republican leader, at whatever level, seemed able to help their cause. Organizations like the Christian Coalition (until 1997), Focus on the Family, and the Concerned Women of America continued the tradition of social movement organization begun by the Moral Majority and other organizations. However, the balance of activist involvement shifted, as social conservatives directed more of their organizational energies to the grassroots of the Republican Party (Wilcox 2006, Oldfield 1996). This integration meant that social conservatives, like *laissez-faire* conservatives who focused on foreign policy and fiscal issues, both benefited from and contributed to this resurgence.

This chapter first examines the organizational change that social conservative movement organizations underwent. It then turns to the place that they found in the Republican Revolution of 1994 and their activities during the Clinton Presidency. It concludes with some observations about the contrast between George W. Bush's firm

espousal of social conservative beliefs and their somewhat limited influence on policy during his administration. It stresses that the dramatic organizational changes of the 1990s did not change how Republicans (and other parts of the conservative coalition) treated social conservatives. The prominent place they enjoy in the party's rhetoric and public image is a sign that social conservative continue to be an integral part of the Republican coalition and, if anything, are even more important to it today than during the Reagan era.

Social Conservative Social Movements during the 1990s

As we saw in the last chapter, social conservatives had initially mobilized in organizations that tried to influence the Republican Party at the level of its national leadership. During the late 1980s, the first wave of these organizations imploded. Some argued that their passing was a clear sign that social conservatism would soon disappear from the American landscape (Bruce 1988). Such judgments were clearly mistaken. Rather, the Moral Majority and other first generation religious right groups were simply one possible way to organize certain deep-seated sentiments in the population. The specifics of how those who held these sentiments organized themselves politically could, and did, change without changing the central fact of their presence in American politics.

Indeed, the Moral Majority's place as the flagship of American social conservatism was soon taken by another organization, the Christian Coalition.[94] Founded by Pat Robertson after his failed attempt to win the Republican nomination in 1988, this group defined much of social conservatism and Religious Right activism until its own

[94] On the Christian Coalition see Moen (1992), Oldfield (1996), Martin (1997), and Wilcox and Larson (2006).

dissolution in 1997. While groups before it had caused dramatic change by the attention they drew to social conservative causes, the Christian Coalition was important because it so strongly promoted what proved to be effective way for social conservatives to influence the Republican Party. Rather than trying to influence the national leadership of the Republican Party directly, Robertson and Ralph Reed (the organization's director) sought to facilitate grassroots activism. By building networks of activists to run for positions in local government, on school boards, and for the lower levels of the Republican Party organization, Robertson and Reed believed that they could build a longer-lasting and more powerful political presence than the first generation groups had. They hoped that these networks would not only be efficient mobilizers of social conservative activists but also training grounds where the next generation of activists could grow in political sophistication.

Tactically, Reed argued that social conservatives ought to moderate their demands so as to contribute more electorally and to build better bridges to other groups in the party (Martin 1997). Somewhat contradictorily, he also advocated 'stealth campaigning,' aiming to hit opponents before they knew that his group was even active in their area. To do this, Christian Coalition activists concentrated on low-turnout elections and contests, often hiding their affiliation with the organization. This strategy was so successful that the Christian Coalition had essentially destroyed its own *raison d'etre* by the time it closed down in 1997 (Wilcox 2002). It had encouraged a generation of activists to become involved in low-level politics. Taken as a whole the impressive ability of social conservatives to organize at a grassroots level made them a formidable force both within the Republican Party organization and – especially in conservative parts of the country –

on bodies like school boards. This infiltration of the party's grassroots meant that social conservatives could more successfully influence the party than they had been able to when their focus was directed solely towards the national leadership (Oldfield 1996). As Conger and Green (2002) found, this shift in strategy increased the number of states in which the Christian Right was moderately influential from 13 in 1994 to 26 in 2000, while it continued to be strongly influential in 18.

This shift in organizational form occurred at the same time that the issues central to social conservative mobilization changed. Abortion continued to be important, but the two sides of the debate had largely fought each other into judicial deadlock by 1992. Sparring over abortion continued at the federal level and could flair up suddenly – when a new Supreme Court justice was nominated, for example. Most pro-life activism, though, moved to the state level after the 1989 *Webster* decision increased the autonomy of states to craft their own abortion laws. The effect of this change has been to defuse contestation over abortion at the national level.

As the hot-button issue mobilizing social conservatives at the national level, abortion was largely replaced by the extension of same-sex rights during the 1990s. Early in the 1990s, it was the right of same-sex individuals to serve in the military that acted as a key mobilizer. By 1996, though, the issue of same-sex marriage had emerged as central and it was around this topic – and other issues connected with the recognition of same-sex relationships – that social conservatives and social progressives battled for the next decade. State ballot initiatives on both of these issues led to a flourishing of smaller scale social conservative movements and allowed social conservatives to reach out to previously un-mobilized voters and to re-energize those activists who had become

weary after a generation of struggle over abortion. Strongly influenced by leaders like James Dobson and sometimes co-coordinating themselves through organizations like the Arlington Group, these were genuinely grassroots organizations. These local activist organization enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with the Republican Party, especially during 2004 elections (Wilcox, Merolla, and Beer 2006).

Long established groups like the Concerned Women of American continued to be important and new groups, most notably James Dobson's Focus on the Family, became prominent. Initially concerned with distributing parenting and marriage advice, Focus on the Family had spun off a political lobbying arm (the Family Research Council) in 1983 and had become significantly involved in politics in the mid 1990s. Since then, Dobson and Focus on the Family have become very significant political players, especially in voter mobilization efforts and campaigns to constitutionally prohibit same-sex marriage (Gilgoff 2007). None of these organizations, though, define and channel social conservative political involvement in the way that the Moral Majority or Christian Coalition did at the height of their influence (Wilcox 2006, 2002).

Social Conservatives, the Republican Revolution, and the Clinton Administration

Social Conservatives had not been very fond of George H. W. Bush. He was, though, a Republican who was willing to maintain open communications with them, give them significant recognition, and was Reagan's declared heir. His defeat at the hands of Bill Clinton was, in part, due to Clinton's successful shifting of attention from social issues and foreign policy to economic concerns. Clinton's 1992 campaign stressed reforms to the programs of the New Deal and an efficient government that could deal

with the concerns of the middle class. His slogan "it's the economy, stupid" tapped into a sense that the economic policies of Reagan and Bush had done little to help ordinary Americans. While he positioned himself on the progressive side of social issues, he did so fairly cautiously and did not make such commitments the focus of his campaign (Waddan 2002, Ceasar and Busch 1993).

Given Clinton's attempt to downplay divisive social issues, one might have expected his Presidency to have seen a lull in the heated struggle between liberals and conservatives in Washington. Such was not to be the case. If anything, Clinton became the target of the hatred that conservatives had once reserved for Communists and his Presidency was marked by heated culture wars.[95] To some extent, the hostility with which Clinton was greeted on the right can be attributed as much to who he was as to what he did (cf. Coulter 1998). Social conservatives saw him, the first Baby Boomer president, as the representation of all that had gone wrong in the 1960s with American life. Rumors of his extra-marital affairs, an admission that he had once tried marijuana (but not inhaled), and such un-presidential activities as playing the saxophone on late night television made him seem unworthy of being president. That his wife departed from the traditional role of a first lady and had kept her own last name until relatively late in their marriage was only further evidence, to many on the right, that the Clintons could not be expected to embody presidential *gravitas*. While these questions of image were important, Clinton did have real ties to social progressives and did give them important policy recognition. One of his first acts in office was to overturn the Mexico City doctrine. This was an executive order, initiated by Reagan and renewed by George H. W. Bush, that denied foreign aid funding to groups or programs that promoted or facilitated

[95] see Guth (2000) for Clinton's efforts to be bipartisan and Hunter (1991) for the notion of a culture war.

abortion. Clinton also made a campaign promise to lift the ban on homosexuals and lesbians from serving in the US military (Rimmerman 1996).

These stances did little to help Clinton's relationship with the right during the 1992 campaign and during the two years following it. After 1994, this conflict was exacerbated by a new strategy the Republican leadership, especially in the House of Representatives, developed to respond to their party's loss of the presidency. Led by the Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, their plan was to lay out a detailed platform that Republicans would follow when elected (*The Contract with America*)[96] and then, based on that legitimization, force a showdown between the Republican controlled legislative branch and the Democratic President. The first part of the plan, electoral success in the 1994 House and Senate elections, worked as the Republicans won control of both Houses of Congress and a majority of state governorships and legislatures. The first part of the *Contract'*s legislative program, concerned mostly with changes to Congressional procedure, was passed on the first day of the session. The Republicans also promised to pass, within a hundred days of the start of the session, a series of more substantive changes to American government. These included a balanced budget amendment to the constitution, a line-item veto, an anti-crime measure, an increase in defense spending, the removal of US troops from UN command, an increase in social security payouts, tax cuts for small business, changes to liability laws, and term limits for politicians (United States Congress 1994). Most of these items were passed fairly quickly.

For social conservatives, the contract included the following items, which were also passed quickly:

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[96] On the Newt Gingrich and the Republican Revolution see Gingrich (1995), Rae (1998), Ashford (1998), Rae and Campbell (1999), MacSweeney and Owens (ed) 1998.

> 3. THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT: Discourage illegitimacy and teen pregnancy by prohibiting welfare to minor mothers and denying increased AFDC for additional children while on welfare, cut spending for welfare programs, and enact a tough two-years-and-out provision with work requirements to promote individual responsibility.
>
> 4. THE FAMILY REINFORCEMENT ACT: Child support enforcement, tax incentives for adoption, strengthening rights of parents in their children's education, stronger child pornography laws, and an elderly dependent care tax credit to reinforce the central role of families in American society.
>
> 5. THE AMERICAN DREAM RESTORATION ACT: A $500 per child tax credit, begin repeal of the marriage tax penalty, and creation of American Dream Savings Accounts to provide middle class tax relief. (United States Congress 1994)

While welcome to social conservatives, these initiatives hardly constituted substantial action on the issues social conservatives were most concerned about. The contract did not deal with issues like same-sex marriage or abortion because Gingrich had insisted that all parts of the Contract have the support of at least 60% of voters. This kept central social conservative issues out of it.

Some social conservatives – most notably James Dobson – expressed real displeasure at this requirement. Most groups and activists found the strategy in keeping with their attempts to moderate their position and so extend their support (Gilgoff 2007). The Christian Coalition was of this view, though it did try to ameliorate the lack of attention to their core issues by releasing a supplemental 'Contract with the American Family' in 1995. This contract called upon Congress to "strengthen families and restore common-sense values" (Urofsky and May 1996, 194). It called for more protection of religious liberty in public places, moving control of education funding to the local level, allowing school choice, enacting a parental rights act, changing the tax act to favour families, ending funding to organizations that perform abortions and imposing a partial-

birth abortion ban, encouraging private charities, restricting pornography, privatizing the arts, and increasing work and study programs in prisons (see Urofsky and May 1996, 192-231 for the text).

In the long run, the attempt to use Congressional power to force a conservative agenda on President Clinton was not successful. This became clear when the Congressional Republicans triggered two shut-downs of the federal government (in November 1995 and January 1996) during a stand-off with the President over the federal budget. They were demanding both a reduction in the growth of Medicare, the abolition of three cabinet departments, and a $245 billion tax cut. At a time when voters were increasingly concerned with medical care and social security, the appearance that conservatives preferred cutting taxes to funding such programs undercut the Republicans (Schaller and Rising 2002).

With this reversal in 1995-96 the Republican Revolution came to an end and the 1996 Presidential campaign saw Clinton defeat Bob Dole handily (Ceasar and Busch 1997).[97] Facing a popular incumbent and carrying the baggage of the aggressive Congressional Republican strategy of the previous two years, this outcome was not too surprising.[98] Two features of Dole's presidential campaign are important illustrations of the status of social conservatives inside the Republican Party. First, major social conservative leaders like Ralph Reed rejected overtures from candidates with closer ties to the movement so as to support the candidate they felt had the most electoral appeal. Most observers take this as an indication of the growing sophistication of the movement

[97] Gingrich was forced to resign as Speaker of the House in 1998 following allegations of both financial and personal scandal.
[98] Although unsuccessful in the Presidential race, the Republicans did maintain a majority, albeit a diminished one, in the House and gained two seats in the Senate.

(Rozell and Wilcox 1997).[99] At the same time, the 1996 campaign season illustrated the limits to that policy of moderation. Though Dole himself had a very strong pro-life record, he proposed moderating the party's platform plank on abortion in hopes of attracting voters. This initiative was quickly quashed by social conservative activists, who insured that the party's now standard pro-life plank was maintained (Rozell and Wilcox 1997).

While it was short-lived, the success of the Congressional Republicans forced Clinton to move to the right during his second term. Gone were promises of a national Medicare system and there was presidential celebration over a balanced budget. For social conservatives, this move to the centre by Clinton was less impressive than it was to their more fiscally minded colleagues. After all, they still had a President in office who embodied for them everything that had gone wrong with American public life since the 1960s. This sense was only worsened when the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke (Bennett 1998). For social conservatives, the notion of the President conducting an extra-marital affair in the Oval Office was both a partisan opportunity and a significant insult to American decency.

More important, in policy terms, were Clinton's efforts during his first term to lift the ban on gays and lesbians serving in the military.[100] These efforts failed in the face of pressure from both Congress and the military, as Clinton was forced to settle for a "don't ask, don't tell position" in 1993. This outcome satisfied neither Clinton's progressive supporters, who were hoping for a complete removal of the ban, nor his opponents (both

[99] As Guth (1997) illustrates, this was a lesson that many social conservatives at the state level were still learning during the late 1990s.
[100] see Rimmerman (2002), McFeeley (2000), and Scott and Stanley (1994) for overviews.

movement social conservatives and in the military) who hoped to see the previous policy of an outright ban maintained.

The tempest over gays in the military was followed by the emergence, in a Hawaii court case, of an issue that would grow more and more important to social conservatives in the next decade: same sex marriage. While the 1993 decision was subsequently overturned, the Hawaii State Supreme Court ruled in *Baehr* that the state's prohibition of same-sex marriage was unconstitutional unless a compelling public interest in the restriction of marriage to those of opposite sex could be shown. This decision set off a great deal of legislative activity in Hawaii, as the state amended its constitution to allow the legislature to define marriage as solely the preserve of opposite sex couples.

Hawaii was only the first of an increasing number of state-level fights over the definition of marriage, battles that reached their peak in the early 2000s. Unlike the question of abortion, where the increased importance of state-level decision-making defused tension at the federal level, state-level disputes over same-sex rights helped to fuel federal-level contention. Nationally, social conservatives won an early victory against same-sex marriage when the Republican-dominated Congress passed, and Clinton signed, the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in the spring of 1996. By 1998, 28 states had passed similar laws (Rayside 2008). These were significant successes for social conservatives, but the DOMAs began rather than ended the conflict over same-sex rights for two reasons: they were only regular legislation that was easily changeable by future legislatures and they could be overturned by the courts. The permanent solution, in the eyes of social conservatives, was to pass amendments to the state and (ideally) federal constitutions that defined marriage as a heterosexual institution. The call for such

amendments did not progress very far under Clinton, but it became a key issue in the 2000 and 2004 election campaigns.

Publicly, social conservatives spent the last part of the 1990s attacking President Clinton about the Monica Lewinsky scandal. In the courts and at the state level, they mobilized to oppose same-sex rights. Leaders in the movement realized, though, that they needed a positive goal in addition to these two negative ones. They settled on insuring that a genuinely conservative candidate was selected to be the Republican presidential candidate in 2000 who was, to the extent it seemed electorally possible, a social conservative (Watson 1997). This goal was achievable because of their success at organizing within the grassroots of the Republican Party throughout the decade. They were not strong enough to insure that one of their own would be elected, but they were certainly strong enough to insure that whoever won would do so with their support and, having won, would have to acknowledge his debt to the social conservatives in the party (Wilcox 2000). Movement leaders had hopes that this would mean more substantial action on their issues than the symbolic recognition and limited policy gains that they had recieved under Reagan, Bush, and Gingrich. It was with this in the background that a wide field of candidates began to organize for the 2000 nomination contest, most of whom sought the support of socially conservative Republicans.

Social Conservatives and George W. Bush

Preparing for the 2000 election, five Republican candidates – Dan Quayle, Gary Bauer, Pat Buchanan, Alan Keyes, and Steve Forbes – hoped to build a successful presidential campaign on the conservative wing of the party. Each could claim substantial social conservative credentials (Mayer 2001). Despite the appeal of these candidates, conservatives generally and social conservatives in particular preferred to support George W. Bush, whom they believed to the more moderate and attractive candidate. Bush's winning of social conservative support was the result of both his talents as a candidate and the continuing shift in the attitude of social conservative leaders (Wilcox 2002). In an initial field that included several more conservative candidates, the decision of social conservative leaders and elder statesmen to support Bush was a sign that they were, as in 1996, considering questions of electability more carefully than they previously had (Ashbee 2007). While other candidates could be counted upon to adhere more closely to the desires of social conservatives, Bush was the most conservative candidate with a good chance to win the general election, so he gained the support of most significant social conservatives.

This is not to say that Bush did not have a lot to offer social conservatives and the Religious Right, for he had long worked to build ties with them. He was chair of his father's outreach effort to them in 1988 and worked hard to maintain the relationships he had formed then. Bush was also extremely talented at using language that placed him on the side of social conservatives without actually making firm promises to act on any of their key issues (Wilcox 2002). In this regard, Bush went even farther than Reagan, speaking often and explicitly about his experience of being born again (Smith 2006). This

witnessing convinced many religious people that he was on their side without his needing to make specific policy commitments (Smith 2006, Wilcox 2002). Such explicitly religious language, coming after a President plagued by personal scandal, was a real motivator for conservatives generally, not just for social conservatives, who saw in it a sign of moral re-commitment after the Clinton years (cf. Frum 2003).

