



What's The Real Nature of Conservative Politics?

A lecture by Morton C. Blackwell



Leadership
Institute



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**By Morton C. Blackwell, President
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Political terms mean different things in different countries, and they mean different things in the same countries at different times.

In the United States and across the world in the 19th Century, the word "liberal" described someone primarily concerned about liberty.

Over the years, the word "liberal," deliberately adopted by the left in the United States, has come to mean here someone committed to, among other priorities, greater concentration of power in government, more government spending, and active opposition to traditional values.

In modern American politics, liberal means left. Leftists have so sullied the word "liberal" that they often prefer now to call themselves "progressive."

Despite this changed but now familiar meaning of the word "liberal," many American free-market economists persist in calling themselves liberals. Those economists have every right to try to label themselves any way they please, even though that makes their communications more difficult for the American general public to understand.

Public opinion polls for many years have shown that approximately twice as many Americans describe themselves as conservatives than those who are self-identified liberals, about 40% to 20%.

Americans who call themselves conservatives would almost all agree that liberals, in today's political use of the word, are those who want bigger government.

In Tehran, Iran, people who hang on their walls honored photos of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini may be called conservative. In Madrid, Spain, people who hang on their walls honored photos of the late Caudillo Francisco Franco may be called conservative. In Beijing, China, people who hang on their walls honored photos of the late Chairman Mao Zedong may be called conservative. The same word means different things in different contexts.

In the United States today, someone who hangs on his wall an honored photo of Ronald Reagan can be called a conservative. Most people now understand immediately. That person is probably committed to limited government, free enterprise, strong national defense, and traditional values.

For political purposes, these four principles are generally accepted in America as pillars of American conservatism.

About 1960, during my college days, Professor Waldo W. Braden asked each of us in his class at Louisiana State University to describe ourselves in as few words as possible.

When my turn came, I answered, "I am a conservative activist."

Professor Braden, who enjoyed quibbles over words, said, "Mr. Blackwell, that is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. A conservative cannot be an activist."

Having already read much by William F. Buckley, Jr., I knew what "oxymoron" meant. I replied to my professor, "We'll see."

Four years later, I was presidential nominee Sen. Barry Goldwater's youngest elected delegate to the 1964 Republican National Convention. By then, even liberal college professors had begun to admit that there are such things as conservative activists.

I base this lecture about the real nature of conservative politics on my more than 50 years of personal political participation and observation.

I earn my living working for conservative employers: five and a half years, on and off, as executive director of the national College Republicans; campaign director (manager) of a Republican congressional candidate's campaign in Louisiana in 1966; a year and a half on the senior staff of the American Enterprise Institute; seven years working for Richard Viguerie, the "Funding Father" of the American conservative movement; a year and a half as a top staffer for conservative U.S. Senator Gordon Humphrey of New Hampshire; three years as a Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan on his White House Staff, where my duties included serving as President Reagan's liaison to all American conservative organizations; nine and a half years (1990 to 2000) working part time as executive director of the Council for National Policy, the major conservative movement

umbrella organization; and since early 1984, employed as president of the Leadership Institute, the conservative political training educational foundation I created in 1979.

My Republican Party activities include: in College Republicans, local club co-founder, state chairman, and national executive director; in Young Republicans, local club founder, state chairman, and elected national officer; in senior party Republicans, county committee member, state central committee member first in Louisiana and currently in Virginia; participation in every Republican National Convention starting in 1964, serving as a Delegate or Alternate Delegate at all those conventions except in 1972.

I'm now in my seventh consecutive four-year term as Virginia's Republican National Committeeman and thus as one of the 168 members of the Republican National Committee.

As a volunteer, I planned and oversaw the 1980 national Youth for Reagan effort, and I currently serve on the governing boards of many different conservative movement organizations (large and small) and Republican Party committees, local, state, and national.

That long experience qualifies me to explain what I believe is the real nature of conservative politics. As much as almost anyone, I have walked that walk.

The engine of conservative politics in America is the conservative movement, which began largely as a serious intellectual movement in the 1950s.

Its principles were already limited government, free enterprise, strong national defense, and traditional values, but it focused primarily on developing its ideas and on the important job of attracting others to those ideas.

Typically, conservative intellectuals considered the nitty-gritty of political action beneath their dignity. They identified the errors and dangers of the left. They persuasively promoted an inspiring set of conservative ideas. They did grow the movement.

They formed some national conservative organizations which modestly prospered, without raising much money or identifying, much less activating, really large numbers of people.

When they did try political action, those early movement

conservatives chose to work almost entirely within the Republican Party. But that party was dominated by Eastern Establishment Republicans like Nelson Rockefeller who seemed to have all the money and, as far as internal Republican matters were concerned, the support of all the major print and broadcast media.

The nascent conservative intellectual movement managed to attract and recruit sufficient numbers of inexperienced but earnest grassroots conservative activists like me to nominate Barry Goldwater for President in 1964, but Lyndon Johnson's landslide victory that year produced confident and loud predictions that conservatism in politics was dead for good.

History didn't work out that way.

Starting in 1965, a number of former Goldwater supporters gravitated to the center of American politics, the D.C. area. Hardly any of us had known each other earlier, much less had prominent roles in the Goldwater campaign.

But our past personal support of Goldwater credentialed us to each other as we eventually met, sometimes by working together in election contests, legislative battles, or Republican organizations, but often only by chance. This process took several years.

