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and
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Commentary: Conservatives

ANTIFEMINISM: NEW CONSERVATIVE FORCE

by Dick Behn

While media attention focused this spring on Anita Bryant's crusade against gay rights in Florida's Dade County, a more serious and much less publicized conservative movement emerged at state conferences for the International Women's Year. Preparing for the national conference in Houston November 18-21, the state gatherings began uneventfully enough in late winter of this year, but the conferences held in June and July turned into fiercely fought conflicts between "change" and "anti-change" groups.

The significance of these battles extends beyond the International Women's Year (IWY) because they presage a new coalition of "social conservative" groups. The groups range from Catholic right-to-lifers to Protestant fundamentalists to members of the Mormon Relief Society. They have demonstrated considerable skill in both coalition politics and convention plotting. This new network of anti-feminists parallels the extraordinary growth of other conservative organizations over the last two years.

The influence of Anita Bryant's Save Our Children campaign may be relatively insignificant by itself, but could be a powerful force if teamed with the many anti-ERA, anti-abortion, anti-gun control, anti-busing groups that have proliferated along with Richard Viguerie's mailing lists. California State Sen. John Briggs (R), for example, found that he could attract a wealth of free publicity for his GOP gubernatorial campaign this spring by flying off to Miami to help Anita Bryant. Briggs tends to style himself after the mentally errant TV anchorman in the movie "Network" who says, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going

to take it anymore." Accused of being a demagogue, Briggs has replied, "What's a demagogue? The guy provided release for the true feelings of people who had been put down. They were mad as hell, too, but they didn't have anybody to lead them...I'm a leader. There's no denying it."

An interesting aspect of the anti-change movement at IWY conferences was the role of male leaders. They were the ones carrying the walkie talkies at the New York Women's Meeting in July. Their brightly colored gloves signaled the "right" vote at the Oklahoma conference. Male participation went one step farther in Mississippi where seven men were elected to the state's national delegation---but no blacks. Less than a dozen men were said to orchestrate that state's meeting.

Commenting on the early July conclave in Jackson, the Greenville Delta Democrat-Times' Bill Minor wrote:

Mississippi got a look-see last weekend in the International Women's Year conference here at a new form of militant conservatism which has emerged to replace the old-time anti-black militancy of the White Citizens Councils and the Ku Klux Klan.

Ostensibly not racist in concept, the new far-right force apparently comes out of a strong reactionary backlash fed by religious fundamentalism, self-acclaimed patriotic organizations, and some old-time staunchly conservative political groups.

Their overall enemy now is not the black man but 'liberalism' in any form, as they see it. In many instances, it is not only liberalism but what they consider non-Christian public policy and government programs

The anti-change coalition varies from state to state. In Mississippi the Pentecostals are a strong force and groups involved include the John Birch Society, Women for Constitutional Government and Patriotic American Youth. As Minor noted: "While it's hard these days to find persons who publicly identify with the Citizens Council or the Klan, some of the ideas of those groups are evidently being perpetrated through the new conservative coalition in Mississippi." Unfortunately, the level of discourse being fostered is hardly higher than the anti-black agitation of the 1950s and 1960s. An Associated Press story quoted two Mississippi delegates on their reasons for involvement: "We were told in our church that ERA meant the end of marriage, that schoolbooks would show pictures of people having sex with animals, and we've got to protect our children," said Laura Huff.



Anti-change women bridled at charges that they railroaded their views through state conventions such as the one in Montana where feminists were so overwhelmed that many walked out. Mormon women from the Church of Latter Day Saints' Relief Society were highly influential, but denied press accounts they acted under "instructions" from church officials. Anti-ERA delegate Ann Allen protested that religious affiliations were inconsequential in the anti-change coalition. She and others accused feminists of being poor losers and denounced North Dakota GOP National Committeewoman Gerridee Wheeler's role in promoting ERA at the Helena conference. Of ERA, said Allen, "It will put future generations into bondage, so to speak, while at the same time deprive them of their rights as free women."