This rhetorical skill was supported by Bush's policy record as governor of Texas (Ashbee 2007). As governor, his actions on same-sex rights, sex education, abortion, and the promotion of healthy families through the welfare system all went some way to address social conservative concerns. At the same time, he rarely took firm public stands and presented his policies to the public in a way that made them appealing to a wide range of voters. During the lead-up to the 2000 campaign, for example, Bush went on record as opposing same-sex adoption, a recent court ruling forcing the Boy Scouts to accept gay members, and the use of the federal power to lift state sodomy laws. These positions made social conservatives quite enthusiastic about his candidacy. At the same time, he was willing to appoint some people of same-sex orientation to bureaucratic posts and opposed the efforts of some social conservatives to make an issue of John McCain's meeting with the Log Cabin Republicans (a group of openly gay Republicans) (Ashbee 2007).

Bush also benefited from his unprecedented financial backing. Late in the campaign he was simply able to out-spend his only serious challenger, John McCain. Bush also had the party's establishment and partisan loyalists firmly behind him (Crotty 2001). Aside from a bitterly fought contest in South Carolina, where the open support of the religious right was crucial to Bush's win in a very divisive contest, Bush ran as a

moderate who was friendly with the conservative base of the party but who also was well positioned to move to the centre during the general election (Schaller and Rising 2002, Crotty 2001).[101]

With conservatives in general now firmly a part of the Republican Party, Bush's challenge in the general election was to express a conservatism that would mobilize the party faithful while attracting swing voters. The part of the Republican campaign that was crafted most carefully to make this appeal was Bush's call for a 'compassionate conservatism' (Olasky 2000). In Olasky's account, which was very influential inside the Bush campaign, compassionate conservatism meant focusing on problems of poverty and family disruption that conservatives often ignored. The solution to these problems was not only to provide for basic material needs, but to build a partnership between government and faith-based organizations. Such a partnership would be able to address the spiritual needs that Olasky identified as being at the root of much poverty. This would mean a solution to poverty that was "assertive…basic…challenging… diverse…effective…faith-based… and gradual" (Olasky 2000, 16-20). While such policies worked better in theory than in practice, they provided the type of optimistic rhetoric that characterized Bush's campaign (Black, Koopman, and Rydan 2004).

Bush's 2000 campaign was marked by the sort of moderate language one might expect from someone advocating 'compassionate conservatism'. Also, during the campaign, while the Lewinsky scandal was definitely in the background, economic and foreign policy issues dominated both candidate's agendas. In fact, in the general election, social issues and social conservative activism were less important than they had been for

[101] In South Carolina that Bush benefited most from the support of religious right leaders as, with their support, he was able to paint McCain as soft on abortion. This was despite McCain's strong pro-life record (Crotty 2001, Wilcox 2002).

some time (Wilcox 2002). The race ended on a sour note when a Supreme Court decision about voting in Florida, not a Bush victory in the popular vote, decided the election's outcome. As the Court split between Republican-appointed and Democrat-appointed justices in making its decision, accusations of partisan decision-making were soon being exchanged, turning a close election into one that called core American institutions into question.

Congressional and Senate elections saw similarly close outcomes. In the Senate, Republicans initially had to depend on the vote of Vice-President Dick Cheney to insure a majority. They lost this majority in May of 2001 when Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords crossed to the Democratic side and then regained it after the 2002 midterm elections. In the House, the Republicans maintained a majority, but by a smaller margin than they had been recently enjoying.

The close 2000 election, and the growing public concerns about the economy and foreign wars, meant that the 2004 election was expected to be a highly charged contest. Despite the central place accorded to the war and the economy, the election was marked by unprecedented attention to social issues. [102] This was partly the result of a series of court decisions to do with same-sex rights that brought that issue to the fore. But it was also due to a deliberate strategy on the part of the Republican Party. After the 2000 campaign, Republican strategists had pointed to low voter turnout among socially conservative Christians to explain their winning only a minority of the popular vote in the presidential race (Powell and Brewer 2005). The Bush campaign put a great deal of emphasis on insuring that these voters turned out in 2004. Much of this effort was

[102] For useful academic accounts of the 2004 campaign, all of which pay considerable attention to the role of social conservatives, see Campbell (2007); McMahone, Rankin, Beachler, and White (2005); Ceaser and Busch (2005); Crotty (2005); and Green, Rozell, and Wilox (2006).

organizational, as the Republicans devoted an unprecedented amount of effort and money (the Bush campaign was, as usual, very well financed) to a successful effort to turn out friendly voters in swing states (Conley 2005).

It was the heated debate over same-sex marriage, not abortion, that mobilized social conservatives in 2004.[103] The immediate trigger was the ruling of the Massachusetts Supreme Court in November 2003. In the ruling, the court decided that the state's law against same-sex marriage was unconstitutional and would have to be revised to allow same-sex marriage within 180 days (Campbell and Monson 2007). In the background was the *Lawrence v. Texas* judgement of the Supreme Court earlier that year, which had overturned Texas's law against sodomy. Combined with the declaration of the mayor of San Francisco that his city would start registering same-sex marriages same-sex marriage soon emerged as central to the debate over values in the campaign.

In response, social conservatives organized popular initiatives in eleven states to amend state constitutions so as to forbid same-sex marriage. These efforts dovetailed very well with Republican efforts to increase voter turnout (Campbell and Monson 2007). Moreover, Bush made social conservatism more central to his public image in 2004 than he had in 2000. The references to his personal faith continued, but his commitment to traditional marriage and to restricting access to abortion was made more prominent and more use made of such appeals in narrow-cast direct mailings to voters who would be motivated to vote on the issue by them (Monson and Oliphant 2007). While the precise effects of these appeals to religious and socially conservative voters are unclear, there is

[103] Although whether or not this mobilization, on balance, helped the Republicans is a matter of some debate in the academic literature. See Green, Rozell, and Wilcox (2006); Campbell (2007); McMahone, Rankin, Beachler, and White (2005) for different perspectives.

no doubt that the Republicans did better in 2004 than in 2000. They clearly won the Presidency and increased their majorities in both the House and the Senate.

The rhetoric and alliances of the campaigns are public, but a full reckoning of the Bush administration's record on social issues will have to wait for the passions of both pundits and scholars to cool after one of the most controversial Presidents in modern history. Even at this point, however, it is possible to point out a striking similarity between Bush and Reagan when it comes to their interaction with their social conservative supporters (White 2005). Both gave substantial symbolic accommodation to social conservative concerns but did not live up to those promises when it came to the actual implementation of policies.

While the gap between rhetoric and policy implementation is significant, there is also little doubt that social conservatives have gained more in both areas from the Bush Presidency than from any previous administration. On the most contentious issue of the decade, same-sex marriage, Bush has been a consistent supporter of an amendment to the American Constitution to ban them (Ashbee 2007).[104] Attempts to pass such an amendment through Congress and the Senate have been consistently defeated, despite the President's support. While unsuccessful nationally, social conservatives were quite successful at the state level, where they passed numerous amendments to state constitutions forbidding same-sex marriage (Wilcox et al. 2004).

Bush's rhetoric on abortion has been far closer to social conservative ideas than any other President. His administration has moved policy in this area in a socially conservative direction in a number of ways (Ashbee 2007). He spoke often about his

[104] Although his support of the amendment did receive some criticism from social conservatives for being too tepid.

desire to promote a 'Culture of Life' and appointed a number of pro-life stalwarts – most notably John Ashcroft as Attorney General – to senior posts in his administration. On his first day in office, he promulgated a number of executive orders restricting or eliminating federal support for organizations that funded abortions abroad or for research that involved them. These executive orders had first been passed by Reagan, and renewed by George H. W. Bush, but had been reversed by President Clinton. Bush's most important act in the abortion debate was his signing of the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act in 2003. Similar acts had been vetoed twice by Clinton, so Bush's support for it was seen as a signal victory by social conservatives.

Bush's initiatives on same-sex marriage and abortion were the natural extension of policies that social conservatives had always hoped for. Social conservatives were more divided on the faith-based initiatives program (see Formicola, Segers, and Weber 2002; Black, Koopman, and Ryden 2004). Both Bush and Gore had promoted versions of this idea during the 2000 campaign. Bush, though, was far more enthusiastic about the notion and was more willing to relax one of the traditional restrictions on such programs, that proselytizing not be mixed with social service provision. The President was unable to get his enabling legislation passed despite two attempts. Eventually, he implemented a limited version of the faith-based initiatives through executive order. These programs faced substantial criticism from two camps. Liberal groups like Americans for the Separation of Church and State opposed the initiatives giving religion too much influence in public policy making. Many conservative religious leaders, on the other hand, were suspicious because they believed that government funding would inevitably lead to greater government control over their organizations. Many social conservatives, though,

saw the faith-based initiative as a real opportunity to replace the secular assumptions of the welfare state with more fulfilling spiritual ones.

It has been in his nominations to the Supreme Court that Bush gave the most to his socially conservative supporters. Because of the Supreme Court's role in deciding issues such as abortion and same-sex rights, social conservatives felt that it was on the appointment of justices that the President ought to listen to them the most. They were especially concerned because two of Reagan's three appointees to the bench proved to be moderates on abortion and other social issues (Ashbee 2007, Kasniunas and Rossotti 2007). Social conservatives were very worried that Bush might similarly renege on his commitment to them. His first nominee, John Roberts, met with social conservative approval. When a second position opened with the death of Chief Justice Rehnquist in September 2005, Bush nominated Roberts for Chief Justice and Harriet Miers for the open associate seat. Miers was widely seen as unqualified and her nomination quickly withdrawn. It is worth noting, though, that her opponents included many social conservatives because she was seen as soft on social issues. Bush's next nominee, Samuel Alito, came with no such baggage and social conservatives worked hard to support his nomination. As of 2008, Bush's two appointees seem to have fulfilled the hopes that social conservatives placed in them, most notably by upholding the partial birth abortion ban in *Gonzales v. Carhart*.

These socially conservative policies would not have been possible without the support of House and Senate Republicans. While no longer in the public eye in the same way that they had been during the Republican Revolution of the mid-1990s, there is little doubt that the congressional party has become uniformly conservative and, to a

considerable degree, socially so (Ashbee 2007). This does not mean that some Republican Senators and Congressmen did not oppose the socially conservative initiatives of the Bush presidency, but that the party in general was remarkably united behind such initiatives. Much of this can be attributed to the success of social conservatives at gaining power at the state and local level that, in turn, depended on their ability to mobilize voters to support their issues (Green, Rozell, Wilcox 2006).

Some have argued that success on same-sex marriage amendments is due to social conservatives finding a short-lived window where the topic is a salient issue but during which popular opinion, which is rapidly liberalizing, is still amenable to conservative appeals (Wilcox, Merolla, and Beer 2006),. If this is true, the efforts of the Bush campaign in 2004 to acknowledge and mobilize, but also to distance itself from social conservatives, was likely a wise strategy. Whether the efforts of John McCain and Sarah Palin in 2008 stood any chance of being equally successful is a question that will have to wait for more data to become available. What is clear is that the Bush years saw more recognition of and influence by social conservatives than any previous presidency. This status was grounded in their organizational integration into the party, their electoral contributions to it, and the continuing recognition by conservatives and Republicans of the fundamental legitimacy of their concerns.

Conclusion

By 2004, the transformation that had begun with Goldwater in 1964 and that had taken its first lasting steps with Reagan and the Moral Majority in 1980 came to fruition. Social conservatives had wedded their partisan fate to that of the Republican Party. While not the dominant source of party activists or funding, social conservatives provide a considerable part of the activist brawn that has made the Republicans so successful (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2004). In return, the party gave them a great deal of recognition.

A great part of the success of social conservatives can be attributed to the strength of religion in the United States and to the institutional openness of American political parties to outside influences. The presence of a dense network of churches and religious media, a high proportion of religious voters, and an electorate destabilized during the 1960s all helped social conservatives when they began to mobilize. Similarly, the presence of large numbers of voters who could be swayed by social conservative appeals has helped them maintain an important place within the party. Organizationally, the vulnerability of American parties to outside influences, especially their very weak party discipline, also helped social conservatives gain and maintain a place in the party.

Such factors alone, though, are not a completely adequate explanation of the way in which social conservatives gained prominence within the Republican Party. Our considerations should also take account of the openness of political elites to the discussion of and mobilization around social issues in partisan politics. Throughout the migration of social conservatives from the periphery of the Republican Party to its centre, their movement was aided by other conservatives, not opposed by them on the grounds

that social conservatives were illegitimate. Intra-party opposition came, early on, from moderate or liberal Republicans – people who did not identify as conservative on any issue. As conservatives of all stripes took over the Republican Party, social conservative were a part of a general movement, not an isolated group of activists struggling against broadly accepted norms.

That is not to say that tensions never broke out within conservative ranks. Especially during the early 1990s (as chapter four documented) the tensions between different groups of conservatives could be considerable. However, the status of social conservatives as legitimate players was never seriously questioned, at the national level, during these times of tension.[105] Instead, the differences were over what one might call normal political matters – debates over leadership, electoral strategy, and how much attention to give specific issues. In short, the norm about the appropriate boundary of politics held by American conservatives consistently included those areas of most concern to social conservatives within the ambit of the political.

As the next three chapters show, this was not the case with their Canadian counterparts. Rather than operating in an environment where their legitimacy was generally recognized, Canadian social conservatives struggled against norms that defined the areas of most concern to them as inappropriate until the mid 1990s. Before then, the definition of conservative held by Progressive Conservatives (chapter six) underlay a norm that rendered social conservative mobilization illegitimate. While different in content, the Reform Party's populism (chapter seven) similarly limited social conservative success during the initial stages of that party's life. It was not until a series

[105] Debate at the state level was often much sharper, though this varied widely from state to state and, as Chapter Four discussed, was often as much a debate between party insiders and new-comers (or professionals and amateurs) about electability as it was a debate over ideological legitimacy.

of institutional changes swept away this norms in the late 1990s that social conservatives could mobilize in a manner similar to that of their American counterparts. Chapter eight examines their entrance into normal politics, but points out how their lack of appeal to the broader Canadian electorate has continued to limit their success.

CHAPTER 6:

THE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVES AND THE BOUNDARIES OF POLITICS

Introduction

Unlike their American counterparts, Canadian conservatives have been a well defined-group for as long as the country has enjoyed self-government. As chapter two noted, this longer history and connection to Great Britain meant that traditionalists were a significantly more important component of Canadian conservatism than they were of the American variety. Moreover, there has always been (at least one) political party with the label conservative in Canada. Given that Canadian parties tend to be tightly disciplined and leader-centric bodies, it should not surprise that strong norms about what being a conservative meant developed over time and were closely tied to the positions and character of the (by the 1960s) Progressive Conservative Party (PCs).

Most treatments of the party by political scientists emphasize its brokerage or office-seeking character (Carty, Cross, and Young 2000; Clarke et al. 1984; Perlin 1980). In this view the PCs, like the Liberals, sought to forge a coalition of diverse interests and actors strong enough to form a government. For scholars in this tradition, the divisions within the party were over matters of leadership and strategy, not ideology (Perlin 1980).

This approach can be taken as a combination of the competitive and sociological approaches to the comparative study of political parties outlined in chapter one.

The other line of scholarly inquiry, while not ignoring the desire of the party to broker conflict and win office, emphasizes the influence of ideology on it (Horowitz 1966, Campbell and Christian 1996).[106] In this account, the Conservative party should be understood as a party with many business liberals (Christian and Campbell 1996) but also as having a strong: "touch of the authentic tory aura – traditionalism, elitism, the strong state, and so on….but also an element of 'tory democracy' – the paternalistic concern for the 'condition of the people' and the emphasis on the tory party as their champion…" (Horowitz 1966, 157). Christian and Campbell (1996) add to this mix the presence of those who are temperamentally resistant to change or nostalgic for things passing by. Progressive Conservatives tended to be loyal to and identify with Great Britain. For this group of scholars, what the brokerage school identifies as struggles over leadership are in fact struggles over ideology.

Rather than arguing that one or the other approach is the only correct one, it is more accurate to say that the Progressive Conservatives pursued a brokerage strategy during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s not only because they saw it as the best way to find electoral success but because they believed it to be the approach most in keeping with their version of conservative ideology. Such a position is very much that of the traditional conservatives previously described. That is, to be conservative is to articulate and protect the living tradition of the entire nation. For traditional conservatives,

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[106] This division leaves aside those historians who have examined the pre-Second World War history of the party (Creighton 1952, 1955; English 1977; Granatstein 1967; Glassford 1992) and the useful body of work that describes its fate in particular elections (Martin, Gregg, and Perlin, 1983; Patten, 2000; Woolstencroft 1994, 1996, 2000).

consensus politics was attractive both because it might lead to office and because it made good sense ideologically.

Before 1968 the issues that required brokering did not include what we now describe as social issues. There was, it seems, a widely held consensus that kept issues such as same-sex rights, pornography, and abortion out of partisan politics (though still the subject of legislation). Because there was a societal consensus around such issues, there was little need for politicians to organize around them or for activists to debate them. In the face of progressive movements who declared that "the personal is the political", the response of the Progressive Conservative party can be characterized as "the personal has not been, and is not now, a suitable topic for partisan organizing." Issues of sexual morality like homosexuality, abortion, or (less strongly) divorce were not legitimate grounds for political mobilization or the imposition of party discipline. This norm remained until the collapse of the Progressive Conservative party in 1993.