While I was executive director of the national College Republicans in the mid-1960s, I met Lee Edwards. He had served high up in the Goldwater campaign, as its director of information. Then he came to Washington, D.C., and opened a conservative public relations firm.

As far as I knew, his was the area's only conservative public relations firm. The New York Times once called him "The Voice of the Silent Majority." Lee generously mentored me, and I supplied College Republican volunteers for conservative events he organized.

In early May 1972, while I worked at the American Enterprise Institute, Lee Edwards introduced me to his friend Richard Viguerie, who had served as executive director of Young Americans for Freedom, the youth group organized around the groundswell for Barry Goldwater.

Richard Viguerie had moved to the D.C. area in 1965 to form what turned out to be a spectacularly successful direct mail consulting firm. For most conservatives, he was famous but a man of mystery.

I had never met him. He worked very long hours building his business, and he did not circulate socially in what was then the very small circle of D.C.-area conservatives.

A story spread that Richard had on the wall behind his desk a huge faucet which he could turn on to pour vast sums of money into the coffers of any organization he would take on as a client.

A couple of weeks after our first meeting, Richard offered me a job with his company. "Morton," he said, "I want you to come help me build the conservative movement." I accepted enthusiastically because building the conservative movement was exactly what I wanted to do.

The story of Richard Viguerie's movement-building in the 1970s has been told many times.

No longer almost a recluse, he sought out philosophically sound conservatives who had proved themselves as activists in various areas of the public policy process. Most of them already knew and trusted each other.

He invited them often and hosted them at mostly small but innumerable meetings and meals to discuss, to figure out, and to implement what had to be done for conservatives to start beating the liberals in politics.

As his political assistant, I helped organize Richard's movement-building meetings and participated actively in them. The discussions often proved highly productive.

Leaders of some previously existing, good groups did not agree with some of the conclusions reached in the Viguerie meetings, particularly the decisions to encourage the creation of a wide variety of new conservative organizations and to persuade existing conservative groups to develop the skills required to grow dramatically in membership and political effectiveness. Some felt creating new and larger organizations would only drain resources from existing organizations.

Our response was that, if conservatives couldn't increase our resources and members, we would never win.

Jump-starting the conservative movement worked, and before long new conservative groups of all types sprang up, doing good work in

many conservative-issue areas – first dozens, then hundreds, and now thousands of new groups.

As a guide for conservatives wanting to start new public policy organizations or expand existing ones, many years ago I wrote a booklet “The Conservative Organizational Entrepreneur.” Periodically updated, that booklet is now easily accessible for free online.

A number of long-established organizations also grew prodigiously in the 1970s. For example, the well-respected National Right to Work Committee increased from 25,000 members in 1972 to more than 1.7 million members in 1979.

What had been largely a conservative intellectual movement grew into a formidable, workable coalition of better-skilled, self-identified conservative activists and leaders able to defeat the left in many political contests (elections and legislative battles) and thereby to affect public policy.

During those years of Viguerie meetings, I summarized what participants had discovered. I described what made the big difference which enabled the exciting and effective growth of conservative activity, the creation of what the news media began in the middle 1970s to describe as “The New Right.”

I called my summary “The Real Nature of Politics,” and I have taught it to conservative activists and leaders ever since. Here it is:

THE REAL NATURE OF POLITICS

Being right, in the sense of being correct, is not sufficient to win. The winner in a political contest is determined over time by the number and effectiveness of the activists on the respective sides.

The number and effectiveness of the activists on a given side is determined by its use of political technology, which includes organizational technology and communications technology.

Most political technology is philosophically neutral, which makes it inherently unattractive to people who are

motivated by their philosophy. Nevertheless, you owe it to your philosophy to study how to win. You have a moral obligation to study how to win.

To the extent possible, movement-oriented conservatives should develop activists and leaders who are philosophically sound, technologically proficient, and movement-oriented.

It's a lot easier to teach someone already solidly conservative the skills necessary to win than it is to make a committed conservative out of someone who is already a skilled opportunist.

But committed conservatives often resist the study of philosophically neutral techniques. Many of them think disdainfully, "That's mere technology. I'm focused on the really important things."

Young, unskilled conservatives who are nevertheless intellectuals and read ardently are greatly affected by what they read.

Often their reading gives them an incomplete understanding of political reality, but they often can learn the real nature of politics through exposure to certain writings of famed conservative intellectuals whom they already deeply admire.

As a conservative activist since 1960, I have read or heard reverently repeated innumerable times a short sentence, "Ideas Have Consequences."

Conservative intellectuals and would-be intellectuals are so enamored of the words "Ideas Have Consequences" that probably each day someone at The Heritage Foundation receives correspondence in which these words are written.

The theme "Ideas Have Consequences" so often crops up in conservative books, speeches and scholarly articles that for several years I catalogued each usage I saw or heard.

No meeting of the Philadelphia Society or of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute is complete unless someone solemnly intones the words, "Ideas Have Consequences." The words appear often in the pages of National Review and in virtually every other conservative journal, including many with little pretense of intellectuality.

There are now close to a hundred independent conservative campus publications in the United States. Because I conduct Student

Publications Workshops, I see many of these campus efforts. Many of these publications explicitly affirm that “Ideas Have Consequences,” often stressing the point in their first issue.