The role of Mormons was even more obvious in other states. In New York they were bused in by the hundreds to vote for the anti-change slate. As in several June-July conferences, organizers were overwhelmed by the anti-change delegates who appeared unexpected at the meetings---literally by the thousands. An incredible 14,000 women showed up in Salt Lake City---compared to 2,000 expected. About 4,500 showed up in Kansas---compared to 2,000 expected. An extra 2,000 showed up in Washington state where men were key anti-change leaders.

In clear control in Utah, the overwhelming anti-change majority ran roughshod over feminists. "It was like a war, only they had atomic weapons and we had words," Maggy Pendleton told the New York Times. "They ran the whole thing. I've never been so rudely treated in my life." A Montana woman who was a former chairperson of the Montana Right to Life Association was equally appalled: "The deliberate sabotage of the state International Women's Year Conference in Helena is an occurrence that future generations will review with shame and disbelief. It will be like the feelings today's blacks must have when they encounter historical revelations that many of their ancestors actually opposed their own emancipation."

Even in state's where anti-change forces did not succeed, they came perilously close. Although a pro-ERA slate was elected in Washington, an anti-ERA resolution passed. And though a pro-ERA resolution passed in Kansas, 12 of the 20 national delegates elected were anti-ERA. In New York, pro-change delegates managed to win all the national spots but anti-change women took all the runnerup slots. And in Ohio, where a pro-ERA resolution was adopted by a 2-1 margin, the national delegation is 80 percent anti-abortion though they constituted only a quarter of Columbus meeting's 2,800 participants.

In Ohio, the Right to Life Society teamed up with representatives of the Eagle Forum, columnist Phyllis Schlafly's group. They took advantage of an underattended meeting and a large field of delegate aspirants to win delegation control. In addition to these groups, another force at these state meetings has been the Citizens Review Committee on IWY.

According to Citizens Review Committee leader Rosemary Thomson, the group has been working to assure that representatives of all women's viewpoints are allowed to participate in the planning and policy-making for IWY. Thomson charges that feminists from the National Women's Political Caucus, the Gay Rights Task Force, the National Organization of Women and IWY have conspired to block participation of anti-ERA, anti-abortion women in planning state conferences. Such actions violates the intent of Congress in appropriating \$5 million to IWY, says Thomson. "All we're asking for is fairness," she says, adding that the actions of IWY organizers have set back the women's movement. To demonstrate her point, Sen. Jesse Helms inserted in the Congressional Record a copy of an NWPC-distributed guide to IWY organizing, entitled, "Monitoring and Mobile Operation Partnership Program."

Although Helms denounced feminist tactics for neutralizing conservative sentiment, conservative women have proven equally adept at utilizing similar strategies to exert their will. The result in many states has been to turn the conferences into battlegrounds in which the opportunity for dialogue and temperate compromise has been muted. In Hawaii, for example, the July conference was overwhelmed by an influx of Mormon women who elected a 14-member conservative slate to the national conference. Noted "liberal" Ah Quon McEl-

rath, "The battle might have been won by the Traditionalists at Farrington High School [where the Hawaii conference was held] because there were more of them. But it was a hollow victory indeed because we never had much of a chance to talk to each other about common problems and how we can solve them."

The conservatives have charged they have been frozen out of IWY planning. The feminists have charged that they've refrained from participating until the last minute. Conservative columnist James J. Kilpatrick sees a conservative victory in the resulting war. Writing of the Oklahoma state conference, Kilpatrick concluded that "the troops of Bella Abzug got scalped. In another column, he prophesied:

Next November's International Women's Convention in Houston already is shaping up as the liveliest brawl since John L. Sullivan licked Jake Kilrain in 75 bare-knuckled rounds. The prospect has its aspects good and bad.

What is happening is a kind of counterrevolution within the women's revolution. For the past 10 years, the Gloria Steinems have had things pretty much their own way. Now the Phyllis Schlaflys are venturing out of their kitchens. For the first time, militancy on the left is encountering militancy on the right.