This is not to say that the party did not contain many who were opposed to removing restrictions on abortion or expanding same-sex rights – it clearly did include some MPs who opposed such changes.[107] While survey evidence on these questions from the 1960s and 1970s is scanty, it also seems fair to surmise that a sizable proportion of the party's membership and electoral supporters were also opposed to such measures, given the views of the population at large.[108] However, many who held these views also shared the norm that the personal was not political and so were conflicted about how to take their stand. Those few social conservatives who did not share the norm were at a disadvantage in internal debates because their views were often seen as illegitimate.

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[107] Epp (2005) and Redway (2006).
[108] See Tatalovich (1997) for an overview of Canadian opinion on abortion, for example.

As evidence of the strength and continuity of this norm, three occasions where social issues became a topic for political debate are examined in this chapter. The debate over the Omnibus bill of 1968 was wide ranging, but this chapter examines the two most controversial topics: the decriminalization of homosexuality and the liberalization of access to abortion. Social conservative mobilization in the two decades following is then described, as is the most controversial debate over social issues in this period: the Mulroney abortion motion of 1988 and Bill C-43 of 1989-90. The chapter concludes with a treatment of the party's approach to the extension of same-sex rights.

The Emergence of Social Issues in 1968

Social issues emerged as a topic of political debate in Canada with a Joint House of Commons/Senate committee report on divorce law reform in 1967 and with the introduction of an Omnibus Bill to amend the Criminal Code the following year. Along with more than 100 other changes to the Criminal Code, the Bill proposed two changes that elicited substantial debate: decriminalizing homosexuality and allowing hospitals to set up therapeutic abortion committees. It can be taken, along with the *Royal Commission on the Status of Women*, as the start of second wave feminism in Canada, the beginning of the same-sex rights movement, and as the catalyst for the abortion debate.

While the debate engendered by the Bill would have a significant effect on grassroots political activity in Canada, it was not itself the result of such activity.[109] Rather, it was a coalition of elites – the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Bar Association, the major Protestant churches (especially the United Church), and

[109] For overviews of the Canadian abortion debate see Brodie (1992), Campbell and Pal (1991), Collins (1985), and Morton (1992). Cuneo (1989) is a very insightful sociological study. Tatalovich (1997) gives a useful comparative perspective.

establishment media like the *Globe and Mail* – that pressed for legislative change. Notably absent from this coalition were social movements, as neither the feminist nor the same-sex rights movement were politically significant in Canada before the mid 1970s. What these elite groups sought was an administrative updating and renewal of laws that, according to them, no longer matched the country's social reality (Collins 1985, Brodie 1992). Progressives did not base their arguments on claims for equal rights but offered them as practical solutions to social ills. They argued that legal changes would eliminate the health dangers to women posed by illegal abortions, resolve the uncertainties faced by those separated from their former spouses and in new common law relationships but unable to obtain a divorce, and the difficulties that homosexuality being illegal posed for the treatment of what was increasingly seen as a medical condition rather than a sinful failing (cf. Berton 1965).

As with social progressives, there was little popular mobilization around issues of social change on the conservative side. Moreover, in the quarters where one would expect the most support for social conservative ideals, there was little to be found. The mainline Protestant churches were generally supportive of the legal changes Pierre Trudeau, first as Justice minister and then as Prime Minister, was introducing. The Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) accepted changes to the divorce law because the Church believed that it was important that the non-Catholic population, which was not subject to religious restrictions on divorce, not be presented with a law they had no reason to obey. The CCCB did present a brief opposing abortion, but too late in the process to have much impact.[110] There seems to have been no official Catholic

[110] One of the bill's mechanisms may have also limited Catholic opposition. It allowed hospitals to set up Therapeutic Abortion Committees (made up of doctors) to oversee the procedures. In many instances, this

position taken on the legal status of homosexuality (Collins 1985, Cuneo 1989). If the Catholic response was muted, it is safe to characterize the evangelical Christian response as non-existent. At this point, not only were Canadian evangelicals a small group, but most, aside from the Aberhart-Manning connection in Alberta, avoided political involvement as too worldly (Stiller 1997).

Resistance to legislative change, then, was largely restricted to those members of the federal political elite who felt that the changes being introduced by Trudeau were wrong. Those Liberals who felt this way were restrained by the imposition of party discipline by both Pearson and Trudeau. New Democrats seem to have had no reservations in supporting the bill. The MPs of *Le Railliement des Crédistes*, alternatively, were not at all hesitant to voice their opposition to the changes proposed by Trudeau, and eventually filibustered the bill. Given the party's origins and strength in rural Quebec, it is not surprising that support for the traditional family, as defined by Catholic social teaching, was a crucial party of its platform. However, the party was so small that it was ineffective in its resistance to the changes.

As the major opposition party, the Progressive Conservatives took a different approach than any of the other parties. Rather than imposing party discipline, the PCs allowed a free vote by their members and encouraged the other parties, especially the Liberals, to do the same. The only position on which the PCs seem to have been united was that the bill should be split so that members would be free to vote on those issues which enjoyed more or less unanimous support amongst all MPs (drunk driving

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structure more or less allowed abortion on demand. But Catholic hospitals, by refusing to create such committees, could prevent the legal pre-conditions for a legal abortion from being present on their premises.

legislation, for example) separately from contentious issues like divorce, abortion, and homosexuality. Otherwise, there were PC speakers on both sides of the debate.

What suggests that the party took its stance because of a norm of non-partisanship rather than because of internal division is the absence of these issues from the recollections of those involved in the party during this period. In the House, John Diefenbaker was "irrevocably opposed to two of its clauses dealing with sex and abortion" on grounds of conscience (Diefenbaker January 27th, 1969)[111] but, when the time came for a vote, he found that he had to be in Saskatchewan to dedicate a statue of himself (Diefenbaker April 18, 1969). Diefenbaker's three volume autobiography, ordinarily so eager to condemn his foes in the party, is silent on the omnibus bill (Diefenbaker 1977). Stanfield supported the bill's intent, although he was concerned that it was not split up into constituent parts and that it might lead to inequality (Stanfield February 25th, 1969). A biography published with his co-operation in 1973 is silent (Stevens 1973), as are the Stanfield papers in the National Archives (MG 32 C21). Heath MacQuarrie (1992), a political scientist and party insider during the period, does not raise the issue in his history of the period. Flora MacDonald, one of the leading progressives in the party, remembers no "rancorous debate" at the time.[112] Even those who described themselves as social conservatives remember no deep division in the party at the time.[113] Moreover, that a party is itself divided on an issue is usually not a reason for it to allow its members to vote freely – Stanfield did not make it a practice to allow free votes for his members on other contentious issues.[114] If usual Canadian practice had been followed,

[111] Hereafter, citations in this form are to speeches in the House of Commons.
[112] MacDonald (2005). See also her biography by Armstrong (1976).
[113] Epp (2005).
[114] On the rarity of and reasons for free votes in the Canadian House of Commons see Flanagan (1997).

discipline would have been imposed to bring members in line with the leader. However, this is not what happened – there was something particular about these issues that made the imposition of party discipline unseemly.

Another clue to the nature and existence of the norm is how opponents of the changes articulated their position. Most PC pro-lifers opposed abortion on the basis of personal conscience. They did so hesitantly, often anxious to avoid imposing their views on others. The initial response of Eldon Woolliams, the MP for Calgary North and PC house leader, can be taken as representative. While identifying his own position (pro-life) he goes no farther than to call for a free vote on the bill so that all members could vote in accordance with their conscience (Woolliams January 23rd, 1969). Admittedly, a few Progressive Conservative MPs did see the bill as representing the arrival of a permissive, "Playboy philosophy" (Dinsdale April 17th, 1969). Such language would suggest a broader, more encompassing social conservative critique of social change. However, even these MPs agreed that the issue was not a partisan one. This lack of partisanship mirrors the position of those MPs who did support the changes (and they included Robert Stanfield), but who did so rather hesitantly and kept partisan considerations out of their speeches.

The Omnibus Bill's provision for the decriminalization of homosexuality produced a similar response from PC speakers. One group (which included Stanfield) supported the change, although with reservations about the clarity of its wording. As Stanfield saw it, if "this sort of conduct involves purely a matter of private judgment [the position of Justice Minister John Turner], then I find that difficult to accept. Surely we recognize that the interests of society are involved with respect to what goes on in private

and that the criminal law must regulate such conduct" (Stanfield February 25th,1969). Stanfield's stance points to the confusion that dealing with emergent social issues could create for traditionalists – he argued for the procedural norms of traditionalism (an ordered society) but against the substantive position those norms had embodied (the condemnation of homosexuality).

The next type of argument came from those who argued that, while they did not want the existing law enforced, neither did they want to see homosexuality approved of. This group included some members who rooted their position in their understanding of the traditional practice of Western countries. Most of these speakers (who included Woolliams, the House Leader) portrayed homosexuality as a mental illness requiring treatment, not as a crime deserving prison time.

The final group made the argument that the law should teach morality to the public and that this function required the criminalization of homosexual acts. For this group, even questioning whether or not homosexuality should be permissible was a sign of social decay (cf. Dinsdale April 17th,1969, Diefenbaker April 18th,1969). Even these hard-line speakers, though, did not portray homosexuality as an issue paralleling the normal partisan divides.

All three groups drew on British examples and arguments, but these examples seemed to support those who argued for legalizing abortion, easing restrictions on divorce, and decriminalizing homosexuality. In the United Kingdom, the Wolfenden Report of 1957 had recommended and the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 implemented a loosening of criminal restrictions on homosexuality. The British Abortion Act of 1967 had similarly loosened restrictions on abortion, allowing it up until week 28 of gestation,

subject to a doctor's approval. Both debates had been resolved after substantial debate and the decision, by the British Conservative Party, that sins were different from crimes (Jarvis 2005).

The overall tendency to keep personal and private separate seems in keeping with the vision of conservatism presented by the party's leader, Robert Stanfield, in a 1974 memo to his caucus. It stressed the dangers of ideological polarization, the value of a "tradition of compromise and consensus" and the need to "serve the whole country and the whole people" (Stanfield 1974). Such an understanding of conservatism, when applied to a deeply divisive issue, would have militated against pushing the politically hot button of abortion for partisan gain.

There is little to suggest that this norm changed during the 1970s. There was, of course, the emergence of a substantial social movement activism around abortion, same-sex rights, and feminism, but the first two issues did not find much room on the agenda of party politics. Trudeau's consistent refusal to reintroduce legislation on abortion rights throughout the 1970s (despite his promise of a free vote on the issue during 1972-1974) had much to do with this situation, as did increasingly heated debate on economic and constitutional issues that pre-occupied the country's political elite.[115]

[115] The 1970s saw many issues of central concern to feminists receive the attention of political parties, but these changes – abortion aside – do not seem to have produced much of a social conservative reaction.

Social Movement Activism and Charter Politics

While the 1970s and early 1980s saw little change in how political parties stood on social issues, the period between the Omnibus bill and Brian Mulroney's election in 1984 saw a great increase in social movement activity on these topics. On the progressive part of the political spectrum, this was perhaps the golden age of Canadian feminism (Young 2000). The later part of the period would see the expansion of Canadian same-sex rights activism (Rayside 1998; Herman 1994; Smith 1999). Initially, social conservative movement activism was concentrated in the pro-life movement. It is important to note, however, that it was not until the late 1970s – as the result of an internal power struggle – that Canadian pro-lifers could really come to be described as conservative. During the 1970s, Canada's largest pro-life organization was the Toronto-based Alliance for Life which, in 1973, spun off a political lobbying arm, Coalition for Life. Both of these organizations had a heavy presence of academics in their respective leadership and saw abortion as a human rights issue with parallels to the war in Vietnam or nuclear weapons rather than as a threat to the traditional family (Cuneo 1989).[116] The approach of these groups to the issue, while affirming the desirability of a much stricter law on abortions, was also to call for the alleviation of the social and economic conditions that placed women in a position where abortion seemed an attractive option.

With the growth of the pro-life movement, this moderate vision became a source of contention between the movement's academic Toronto leadership and its growing grass-roots base of conservative rural Catholics. This base preferred a stricter analysis of

[116] I would like to thank an activist who was heavily engaged in the movement during this period for granting me a very insightful interview. The interviewee also asked, however, that his/her identity remain confidential. The point, with reference to the Roman Catholic part of the pro-life movement, is very well substantiated by Cuneo (1989).

the situation that saw abortion as part of a "contraceptive mentality" that the Liberal government and its feminist allies were promoting to undercut family and religious life (Cuneo 1989). In 1977, this ideological divide split the movement, as members of the grassroots/moralist group split off and founded Campaign Life. By 1979, Alliance for Life had moved its offices to Winnipeg and more or less imploded, leaving Campaign Life as the organizational face of the Canadian pro-life movement. [117]

Campaign Life's identity, which has been remarkably consistent since its founding, has been to stress that it is a "life and family movement".[118] Until the late 1990s, the organization's Catholic roots and Ontario base meant that, although officially non-partisan, most of its connections were with the federal Liberal party. Since then, grass-roots links with the Reform Party and the mobilizing effect of Stockwell Day's leadership campaign moved the organization and many of its supporters towards the Canadian Alliance and then the new Conservative party. While flexible in its partisan affiliation, Campaign Life's uncompromising commitment to its principles made it a very difficult partner for politicians.

Sometimes equally immoderate in its tone, but with closer ties to the Progressive Conservative grassroots and more religiously mixed than the predominantly Roman Catholic pro-life movement, is R.E.A.L. (Realistic, Equal, Active, for Life) Women of Canada. Founded in 1983, it was initially catalyzed by abortion and state support for feminist organizations. In the 1990s and 2000s R.E.A.L. Women focused more and more on same-sex rights issues. In this way, its program is far more a generally socially

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[117] While Campaign Life was a more important organization and likely organized and mobilized more activists, the role played by individuals like Joe Borowski should not be underestimated. Borowski's strategy of litigation was a powerful mobilizing force, though his focus on the courts made him somewhat removed from federal party politics (Morton 1992).

[118] Jim Hughes (2006).

conservative one than those of the pro-life groups, who tend to focus primarily on abortion and intervene only occasionally on same-sex rights (Foster 2000, Erwin 1993). This group's connection to the PCs was quite strong, but seems to have been mostly at the constituency level. Given its grassroots character, it is perhaps unsurprising that many of R.E.A.L.'s activists left the PCs for the Reform Party during the late 1980s (Foster 2000).

In tone and membership, Campaign Life and R.E.A.L. Women (and shorter-lived groups like them) defined one face of Canadian social conservatism during the 1980s. They developed substantial memberships and achieved some level of media visibility. At the same time, their very stridency made them difficult political allies. Campaign Life, in particular, developed a reputation for being so demanding in what a politician had to do to be considered pro-life that it alienated party members and leaders who might otherwise have been happy to listen to their message (Cuneo 1989). Other, more moderate groups with socially conservative messages seem to have been better received by Canadian political parties generally and to have enjoyed good access to the Mulroney government (Stiller 2005).

In the 1980s, the most organized and effective of these groups was the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). Founded in 1964 as an umbrella group for Canadian evangelicals, by 1983 EFC had expanded its activity into political lobbying. Initially headed by Brian Stiller, EFC had a broad policy agenda. It lobbied for increased foreign aid and measures to reduce domestic poverty, in addition to taking conservative stances on issues such as same-sex rights and abortion. Active on a wide range of issues and aware that it represented only one voice in a diverse society, EFC stressed a

pragmatic and incremental approach to social issues. While firmly pro-life, the organization supported Mulroney's attempt at compromise in Bill C-43 in the hope that its pro-life language could be incrementally expanded to reduce the number of abortions in Canada (Stiller 1997, 2003, 2005; Clemenger 2005).

The Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops, the other major Christian institution that took socially conservative positions during Mulroney's tenure, also tried to lobby pragmatically and moderately. Again, this may have been because of the range of stances that the bishops would take – some of them quite progressive on issues like poverty, foreign aid, or war. In addition, like EFC, the bishops were also very aware of Canadian diversity and so hesitant to mandate a particular course of action (Cuneo 1989, Higgins and Letson 1990).

The moderation of the bishops caused perhaps the deepest divide in Canadian social conservatism during the 1980s: that between the Canadian Catholic hierarchy and Catholics in the pro-life movement. While the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops and bishops individually did lobby on the pro-life side, their refusal to demand protection for the unborn in the *Charter* or to declare abortion the *only* issue of concern to Catholic voters won them the hostility of the pro-life movement. At the same time, the Bishops saw the language and tactics of Campaign Life to be misguided and inflamatory. Toronto's Cardinal Carter, for example, ultimately forbade Campaign Life from distributing literature or holding meetings in Toronto's Catholic parishes and schools (Cuneo 1989).

The EFC and, to a lesser degree, the CCCB had good access to the leadership of the PC party under Mulroney.[119] While groups such as Campaign Life and R.E.A.L. Women could put protestors in the streets and sometimes influence events in a particular riding, their stridency greatly reduced their influence in Ottawa with the national leadership. The difference in approach, though, was a real divide in the movement and the cause of considerable tension.

Between 1968 and the emergence of the abortion and same-sex rights debates of the mid-1980s, Canada's political structure underwent a dramatic change with the passage of the 1982 *Constitution Act* – especially its *Charter of Rights and Freedoms.* The *Charter* opened up litigation as a way for activist groups to pursue their goals (Morton 1992, Smith 1999, Rayside 1998, Brodie 1992). This made it possible for activists to place their issues firmly onto the political agenda even if political parties found social issues too politically dangerous to handle. Unlike the situation before the introduction of the *Charter*, social issues could not be kept out of the public spotlight through the inaction of the political parties or the cabinet.