The proposition, “Ideas Have Consequences,” has attained talismanic status with young conservatives. I would not be surprised to learn that some budding conservative, having adopted it as his mantra, now sits quietly several minutes each day, contemplating those three words.

From time to time I venture to question young conservatives who have used, in writing or in speech, the refrain “Ideas Have Consequences.” Alas, even if they know it is the title of a book by Richard M. Weaver, the great majority of those who use the refrain have never held in their hands any book by Richard Weaver.

What then accounts for the frequency of the references? It is, I believe, a manifestation of hubris. The young person of conservative inclination, possessed of a growing vocabulary and having gained some familiarity with conservative writings, readily concludes he is now capable of elevated thoughts beyond the reach of all but a tiny elite.

Perhaps he finds, as I first did in 1960, the praise of Richard Weaver in *The Conservative Mind* by Russell Kirk. But more likely he reads the magical title in a conservative journal.

If the fascination with those three words merely increased the sense of self-worth among young conservatives, it would do little harm to the conservative cause. Unfortunately, the temptation is often overpowering to take the words literally.

If ideas, in and of themselves, really do have consequences, then being right, in the sense of being correct, is sufficient. If you know you are right, particularly if you believe you can prove you are right, then your ideas inevitably will prevail.

For a young person with intellectual aspirations, this is heady stuff. He concludes he need no longer work with mere mortals in their ordinary plane of existence. He feels elevated above them; he knows that they will eventually conform to his ideas.

Thousands of young conservatives, caught up in the delight of thinking deep thoughts, find that the world does not treat them as they expect and as they believe they deserve. Public policy battles, for example, do not often turn on the question of who is provably right.

Confronted with the failure of his ideas to have their merited consequences, many a young conservative becomes embittered. Some, in the words of the late Dr. Warren Nutter of the University of Virginia, “retreat to the citadel to save the books.”

Others become opportunists and quiet cynics. With great inner agony, some resign themselves to impotence in a world that does not function as it “should.” Too few discover how to make their ideas effective.

For a number of reasons, it would not be fair to blame Richard Weaver for the problems associated with his magically titled book. He was a professor of rhetoric, which can be defined as ideas artfully presented. A master rhetorician, Weaver knew full well that ideas do not necessarily have consequences.

Although it is dangerous to suggest how deceased persons would respond to current questions, I am confident Weaver would affirm that “Ideas Have Consequences” is a rhetorically contracted enthymeme, an enthymeme being a syllogism with one of the elements missing but understood.

Expanding Weaver’s enthymeme, we can get the following syllogism:

- Ideas can motivate people to act
- Actions have consequences
- Therefore ideas can have consequences

Without understanding Weaver’s true meaning, some conservatives often give his three words a dangerously misplaced, almost religious devotion. A noble confidence in the truth of their ideas can lure them into the voluntary paralysis of a life of contemplation.

For anyone who makes the effort to read the difficult but highly rewarding Richard Weaver, his meaning is brilliantly clear. In *Ideas Have Consequences*, he actually wrote: “The youth is an intellectual only, a believer in ideas, who thinks that ideas can overwhelm the world. The mature man passes beyond intellectuality to wisdom...”

Does this sound like a man who believes that ideas are efficacious without something more?

Elsewhere in *Ideas Have Consequences*, he wrote: “Organization always makes imperative counterorganization. A force in being is a

threat to the unorganized, who must answer by becoming organized themselves.”

Weaver warned powerfully against rootless, mechanistic manipulation, against knowledge “of techniques rather than of ends.” His deserving target was the destructive tendency of modern man to lose his sense of purpose as he rapidly accumulates knowledge of how to do things.

But it is a gross misreading to suggest he argued against action. It would be fair to say he held that actions based on the right ideas will have desirable consequences. He quite correctly gave absolute priority to ideals, but recognized the duty of philosophically sound people to take actions.

In 1958 Weaver wrote an essay entitled “Up from Liberalism,” a title he graciously later authorized William F. Buckley, Jr., to use also for his delightful book of that same name. Russell Kirk called that 1958 essay Weaver’s intellectual autobiography.

In it Weaver wrote, “Somehow our education will have to recover the lost vision of the person as a creature of both intellect and will. It will have to bring together into one through its training the thinker and the doer, the dialectician and the rhetorician.”

This statement should enlighten those who take the words “Ideas Have Consequences” only at their simplistic, literal value.

Many conservative intellectuals and aspiring intellectuals still find comfort in the proposition that Ideas Have Consequences. They can believe themselves thereby absolved of the awkward responsibility for personal actions.

The world of politics is invariably imperfect and replete with compromises. How tempting it is to shield our principles from degenerating contact with such untidiness. Never mind that we simultaneously insulate the real world from the ennobling effect of practical contact with our principles.

More than any other thinker, 18th Century British statesman Edmund Burke is credited with laying the intellectual foundations of modern conservatism. He also provided and brilliantly communicated the arguments which activated Britain and much of Europe against the horrors inherent in the French Revolution.

We cannot help but admire Burke's towering intellectual achievements for liberty and order.

Burke was a practicing, professional politician virtually all of his adult life.

In him we see a principled man who, during all his long career, took vigorous actions to promote his principles, a man who understood the proper relationship between ideas and actions, a man who stood by good causes even when it appeared those causes were losing.

In 1770 Burke wrote, "It is the business of the speculative philosopher to mark the proper ends of government. It is the business of the politician, who is the philosopher in action, to find out proper means to those ends, and to employ them with effect."