IWY thus seems to have been granted a dubious honor. It's the newest conservative rallying cry. Given the volatility of the gay rights issue, it may have been no accident that workshops on lesbianism were key battlegrounds at many state conferences. The New Right has been increasingly vociferous in its exploitation of what the Conservative Caucus' Howard Phillips calls "hot buttons": gun control, capital punishment, ERA, abortion, and the Panama Canal. With about 20 percent of the delegates to Houston, the New Right has a new forum for its "hot buttons." ■

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Commentary: Labor

REPUBLICAN OPPORTUNITIES

by Victor Kamber

The Republican Party is laid low with a variety of ailments, the most acute of which is hardening of the arteries when it comes to new ideas. The talk is about a little cosmetic surgery--snappier advertising, recruitment of minorities and stronger local organizations. That's a prescription for improving the body, but the soul of the party.

Those who call for "broadening the base" assume that people need only to be invited to become Republicans. I disagree. I believe there are serious limits to attracting more supporters simply through better organization and recruitment. The mechanical approach to broadening the base is not unlike hiring a clique for an opera singer; it doesn't improve the performance, but gives the illusion of enthusiasm.

What the Republican Party needs is an overhaul of its thinking, not a tune-up of its party machinery. Historically, political parties in the U.S. fail when their ideas fail to attract voters, not because they run out of members---which is the result, not the cause, of voter alienation.

The willingness of the GOP to write off large segments of the American electorate certainly contributed to its present weakness, but the party's failure to grow philosophically is at the base of the problem. The tendency in the party to say "there's nothing wrong with Republican principles, just our failure to attract enough people" misses the point entirely. In our age of mass communications, Americans are familiar with the party's ideas. The problem is not marketing, but the product. For this reason, I believe the GOP must look not only for new constituencies but at the ideas that go with them.

In the 1976 presidential election, the write-off of labor and blacks cost Gerald Ford and his party the White House. For years, the party's antagonistic attitude toward labor has hurt even more in congressional elections. The party's support for business has been a lopsided alliance with dividends only for business. The GOP has taken the business line, which most often is perceived as anti-people, and, in re-

turn, business has generally supported incumbents, regardless of party. In essence, Republicans took on the liabilities of business and few of its assets.

I believe the time is ripe for the GOP to reconsider its antipathy toward labor. The political advantages of labor support are well known, but reexamination of weary, old attitudes also would be invigorating for the party. Democratic defections in the first months of this Congress and the lukewarm attitude of the Carter Administration toward labor certainly set the stage for serious Republican overtures.

The theory that Democrats can kick labor in the teeth because Republicans offer no alternatives is losing its appeal to labor. Labor has lost on some issues because of Democratic unconcern. To put it bluntly, labor is being taken for granted by Democrats, and labor isn't feeling very kindly towards some of the people it elected last fall.

Carter pollster Pat Caddell theorized in a memo to the President that labor organizations and Democratic city machines "should be the easiest for Carter to dominate. They have party loyalties that go back for many years and a willingness to accept any status quo that provides them with power and patronage."

The memo's mentions of labor are few and patronizing. And while the memo may not be Carter's blueprint for his administration, the tone is not conducive to an unshakeable alliance. Caddell also writes of a new presidential coalition. While labor is not excluded from this coalition, the implication is that labor is not as important as reaching out for new allies.

All of this does not mean the historic alliance between labor and the Democrats has disintegrated. What it does suggest is that the Republican Party has an opportunity to capture some labor support if it rethinks its antiquated opposition to labor issues and if GOP candidates seek labor's help.

There are other reasons that labor's unhappiness with some Democrats continues and why Republicans should reconsider labor. The political advantage of labor's organization and money

is well-documented. Labor made the margin of victory for Carter in key Electoral College states. At the congressional level, labor's impact is impressive. Labor groups contributed \$8.2 million to congressional candidates in 1976, but volunteers, internal communications, and registration/voter participation drives may have been even more important. Registration efforts by union and black organizations in Ohio and Texas were critical to Carter's victory in those two decisive states. For example, some 43 percent of all new registrants were in Texas.

Republican candidates, incumbents, and other party professionals know these political facts of life; yet, few seek labor's support. The question is why. I believe one major reason is the takeover of the party's soul by the right wing. Rhetoric has replaced reason in too many areas of Republican thinking.