Mulroney, The Charter, and Morgentaler

The emergence of the courts and social movements as major actors also produced a significant shift in the terms of the abortion debate. No longer was the topic a public health or religious issue. Instead, it was a contest between two seemingly irreconcilable rights claims: the right to life of the fetus and the women's right to control her body (Campbell and Pal 1991, Brodie 1992). While the NDP was again firmly pro-choice and the Liberals were again divided, the replacement of the Liberals by the PCs in power

[119] Stiller (2005).

changed the dynamic. As both the 1988 motion and 1989's Bill C-43 were declared free votes by the government, neither opposition party imposed party discipline.[120] The absence of the *Crédistes* meant that it was socially conservative PCs who sat farthest to the right on the issue.

Despite consistent polling evidence that most Canadians would have preferred some kind of middle ground solution to the issue, court decisions and the level of social movement mobilization made it very difficult for the Progressive Conservatives to find such a position (Tatalovich 1997). As a result, the situation that the Mulroney PCs faced was far more difficult than that faced by the party under Stanfield. While this difficulty was somewhat moderated by their ability to decide abortion through free votes, it still represented a real problem for the government.

Social movement mobilization in the general population found parallels in the Progressive Conservative party. Pro-life PCs had formed a caucus to organize themselves after the 1984 election victory[121] while pro-choice PCs had organized as Tories for Choice in the 1970s.[122] The number of MPs consistently active in these groups was small (weekly attendance at the pro-life caucus was around 12-15 MPs) and they were run mainly by back-bench MPs, but they distributed information more broadly and provided the two poles around which MPs grouped themselves on the issue. These two groups seem not to have extended their activities beyond organizing these caucuses. There seems, for example, to have been no effort to contest riding nominations or other party offices on a pro-life/pro-choice basis.[123]

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[120] Although NDP MP Bill Blaikie did break with his party's otherwise uniformly pro-choice position.
[121] Personal interview in 2006 with a caucus member who preferred to remain anonymous.
[122] Le Breton (2006).
[123] ibid.

The Mulroney government attempted to address abortion three times. In May 1988, Mulroney introduced a complicated motion that embodied a gestational approach to the question, with abortions early in pregnancy being subject to fewer restrictions than ones later in pregnancy. Appended to the main motion, however, were two contradictory amendments – one emphasizing the rights of the fetus and one a women's right to choose. This failed on procedural grounds, as the House did not grant the unanimous consent this unconventional procedure would require. Then, in July, the government sought the 'sense of the house' by introducing a motion (again embodying a gestational approach) but without the amendments of May. MPs brought a series of amendments forward on the motion, but none passed and the motion failed (Brodie 1992, Flanagan 1997).

After the *Daigle* and *Dodd* court cases, the government decided that it had to introduce a new law. It attempted to do so with C-43 in the summer of 1989. In an attempt at compromise, the bill would criminalize abortion "unless the abortion is induced by or under the direction of a medical practitioner who is of the opinion that, if the abortion were not induced, the health or life of the female person would likely be threatened" (as quoted in Brodie 1992, 98). Unlike the completely free votes on the resolution, on C-43 the government whipped Cabinet ministers in support of its compromise position and passed the bill through the House of Commons 140 to 131 in the face of opposition from both pro-choice and pro-life MPs. C-43 was then defeated in the Senate, in part because two PC senators voted against it (Brodie 1992, Flanagan 1997).

While the cabinet ministers being whipped in support of C-43's middle way made a difference to the vote count, the rhetoric used by pro-life and socially conservative MPs

in both 1988 and 1989-90 is similar enough that the debates over the resolution and the bill can be considered together for the purposes of evaluating the party's norms. An examination of the language and strategy of the Mulroney government suggests that it was acting in accordance with the same basic principle as Stanfield's Tories had been in 1968: abortion was not an appropriate subject of political mobilization and the party should not define itself by a stance on the issue or permit much internal mobilization on the topic.

On both the resolution and the bill, most pro-life Tories caucus no longer book-ended their comments with observations on the limits of decisions based in personal conscience. Instead, by and large, their position was justified on rights grounds. They also argued that, as a moral issue, abortion was something that created divisions as much within parties as between them (Health Minister Jake Epp's speech was representative of this approach). Approximately a dozen pro-life MPs who spoke took a straight-forwardly social conservative approach to abortion, linking its liberalization to the decline of social mores (cf. Nickerson July 26th, 1988; Plourde July 26th,1988).

Even such speakers, however, avoided making the issue a partisan one. Strikingly absent from the debate were pro-life or pro-choice Conservatives who took that position because they were a conservative. MPs state that they were pro-life because they were fathers (and all the pro-life speakers were men), doctors, lawyers, believers in human rights, or Christians, but never because they were Progressive Conservatives. Similarly, PC pro-choice MPs argued for decriminalization, more funding, and women's choice because they were women, for compassionate reasons, or because they believe that the law is ineffective, but they did not take their position because of party membership. This,

as in 1968, stands in contrast to members of other parties who linked their partisan status to their position on the question.

This rhetoric seems to have matched the behavior of MPs in the caucus room. While members of both the pro-life and pro-choice persuasions organized on the issue, neither those organizational ties nor positions on the issue spilled over into other policy discussions.[124] This tendency was reinforced and encouraged by Prime Minister Mulroney's considerable skills at consensus building. While free votes on abortion certainly helped to diminish the tensions between the two sides, Mulroney's own style of management reinforced the idea that it was not a debate with parallels to other policy areas. As Mulroney put it, in a speech which made no partisan distinctions and echoed the party's 1968 stance, "what we have been called upon to do, as elected representatives of the people, is to determine under what circumstances the state should characterize abortion not as a sin, but as a crime" (Mulroney 1988).

Same-sex Rights and Social Conservatives in the 1980s.

Until the failure of C-43 in 1990, abortion was the issue of greatest concern to Canadian social conservatives. The 1980s also witnessed the emergence of the same-sex rights as a national question and of legal and political moves to extend equal rights to homosexuals. Not as important as abortion during the 1980s, same-sex rights emerged after 1993 as the dominant issue for social conservatives in Canada. Aside from the 1968 Omnibus bill, contention over same-sex rights had previously occurred at lower levels in government. Most provinces had significant pressure placed on them to amend their human rights codes to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation during the mid-

[124] Epp (2005), Stackhouse (2005), Le Breton (2006), and Edwards (2005).

to late 1970s and 1980s. In 1976, Quebec was the first province to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation; several other provinces waited until late 1980s to change their human rights codes. At the municipal level, in Toronto and Montreal, proponents of same-sex rights first mobilized to oppose police raids on bathhouses in 1977-79, leading to significant mobilization to change police attitudes and behavior (Rayside 1998, Herman 1994, Smith 1999).

A number of factors prevented much lobbying of legislators on either side of this issue at the federal level during the 1980s. On the part of many same-sex activists, there was a sense that there was little point in lobbying the Tories about same-sex rights, especially given the urgent need to deal with the AIDS epidemic. Further, section 15 of the *Charter* came into force in 1985, making litigation a profitable avenue for the advancement of same-sex rights (Smith 1999, 96). This relative inaction at the federal level on the part of same-sex social movement activists was matched by the equal inactivity of their socially conservative counterparts.

While the federal parties were not subject to much lobbying on same-sex rights during the 1980s, the issue did arise occasionally. However, it seems that, on the occasions when same-sex issues did make it onto the caucus agenda, neither progressives nor conservatives in the PCs saw them as being of great political importance.[125] The most serious debate over same-sex rights occurred in 1986, when Justice Minister John Crosbie suggested that the federal human rights code should be amended to include same sex rights. His proposal was set aside in the face of social conservatives in the caucus (Crosbie 1997). While Crosbie's autobiography decries his "troglodyte" opponents

[125] Crosbie (2006), Edwards (2005), MacDonald (2005), and Epp (2005).

(Crosbie 1997, 271), in retrospect he does not see the issue as vitally important at the time, at least in comparison to the otherwise full government agenda.[126]

While the late 1980s saw some significant court cases dealing with same-sex rights and a number of provinces adding discrimination based on sexual orientation to their human rights codes, it was not until 1992 that the PCs moved on the issue again. In the fall of 1992, Justice Minister Kim Campbell lifted a ban on gays and lesbians in the military in the face of judicial pressure. Then, in December of 1992, she introduced an amendment to the Canada human rights code that would have added sexual orientation to the list of reasons private employers could not discriminate against employees. Campbell's description of the negotiations leading towards the proposed amendment show the continued importance for PCs of same sex issues being excluded from the political agenda. For her and her fellow MPs (even those who opposed the change) the central concern was insuring that the issue "fell off the table" (Campbell 1996, 214).

The 1993 election marked the end of the Progressive Conservative party as a powerful player in federal politics. While it still received a significant part of the popular vote, it never again was a serious contender for office. A victim of Canada's first past the post system, it lost its Quebec seats to the *Bloc Québécois* and its western seats to the new Reform party. Its hopes of restoring federalism dashed, and outflanked to the right on economics by the Reform party (and the Liberals, in many ways) the party proved unable to differentiate itself clearly from its competitors during the 1990s.

One area where it did manage to redefine itself was on social issues. Particularly during Joe Clark's leadership (1998-2003), the party stressed its progressive position on same-sex rights. Clark went out of his way to contrast his progressive sensibilities to the

[126] Crosbie (2006).

socially conservative mores of the likes of Preston Manning and other Reformers. Clark also insured that those social conservatives who had not already left the PCs for Reform or the Canadian Alliance knew that they were not particularly welcome in the party (anonymous interview).

Conclusion

From 1968 until 1991 an important part of the Canadian Progressive Conservative party's approach to abortion remained consistent: the party rejected the notion that abortion was a partisan issue. Instead, it characterized it as a moral issue necessarily left up to the personal values of its MPs. [127] This norm placed a powerful limit on the arguments available to Canadian social conservatives, for it prevented them (at least publicly) from arguing that their approach was unquestionably the approach conservatives should take on these emergent issues. The party's position on same-sex rights was remarkably similar. While not nearly as contentious during this period as abortion, there seemed to be a general consensus that same-sex rights were something best kept off the political agenda.

The character of this norm helps us understand why social conservatives usually seem to have been so low in profile from the Canadian political landscape before the Reform Party emerged. It is not that they did not exist nor that issues of concern to them did not arise, but rather that the norms held by members of the Progressive Conservative party gave them little room to argue for their position. At the same time, it seems clear that this norm also limited the activism of those who were progressive on issues like

[127] It seems fair to surmise that it was also held by the grassroots of the party but, given that surveys of the parties membership and convention delegates do not ask questions associated with social issues until around 2000, it is not possible to establish this with any definitiveness.

same-sex rights and abortion – they too were not to make too big a deal of such 'non-political' issues.

The party that succeeded the PCs as the voice of the Canadian right did give social conservatives more prominence in Canada. As the next chapter shows, the Reform Party represents a transitional period in the history of social conservatives in Canada. Initially, they were limited in their success within the Reform Party by a norm that designated social issues as moral ones to be decided upon only through populist mechanisms. Over time – and for a complex set of reasons including the transition from abortion to same-sex rights as the most prominent area of contention and a decline in the power of the party's leadership – the Reform Party came to accept social conservative concerns as legitimate. As chapter 8 shows, this transition has lead to permanent change, for social conservatives have now achieved full membership on the Canadian right. It is this transition that has led to today's Conservative Party of Canada being, on the whole, more open to social conservatism than its predecessor was two generations ago.

CHAPTER 7:

THE REFORM PARTY OF CANADA AND SOCIAL CONSERVATIVES

Introduction

The Reform Party emerged just before the 1988 election. It offered populist politics and free market economics as the solutions for Western discontent. In 1993, its success on the Prairies decimated the Progressive Conservatives and made the Reform Party the major right-wing party in Parliament. Despite becoming the Official Opposition after the 1997 election, a sense developed that the existence of two right wing parties was doing little other than insuring continued Liberal governments. This situation caused Preston Manning, the party's only leader, to initiate the unite-the-right process that created the Canadian Alliance in 2000.[128] This process failed to unite the right and saw Manning's defeat by unequivocal social conservative Stockwell Day – a high point for Canadian social conservatism that is examined in the next chapter.

As befits a third party, scholars have given Reform's ideology (Laycock 2002) and the beliefs of its members (Archer and Ellis 1994, Ellis 2005) substantial attention. Despite this, scholars have not reached any consensus on the place of social conservatism in the ideological mix that the Reform Party articulated. One school of thought,

[128] The Reform Party had plans to form government from before the 1993 election, but these plans had envisioned it replacing, not uniting with, one of the existing major parties.

exemplified Laycock (2002, 1994), treats the Reform party as a party of the New Right.[129] In this view, the party seamlessly combined populism with a right-wing espousal of small government and limited politics. It offered a vision of society that stressed the role that the market can play in dealing with material needs and that the family can play in providing a social safety net and education. This was a widespread reaction to the pressures of societal change, shared by parties in continental Europe (Laycock 2002), Thatcher's Tories in Great Britain, and American conservatives (Harrison 1995). In this view, the party's position on social issues like abortion or same-sex rights derives from the foundational New Right notion that the state must be limited. In addition, such scholars see the generalized preference for undifferentiated individual rights rather than differentiated minority rights by the New Right as an articulation of social conservatism (Laycock 2002).[130]

The other view, exemplified by Foster (2000) and Patten (1996, 1999), argues that the party was "fraught with tensions" because of the difficulties in reconciling competing populist and conservative tendencies within it (Patten 1999, 29). Foster (2000) points out that the populism inherent in the party's formation often diffused or limited social conservative's activism in the party.[131] For those on the New Right, according to Foster, coming to a consensus on economic or constitutional issues was far easier than finding a unified position on social issues. This sense of a tension in the party over social issues is

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[129] See Betz (1993) for the origins of this category.
[130] By portraying the party as exclusively populist entity, Arseneau (1994) and Manning himself (1992, 2005) similarly downplay the tensions contained in the party.
[131] Foster's focus is on the relationship between social conservatives and the party at large. Reform's commitment to populism meant that social conservatives did not believe the party as a whole could be trusted to forcefully articulate its goals. As MacKenzie (2005) points out in his study of the pro-family movement in British Columbia, the core of social conservative activists were generally quite clear that they did not want to see any institutional or economic concern stand in the way of their activities on questions of abortion and same-sex rights.

shared by Harrison, who notes that "potential internal conflict extend[s] to other moral issues, in particular the abortion question" (Harrison 1995, 213).

This notion that the party contained significant tension within it is supported by Tom Flanagan (1995, 2005). Flanagan, speaking with experience as a senior party official, argues that Reform's populism could often devolve into little more than an unclear strategy to choose what was popular at any given time. More dangerously, it gave the party a set of institutions that placed too much power in the hands of the leader. This often prevented the party from pursuing policies that a social conservative would have supported, as Flanagan explains:

> The party that Manning has built has a dual identity. It is partly the trans-ideological populist movement portrayed in his rhetoric, but it is even more a new conservative party formed by a mass migration of voters deserted by the centrist leaders of the Progressive Conservative party. Perhaps the most interesting story in this book lies in the complicated interplay between the leader's unique mystical populism and the quite ordinary conservatism of most Reform supporters. At the time of writing, the identity of the party remains suspended between these two poles, but that is unlikely to go on indefinitely (1995, 4).

In Flanagan's account, the party would sometimes act on conservative principles and sometimes on the basis of what Manning had decided was the popular will. For example, it was committed to balancing the budget, but preferred to maintain agricultural subsidies and (as of 1995) shied away from suggesting free-market solutions to the problems of the Canadian health care system (Flanagan 1995). On issues of sexuality and abortion, Flanagan argues, Manning had avoided taking a conservative stance. At least as of the mid-1990s, Flanagan argues that Manning's "various statements regarding homosexuality

may represent confusion or tacking in the wind, but they are certainly not the utterances of a leader imposing a hard-right agenda on the party" (1995, 15).[132]

Ellis (2005) echoes Flanagan, identifying a tension in the party between the populist, and therefore moderate leadership circle of Manning, and the avowed social conservatism of much of the party's membership. In Ellis's history of the party, he finds that Manning was best able to control dissent on social (and other) issues early in the party's life, when there were few other significant centers of power or experienced leaders in the party. As time went by, Manning's power declined, meaning the party's position became more determined by the collective belief of the membership and activist activity and less by Manning's personal agenda (Ellis 2005).

This chapter is in broad agreement with the second view. It finds that the place of social conservatives in the party was initially ambiguous but that, over time, they gained a secure place within it. On some questions of concern to social conservatives, most notably abortion, the party imposed fairly strict restrictions on their activism. On abortion, it developed a stance analogous to that of the Progressive Conservatives. It maintained that the topic was a moral one to be settled through popular initiative, not partisan contestation (Foster 2000, Harrison 1995). This position seems to have been widely held by activists, the party's MPs, and its only leader, Preston Manning. When challenged, Manning would use his power as leader to enforce compliance on the issue – seemingly with the agreement of caucus and the party's grassroots members (Ellis 2005).

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[132] Though it is also important to remember Flanagan's (1995, 1998) argument about timing on this point. The early 1990s were a period in which there was significant popular demand for politicians to articulate conservative solutions – demands which Reform positioned itself very well to meet and which the Progressive Conservatives did not. Flanagan does not argue that Reform emerged solely because of this opportunity or that the opportunity completely determined the character of the party, but he does make a strong case that it was these strategic factors that allowed Reform to become prominent as quickly as it did.