Burke could not take seriously people who failed to act and act skillfully on their principles. He wrote, "For my part, I find it impossible to conceive that anyone who believes in his own politics, or thinks them to be of any weight, who refuses to adopt the means of having them reduced into practice."

In other words, you owe it to your philosophy, first, to study how to win and second, to take appropriate actions to win if you can.

Burke explicitly held that education as to issues and philosophy was insufficient. He argued:

What is right should not only be made known, but made prevalent, that which is evil should not only be detected, but defeated.

When the public man omits to put himself in a situation of doing his duty with effect, it is an omission that frustrates the purposes of his trust almost as much as if he had formally betrayed it.

It is surely no very rational account of a man's life, that he has always acted right; but has taken special care, to act in such a manner that his endeavors could not possibly be productive of any consequence.

Now, however, we should know better. Edmund Burke did not tell us: "All that is necessary to triumph over evil is for men to have enough good ideas." Quite the contrary, Burke's most famous words are: "All

that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

In one of his too few surviving letters, Whittaker Chambers, author of the seminal anti-communist book *Witness*, told how he had just burned several hundred pages of a book manuscript he had been working on.

For those of us who consider Chambers one of the great masters of our English language, the loss is tragic and irreparable. Those ideas are lost and will not have consequences.

Austrian economist and intellectual giant Ludwig von Mises, in the chapter on “The Role of Ideas” in his book *Human Action*, said “Thinking is to deliberate beforehand over future action and to reflect afterwards upon past action. Thinking and acting are inseparable.”

Particularly in our day, we cannot afford to concentrate on either ideas or actions to the neglect of the other. The conservative intellectual who avoids association with less elegant men of action may doom his cause. Chambers understood this and wrote:

I do not ask of the man who lets me slip into his foxhole whether he believes in the ontological proof of God, whether he likes me personally, or even whether, in another part of the forest, at another time, he lobbed a grenade at me.

I am interested only that, for the duration of the war, he keep his rifle clean and his trigger finger nerveless against a common enemy. I understand that that is all he wants of me.

The reason for the increasing success of conservative ideas in recent years is not that our ideals are much more correct now than those we held, say, in the Goldwater era. We prosper in many ways because we have begun to study the political process and to work together to implement our new knowledge.

We must teach young intellectuals that a flattering and seductive talisman which they do not fully understand will not guarantee them success. They must not rely on victory falling into their deserving hands like ripe fruit off a tree. They have to earn it.

Good ideas have desirable consequences only if we act intelligently for them.

My Leadership Institute offers 40 different types of training schools to teach conservatives how to be successful in government, politics, and the news media. In 2013, more than 19,000 people took my training courses in person. Others study courses the Institute offers online.

For many years, mine was the only conservative organization focused on political training. All the others concentrated on the important task of teaching about conservative principles and public policy issues.

However, I am pleased to report that in recent years at least a dozen other national conservative and libertarian organizations have begun to offer useful training programs for successful political participation. I commend their efforts.

I do not entirely neglect to provide philosophical education to my students.

About 5,000 Leadership Institute students per year receive copies of my booklet, "Read to Lead," which lists and briefly discusses 26 books I believe to be especially valuable as a foundation for movement conservatives. The booklet "Read to Lead" is accessible for free online.

Each year I give away to bright students hundreds of copies of excellent books by F.A. Hayek, Milton Friedman, Edmund Burke, Frederic Bastiat, Thomas Sowell, Russell Kirk, Paul Johnson, Whittaker Chambers and others of like mind. But traditionally, conservative educational efforts focused exclusively on teaching about issues and philosophy. That is not, in the main, what I do.

Conservatives used not to be able to identify and communicate widely with each other except through the filter of media determinedly hostile to conservative principles.

Now conservatives have direct mail, talk radio, a cable news network, many new types of online communication, and literally thousands of conservative organizations capable of very quickly communicating facts, conservative opinion, and focused calls to action to thousands or millions of fellow conservatives.

The Obama campaigns' celebrated, high-tech ground game in 2008 and 2012 didn't mean the left had a monopoly on those techniques.

The Tea Party movement had a massive impact on the 2010 elections. It was organized largely through the spontaneous activity of conservative grassroots activists who could become leaders because

they, too, had learned how to communicate and organize online.

CONSERVATIVE POLITICS TODAY

Having defined American conservatives and described how conservatives became effective in politics, I shall devote the rest of this presentation to brief discussions of four areas of current concern to politically active conservatives. Those four areas are:

- 1 Problems and opportunities caused by the left
- 2 Problems and opportunities caused by political consultants
- 3 Problems and opportunities within the Republican Party
- 4 Problems and opportunities among conservatives themselves

THE LEFT VS. CONSERVATIVES

The left is using the power of government not only to grab more power. The left now uses their power inside government to target and persecute conservatives. Used ruthlessly, the I.R.S. and other government agencies can crush many political opponents and terrorize a great many others.

This is a very serious abuse, and what's worse, they have thus far completely gotten away with it.

The Obama Administration breaks laws written to prevent abuses. Everyone knows it, but even the most abusive leftist bureaucrats thus far have reason to be confident that they will not be fired, fined, or jailed.

The left acts as if people on the government payroll are some kind of entitled elite who can act with impunity because they are above the laws and regulations binding on everyone else. Even after exposure for great abuses or disastrous incompetence, the worst that happens to most senior bureaucrats is retirement on a full pension.