The anti-labor rhetoric so prized by Republican extremists often makes it unclear whether Republicans run against Democrats or against labor unions. Often the issues get lost when the right wing targets George Meany and "big" labor. Apparently, these extremists do not realize that labor is millions of American workers, not just their national spokesmen.

Of course, the Republican Party cannot win labor's aid without reconsidering its knee-jerk "no" on some major issues. The point is not that Republicans must please labor, but that it must learn to please American workers, many of whom belong to labor unions. Labor does not always represent the entire American electorate, but labor has been out front on social justice, minimum wage, employee rights, and other matters vital to the average American voter. The Republican "no" to labor means "no" on people issues, and the negative image of the party comes from these kind of "nos."

For example, to hear some Republicans discuss minimum wage, it sounds as if the extra money would be paid to George Meany, not to millions of workers. The fact is that the current minimum wage of \$2.30 is 64 cents less than the poverty level, and less than five of the 110 affiliates of the AFL-CIO affected by the minimum wage law. Minimum wage is a "people" issue, and Republicans must stop listening to their rhetoric and start worrying about what happens to people.

For those who oppose minimum wage, the reasons must be more positive than dangers to the economy. I believe most voters equate these traditional Republican arguments with protectionism of business. Republican rhetoric on the economy has often strangled the ability of the party to respond to issues with new initiatives. Tradition, not merit, frequently is the standard for deciding Republican policy. The party's response to many issues is to wave the flag of economic disaster; it is rare for Republicans to present alternatives to Democratic programs or to initiate action to meet a public need.

Part of the problem is that the party is being choked from within by the strange power of its reactionary wing. The negative effects of continuing defensiveness are compounded by reactionary initiatives. The GOP does have moderate leaders, but their voices are muted in deference to the "right" on many sensitive issues.



Here's how it worked on common situations. The bill was a reform measure to correct a variety of existing inequities in the building trades. The controversial secondary boycott provision would have given workers in construction trades the same right enjoyed by other workers. Right wing ideologues made the bill an emotional Republican point of honor. President Ford, who honestly supported the bill, was turned around by what he believed were the political realities of his party. Instead of leading the party, Ford danced to the music of the Pied Pipers of the right.

The switch was even more disastrous to labor than initial opposition would have been because it underlined Ford's weakness as a leader.

The problem is that often it is not the issue itself that guides Republican thinking, but the possible reaction of the ever-vigilant right wing. Reaction politics makes for some strange distortions of conscience. How ironic for a New York Republican to support Section 14-B of the Taft-Hartley Act when this law favors those states with cheap labor markets. The repeal is much more a regional issue than it is some badge of pure Republicanism.

Far too many moderates and liberals in the GOP seem willing to let the right wing dictate the criteria for being a "good" Republican. Why the membership standards should be written by the segment of the party that has done the most to bring on its demise is a mystery. Where are the voices of moderation in the Republican Party?

The shabby treatment of then-Vice President Nelson Rockefeller was accepted as a pro forma necessity. During the primaries of 1976, the conventional political wisdom was that President Ford had to do this in order to please the right and win the nomination. Few Republican leaders suggested there might be something wrong with a candidate or party bowing to extremists. Most talked of decisions as "un-Republican"---not as unconcerned about people as many of Ford's right wing appeasement policies indeed were.

The extreme conservatives and their chronic opposition to any change cannot be allowed to dominate the party's thinking and political direction. The path of the extreme right is the railroad to disaster. Their incessant demands for political purity have polluted the party's image and worked subtle corruption on its ability to respond to the needs and desires of the American people. "No" is one answer to a question, but as a constant refrain, it obviously has limited political appeal.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to say what Republicans believe in; but thanks to the right wingers, it's easy to know what Republicans oppose. The "enemies list" mentality of the right corrodes the party's ability to respond thoughtfully and honestly to new issues and new ideas.