As abortion was the major issue of concern to social conservatives at the time of the party's founding, this position represents a very real limitation on their initial place within the party.

On the other hand, Reform contained many activists and MPs who were socially conservative and who would, at important junctures, speak out and garner significant attention. Such members – and their supporters among the grassroots of the party – gave a socially conservative colouring to Reform on many questions. Throughout the party's life, for example, it maintained that government policy ought to be evaluated for its effect on families – an important rhetorical theme for social conservatives. More importantly, the party's opposition to same-sex rights from the mid-1990s forward represents the full entry of social conservatives into the mainstream of Canadian conservatism.

The period of disruption and transition on the Canadian right that the Reform Party triggered would see eventually social conservatives recognized as legitimate by others on the Canadian right. The greater popularity of opposing same-sex rights (compared to a pro-life position on abortion) no doubt had much to do with this. What this chapter establishes as equally important is that, since the party had to deal with issues as they emerged – rather than on the basis of long-standing rules of correct behaviour – it was more open to such changes. Additionally, as Ellis (2005) points out, the weakening of Manning's grasp on the party's apparatus as time passed meant that the leadership's ability to exclude social conservatives declined over time. This combination of electoral opportunity, normative change, and institutional porousness created a situation in Reform analogous to that of the American parties. This situation facilitated the recognition of social conservatives by other groups on the Canadian right.

Social Issues and the Reform Party's Origins

Many Western Canadians, especially Albertans, were dissatisfied with Canadian politics in the mid-1980s. The region had a long-standing sense that its concerns were ignored in Ottawa and a severe economic depression, after the oil boom of the late 1970s, created solid grounds for claims that this lack of political voice was hurting the region's general prospects. Federal economic policies – most notably the National Energy Program – had seemingly exacerbated these problems. The victory of Mulroney's Progressive Conservatives in 1984 raised hopes that these issues would be addressed but, to many Westerners, the government seemed too focused on Quebec to address their needs. Soon, a series of fringe Western independence parties emerged, offering separation as the solution to these problems (Harrison 1995, 26-81).

The Reform Party's founding impetus was the desire to solve the West's problems without resort to independence. It was initially formed by a group of prominent Westerners (most notably Preston Manning, Stan Roberts, Robert Muir, Francis Winspear, and Ted Byfield) who organized a meeting to review solutions to the political problems dogging the West. While they tried to avoid partisan language and presented a range of options to the meeting, it seems clear that the formation of a new political party was what Manning and the other organizers had in mind for their first major meeting in May of 1987 (Ellis 2005). This Vancouver meeting was followed by a convention in Winnipeg in October that officially launched the new Reform Party of Canada. This convention established a party constitution and a party platform (the *Blue Book*). While

the party failed to win a seat in the 1988 general election, success in a by-election a few months later sent Deborah Gray to Ottawa as the first Reform MP.

Reform's early platforms and announcements stressed four issues: fiscal responsibility, democratic renewal, a Triple-E Senate, and opposition to bilingualism. Notably absent in early party discussions and planning were social issues.[133] The extent of the treatment of social issues in the 1989 *Blue Book* is a statement that the party would "affirm the value and dignity of the *individual person*, and the importance of strengthening and protecting the *family unit* as essential to the wellbeing of individuals and society" (italics in original, 26). This language certainly did not exclude social conservatives; indeed, it may well have been attractive to them. It stops well short, though, of being an espousal either of state intervention to maintain traditional family roles or the definition of those roles through religious authority which, as we have seen, are two fundamental parts of social conservative ideology.[134]

This principle remained in subsequent versions of the party's platform, but was muted by the party's stance on moral decision-making. Being more specific, this set of guidelines would have far more of an impact in later debates than the above statement. The party's stance on moral decision-making is first found in an addition to the 1990 *Blue Book* that stated:

> We believe in freedom of conscience and religion, and the right of Canadians to advocate, without fear of intimidation or suppression, public policies which reflect their most deeply held values.
> <u>Abortion</u>
> A. The Reform Party commits its Members of Parliament to stating clearly and publicly their personal views and moral beliefs on the question of abortion, to

[133] Though there were some prominent early disputes over immigration, most notably the party's opposition to the wearing of turbans by Sikh RCMP officers.
[134] At the same time, it is fairly easy to expand this language to include these two core social conservative claims. See, for an example, Gairdiner (1990, 1992).

> asking their constituents to develop, to express, and to debate their own views on the matter, and to seeking the consensus of the constituency on the issue.
> B. In the absence of a national referendum, the Reform Party expects its Members of Parliament to faithfully vote the consensus of the constituency in the appropriate divisions of the House of Commons if such a consensus exists. If such a consensus does not exist or is unclear, Members of Parliament shall vote in accordance with their publicly recorded statements on the issue (Reform Party 1990, 26).[135]

Preston Manning offered the justification for this division most explicitly. Manning sought to transcend left-right distinctions and to base his politics in the common sense of the common person. He also paid significant attention to the relationship between religion, morality, and politics. He has been quite clear that he sees two approaches to the problem. One approach, which he disapproves of while acknowledging that it can be both effective and popular, is to articulate a specifically Christian political agenda. Such an approach is rooted in Old Testament notions of a godly government and has been pursued by those on both the political right and the political left. However, Manning also argued that a specifically Christian political agenda is unsuitable in a diverse society as it frightens non-Christians with the threat that successful Christian political action might force others to act as if they had Christian beliefs. It also puts Christians into the position of merely being one interest group among many others (Manning 1988).

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[135] Later in the 1990s, euthanasia was added to the specific category of moral decisions. In the 1996 *Democratic Populism II* Report it was suggested that this category of 'moral issues' was too vague to be satisfactory analytically and this vagueness lead to "policy gridlock … as party members assert various issues to be moral ones, and thus not subject to legitimate debate by party members" (9). Instead, it was suggested that the section be recast as a 'Referendums and Citizens Initiative' section of the *Blue Book* that would have issues concerning Canada's "basic social fabric" (immigration, language, and measurement) and issues of "personal conscience" (abortion and capital punishment) as necessitating direct popular action (Reform Party 1996, 10). This suggested change, which was shelved as the United Alternative process began, amplifies the point made by the original wording – there were a variety of issues that the party marked off as outside the legitimate boundary of politics.

The alternative, which Manning sees as more appropriate for political action in a diverse country like Canada, is for Christians to co-operate with someone else's political agenda. Accepting their minority status and the idea that God can work through both believers and non-believers, Christians need to make a firm distinction between their personal faith commitments and their public political agenda:

> I have a personal agenda as a believer, but it's not a political agenda. It has to do with my own spiritual development and that of my family….On my agenda I have a prayer for a spiritual awakening in Canada – I think Canada's never had a spiritual revival in the way that other communities have had. But these are not political items on my personal agenda. (Manning January 1988, 13; see also Manning 1992, 2002).[136]

Central to this distinction is the realization that "committed Christians" are a minority in Canada and so their political strategy must fundamentally be a witnessing one (Manning 1992, 107). If their witness fails to attract minority support, this is simply a cost of being principled. On topics like abortion this would mean that the politician in question would have to resign his or her office so that their riding could be represented by someone with views closer to the popular sentiment (Manning 1992).

This populist position was not merely a matter of principle for Manning, for he was willing to act quite definitively to insure that the party presented a populist and moderate image on social issues. Most famously, Manning expelled two MPs – Dave Chatters and Bob Ringma – in 1996 for defending the 'right' of business owners to employ gay employees only at the 'back of the shop'. That an MP who criticized this

[136] This speech was delivered to faculty and students of Regent College, a private Christian college. It is similar in content to a talk, also in the Manning archives at the University of Calgary, that he gave to the Missionary and Alliance Church of Calgary (his home congregation) on June 1, 1991. It should be taken, therefore, as a consistent part of his political thinking and, as addresses given to groups likely very amenable to the notion that religious beliefs ought to play a direct role in politics, as an honest portrayal of his own beliefs.

pair, Jan Brown, resigned before Manning could expel her for breaking party discipline suggests that there were matters of tactics and organizational maintenance at stake as well, but his action was consistent with Manning's actions on other occasions. At the 1988 founding convention, Manning "lecture[d]" (Ellis 2005, 26) delegates who he believed to be pursuing social conservatism. After the convention, he used the moral issues resolution to "control radical elements within the party by arguing that any attempt to develop firm policy stances on these issues would be contrary to the spirit of the Abortion Resolution and would hamper MPs in their ability to faithfully represent their constituents, one of Reform's key populist planks" (Ellis 2005, 66-67).

It would be unfair to characterize the party's position as entirely one of Manning's own making – though his stature as leader doubtless did much to solidify the distinction between public and private that the party took and he spoke on the topic at the greatest length. Similar notions were widely held by the party's members and activists as well. For example, at party conventions in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the overwhelmingly pro-life but pro-capital punishment party membership routinely voted to declare that capital punishment and abortion were moral issues best decided by referenda or some other means of expressing the will of the majority, rather than by a parliamentary vote or partisan contest (Ellis 2005). Ellis's analysis of the views of activists who attended 1992 assembly found that views on abortion, the most prominent social issue of the day, ranked eighth out of eleven factors in influence on the overall views of party activists (2005, 109). And, he finds that delegates who became party members later in the party's life were more likely to rank abortion as a major issue, suggesting that opinion at the 1988 and 1989 assemblies that institutionalized the party's rules on the question

were even more likely to see abortion as a relatively unimportant matter. A social conservative effort at the 1992 convention to force the party to take a substantive stance on abortion received a lecture from the chair, Stephen Harper, on appropriate populist methods. Harper's dressing down of social conservatives received a rousing ovation and the support of 95% of the delegates when the motion came up for a vote (Ellis 2005, 133).

While this call for populism was, in and of itself, a radical departure from the practices of the established parties, it was also an approach that could be very unpopular with social conservatives in general and pro-life activists in particular, who did not trust such mechanisms to give them the results they desired (Flanagan 2005, Hughes 2006). As MacKenzie (2005) has detailed at length with regard to social conservatives in British Columbia and as the treatment of social conservatism in chapter two showed at the theoretical level, populism – in anything other than situations where it guarantees social conservatives certain victory – is not for them an acceptable solution. As one of the British Columbia pro-life activists interviewed by MacKenzie put it, populist principles created "nothing more than … 'a typical power-hungry party without principles'" (2005, 160).

Despite these restrictions, some room was granted to social conservatives within the party's broader populist framework (Flanagan 2005, Cameron 2005). The mention of healthy families is an important example at the level of principle. Organizationally, socially conservative members of the party were channeled first into the Family Task Force and then, once a Parliamentary caucus was formed, into a Family Caucus (Manning 2005). Both of these groups had responsibility for investigating the impact of

government action on Canadian families. Social conservatives were also able to stop the attempt to form a 'women's work group' in 1990, arguing that such a group would simply mirror the organizational feminism of the other parties (Harrison 1995, 213). The party's consistent effort to appeal to the 'ordinary Canadian', usually depicted as a member of a heterosexual family, undoubtly helped to appeal to social conservatives as well.

In comparison to the prominence given to themes of populist reform, regional alienation, or free-market economics, though, the place that social conservatives found early in the party's life was a restricted and ambiguous one. They were recognized as a constituent part of the party, but there is no indication that the leadership or vast majority of the membership of the party – during the years after its founding – saw it as a vehicle for social conservative mobilization.[137]

From Abortion to Same-Sex Rights

By the mid-1990s the issue that the Reform Party had initially defined as moral, abortion, had moved off the legislative agenda and so the party's populist position on it was never put to the test.[138] Instead, the delicate definitional distinction made by Reformers between moral and political issues was tested by the extension of same-sex rights. This shift in topic had some important implications for the nature and organization of Canadian social conservatism outside of party politics, as well as

[137] Indeed, it is probably safe to surmise that more of the party's membership saw it as an opportunity to oppose immigration and cultural change in Canada (Ellis 2005, Harrison 1995).
[138] Reform's position on abortion remained relatively consistent: a party whose grassroots and leadership was predominantly pro-life consistently argued that the issue should be resolved in a referendum. Issues which social conservatives link to abortion, most notably euthanasia, emerged during the 1990s, but never grew to the point that they became flashpoints for partisan contention (Ellis 2005).

presenting a different strategic situation to the party itself. Each of these differences between abortion and same-sex rights meant that the change in topic gave social conservatives more popular support and made their arguments easier to combine with populist appeals.

At the broadest level, the change made the religious nature of the social conservative movement less Roman Catholic by mobilizing evangelical Protestants in sizable numbers. This is not to say that some evangelicals (or other Protestants, for that matter) had not been opposed to abortion (many were) but many more were mobilized by debates over same-sex rights. Conversely, Catholics tended to oppose abortion more strongly because they saw it as the graver moral threat. Gay rights were, for many Roman Catholic activists, a significant problem (especially if the definition of marriage was involved) but one much less problematic than open access to abortion.[139]

In terms of party politics, the more that the social conservative movement was made up of evangelical Protestants, the more natural was its alliance with right-wing parties (traditionally the parties of Protestants in Canada).[140] Negatively, the increasingly evangelical face of Canadian social conservatives made it easy for their opponents to argue that Canadian social conservatives were simply following the example of their American counterparts (cf. MacDonald 2006). This despite the fact that many prominent evangelical groups, like the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), claim to maintain closer ties to their British co-religionists than to their American ones.[141]

The shift from abortion to same-sex rights as the central topic of debate, somewhat surprisingly, did not cause major changes in the social conservative groups

[139] Clemenger (2005), Epp-Buckingham (2005), and Ian Gentles (2005).
[140] With the exception of the *Créditistes* and the Conservatives of John A. Macdonald's day.
[141] Clemenger (2005), Epp-Buckingham (2005), and Ian Gentles (2005).

involved in litigation and lobbying. The four major groups reviewed in the last chapter (EFC, CCCB, REAL Women, and Campaign Life Coalition) continued to dominate as the long-term core of the movement and maintained their previous strategies and characteristics. They were joined, as a major player, by Focus on the Family Canada. There also appeared, from time to time, organizations that were little more than letterheads for a particular individual's activities (Malloy 2007) or groups that were active only at the provincial level (MacKenzie 2005). Such organizations did not change the division in the movement between those who favoured a moderate, incremental approach and those who wanted to take a hard-line stand against social progress.

Another important difference between the two issues was that public opinion on abortion had been remarkably stable in Canada since the mid 1970s – a consistent 12-15% of the population opposed it under all circumstances, 50-60% of the population believed it ought to be allowed under certain circumstances, and 25-35% supported a woman's right to choose under any circumstances (Smith and Tatalovich 2003, 260). On same-sex rights, alternatively, public opinion was more evenly divided and changing rapidly during the 1990s. In 1992, for example, 24% of Canadians supported same-sex marriages and 61% opposed them. By 1998, opinions had changed so that 40% of Canadians supported and 52% opposed same-sex marriages (Smith and Tatalovich 2003, 268). Abortion offered few potential partisan gains for the party, while opposition to same-sex rights did not carry with it the same disabilities and, in fact, could be seen to offer certain electoral advantages in a situation where the other parties ranged from decidedly undecided (the Liberals) to strongly in favour (the NDP).

Additionally, debates over the substance of same-sex rights, like the conclusion of the debate over abortion, were closely intermeshed with debates over the proper relationship between the courts and Parliament. As Smith (1999) argues, the opportunities opened by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms made litigation a popular strategy for same-sex rights groups. To some extent, litigation eclipsed earlier grassroots mobilization strategies on both sides of the debate. As with abortion, the increased role of the courts caused a consolidation of language as both sides adopted 'rights talk' that meshed with the language of the Charter.[142] The increased role of the courts also gave a powerful reason for populists to agree with social conservatives that progressives were threatening both society's proper structure and Canadian democracy (cf. Knopf and Morton 2000).

While the increased prominence of the courts adds an important dimension to the same-sex rights debate, it did not remove the issue from the legislative agenda. Indeed, with a Liberal government in power after 1993, progressive activists felt more confident in calling for change at the federal level than they had during the Mulroney years. Those lobbying the federal government now included a national same-sex lobby group, Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere (EGALE) (see Smith 1999 and Rayside 1998). While persistently short on resources and without an extensive grassroots base of its own, EGALE was generally successful at promoting the extension of same-sex rights in federal jurisdiction. It did a lot, for instance, to keep Prime Minister Chretien's 1993 campaign promise to add sexual orientation to the human rights code in front of the public (Rayside 1998, 118-123).

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[142] Epp-Buckingham (2005).

The Reform Party and Same-Sex Rights

Against this backdrop of social movement and court activity, same-sex rights began to be debated almost immediately after the 1993 election first sent a significant number of Reform MPs to Ottawa. The question of same-sex rights had been a minor campaign issue in that election, as the Liberal party had suggested it would act on the recommendations of the Human Rights Commission to extend equal treatment to same-sex couples (Rayside 1998). Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, it would replace abortion as the most strongly contested social issue in Canada. The Reform Party responded to this change in two ways, both of which opened up significantly more room for social conservatives inside the party.

Outside of Parliament, party assemblies soon showed that they would oppose-same sex rights in an unambiguous way that they never had abortion. The 1994 Ottawa Assembly passed a resolution that declared the party "support[ed] limiting the definition of a legal marriage as the union of a woman and a man" (Reform Party Documents, Series V Assemblies). The 1996 Vancouver Assembly passed a similar resolution that the "family should be defined as those individuals related by the ties of blood, marriage, or adoption. Marriage is the union between a man and a woman as recognized by the state" (Reform Party Documents, Series V Assemblies). These resolutions clearly placed the party on the socially conservative side of the debate over same-sex rights. This was a decision that does not seem to have produced much debate or contention within the party.

