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ARE AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES PRETTY MUCH THE SAME  
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In the last fifteen years or so I have found myself at odds with friends, colleagues, and other luminaries over whether the changes among political activists within the major political parties are real but modest in their impact or whether, as I believe, the changes are fundamental. Most commentaries on political parties by pundits and political scientists give no clue that anything fundamental has occurred. The Democratic party is described as if it were still the party of Harry Truman and Hubert Humphrey and the Republican party is still conceived as tantamount to the party of Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon. True, the presidency of Ronald Reagan led to discussions of a strong conservative trend; by and large, however, this trend is treated as an aberration, a product of Reagan's peculiar personality and popularity, rather than an indicator of basic change within the Republican party.

It is widely agreed that there has been a transformation of party politics in the south. Partly due to the migration in of conservative Republicans and the conversion of

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conservative southern Democrats to Republicans, it is understood that this continuing change gives the Republican party a near-lock on electoral votes in presidential elections, and has made the Democratic party somewhat more liberal while making the Republican party somewhat more conservative. But no national party transformation is seen either as having occurred or as being likely in the near future. I disagree.

While the views of the electorate either remain relatively unchanged, or moderately more ideological, depending on whose work you read, party activists in both parties, those who are continually active in internal party affairs as well as, sometimes, in governing, are further apart than they have been in living memory. Republican activists are much more economically individualist and socially conservative than they were in the 50s and 60s; Democratic party activists are much more radical egalitarian (that is, they are largely devoted to equalizing power differences among groups in the population) than they have been at least since the New Deal.

An interesting aspect to the rise of these polarized politicians to prominence is that they represent caucuses of losers. Ever since Barry Goldwater lost the 1964 presidential

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election by huge margins, his economically and socially conservative followers have taken over his Republican party. And after George McGovern lost in a landslide in 1972, his egalitarian followers have grown in strength until they are in indisputable command.

What do I mean by taking over the political parties? I mean that in the vast majority of states, egalitarians form a majority of party activists within the Democratic party and that social and economic conservatives similarly form a majority of activists state-by-state within the Republican party. And what do I mean by the Democratic activists' preponderant belief in equality of condition? A continuing occurrence in California, where I live, illustrates the point. In 1990, with every single Democrat in the state Assembly and Senate in support, and with gubernatorial candidate Diane Feinstein pledged to follow suit, the Assembly and Senate voted to make all university appointments (administrative, student, faculty) on a basis of proportionality to the general population by race and gender. Moreover, these proposed laws, ultimately vetoed by the then-Republican Governor, George Deukmajian, went as far as humanly possible in trying to guarantee proportionate graduation rates! That is equality of condition. Which should come as no surprise because the

major movements contributing to activism in the Democratic party--feminism, the effort to reduce power differences between women and men; civil rights, to reduce power differences between black and brown, and white; gay rights, to reduce differences between straight and gay; and so on--are devoted to this purpose.

Are there signs that party polarization is taking effect? The most important sign, I think, is qualitative; it invokes the still-powerful proposition about cross-cutting cleavages reducing ideological conflict. From the 1930s through the 1950s and most of the 1960s, the main difference between the Democratic and Republican parties was over the size and scope of the welfare state. There were no social or environmental issues. The Republican party was still the party of civil rights and the Equal Rights Amendment, and the Democrats, due to their heavy southern contingent, of racism, while the Democrats and Republicans vied for who wanted to spend the most on defense, with the Democrats in the lead (recall Kennedy's missile gap). Consequently, people who opposed each other on welfare issues might well support one another on different matters, thus necessitating a certain respect for those they might need to form coalitions in the future. Nowadays the parties are divided almost entirely over issues



organized around questions of equality, at least as interpreted by Democratic activists. Instead of differing only on one major issue, the parties systematically split on a whole series: large majorities of Democratic activists not only support a larger welfare state but also reducing defense spending, seeing it as taking from welfare, support relatively unlimited rights to abortion while deploring prayer in schools, desire stronger and more costly environmental and safety regulations but oppose efforts to regulate individual sexual behavior. Republican social conservatives believe and vote almost exactly the opposite while Republican economic conservatives sometimes demur on social issues like prayer and abortion. The Persian Gulf war also demonstrated that the long-standing aversion of libertarians for engaging in foreign wars is, after the partial collapse of communism, reasserting itself. The result is that although Democratic activists remain more socially heterogeneous than their opposite numbers, Republican activists are now more ideologically heterogeneous than are the Democrats. There are also quantitative signs of party polarization.

No better empirical support for the thesis of increased party polarization could be found than from the evidence in two 1991 studies of party polarization in the House of

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Representatives. Lynda W. Powell's study of the decade from 1977 - 1988 reveals that

. . . polarization is a party phenomenon. Democrats have moved to the left and Republicans to the right. Southern Democrats show the same trend, though in a less extreme form, and are predominantly on the liberal side in 1988 in contrast to their preponderance on the conservative side in 1978. The nonSouthern Democrats show an astounding ideological consensus. Eighty-four percent of the Democrats are at scale position 2 [the second most extreme position] in 1988. The parties are ideologically much further apart and much more internally homogeneous than they were 10 years ago.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the votes of each party member in the House showed "Astounding ideological consensus" is even more remarkable, as Powell observes, because it occurs "In striking contrast to the lack of change . . . among citizens."<sup>2</sup>

If further evidence were needed, David W. Rohde demonstrates that ". . . the average unity score for southerners was 76 percent. The average party-unity score for all Democrats (86 percent) was the highest since the early part of the century."