Historically, Americans have always tolerated some elected politicians and government officials found to have deliberately misled or blatantly lied to the public for their personal political advantage. Sometimes politicians get away with using their power in government to persecute their enemies or with breaking some

laws and unconstitutionally ignoring other laws. Many politicians keep secrets from the public which would otherwise damage them politically, or they grant major and unethical favors to enrich their political allies or to give those allies unwarranted advantages over other Americans.

The public has come to expect and to suffer a certain amount of such abuses from people inside government. Often most people simply shrug their shoulders and think, “Well, that’s just politics.” But when an official’s failings became obvious enough and aggravating enough, an outraged public would rise up and hold that official accountable.

As scandal after scandal piled up, conservatives recently began to wonder if there were anything the Democrats and the nation’s major news media wouldn’t help President Barack Obama get away with. But not now.

Everyone except those who are willfully blind now understands that the President and his allies shamelessly lied and misled the public in order to ram Obamacare through the Congress, that its attempted implementation is a disaster for millions of people, and that other and insurmountable problems almost certainly loom for it soon.

Grassroots conservatives and their leaders are delighted to learn at last that there are things Barack Obama and his leftist allies cannot get away with. That development encourages conservatives to explore other ways to hold leftists accountable in the public policy process for their abuses.

To coin a phrase, perhaps conservatives now can send more of Obama’s chickens home to roost.

CONSULTANTS AND CONSERVATIVES

Most political consultants limit themselves to working either entirely for Republicans or entirely for Democrats.

Nevertheless, very few consultants who work only for Republicans can be relied upon to work only in the best interest of conservative principles in the public policy process. Most of them chase after the money, wherever they can get it.

I discussed this matter in an opinion piece entitled “The GOP’s

Consultant Problem,” published in “The Daily Caller” in 2012. It is still available online.

Consultants usually cannot resist the temptation to recruit as clients as many candidates as they can, as long as their clients have or can raise large sums of money for their campaigns.

In Republican nomination contests, this frequently results in many conservative candidates splitting the conservative vote and in the nomination of the only well-funded “moderate” Republican in the race.

In recent decades, consultants have often wormed their way into domination of state or national party committees. Uncounted numbers of candidates have been told by those who control party committees that they must hire designated consultants in order to receive money from those party committees.

Conservative candidates and shut-out conservative consultants have achieved limited exposures of these practices, and some party leaders have taken steps to prevent such abuses.

Although consultants can legitimately earn money in all aspects of a modern election campaign, the ground war as well as the air war, the big bucks for consultants come from commissionable political advertising.

Karl Rove understands well that advertising alone is not the way to win elections. In fact, when winning elections was the most important thing to him, Rove was a successful innovator in improving Republican candidates’ ground game.

In the 2002 mid-term elections, when he was running the political operation in President George W. Bush’s White House, Rove oversaw the development and testing of “micro-targeting” to identify previously unidentified potential Republican voters, target them for individual attention, motivate them to vote, and put together an effective ground game to make sure they voted.

His micro-targeting tests worked so well in 2002 that the 2004 Bush re-election campaign used micro-targeting all across the country, to good effect. And Rove made sure then that Republican leaders knew in detail the measurable success his micro-targeting program had produced.

Most political technology is philosophically neutral. Skillfully

applied, techniques work for either side. It is fair to say that Barack Obama's systematic and now-famously-successful ground games in 2008 and 2012 were logical extensions of Karl Rove's micro-targeting innovations during the George W. Bush Administration.

To the best of my knowledge, none of the hundreds of millions of dollars raised by Rove's 2012 operations was spent on ground-game activities. As far as I have learned, whatever he spent to affect election results was spent on commissionable advertising.

Advertising typically includes paying to consultants a commission of 15% of all sums paid to broadcasters or print media to run that advertising.

Compared to the labor of creating and running an effective ground game in an election campaign, running an expensive paid-advertising campaign is easy and highly profitable for political consultants.

Paid advertising is a gold mine for consultants. They customarily receive fat monthly retainers. They bill campaigns for the creative work required to produce each ad. Then they receive big commissions from the public-media outlets for all the advertisements they place.

In 2012, Karl Rove obviously decided that commissionable advertising is now where the money is for his associates. He knew exactly what he was doing, but probably few of his major donors did.

No one has yet "followed the money" raised and spent by Rove's operations in 2012. That should be done for the information of the major donors who gave hundreds of millions of dollars to Karl Rove's independent expenditure efforts.

By name, who were the consultants who received money from those hundreds of millions of dollars? How much in retainers was each of them paid? How much was each paid for creating ads? How much income did each of them receive in commissions paid on advertising funded by that huge pot of money?

When they see such an accounting and an accurate report on the win/loss record of candidates Rove chose to spend their money on, his large donors will be better able to decide for themselves whether or not he looted them.

Many unprincipled operatives who are professional lobbyists or political consultants and cultivate access to people in power make all or part of their income consulting with special interests actively at odds with conservative principles such as those proclaimed, for example, in platforms crafted and adopted by delegates to Republican national conventions.

With some admirable exceptions, political consultants and lobbyists have been thorns in the flesh of conservatives for many years. Some of them are complete opportunists from the start.

Others prove their competence initially by achievements for conservative principles through work for conservative employers, but too many in this latter category lose their principles when their reputations enable them to increase their income greatly by selling their services on the open market to any employers, regardless of their agendas, who have fat wallets.