A lengthier example of how the party proposed dealing with same-sex rights is contained in a "Draft Statement of Homosexual Rights" that the leadership circulated to party candidates, executive councilors, and regional co-coordinators in September 1993:

> "The Reform Party believes in the principles of minimum state intervention in the lives of individuals, that all Canadians should be treated equally under the law, and that all Canadians should be protected from discrimination. The Reform party does not believe in the principle of granting special status or special entitlements in law to any group based on its cultural, linguistic, ethnic, or sexual characteristics. The application of these principles would recognize the right of homosexuals to exercise their freedom of choice in their private lives, and would condemn any instances of "gay-bashing" or discrimination against homosexuals. We would not support the extension of family benefits to same-sex partners since the rationale for such benefits is generally related to the procreation and raising of children – a rationale which does not generally pertain to homosexual liaisons. (Reform Party 1993)"

The linkage of populism and opposition to same-sex rights this statement makes clear is also apparent in the other way in which the party took a stance on same-sex rights, the statements of its members in Parliamentary debates. These debates were foreshadowed in 1994, when members of all parties tabling petitions from their constituents arguing for or against the legal recognition of same-sex relationships. In the spring of 1995, a BQ member introducing a private member's bill to extend "legal recognition of same sex spouses" (Ménard April 26th, 1995). Because it was a private members bill, debate was not extensive, but did reveal that some Reformers (and the significant number of Liberals who opposed the bill) were willing to make arguments that gave the legal system the role of promoting traditional sexual morality, portrayed the traditional family as the bedrock of society, and warned of Canada's moral decline.

Bill C-33, a government bill to add sexual orientation to the prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canada human rights code, was introduced into the House on April 29th, 1996. In an effort to assuage critics of the bill within the Liberal Party, the bill included a preamble which stated that nothing in it should be read as affecting the traditional definition of the family then enshrined in common law. Allan Rock, then the

Justice Minister, was especially insistent that the changes to the Human Rights code would not facilitate the extension of spousal benefits to same-sex couples. With the Bloc, the NDP, and the vast majority of Liberals (of whom only 28 voted 'nay') supporting it Bill C-33 passed into law by May 9.

While Liberals like Tom Wappel and Roseanne Skoke took a very strong line against the bill, Reform was the only party where most of the MPs opposed C-33. While party discipline was not imposed on the vote, the 45 'no' votes cast by Reform MPs made it seem as if social conservatives dominated the party. While this almost monolithic opposition made clear the party's opposition to the extension of same-sex rights, a closer examination of the reasons given by the party members points out how important populist, rather than conservative, reasons were to their thinking, or at least to their public utterances.

One of the arguments, that the law should not seem to condone or to promote homosexuality and that tradition should not be broken with, was clearly socially conservative. It assigned to the legal system a role in promoting a conservative vision of private virtue and saw the recognition of same-sex rights as creating a great disturbance in society:

> Canada may recover in time from the huge financial mess it is in, but the damage that will be caused to Canadian society by the changes made this week to the Canadian Human Rights Act will haunt us for many generations to come…the irreparable harm caused by creating virtually equal status for gay and lesbian marriages with others will take a lot longer to heal. We will destroy the very fabric of our society by allowing the courts to redefine marriage (Breitkreutz May 7th, 1996).

Those who emphasized this argument (who also included Jay Hill, Lee Morrison, Monte Solberg, Myron Thompson, and John Williams) accepted that matters previously private

had become matters for political contestation and sought to insure that the law articulated a conservative vision of moral behaviour.

The other Reform MPs who opposed the Bill did not oppose it for conservative reasons. Rather, they argued from populism. They were upset that the change was being forced through the House of Commons by a government without a clear mandate on the question. More deeply, they saw in recognition of same-sex rights the extension of differentiated rights to yet another group. Rather, they argued, the legal regime needed to maintain an undifferentiated set of rights that applied to all. Preston Manning and Sharon Hayes (the leader of the family caucus) offered this sort of argument. [143]

The Reform Party's position in the 1996 debate was, then, a mixed one. Significant numbers of its MPs did ground their positions in socially conservative principles. More, though, based their position in populist language about the correct manner in which public policy decisions ought to be made. Equally important, in light of later developments, is that Reform MPs and the party's resolutions did not draw explicitly on religious arguments in taking their position. In later debates, MPs and party activists would draw on religion to frame their position. Since the desirability of religious arguments in the public square is an important aspect of social conservatism, one can see signs in the 1996 debates that social conservatism had not yet been fully recognized on the Canadian right.

The Reform Party's position in the House was overshadowed, and its public image damaged, by a newspaper story that ran on April 30th, 1996. The story was based on an interview that Bob Ringma, one of its whips, had given in 1994. In that interview,

[143] MPs who made such positions the major part of their argument included Diane Ablonczy, Leo Benoit, Ken Epp, Jim Gouk, Elwin Hermanson, Ian McClelland, Robert Mills, Michael Scott, and Darrell Stinson.

he stated that he believed an employer should have the right to fire a gay or lesbian employee or move them "to the back of the shop". Dave Chatters, an MP from Alberta, then defended Ringma's remarks while Jan Brown, from Calgary, began denouncing the "rednecks" in the party.[144] Ringma's remarks became the centre of political attention for some time. Manning's eventual response illustrates how a powerful leader is able to maintain discipline in a Canadian party: Ringma and Chatters were suspended from the party and Brown resigned before she could be suspended (Manning 2002, Grey 2004, Ellis 2005). Importantly, Manning's rather heavy-handed action did not receive any criticism from within the party. This is strong evidence that Manning was acting in accordance with the generally held beliefs of party members.

After the passage of C-33, the debate over same-sex rights in Canada shifted to the question of whether or not same-sex marriages ought to be recognized by the state. Throughout the later half of the 1990s, MPs of all parties introduced motions or petitions concerning same-sex unions into the House of Commons. However, debate on a large scale only broke out in reaction to the *Rosenberg* decision of the Ontario court of appeal extending spousal benefits to same sex couples. Reform MP Eric Lowther introduced the following private member's motion:[145]

> That, in the opinion of this House, federal legislation should not be altered by judicial rulings, as happened in the redefinition of the term 'spouse' in the Rosenberg decision, and that, accordingly, the government should immediately appeal the Rosenberg decision (June 8th, 1998).

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[144] Manning notes that neither Ringma nor Chatters were part of the family caucus. That is, they were not amongst the self-identified social conservatives in the party who saw issues of family and gender as especially important. Rather, they were both Reformers who had gotten involved in politics for other reasons (Manning 2002).

[145] Liberal member Tom Wappel did introduce a private members bill in April of 1998 to define marriage as between persons of the opposite sex. However, it was not deemed votable, so that it only received an hour of debate in the House and then was dropped from the order paper (Wappel, October 9th, 1998).

While *Rosenberg* was a case about the extension of same-sex rights, most Reform speakers framed their arguments as protests at the power of judges to over-rule decisions made by Parliament (cf. Eric Lowther, Grant McNally, Jason Kenney, Erwin Schmidt, and Chuck Strahl June 8th-9th, 1998). Only a few Reform MPs argued that "what is happening here is an abandonment of family values" (Pankiw June 8th, 1998) and that "the institution of marriage and the family unit which is the fundamental building block of society" (Vellacott June 8th, 1998).

More extensive debate broke out the following year over a motion to define marriage as being only between a man and a woman. Again, Eric Lowther took the lead and framed his motion as a response to "public debate around recent court decisions, to state that marriage is and should remain the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others" (Lowther June 8th, 1999). A few MPs emphasized the position of the traditional family as the basic unit of society (Ken Epp, Erwin Schmidt, Chuck Strahl, and Jay Hill). However, most speaking to the motion emphasized a populist discontent with important decisions being made by the court system, rather than by Parliament (Eric Lowther, Gurmant Grewal, Gary Lunn, Monte Solberg, Maurice Vellacott, Diane Ablonczy, Jim Pankiw). Somewhat surprisingly, Lowther's motion passed the House of Commons with overwhelming support from the Liberals who – for once – were not subject to party discipline on the question.

On same-sex rights, unlike abortion, the Reform Party developed a clear position. Its ambiguity on abortion meant some significant tension with the pro-life movement initially (Hughes 2006), but as the debate became more defined in terms of same-sex rights, the Reform Party became the Canadian party with the most room for social

conservative activism. This shift occurred at the same time, and offset, the simultaneous transformation of Reform from an ideologically driven and regionally based third party to a truly national contender for office. This combination, and the shift in norms that accompanied it, meant that Reform was more socially conservative at the end than the beginning of its life.

This transformation into an office-seeking party had its roots in the early 1990s. This was a period of great success and growth for the party, but it was also a period of increasing debate over what, exactly, the party's goals were. For Manning and much of the leadership, especially after Reform had replaced the Progressive Conservatives as the major right-wing party, the party needed to try to form the government (Flanagan 2005, Manning 2002). For others, located mostly outside the party leadership, the party should continue to be a Western party promoting the full version of its populist ideology (Ellis 2005). This tension between those who argued the party should seek office and those who wanted it to articulate policy broke out frequently. It underlay debate about whether the party should expand into Ontario in 1991 and, more significantly, about what attitude Reformers should take to those Progressive Conservatives who remained after 1993.

For the 1993 and 1997 elections, Reform's plan was based on a two-election strategy: 1993 would see the party displace one of the existing major parties and 1997 would see it form the government (Flanagan 1995, Ellis 2005). This strategy would require substantial institutional and financial growth for the party (most notably the building up of an Ontario organization) but there seems to have been little notion that ideological change would be required to appeal to Eastern Canadians. Instead, all that the

party needed to do was improve its technique and organization (Manning 2002, Flanagan 1995).

The Reform Party, in short, was seeking to form the government while keeping its principles intact. Its leaders were betting that the average Canadian would support them if only those principles were better articulated and the party better organized. After Reform's disappointing performance in the 1997 election, the party's leaders began exploring what more dramatic changes would be necessary if the party was to be able to seriously challenge the Liberals for government. Central to any chance Reform had to win office was a better relationship with the still substantial remnants of the PC party. The need for co-operation grew clearer after the 1997 election, when the PCs staged a come-back winning 20 seats, most in Atlantic Canada, and 19% of the popular vote across the country (Woolstoncroft 2000, Patten 1999). However, the federal PC leadership (especially Joe Clark) was very resistant to any such co-operation (cf. Segal 1997).

There was real co-operation between federal Reformers and prominent provincial PCs, notably those associated with Alberta's Klein and Ontario's Harris governments. Working together with these groups, Manning launched a proposal for a "United Alternative" (to the Liberals) at the Reform convention in London, Ontario in May of 1998. Manning rejected describing the proposed party as a conservative one. He argued that it could be built around four principles already in Reform's Blue Book: fiscal responsibility, social responsibility, democratic accountability, and institutional reform. Most other Reformers, and certainly those PCs involved in the process, saw it as an opportunity to "unite the right" and finally push the Liberals out of office. After his idea

was approved by the Reform Convention, Manning then successfully shepherded the idea of a new party through the first United Alternative convention, again in London, in February of 1999. This was followed by a second United Alternative Convention and a membership vote in the spring of 2000 that formed the Canadian Alliance.[146] As we will see next chapter, this new party ended up being conservative rather than populist and had as leader Stockwell Day, not Preston Manning.

Conclusion

This openness to social conservatism is important because it was on the basis of the thinking and personnel of the Reform party that the Canadian right united after 2000. Its openness represents a major change in Canadian conservatism and one that seems – a decade later – to have become permanent. There is a little reason to doubt that part of the reason for this move was the state of public opinion on same-sex rights, especially on same-sex marriage, during the 1990s. This cannot be the entire story, though, for no other party (even the Liberals, where a very substantial portion of the MPs and Cabinet supported the heterosexual definition of marriage on the 1999 vote) sought to exploit this opportunity.

Rather than seeing it as explained by the state of public opinion alone, the situation should be understood in the context of the dramatic changes that Reform caused on the Canadian right. These changes created both organizational (by transforming how conservatives organized) and normative (by introducing populist and disrupting Progressive Conservative notions of conservatism) turmoil. Social conservatism

[146] See Harrison (2002), Manning (2002), Ellis (2005), and Segal (2006) for different accounts of this attempt to unite the Canadian right.

succeeded within Reform on the basis of opposing same-sex rights, in part, because they could link such opposition to both populism and conservatism in a way that pro-lifers had earlier been unable to do. They were also able to make their arguments in an environment where they were not faced with an entrenched previous norm about what the appropriate boundary of politics was for conservatives.

The transformation that Reform triggered seems to have become permanent. As the next chapter shows, the fortunes of social conservatives have waxed and waned since Reform passed from the political scene, but they have found a consistent place on the Canadian right. They, and their concerns, are now seen to be part of normal politics; where the party can take positions as a whole and on which political activity is legitimate. This situation could not have taken place had not the Reform Party created a situation of organizational and normative flux and had the switch from abortion to same-sex rights as the dominant social issue not made at least some aspects of social conservatism electorally attractive.

CHAPTER 8:

SOCIAL CONSERVATIVES AND THE UNIFIED CANADIAN RIGHT

Introduction

While the Reform Party successfully established itself as an opposition party, by the late 1990s many within the party felt that it had had stalled and was merely splitting right-wing votes with the PCs. This division on the right insured continued Liberal governments, which neither the PCs nor the Reform Party wanted. This concern eventually led Preston Manning, other prominent Reformers, and representatives of some provincial PC parties to begin the United Alternative process. This process led to the creation of a new party, the Canadian Alliance (CA), in 2000. The new party identified itself as a conservative party, rather than as a populist one, and sought a national, rather than regional, base of support. It had the clear goal of driving the Liberals out of office. Despite these changed goals and ideology, it was made up (at the elite and the mass level) of former Reformers, for most federal Progressive Conservatives continued to oppose the idea of joining with Reform.

Unexpectedly, Stockwell Day defeated Preston Manning in the contest to lead the new party. For many socially conservative activists, Day's openly pro-life stance and

proud articulation of his Pentecostal faith represented an opportunity to fundamentally change Canadian politics. Social conservatives flocked to support Day in large numbers and were to prove loyal supporters of his leadership. While Day benefited greatly from this support, most of his success was due to his image as a media-savvy politician who would lead the party to victory (Harrison 2002). But Day's leadership was short-lived. He was unsuccessful in the 2000 election, proved to be a poor caucus leader, and was very prone to media gaffes. Perhaps most importantly, little was done to unify the right under his leadership. These faults led to several senior members of the party leaving to form the Democratic Reform Caucus (DRC) in the spring of 2001. The defection of respected party members like Chuck Strahl and Deborah Grey soon caused a general call for another leadership race (Harrison 2002).

The candidate who defeated Day in the 2002 leadership race, Stephen Harper, proved more successful. Under Harper, the party moderated its image and committed itself to securing power. Harper's leadership of the Canadian Alliance saw it merge with the PCs (now led by Peter McKay) to form the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) in 2004. This united Conservative Party formed a minority government in January 2006 and won a renewed minority mandate in the fall of 2008. These organizational developments parallel a move to a moderate, brokerage style of conservatism, which has been the dominant theme of most examinations of the new party to date.[147]

[147] Johnson's biography of Stephen Harper (2005) argues that under his leadership the party moved back towards a moderate Canadian version of conservatism. Segal (2006) makes the same argument, but seeks to show that the new Conservative Party follows in the tradition of the old Progressive Conservatives. Plamondon (2006) offers a very good overview of the process of unifying the PC and Canadian Alliance parties down to the 2005 election. Unfortunately, a lack of access to key figures renders MacKey's (2005) examination of the place of religion in the party and in Stephen Harper's own thinking less than complete. Ellis (2001) stresses how the United Alternative process and the Canadian Alliance mark a return to brokerage politics by Canadian conservatives. Woolstencroft (2001) emphasizes the problems of the PC party before the merger and how the party had little choice but to merge with the Canadian Alliance. Ellis

Even during Harper's leadership and this return to a brokerage style of politics, the Conservative Party of Canada has maintained a place for social conservatives. Harper does not have close ties to social conservatives (Flanagan 2005), but they have enjoyed more prominence in the party under his leadership than under any previous Conservative leader (with the exception of Day). As the debate over gay marriage in 2005 showed, social conservatism has defined important parts of the party's public image. The place that social conservatives found in the Conservative Party of Canada is something of a puzzle, for it took a strong stand on social issues but was willing to moderate its position on issues traditionally far more important to Canadian conservatives.[148]

This chapter argues that this puzzle can be understood as the result of the norms against social conservative involvement weakening as the institutions in which those norms were embodied changed. By doing away with the old Progressive Conservative norm that kept social issues out of politics and the populist norm that rendered their place ambiguous under circumstances where social conservatism seemed electorally advantageous, these changes allowed social conservatives to establish their political legitimacy. This legitimacy allowed them to continue as an important part of the party even after the departure of their preferred leader, the influx of other, "Progressive" Conservatives, and the commitment of the new party to winning office through brokerage politics. In comparison to their American counterparts, though, their success has been far

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and Woolstencroft (2004, 2006) portray today's Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) as following in the brokerage tradition of other large Canadian parties.

[148] Perhaps the most striking example of Harper's willingness to compromise was his recognition of the Quebecois as a nation within a united Canada, despite the long tradition on the Canadian Right (of which he was a vocal exponent while in the Reform Party) of rejecting the 'two nations' vision of Canada and defending one of 'ten equal provinces'.

more limited – most likely because Canadian voters have proven less amenable to social conservative appeals.