The pressure of the right wing also distorts the party in still another way. Sometimes, it is hard to know why Republican leaders bother to take a stand on an idea if they are only going to reverse themselves when the noise comes. Is election day registration a good or bad idea? How did Republican leaders decide on its merits? Apparently their decision hinged on the volume of the right wing opposition. House and Senate Minority Leaders John Rhodes and Howard Baker and Republican National Committee Chairman Bill Brock endorsed the idea at first. Later, they reversed themselves and spoke of the dangers of fraud---after some of the party faithful angrily revolted. Fraud is an issue, and it should be debated. The problem is that once again the merits of the issue got lost in a switch that looked much less like a reexamination of conscience than like a reaction to pressure.

One of the party's major deficiencies is the absence of leadership. It shows up in episodes like the one just mentioned, and it cripples the party's ability to appeal to more candidates and more voters. Again, I believe the root cause is the GOP's failure to seek out new ideas, but the party also lacks strong leaders to articulate its principles.

In a 1967 book, the Republican Establishment, The Present and Future of the GOP, authors Stephen Hess and David Broder dealt at length with the revival of the Republican Party in order to offer voters the "luxury of choice." A lot has happened to the party in the past ten years, but perhaps the saddest trend is that the diversity of its leaders, like its tolerance for different ideas, has been constricted. The two are obviously related. No longer is there talk with party ranks that a liberal or progressive might carry the presidential banner. If liberals and moderates don't start initiatives---such as serious overtures to labor, blacks, and women based on a willingness to talk about issues---then the party will choke on right wing rhetoric and limited vision.

The impetus for a relationship between Republicans and labor are much the same on both sides. Republicans and labor are at a stage where both need new allies. The Caddell memo which brushes off labor certainly reflects the willingness of some Democrats to ignore labor after the election. No



one in labor suggests that Republican overtures will cause labor to turn on its friends, but not all who dined at labor's table last fall have remembered their promises. Republicans must look to Democratic weaknesses, and, in some areas, that certainly includes labor's support.

The waning organizational influence of both parties, the trend toward independent voters and new methods of campaign financing all work together to produce greater influence for the few remaining blocs of voters. The shifting patterns in politics should also encourage Republicans to reach out for new allies. But the party is going to have to do more than get creative with its advertising and more organized at the local level to forge these alliances. It must get creative with its political thinking, and its leadership must speak up and welcome a diversity of ideas.

Labor has political strength and a track record of strong commitment on people issues. If Republicans examine the right wing myths about labor, many will be surprised to discover that labor understands and represents many hopes of the American people. GOP candidates who talk with labor along with other segments of their communities will find common ground for discussion. It would mean much to a party that seems permanently frozen in the past if it threw out its old taboos and began a dialogue with labor.

An exploration of mutual interests with labor also would help break up the party's ideological icejam and create new interest among other potential allies. The GOP can continue to feed off its right wing fears and die of political starvation, or it can seek revival

in new ideas and new possibilities. I believe labor is an important and necessary place for the Republican Party to begin its march out of the political wilderness.

Contributor Note: Victor Kamber is a former official of the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Department. He was appointed this year by AFL-CIO president George Meany to head up labor's lobbying on Capitol Hill. Under Kamber, the AFL-CIO has actively sought to create a broad coalition of interest groups on labor legislation.

Ripon Update

WYOMING The decision of Sen. Clifford Hansen (R) not to seek a third term in 1978 has opened an opportunity for U.S. Rep. Teno Roncalio (D) to win the seat he lost to Hansen by a 52-48 percent margin in 1966. Roncalio hasn't indicated that he will definitely seek the Senate vacancy nor has Gov. Ed Herschler (D) developed a consistent line on his gubernatorial plans. Their indecision has affected the GOP's planning. House Majority Leader Alan Simpson is probably the GOP's leading contender for both the senatorial and gubernatorial spots. As the son of former Gov. Milward L Simpson, the Cody Republican has a name recognition edge. Former Gov. and onetime Interior Secretary Stanley Hathaway (R) would be a strong able candidate but he protests disinterest. Former Assistant Interior Secretary Jack Horton (R) is interested, but he was also interested in 1976. His decision not to run led to the candidacy of now-Sen. Malcolm Wallop. On the gubernatorial side, House Speaker Harold Hellbaum (R) and Speaker pro tem Nels J. Smith are potential candidates. Their opportunity to dislodge Herschler may depend on the outcome of an investigation into an alleged coverup of malfeasance in the Herschler Administration.