For many reasons, wise conservatives have learned to trust and hire only consultants who have demonstrated clearly a commitment to work exclusively for conservative candidates and causes.

CONSERVATIVES AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

It's not easy to change a major political party, but changing a major political party today is much, much easier than creating a new major party.

The last time a new major party was created, in the 1850s, the two existing major parties were the Whigs and the Democrats. The Whigs split and disintegrated largely over the slavery issue, but the Democrats were not a monolithic party at that time, either.

In fact, by and large, the Democrats were the party which then opposed political centralization and the rise of big government.

Today the Democratic Party is totally controlled nationally and in almost every state and locality by forces determined to grow and centralize government any way possible.

Whether incumbents or candidates, Democrats who reveal signs of impermissible disagreement or even moderation on any major issue are now promptly crushed and eliminated from the Democratic

Party. Conservative Democrats these days are like ivory billed woodpeckers: Everyone has heard of them, but no one has actually seen one in years.

The left runs the Democratic Party and feeds on growing government spending, increasing government regulations, maximizing the number of people who are totally or largely dependent on government payments, and grabbing power by any means.

Internal disagreements within today's Democratic Party are not about political principles but about who among them shall run everything.

If many dissident conservatives were to split off now from the Republican Party, the very large conservative vote would be split.

The now-monolithically-leftist Democrats would win almost all important elections, consolidate their control of the country, and use their power ruthlessly to persecute and destroy all politically significant opposition to their power.

That's what history shows real leftists always do when they consolidate political power. Until they win monopoly control of government, they might describe their ultimate aims vaguely, as "fundamental changes."

No, a new major conservative political party is not the way to advance conservative principles in the United States under current circumstances.

By the 1970s, the left had begun using government in wide-ranging attacks on what are now called "social issues." Until then, those issues had long been considered as settled in America and outside of the public policy process.

As a result of liberal attacks through the public policy process, millions of social conservatives who had previously been inactive in politics became political participants to defend themselves, much to the benefit and political success of the Republican Party.

Current calls for a "truce" in the Republican Party on social issues are not new. Starting in the 1970s, some widely publicized, nominal Republicans who claimed to be fiscal conservatives began to urge loudly that conservatives committed to traditional moral values should stop supporting their principles through political advocacy

and participation. But the liberals have no intention of stopping their use of government power systematically against traditional values.

Content-free Republicans today know that full well, but they act as if they expect millions of traditional-values conservatives to support Republican candidates who are silent about or even liberal on social issues. Fat chance.

There are some current signals that big-business interests will intervene financially in Republican nomination contests against candidates who refuse to abandon their public advocacy of conservative social issues. That appears to be Karl Rove's hope.

Does anyone doubt that he'd love to spend more big bucks on commissionable advertising?

Perhaps Rove can explain to such big-business interests how they can expect Republican nominees to win many elections if the grassroots conservatives most committed on social issues decide that the Republican Party is useless to them.

In different ways, I have taken an active part in five large waves of newly active conservatives and libertarians entering politics through the Republican Party.

The first wave: I became politically active during the conservative awakening around Barry Goldwater in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I was one of the original eight members of the Steering Committee of National Youth for Goldwater in 1963 and Goldwater's youngest elected delegate to the 1964 Republican National Convention.

The second wave: In the 1970s, helping Richard Viguerie and others achieve our declared intention to build a politically effective conservative movement, I helped create many new and useful conservative groups of many types. We built what was soon called the New Right.

The third wave: In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I worked with conservative religious leaders who recruited millions of theologically conservative Americans into politics for the first time. On the White House staff, I served as President Reagan's liaison to all conservative groups, including the emerging "Religious Right."

The fourth wave: When the Tea Party movement arose in 2009, my educational foundation, the Leadership Institute, began immediately

to arrange co-sponsored political grassroots training schools with every one of the several national Tea Party and Tea Party-like groups and many state and local Tea Party groups. Thousands have already been trained, and that training program continues.

The fifth wave, and counting: The Liberty movement, generated largely around the Ron Paul presidential campaign, has sent thousands of their supporters, largely young people, to my training schools.

Most newly active libertarians understand that, to advance their principles most effectively, they must work within the Republican Party.

There's a pattern to these five waves.

In each case, the left and the mainstream media (not much different) charged that the newly active conservatives and libertarians were ignorant extremists who could not possibly succeed in politics, were incompatible with Republicans and previously active conservatives, and even were racists -- almost exactly the same attacks from the left and content-free Republicans every time for 50 years.

And each time the charges were wrong, wrong, and wrong.

New waves of active conservatives nominated Goldwater and nominated and elected Reagan. They were undoubtedly decisive in the 2010 national elections and in victories of many other conservative Republican candidates over the last 50 years.

Moreover, the new activists don't drop out of politics. Many like me from the Goldwater era are still active. Social-issue conservatives who changed the direction of America in 1980 still work effectively in the public policy process.

Waves of new participants continue this process. For example, in Virginia in 2012, long-time movement conservatives worked closely with Tea Party activists and Ron Paul supporters to overturn Republican establishment control of the state party committee.

Similarly united coalitions recently won important, internal Republican state party elections in many states, including states as diverse as Maryland, Delaware, Iowa, Missouri, Michigan, and even Massachusetts.