While the evidence is currently too scanty to draw firm conclusions it does suggest that social conservatives themselves have become more moderate since the CPC won office in 2006. Social conservatives have continued to be seen as legitimate, but their positions are less central to the party's overall appeals than they were during the debates over same-sex marriage. This is not surprising – social conservatives were defeated on their central issue and proved unable to draw new Canadians into the Conservative fold – but the very reasons for their decline point to their achievement of "normal" status. No longer is their role minimized because they are seen to be illegitimate. Rather, their prominence within the party, just like that of any other group, is dependent on their ability to achieve political success. Moreover, they seem to have accepted this situation themselves.

Social Conservatives and the Canadian Alliance

The Canadian Alliance emerged out of the United Alternative process described in the last chapter. With Clark's federal PCs uninterested in joining with Canadian Alliance, the later party formalized ties between former Reformers and PCs from the more conservative Alberta and Ontario provincial parties. The process created considerable resistance from die-hard populists among Reformers, but their resistance was overcome by Manning's still significant command of party organization and resources (Ellis 2005). Manning had no significant difficulty in creating a new party, but

he faced a serious challenge to his leadership of it from Stockwell Day.[149] Day, Alberta's Treasurer at the time, proved adept at signing up new members. Given the one member, one vote rule of the leadership race, this was a key advantage. To some extent, this ability was the result of his promise to be a youthful, telegenic, and bilingual politician who would be more able to reach out to the vote-rich east than Manning. Day also benefited from disillusionment with the party's repeated failures to become the government and the support of a significant number of Reform MPs and Alberta MLAs (a point stressed in Harrison 2002).

Another part of Day's ability to attract new members was his recruiting of evangelical Christians and pro-life activists. Day worked hard to build up support in these communities and often used the language of social conservatism and evangelical Christianity.[150] As a result, Day was able to convince many that he was a more 'Christian' candidate than Manning and would be less inclined to the kind of compromises that Manning's populism, in the eyes of many social conservatives, had led him to on same-sex rights and abortion.[151]

In the last weeks of the campaign, Manning did try to counter the efforts of Day's team to portray him as an un-Christian candidate by being more open about his own faith commitments. This effort proved to be too little, too late. Given Manning's long-established position that religious beliefs were best kept separate from political positions

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[149] Ontario Tory strategist Tom Long was the only other significant contender for leadership of the new party.

[150] Tuns (2005) and Hughes (2006).

[151] One fiscal self-described libertarian party insider suggested that this difference could be partly attributed to a difference in evangelical theology. Many evangelicals, like Manning, were hesitant to be politically involved at all, let alone openly mix faith and politics. Alternatively, other Canadian evangelicals, like Day, saw themselves as a minority who needed to come out of the closet (a phrase frequently heard in evangelical circles) to articulate their own unique approach to politics. See Stiller (2003) for a discussion of this point and Harrison (2002) for examples of the types of appeals that Day made to social conservatives.

(discussed last chapter), it seems that there is little he could have done that would have satisfied this group entirely. For Day and his supporters, as their statements on same-sex marriage (among other issues) show, there is a specifically Christian approach to politics and a truly Christian politician will act in a definitely Christian way.

The optimism that surrounded Day at the time of his leadership evaporated quickly. He was initially seen by many as a media-savvy leader who would finally achieve the party's long awaited electoral breakthrough in Ontario (Harrison 2002). During the 2000 election campaign, though, he was disorganized and gaffe-prone (Ellis 2001, 2005). After the election, Day proceeded to alienate both many of the party's senior staff and a significant portion of its parliamentary caucus. These problems exploded on May 15th, 2001, when eight MPs resigned from the party. By July, the number of dissidents had grown to 13, including senior party members Deborah Grey and Chuck Strahl. This group of dissidents formed their own Democratic Reform Caucus (DRC). Over the summer, this group entered into negotiations with Joe Clark's PC party and, in the fall, co-operated with them in the House. Eventually, this pressure caused Day to announce definite plans to resign the leadership, though with the caveat that he would run to succeed himself as leader of the party. In a formal race that ran from December 2001 to March 2002, Stephen Harper defeated Day. Harper did not, however, purge any of Day's supporters from the party. Day himself received an important shadow cabinet position, and many of his supporters continued to play important (if not quite so prominent) roles in the party. Many of the social conservatives that Day had mobilized also stayed in the party.

Stephen Harper and the Return to Brokerage Politics

Stephen Harper had more experience in federal politics than his competitor. He had risen to prominence with a speech at the first Reform convention and had become an important policy advisor in the party's early development. Becoming a Reform MP in the 1993 election, he was soon the most prominent public figure in the party after Manning himself. His youth and talent led many to believe that he was also a possible successor to Manning. However, there was significant tension between them. For example, Harper seems to have been the decisive factor in pushing Manning to clearly oppose the Charlottetown Accord, something that Manning was initially hesitant to do (Johnson 2005). Harper resigned from the party in 1997 to join the National Citizen's Coalition, a conservative think-tank. While never far from politics, he was an inactive partisan until 2001 when he returned to politics to contest the Canadian Alliance leadership (Johnson 2005).

On social and religious issues, Harper has kept his personal views relatively quiet. He seems, though, to lean towards a moderately laissez-faire stance on such issues (Johnson 2005). While personally opposed to the extension of same-sex rights to include marriage, he had argued that Reform should take no position at all on same-sex rights or moral matters and, as early as the mid-1990s, favored the creation of civil unions that would recognize same-sex couples (Johnson 2005). Social conservatives saw Harper in his early years as rather ambivalent about their goals. Many inside the party saw his closest advisors as being cool to social conservatives at best and hostile to them at worst – a feeling that has increased as old Reformers, like Tom Flanagan, were replaced by

Mulroney Tories like Hugh Segal and Marjorie Le Breton in the leader's inner circle after the 2004 election.

These personnel changes were part of Harper's broader strategy of reconciling different factions on the right and making moderate partisan appeals. This pattern became apparent with his successful incorporation of Day's supporters and the dissident Democratic Reform Caucus into the rest of the Canadian Alliance after his leadership victory. He followed this exercise with negotiations with Peter MacKay (who had replaced Joe Clark as PC leader in 2003) to unite the two parties.[152] Negotiations between the two party leaders led to a memorandum of understanding in October 2003 about the terms on which the two parties could be merged. This was followed by Harper's victory in the contest to lead the new, united, party in March 2004.

Harper's successful creation of the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) out of the Progressive Conservative and Canadian Alliance parties was followed by what most observers saw as a reasonably successful 2004 election campaign. The Liberals were reduced to a minority government and the Conservatives had positioned themselves on the centre-right as the government in waiting (Ellis and Woolstencroft 2004). In the 2006 and 2008 campaigns, Harper followed an even more moderate brokerage strategy and successfully won a minority government (Plamondon 2006, Ellis and Woolstencroft 2006).

Despite this background and his defeat of Day in the leadership race, Harper did not try to drive social conservatives out of the party after his victory and has proved somewhat responsive to their concerns. Both as party leader and as Prime Minister,

[152] As leader, MacKay worked to define the party in traditionally Progressive Conservative terms, seeking a moderate position that made a fairly clear divide between the personal espousal of traditional morality and the necessary political goal of extending respect and equality to all (Plamondon 2006).

Harper departed dramatically from the previous practice of brokerage politicians in Canada on social issues. Most importantly, he positioned the party on the socially conservative side of the same-sex marriage debate. While he continued the old Conservative and Reform practice of allowing free votes on contentious moral issues, he has also not been afraid to identify the party as a whole in opposition to the extension of same-sex rights. This represents a break with previous practice because, while the Conservatives certainly hoped to make electoral gains (especially amongst new Canadians) with their stance on same-sex marriage, broadly similar potential for growth had existed before. For Stanfield, one could suppose, a firm opposition to abortion might have improved his position amongst Catholics; for Mulroney the example of the Republicans in the United States might have offered visions of similar possibilities.[153] It is not merely that this was a position that might garner votes, but that it was appropriate to win votes with such appeals that changed under Day and Harper.

The Courts and Social Movements

These transformations in party politics were going on at the same time as court challenges to the existing, heterosexual, definition of marriage. Attempts to change the definition of marriage through legal action had been going on for some time. The first verdict on these cases was delivered in October 2001, when a British Columbia judge upheld the existing common law (heterosexual) definition of marriage. Decisions at the trial level in Ontario (*Halpern*) and Quebec (*Hendricks*) the following summer decided that the exclusion of same-sex couples from civil marriage was discriminatory. In both cases, the court gave the government two years to pass a law extending the right to marry

[153] Though the latter's huge majorities likely also limited the need for such experimentation.

to same-sex couples. Should Parliament not pass such a law in that time, same-sex marriage would become permissible. The couples concerned appealed these rulings, arguing that the two-year waiting period for the decisions to take effect was unjust. In May of 2003, the BC Court of Appeals set out a ruling that agreed with the Quebec and Ontario rulings – same-sex marriages should be recognized, but giving the legislature two years to change the laws (Rayside 2008).

Hearings before the Ontario Court of Appeal were heavily contested, with the Federal government calling as witnesses socially conservative academics like Daniel Cere and Katherine Young (see Cere and Farrow 2004, Young and Nathanson 2004). The federal argument was that same-sex unions could not be called marriage because of the traditional linkage of marriage and procreation. This argument, and the suspended implementation of the earlier decisions, was overturned in June 2003 when the Ontario Court of Appeal ordered the City of Toronto to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples immediately. It was followed by similar decisions in the BC Court of Appeal in July of 2003 and the Quebec Court of Appeals in March of 2004 (Rayside 2008). These court decisions changed the political situation greatly – no longer was the question only that of how to recognize same-sex unions but also how to respond to very clear court decisions grounded in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

While there was some discussion at the Cabinet level of whether the Chrétien government would appeal the Ontario court's decision, the government decided that it would not. Instead, it referred three questions to the Supreme Court of Canada:

> 1. Is the definition of marriage within the exclusive legislative authority of the government of Canada?
> 2. Is same-sex marriage consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

> 3. Does the Freedom of Religion guaranteed by the Charter protect religious officials from being compelled to perform a marriage between two persons of the same sex that is contrary to their religious beliefs? (Laroque 2006, 154).[154]

The Supreme Court hearings on these reference questions began on October 6th, 2004. In its response to the reference, the Supreme Court ruled that the definition of marriage was within federal jurisdiction, that same-sex marriage was completely consistent with the *Charter*, and that religious officials were protected by the freedom of religion clause in the Charter should they refuse to perform a same-sex marriage. The court refused to answer the fourth question (whether an opposite-sex only definition of marriage was constitutional) the new Martin government had attached, arguing that same-sex marriage had largely already been recognized by judicial decisions and the Federal government's own decision not to appeal lower court decisions to the Supreme Court. What remained to be determined after the string of court decisions was whether the government would simply allow them to stand, introduce a bill to conform Canadian legislation with the court rulings, or – as some social conservatives were calling for – use the Charter's notwithstanding clause to maintain the traditional opposite-sex definition of marriage.

This series of court cases was paralleled by very significant social movement activity on both sides of the debate. Pro-same-sex marriage groups like EGALE, Canadians for Equal Marriage, the United Church, various labour unions, and many human rights groups presented briefs and organized grass-roots activity. Opponents of changing the law also organized. The organizations examined in previous chapters (REAL Women, the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Focus on the Family Canada, and Campaign Life) continued to play central

[154] When Paul Martin replaced Jean Chrétien as Prime Minister, he had a fourth question added: would civil unions satisfy the rights of same-sex couples?

roles. They were joined by several ad hoc groups formed specifically to organize against same-sex marriage. Of these new groups, only the umbrella organization Defend Marriage Canada was more than organizational letterhead for a single activist (such prominent one-man shows included Equipping Christians for the Public Square, Concerned Christians Canada, and 4 My Canada) (Malloy 2007). All of these organizations built on concerns that had been growing on the right about the definition of marriage throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.

Same-Sex Marriage in Parliament

Debates in Parliament over changing the definition of marriage took place against the backdrop of organizational turmoil on the Canadian right and the judicial and social movement activity outlined above. In Parliament, both the Bloc and the NDP imposed party discipline to support the extension of same sex rights from the mid-1990s forward, making these two parties clearly the parties of social progressivism. The Liberals were divided. Indeed, until the Ontario, BC, and Quebec court rulings extended the right to marry to same-sex couples, the Chrétien government had been fairly active in opposing the extension of marriage rights to same-sex couples. However, after the Ontario court decision, Chrétien and his cabinet reversed course and prepared a draft bill extending the definition of marriage in tandem with their Supreme Court reference.

From about 2000 on, the Progressive Conservatives also took part in debates over the extension of same-sex rights. Their major and representative intervention was in 2003 when the Liberal government introduced Bill C-23, the *Modernization of Benefits Act.* The Bill, which passed, extended government benefits equivalent to those enjoyed

by opposite-sex couples to same-sex couples. Though not yet leader, Peter MacKay was the party's major voice in the debate. He argued that the bill was about fairness and equality, not about morality or marriage, and protested that the furor over the bill was distracting attention from more important issues. At the same time, he was careful to state that for him "personally", marriage was between a man and a woman (MacKay Feb 15th, 2000).

Debate over the bill began in the midst of the transformation of the Reform Party into the Canadian Alliance. Eric Lowther was, as he had been throughout the 1990s, in the forefront of opposition to the bill. And, as before, Lowther and Canadian Alliance MPs like him offered a mix of populist and socially conservative arguments against the bill.[155] Compared to the language of previous debates, however, there was far less emphasis on populist themes and more on socially conservative ones. Grant McNally argued that "the guiding philosophy of our day and our society, I would propose, is something called personal subjective relativism." For him, issues like the extension of same-sex rights were not so much religious ones as philosophical: either one believes truth can be absolute and so opposes the bill, or believes all things are relative and subjective and so supports it. He spoke of how in 1968 the "government started its assault on tradition, family, and marriage" (McNally April 3rd, 2003). Jim Pankiw was even explicitly partisan, arguing that "we are a pro-family party as opposed to the anti-family policies of the federal government" (April 3rd, 2003).[156]

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[155] See also Chuck Strahl (April 3rd), Diane Ablonczy (April 3rd), Monte Solberg (April 3rd), Ken Epp (April 3rd), Jim Reynolds (April 3rd), Gerry Ritz (April 10th), John Williams (April 10th), Rick Casson (April 10th), Myron Thompson (April 10th), and Randy White (April 10th).

[156] Other MPs speaking in this vein included Robert Mills (April 3rd), Maurice Vellacott (April 3rd), and Lee Morrison (April 3rd).

MPs were also more likely to offer explicitly religious arguments than they had been during previous debates. Jim Hart "spoke out on behalf of a minority group in the country, that group being Christians….I speak out on behalf of the traditions, society, and foundations we have here in Canada." (Feb 21st, 2000). He went on to argue that "the union of a man and a woman is something sacred in this country" (Feb 21st, 2000), but that the government was not doing enough to promote and protect family life. Paul Forseth, another CA MP, quoted from Corinthians to express his opposition to same-sex marriage (April 3rd, 2000) while Garry Breitkreuz quoted from the Gospels (April 3rd, 2000). The statements of Canadian Alliance MPs mark a major change, for a significant number explicitly took substantive social conservative positions, grounded them in religious teaching, and identified their party with those positions.

After this debate, and after Day's leadership ended, the question of exactly where social conservatives fit in the Conservative Party of Canada was an issue in the 2004 election. This had not been the CPC plan, as they (and the other opposition parties) had been successful early in the campaign at keeping debate focused on the sponsorship scandal that was afflicting the government. In a series of ads, though, the Liberals countered that Harper's Conservatives had a hidden agenda to transform Canada into something like George W. Bush's United States. The damage done by these ads was exacerbated late in the campaign when Conservative MP Randy White, in an interview, said that he thought laws prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals should be repealed and that a Conservative government would use the not withstanding clause to repeal a same-sex marriage bill. When combined with earlier comments by Cheryl Gallant comparing abortion to the beheading of hostages by terrorists and an ill-advised

press release asking whether Paul Martin approved of child pornography, the Conservatives had a difficult time resisting the charge that they were a party committed to social conservatism (Johnson 2005, Ellis and Woolstonecroft 2004).

Despite these problems, the Conservatives did reasonably well in the election, winning 30% of the popular vote and 99 seats. As the other opposition parties had also done well, the Liberals formed only a minority government. While this situation meant that all parties expected only a short time between the 2004 election and the next one, it was enough of a space for the Conservatives to improve the organization of their party and sort out policy.

Central to this project was the work, also meant to bring together former PCs and Reformers, to formulate a definitive policy platform for the party. This process culminated in a policy convention March 17th-19th, 2005 in Montreal.[157] Built on discussion groups that had gone on at the local level for some time, the convention was tightly scripted. It had the goals of reaching out to Quebec voters, making the party appear moderate, and using the publicity from the convention as a springboard to a successful election campaign (Plamondon 2006).

As Bill C-38 (the *Civil Marriage Act*) had already been introduced into the House at the time of the convention, it was no surprise that there were attempts by social conservatives to get platform planks favourable to them placed on the platform. And, while the convention maintained substantively the same platform on same-sex marriage on which the party had fought the election, social conservatives made gains on the issue:

> i) The Conservative Party believes that the family unit is essential to the well-being of individuals and society, because that is where children learn values and develop a sense of responsibility…..

[157] The author was able to attend this convention as a student observer.

> iii) The Conservative Party believes that Parliament, through a free vote, and not the courts should determine the definition of marriage. A Conservative Government would support the freedom of religious organizations to determine their own practices with respect to marriage.
> iv) The Conservative Government will support legislation defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman (CPC 2005, 22).