MAINE Two-time GOP Senate aspirant Robert A.G. Monks has been named Republican state chairman. The millionaire industrialist replaces former Auburn Mayor John R. Linnell, who led the party to an impressive 1976 recovery from the ill fortunes of 1974. Monks himself ran a strong uphill race against Sen. Edmund Muskie last year and has been talked about as a possible 1978 gubernatorial candidate. Monks is also an advocate of compromise nego-

tiation in the state's Indian land claims dispute. Noting that Georgia once attempted to take some of his wife's family land away "for peanuts," Monks says he's hypersensitive to "taking land away from people." He's also sensitive to the political ambitions of Elliot Richardson, having worked together on Bay State campaigns when both were Massachusetts residents. (Monks is a former Massachusetts GOP finance chairman.) Richardson campaigned for Monks last year, drawing a large crowd of 700 to a political fundraiser. Monks might be expected to return the favor if Richardson his sights on the gold dome of the Massachusetts state house now that the Law of the Sea Conference is floundering.

NEW YORK The post-Rockefeller problems of the New York State GOP are exemplified by the current three-way primary campaign now under bitter way in Nassau County. The favorite---as befits the reputation of Nassau GOP Chairman Joseph Margiotta---is the organization candidate, Francis T. Purcell. He also has the Conservative Party endorsement but is being challenged by Michael J. Camardi, who says Conservative leaders have sold out to the GOP. As if to illustrate the point, Hempstead Democratic Chairman John D. Reddan said he asked Conservative Chairman John O'Leary if the \$9,000 job awarded him by Oyster Bay Republicans wouldn't look like a deal for Conservative endorsements. "No, no. That's not for this year's endorsements. That was for what I did last year," he claims O'Leary replied. Conservative endorsements became a major issue with progressive Republican State Sen. John Dunne blocked from getting the GOP nod because of his ineligibility for the Conservative endorsement. Incumbent County Executive Ralph Caso (R) unsuccessfully sought Conservative backing and failing to get it, has sought to field an independent ballot line. In the same predicament so has Dunne. Margiotta dumped Caso as the GOP standard

bearer because his "imperial trappings ...complete with 11 bodyguards" made him a doubtful winner in November. Caso has waged a surprisingly vigorous contest to retain his post, however. And the head of reputedly the nation's most powerful GOP machine has suffered other indignities this year. He was denied his goal of election as GOP national committeeman when Richard Rosenbaum cornered the GOP market. He nominated Rosenbaum's successor as state chairman, upstate county chairman Bernard M. Kilbourn, but he was reportedly unhappy with Kilbourn's selection. Rosenbaum was considered instrumental in blocking the appointment of a chairman more favorable to the gubernatorial candidacy of Assembly Minority Leader Perry Duryea. Margiotta is considered a Duryea ally. To add additional insult to Margiotta, Dunne has been a vocal critic of Margiotta and the county organization's habit of encouraging one-percent-of-salary contributions from county workers. Nassau Democrats have viewed the Republican disarray with glee. They have endorsed a Jewish-Italian-Irish ticket headed by Assemblyman Irwin Landes. Unfortunately for the Democrats, Landes is being challenged by businessman-attorney David Peirez who has been critical of Landes' endorsement by Liberals---"a bunch of political prostitutes"---and Landes' former position on cross county school busing between Queens and Nassau. Landes' problems were exacerbated at one point by the disappearance of 14,000 petition signatures on the eve of the state filing deadline. Another 12,000 were quickly solicited. National publicity has focused on the Democratic mayoral battle in New York City, but the outcome of the Nassau county executive race is vitally important to the future of the state GOP. Nassau and neighboring Suffolk County are keys to any statewide victory. The recent indictment of a former Suffolk county chairman and the Nassau GOP fratricide are GOP bad news.

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