The process is cumulative. Huge numbers of new activists who get

their first taste of politics in grassroots activity in one election cycle keep fighting for their principles for decades to come. Always some of them become a new generation of conservative leaders in elections for public office, legislative battles, and intra-party contests.

Few Americans and almost no one elsewhere understand the fundamental structural difference between political parties in the United States and political parties elsewhere. In almost every country, political parties are completely centralized and are run almost entirely from the top down.

In some countries, political parties are created as vehicles entirely for the benefit of one politician, and those parties often fade away when that politician drops from prominence.

Our American political parties are constructed on a Madisonian model. That is, they include internal separations of power and what amount to checks and balances. Our major political parties, especially the Republican Party, are not centralized or unitary.

The Republican Party of each state and territory, regardless of its population size, selects three members of the Republican National Committee (RNC): its State Party Chairman, a National Committeeman, and a National Committeewoman.

I'm currently the Virginia Republican National Committeeman, and I rank fifth in tenure on the RNC.

The RNC raises hundreds of millions of dollars and sometimes provides staff and substantial financial help to state parties and to candidates below the presidential level, but its main legal functions are to arrange for the quadrennial presidential nominating conventions and to support the election of the Republican nominees for President and Vice President.

Most people assume that the RNC controls the entire Republican Party. Not so.

There are the National Republican Congressional Committee, which exists primarily to elect Republican Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the National Republican Senatorial Committee, which focuses on the election of U.S. Senators.

The NRCC and the NRSC are organizationally completely independent of the RNC. Their leadership is elected by Republican

Members of the House and Senate, respectively. Like the RNC, but separately, they raise hundreds of millions of dollars over time for their activities. The RNC has no power to tell them what to do. Cooperation does occur among these big committees, but it is entirely voluntary.

Similarly, the Republican Governors Association operates separately from the RNC, the NRCC, and the NRSC. Its function is to help elect Republican governors. It raises a lot of money independently of the above-named committees.

Another large, nationally active committee, the Republican State Leadership Committee, operates independently to help elect Republican candidates to state offices below the rank of governor.

Nationally, a myriad of independent Republican auxiliary groups thrive, such as the National Federation of Republican Women, the Young Republican National Federation, the College Republican National Committee, the National Teen Age Republicans, the Hispanic Republican Assembly, etc. Dozens of them.

None of the party committees and party auxiliary groups I have mentioned has legal power, individually or in combination, to tell each other what to do.

There are legally established Republican Parties in each of the states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories. These parties are almost entirely independent.

Only the RNC has any authority over them, and the RNC has that legal authority only with respect to credentials of their RNC members and their participation in the presidential nomination process, including such matters as the allocation and election of national convention delegates.

The Republican National Committee did not create and does not control the operation of state parties. State parties are correctly understood to have created the RNC. Any attempt by the RNC to control the state parties (other than as it relates to RNC members' credentials or to the national convention) would be fiercely and successfully resisted.

The state parties do have legal authority over local parties at the city and county levels and over special party committees which operate at the congressional district level, state legislative district level, etc.

However, state parties rarely dare to meddle in local party matters. Local party committees are correctly understood to have been created by the state parties and to be subordinate to their state parties.

But as at the national level, in most states there are committees of Republican state legislators, independent of the official state party organization, focused on electing Republican state legislators.

Each elected official has his or her own campaign committee which can raise and spend money without control by a party committee. Many elected officials also create separate political action committees which raise and spend money in campaigns other than their own.

Freedom of association in political activity is a treasured and exercised right throughout the United States. People can and do join together for almost any reason, at least formally independent of any party affiliation, to form political action committees to raise money and support the election or defeat of political candidates.

As far as I know, in every other country, parties may require their members to pay dues and may revoke anyone's party membership. Not in the U.S. Here one has a legal right to participate, at least at the lowest level, in the party of one's choice.

A fact of central importance for conservatives makes U.S. political parties different from those in any other country I know of: the existence of so many independent Republican Party committees and organizations at every level. That Madisonian model makes it virtually impossible for anyone who has any power in a party to purge from participation anyone who might be targeted for expulsion.

So a conservative who has cultivated or recruited many conservative allies in the Republican Party can continue to participate effectively in it despite the disapproval of the current "powers that be."

Wise conservatives know that the way to win in politics is to increase the number and effectiveness of principled conservative activists and leaders who are philosophically sound, technologically proficient, and movement-oriented.

Conservatives with no practical political experience at all can participate, at least at the entry level, in the political party of their choice. Certainly in the Republican Party, they have many opportunities over time to become effective for their principles -

even to become party leaders. Here is a course of action which many conservatives take successfully:

- 1 Volunteer to work in the election campaigns of your party's nominees. Under-promise and over-perform.
- 2 Donate to your party's good candidates. Financial contributions put you on the political map. Attend party fundraising events. Give to your state and local party committees.
- 3 Then attend party committee meetings. There you will get to know the existing party activists and leaders. And they will get to know you.

If your local party committee has a vacancy, accept it if offered. But modestly keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut as you learn the ropes. Most such meetings are not very exciting. Always take with you something to read or write during the less interesting parts of party meetings.

- 4 If you are not familiar with the organizational structure and rules of your party, get copies of the state and local party committee rules. Study them and the applicable rules of procedure, usually Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised.

At every level, party rules determine how difficult or easy it is for power to flow from the bottom up. Those who currently hold power in party committees often much prefer for power to flow from the top down, so those who welcome full participation by grassroots conservatives must frequently engage in battles over party rules.