Social conservatives' efforts from the floor to get a platform plank on abortion were soundly rebuffed. One leading social conservative, former PC MP Elsie Wayne, was booed off the stage after a speech in which she referred to abortion as "baby-killing". The convention settled on platform statement that "a conservative government will not support any legislation to regulate abortion" (CPC 2005, 20).

Debates over same-sex marriage began again when C-38 was introduced 1 February 2005. Debate over this bill lasted late into June and overlapped not only with the Conservative policy convention but also with a very unstable political situation. The Liberals narrowly survived a confidence motion in early May and were able to pass a budget only after Conservative Belinda Stronach defected and independent Chuck Cadman agreed to support the government. In such a situation, Martin's whipping of his cabinet ministers to support C-38 was controversial and he saw two ministers resign from Cabinet, two MPs leave the party, and 32 Liberal back-benchers vote against the bill. Even with support of the NDP (which imposed party discipline on the vote), most of the BQ caucus, and a handful of Conservatives it was not clear until late in June that the bill would actually pass, such was the opposition of the Liberal backbenches to the motion.

Despite the heated political atmosphere, the CPC allowed a free vote on C-38. Aside from three MPs who voted for the bill, the party was remarkably unified, with 93 of its MPs voting against it. Conservative MPs voting against the government motion

generally agreed that they would like to see a compromise enacted along the lines that Harper laid out in his response to the introduction of the bill. He argued that "marriage is a fundamental distinct institution, but that same-sex couples can have equivalent rights and benefits and should be recognized and protected" (February 16 2005). In the rest of his speech, he argued that such a compromise was legally defensible without using the s. 33 override clause and was in keeping with the preferences of most Canadians. He also tried to make clear that, for him personally, the issue was not a religious one but, rather, the protection of a traditional institution from state interference. He also expressed concern that the bill would threaten religious freedom.

Aside from those who voted with the Liberals, Conservative MPs generally followed the lines laid down by the policy convention and Harper's speech. All MPs argued that civil unions would be preferable to extending the definition of marriage to include both same-sex and opposite-sex couples. They argued that such a solution would extend all of the legal rights of marriage to same-sex couples, but would retain the traditional recognition that opposite-sex marriage was a unique institution. There was also general agreement that, on such an important issue, Parliament, in a free vote, had both the right and the responsibility to speak for the popular will against court decisions. Some added that progressive European countries had come to a compromise on same-sex marriage, others that the United Nations Human Rights Tribunal had argued that the traditional definition of marriage could be retained without infringing on the rights of gays and lesbians. Most also took the more partisan line that the Liberals were being

inconsistent, as Martin and many of his senior colleagues had voted for the Reform motion defining marriage in traditional terms in 1999.[158]

While often drawing on these themes, and never disagreeing with them, more socially conservative MPs added other arguments. They especially stressed the point that the traditional family, with two parents, did a better job of raising children than other family models. This, social conservatives argued, reinforced the notion that procreation was a central part of the definition of the family and of marriage. They also argued that allowing same-sex marriage represented a harmful shift from a child-centred model of family to an adult-centred one.[159]

Finally, a number of social conservatives took a stand based on personal faith commitments. Several quoted religious leaders or texts as the basis for their decisions, some going so far as to quote Scripture into Hansard. Others preferred to describe how their personal faith commitments prevented them from supporting the extension of the definition of marriage. Some argued that changing the definition of marriage showed how far into relativism society was falling.[160]

Despite the passage of C-38, in the summer of 2005 activists still hoped that a Conservative government would work to repeal the bill. In response, Harper made it one of his campaign promises that a Conservative government would introduce and allow a completely free vote on a motion to repeal the *Civil Marriage Act.* In December 2006, he

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[158] MPs taking this line in their speeches in the House of Commons included Moore, Skellon, Williams, O'Connor, Forseth, Smith, Kamarnicki, Allison, Toews, Hiebert, Mills, Merrifield, Kamp, Gurmant Grewal, Nina Grewall, Casson, Finley, Fitzpatrick, Miller, Epp, Fletcher, Watson, Mark, Batters, Cummins, Hinton, Schellenberger, Warawa, Nicholson, Tweed, Yelich, Poillievre, Bezan, Tilson, Johnston, MacKay, Harrison, Ambrose, Benoit, Preston, Menzies, Reid, Guergis, Anderson, Anders, Goodyear, Benoit, Brown, Hinton, Harris and Lukiwski.

[159] In speeches in the House, these MPs included O'Connor, Pallister, Vellacott, Hill, Ablonczy, Scheer, Merrifield, Schmidt, Breitkreuz, Thompson, Komarnicki, Jean,

[160] These included Warawa, Werner Schmidt, Duncan, Goldring, David Anderson, Day, Dale Johnston, Lunney, Hanger, Yelich, Doyle, Solberg, Prentice, Penson, Breitkreuz, Ritz, Myron Thompson, and Scheer.

partially kept this promise by introducing a motion asking the House to call on the government "to introduce legislation to restore the traditional definition of marriage without affecting civil unions and while respecting existing same-sex marriages" (Dec 7th, 2006). This unusual legislative step – in essence the government asking the House for permission to introduce legislation – saw only brief debate before being defeated 175 to 123. In the debate, Conservative MPs spent far more time arguing that there was a need for continued debate than they did arguing for a substantive position one way or the other. Harper had made it clear before debate on the motion that he would only return to the issue once, so that the defeat of the motion effectively ended his concern with same-sex marriage.

Since the end of the debate over same-sex marriage, issues of central concern to social conservatives have not been as prominent as they were during the first half of the decade. This, compounded by the great difficulty in gaining access to central players since the CPC formed the government, makes it difficult to assess completely the place that social conservatives currently have in the party. There are a number of indications, though, that suggest they have retained their legitimacy within the party but, given their lack of success at attracting new voters or winning policy battles, are not as prominent as they were in the early 2000s.

One indication is that only two items on the legislative agenda that can be seen as socially conservative initiatives. Both are relatively minor, have been presented in a low-key fashion, and have not attracted a great deal of media attention. The first was an increase in the age of consent for sexual activity. This measure had been introduced in one form or another for some time, but only passed at the end of March 2008 as part of an

omnibus criminal justice bill. Somewhat more controversial have been repeated efforts to introduce, through private members bills, 'unborn victims of crime' legislation. Leon Benoit introduced such a proposal in May 2006. It made it as far as committee before stalling in the face of objections that it was unconstitutional. Some argue that this was due to the bill's poor drafting, others that the constitutional judgement was merely cover for the government to remove a controversial measure from the legislative agenda (Reid 2008). In revised form, introduced by Ken Epp in the fall of 2007, this bill came before the House in the spring of 2008 as C-484. While in public this measure has been described as a very minor and commonsensical change to Canadian law, social conservatives see it as an important incremental move on abortion (Reid 2008).

This incrementalism has a been a part of what both social conservatives close to the party and party insiders who are definitely not social conservatives (Le Breton 2006) have described as a movement to become more team players on the part of those social conservatives who have remained politically active.[161] No longer do social conservative elites in the party feel it appropriate to articulate their views at any cost, nor do they see the articulation of principles as their primary purpose in politics. Instead, the vision they pursue is one that seeks incremental change in their favor, but only if pursuing that change does not endanger the party's chances of staying in office. They have come to believe that, since there are many other initiatives that they have more of a chance of achieving, they ought to focus their attention primarily on those, achievable, goals.

To be sure, a good part of this must be attributed to the defeat of social conservatives in debates over same-sex marriage. On such symbolic issues, however, defeat does not always mean the end of activism – the American social conservative

[161] Reid (2008), Hughes (2006), Clemenger (2008), and Le Breton (2006).

movement has been remarkably resilient in the face of policy setbacks. Rather, the situation of the party and a change in attitudes amongst the social conservative elite seem to be at the root of the change. What it marks is the recognition of social conservatives as a part of 'normal politics'. They are able to argue for some of their convictions, so long as their arguments do not endanger the place of the party as a whole.[162]

While the evidence is, admittedly, only impressionistic, it also seems that there has been a shift in the attitudes of grassroots social conservatives (Reid 2008, Clemenger 2008). Many of the grassroots activists, disappointed by the outcome of the same-sex marriage debates, have withdrawn somewhat from politics. They still hold the same views, but have begun to emphasize action at the local level through voluntary and church-based organizations. On abortion, for example, there has been a shift in interest away from lobbying parties and government to operating community-based organizations such as Birthright (Reid 2008). Others, while unhappy that they did not win on same-sex marriage, have decided that it is still worth being involved in politics in the hope of gaining incremental advances (Reid 2008).

In short, the period since 2005 has seen a moderation of social conservative demands as some activists exit partisan politics and others become more like traditional brokerage politicians. This has not been because they have been forced out of the party, however. Rather, they have shifted to a more 'normal' model of political involvement. Social conservatives are still allowed a seat at the conservative table, but must prove they can contribute to the party's success. They have become legitimate players who have difficulty in making the case that they can help the party to win office.

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[162] As has been remarked by other observers, information is a tightly controlled commodity in the Harper government. Access to key players is more difficult to obtain now than while the party was in opposition. Substantiating that this has been the situation since 2006, in a rigorous way, has been difficult.

Conclusion

The debate over same-sex marriage shows just how much the norms around social issues changed in Canada between 1968 and 2007 and how those changing norms affected the political mobilization of social conservatives. In 1968, Canadian conservatives, not just social conservatives, were careful not to take specifically religious positions on social issues or to link a position on a social issue to other political issues. Throughout the 1980s, despite heated public debates over abortion, the PCs continued to maintain that social issues ought not to be the subject of party discipline. Initially, the Reform Party's populist ideology and powerful leadership prevented that party from taking a socially conservative position on abortion, leading to an outcome on that issue very similar to that of the Progressive Conservatives. With the emergence of same-sex marriage as the major social issue and decentralization of the party (Ellis 2005), Reform took on a definitively social conservative colouring.

This change was cemented during the United Alternative process. Since the selection of Stockwell Day as Canadian Alliance party leader in 2000, social conservatives have emerged as a part of the conservative coalition in Canada. This was due not only to their ability to mobilize, but also to a more general acceptance of their concerns and positions as politically legitimate by other conservatives. This shift gave social conservative the ability to mobilize within right-wing Canadian parties. It led to their continued presence and – at some important junctures – prominence. While they are certainly not dominant, they have been more prominent since Day's emergence than at any time prior to it, despite Day's defeat by Stephen Harper.

What these changes represent is the disappearance of norms, held by both populists and conservatives, which placed social issues outside of partisan politics. Canadian conservatives now see social issues as "normal" political issues to be decided by the party as a whole and taking into account any given position's electoral ramifications. That this norm held for so long after the emergence of social issues into political debate is an important factor, along with Canada's less favourable political culture and more centralized party institutions, in making Canadian social conservatives less prominent and powerful than their American counterparts.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation sought to answer an empirical puzzle: why has social conservatism been so much more prominent in American than in Canadian party politics, especially before the mid-1990s? Its answer to that question hinges on two claims. The first is an empirical one about the different nature of Canadian and American conservatism. Canadian conservatives, until the 1990s, were very hesitant to mix personal or religious matters with political ones. American conservatives had no such hesitation. These different beliefs are apparent as different norms held by activists in the Republican Party compared to those held by Canadian conservatives prior to the Reform Party. The second claim is a theoretical one: institutional norms ought to be considered in the study of large, office-seeking parties. They do not replace, but form an important supplement to, more usual considerations such as party competition or mass belief.

The empirical support for these claims rests on the historical examination of party activism on social topics (Chapters Three through Eight) and the recognition that not all conservatives are social conservatives (Chapter Two). In Canada, the natural hesitancy of those conservatives who draw on classical liberalism to have the state regulate social mores was reinforced by a strong group of traditionalists who saw taking a political

stance on social issues as un-conservative. While conservatives in Canada, by and large, were not keen on extending access to abortion or allowing equal rights for gays and lesbians, they were even less eager to trigger political turmoil over these questions. It was better, they believed, to frame these issues as ones of personal morality on which a political party had no business taking a particular position. The Reform Party's declaration that abortion was a topic of private morality best dealt with by plebiscite or other mechanisms of direct democracy illustrates that that party, initially, held to a similar norm.

It was only when the major issue under contention shifted from abortion to same-sex rights and after a period of electoral failure and institutional turmoil within the Reform Party that social conservatives were able to brand a major Canadian party as sympathetic to their cause and to win space on its platform. They really solidified their position during Stockwell Day's leadership of the Canadian Alliance. Day's tenure as leader was short-lived, but it confirmed the recognition by other conservatives that social conservatives were legitimate political partners for other sorts of conservatives. Once part of the mainstream of the Canadian Alliance and the Conservative Party of Canada, social conservatives continued to deal with the challenges imposed by a political system that stresses strong party discipline and a political culture not terribly sympathetic to their concerns.

In the United States, the story has been a very different one. Most conservative efforts between the Second World War and the 1970s went into the creation of a social movement. Within this movement, traditionalists were relatively rare and had more affection for religion than did their Canadian counterparts. Similarly, many American

laissez-faire conservatives saw the United States as a nation that was both virtuous and free – giving concerns about the decline of public virtue substantial traction for them as well. Social conservatives were able, when they emerged during the 1970s, to draw on existing themes to build alliances with other conservatives. These alliances meant that conservatives of all sorts worked together to gain control of the Republican Party during the late 1970s. Their success at this enterprise, and the recognition that social conservatives should have as prominent a place in the party as in the movement, came with Reagan's 1980 election victory.

Since 1980, social conservatives have been able to retain their place within the Republican Party. On key issues like same-sex marriage and abortion, they have insured that the national party always positions itself on their side of these divisive issues. At the same time, the difficulty that they have had translating this recognition into policy change is clear evidence that they do not dominate the party. Other American conservatives have been generally happy to recognize the claims of social conservatives, but they are not willing to forgo their own priorities for the sake of the social conservative agenda. Times when social conservatives overreached – most notably 1988-1992 – did see some controversy over policy and the control of party offices. The controversies during these periods, though, were not over whether social conservatives had a place in the party but what, precisely, that place was.

In addition to this clarification about the nature of conservatism in North America, this dissertation sketches an argument of more general concern to scholars of political parties: that norms matter even in large office-seeking parties. This is not to underestimate the impact that formal institutions and political culture have played in

creating the different situations in the two countries. One would, after all, expect the tightly disciplined Canadian parties to be more resistant to the influence of outsiders than the loosely defined American ones. Similarly, a more religious population, like that of the United States, would naturally be more amenable to political appeals that often draw on religion than one with lower levels of religiosity, like Canada. However, an account of the difference at the level of party politics that draws solely on these factors is incomplete. This is because an answer that draws solely on such factors presupposes we know what political positions are accepted inside existing institutions or how appeals to popular sentiment are affected by considerations of what is an appropriate appeal to make for a given political organization. Especially when new problems challenge such standard solutions, such considerations cannot be assumed to be given or constant.

If norms have an influence on large office-seeking parties, then these parties cannot be analyzed as if their sole motivation was the pursuit of the median voter or as if their behaviour was only the result of their organizational configuration. Rather, the beliefs – sometimes unspoken – of their elites and members need to be examined and understood. Such analysis should not replace considerations of organization or vote-maximization as ways to analyze the behaviour of political parties, but they are necessary complements if we are to fully understand it.

This conclusion is also a sensible place to say something about the future of social conservatism in major national conservative parties in the two countries. In both, the activities of social conservative activists are now seen to be legitimate by other conservatives. They have succeeded in both countries in fighting elections – with varying degrees of success – where social conservatism substantively defined the position

of a major party. These are important commonalities between the two countries, even though the paths that social conservatives took to get to these points were very different.

Being aware of the reasons for their success, however, also points to the limits of their influence in the future. Social conservative prominence has come from their ability to mobilize and to use organizational resources to magnify their voice. What is missing, for their long term success, is any evidence that traditional beliefs about family structure or sexual life are gaining ground in the population. Instead, most evidence indicates that the substantive beliefs that have motivated social conservatives are in decline amongst the general population. In neither country have they succeeded in reversing the societal trends that initiated their mobilization in the first place. Abortion rates are reasonably stable and same-sex relationships are increasingly recognized by both the law and society in the two countries. Both Canadians and Americans are less and less likely to belong to organized religious groups. Religiously motivated intervention in public life is more and more identified with social conservatism, with the past, and with a rather narrow and provincial outlook on the world.

This failure to move from legitimacy to persuasiveness at the societal level is paralleled by a rather surprising facet of social conservative activism in both Canada and the United States: social conservatives have been remarkably unsuccessful at implementing the policies that they desire. In Canada they have achieved almost no success, in the United States somewhat more, but if the goal of political action is to change public policy, there has been much smoke and little fire from social conservatives.

What this analysis suggests about the future of social conservatism – absent a major change in social dynamics – is decline. Their rise to prominence in the face of adverse social trends and policy defeats has been predicated on gaining respectability and visibility within party organizations and then using those organizations to promote their agenda. This they have achieved in Canada and the United States, but their failure to implement policy change shows the limits of their influence in the bureaucracy and, often, the judiciary. Furthermore, despite their best efforts, they have been unable to influence society in a way that might make their views more pervasive, and so more generally attractive to office-seeking parties. As the societal base on which they have built their activism declines and the shock factor of their emergence wears off, organizational successes will be unable to offset such global decline.

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A Note on Interviews

A number of people took the time to have conversations with me, but have preferred to remain anonymous. I thank them very much for their time, as I do for those who spoke on the record. In addition to those who granted interviews, I owe a thank-you to Ian Brodie for allowing me access to the 2005 Conservative policy convention as a student observer, and to the organizers of the 2006 March for Life and 2006 Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington D.C.

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