- 5 Participate in some party auxiliary group activities: youth groups, women's groups, etc. If there is none in your area, volunteer to start one.
- 6 In most areas there is a fairly rapid turnover of party officers. Don't push yourself for party office. If you do good work in the local party, others probably will ask you to take on some responsibilities. Accept these tasks. Perform them well.

Soon you may be drafted into local party committee office. But you don't have to hold a party office to play a leading role from time to time in a party committee.

- 7 In some areas, local party committees are moribund or dead. The party officers may be unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons.

They may be lazy. They may be incompetent. They may be fine people burned out from years of good work. They may be hanging on to power for its own sake. They may be actively hostile to your conservative principles. If party leaders are unsatisfactory, you should work to see that they are reformed or replaced.
- 8 Build strong working ties with any other conservatives you meet in party activities.
- 9 Build strong working ties with leaders of conservative non-party activity in your community, such as: taxpayer associations, veterans groups, ethnic organizations, right to work groups, right to keep and bear arms groups, civic associations, church groups, traditional values groups concerned about such issues as abortion, traditional marriage, education, government infringement of religious liberty to practice and promote Christianity, etc.
- 10 Make contacts with national conservative groups to locate and involve their local activists in your party.
- 11 Learn the principles of effective direct marketing and start to assemble lists of contact information for local conservative activists and donors.
- 12 Party committees often have influence in the election of candidates for public office, but in some cases they also have decisive power over the rules and therefore the outcomes of the nomination contests.

Find out the role of your state and local party committees in the nomination process and the schedule of their required activities before upcoming elections.
- 13 Party committees must renew themselves periodically, usually in two-year or four-year cycles. New party committees may be elected by primaries, conventions, or mass meetings. Newly elected committees usually elect their new party officers.

Local party units usually send delegates to state party conventions. Sometimes, membership on party committees

and delegate slots to party conventions are available just by filing properly for openings. Find out how these processes work in your party. Among the things you'll need to know:

- When are the next party primaries or conventions?
- What party offices are to be filled and for what public offices are party nominees to be chosen?
- What are the deadlines for filing, dates of conventions and dates of primaries? And how does one file?
- How are the dates set, by law or party decision?
- What are the requirements for party committee membership? For eligibility to be a convention delegate?
- If your party has an executive committee, who serves on it? How are its members chosen?

14 Because all local party committee elections and party primaries are open at the bottom, whoever gets the most people to participate wins. To succeed, you must organize a sufficient number of conservatives to win primaries, conventions, and party committee elections. It is simple but not easy.

Much more information about how to participate effectively in the party of your choice can be found online in my 1993 piece, "The Life of the Party."

The way to grow a party is to treat newcomers fairly, politely, and even cordially and to show them that power in the party frequently flows from the bottom up, rather than only from the top down.

CONSERVATIVES AMONG THEMSELVES

The late Frank Meyer, for many years a senior editor of National Review magazine, persuaded movement-oriented conservatives like me in the 1960s that there is a natural alliance between people who love liberty and those who deeply believe in traditional values.

He argued that, at root, the two interests are philosophically compatible and that they ought to be and are compatible for practical political purposes. Meyer's analysis of this matter can be found in his writings in National Review and in his book, *In Defense of Freedom*.

Nevertheless, the left and content-free Republicans cling to their fond hope that their conservative opponents can't possibly work together.

We'll see.

Centrifugal forces try to pull apart the elements in any coalition. Different elements have different priorities, and some of those priorities sometimes conflict.

However, there are centripetal forces which pull people together in politics.

When the same organizations and the same leaders work side by side against the same enemies in a long series of election contests and legislative battles, they tend to become comfortable together. They frequently confer, make plans around the same tables, and get to know each other on a first-name basis.

They fight against the same enemy, the left, and they know that the left would destroy all of them, without a single scruple.

They learn which of their allies are trustworthy and come to like them.

Before long the leader of one group goes to dinner at the home of the leader of another group. And when he arrives at the front door, the dog there wags its tail rather than barks.

Through such processes, movements and normal governing majorities are born.

Unity is easier in an embattled minority where survival is at risk. Centrifugal forces grow in strength after a principled minority defeats its opposition. Foolish elements of the new majority, heady with success, may take actions grossly offensive to other groups in their coalition. That is always a big mistake.

Power does tend to corrupt, and success stimulates hubris—as Republicans sometimes find out to their sorrow.

Conservatives and libertarians now have it in their power to cooperate in using the Republican Party to build a stable, governing majority.

Leftist Democrats and content-free Republicans will not be persuaded by sweet reason to change their ways. Nor will many of them change for fear of future defeats by conservatives and libertarians.

Some content-free Republican elected public officials and party leaders will have to be replaced before the party can be reliable for conservative principles.

Only a critical mass of principled conservatives and libertarians can preserve and advance their principles and only if they work together and do not compromise in ways which accept the left's power grabs as permanent. Conservative principles may be defeated in some elections and legislative battles, but they can triumph in the long run if those principles are faithfully upheld as the alternative to the left's agenda.

Using a major party as its principal vehicle, resurgent libertarians and conservatives will break the statist consensus in America only if they nominate and elect people who could not have been elected in recent times.

That can be achieved through a more widespread understanding of the real nature of politics, which will lead to greater grassroots political participation and the development and emergence of many new leaders.

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