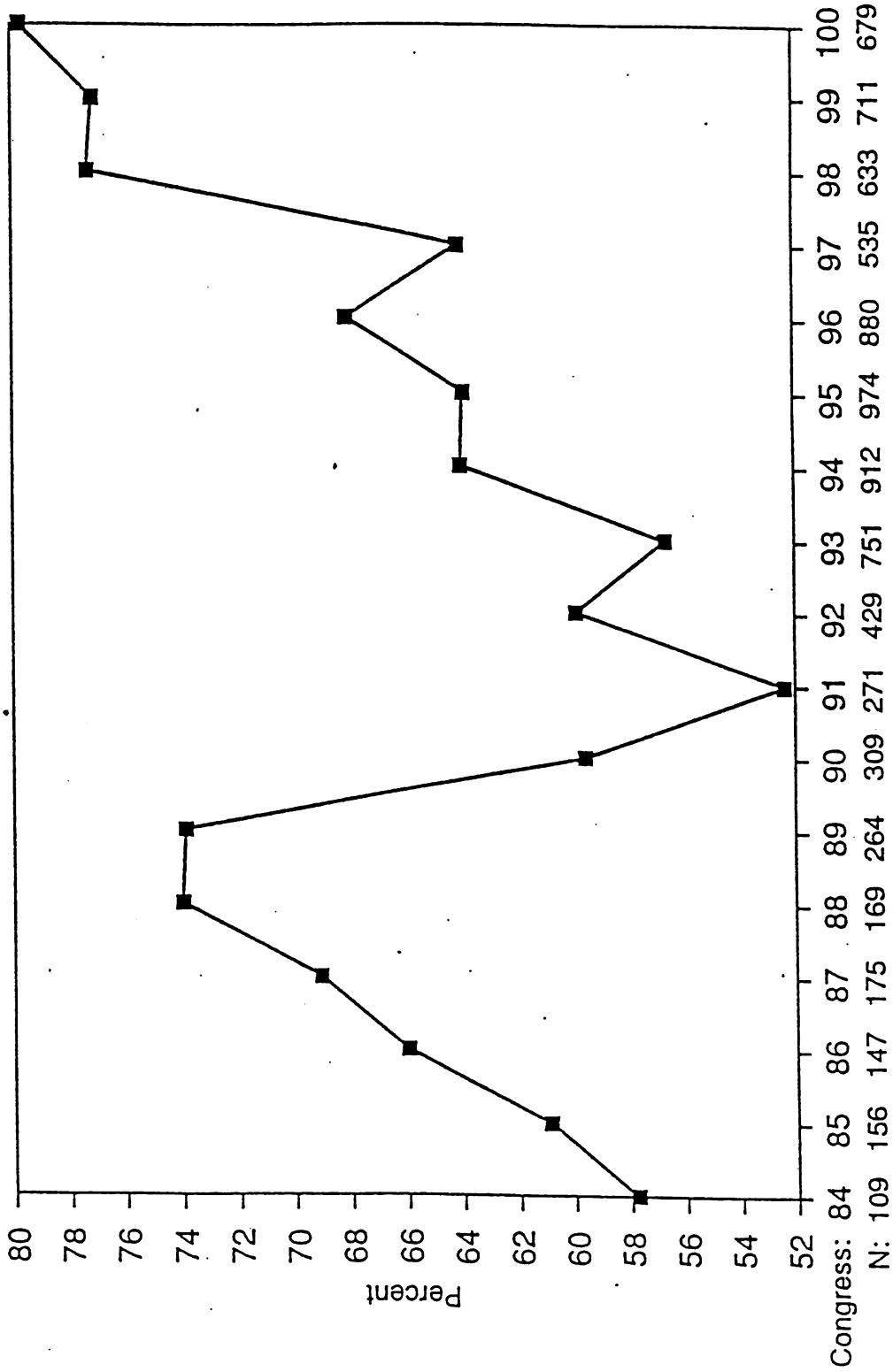
In regard to party discipline, Rohde continues,

Evidence indicates that committee majorities became more responsive to an increasingly homogeneous Democratic majority, producing bills that were more satisfactory to that majority and less satisfactory to Republican representatives and presidents. The Democratic Caucus demanded, and usually got, greater party responsibility from party and committee leaders, and the Democratic leadership more vigorously exercised expanded powers that had been granted during the reform era of the 1970s, especially those involving control over the House's floor agenda.<sup>3</sup>

With party polarization rising way beyond levels observed for nearly a century, and party discipline (not merely party cohesion) invoked to keep it that way, the extraordinary party differences invoked in Rohde's table are the wave of a future already present.

These conclusions are bolstered by a major study of presidential party activists in which Clark, Bruce, Kessel, and Jacoby conclude that "greater issue distance between parties and greater agreement within parties points to

Figure 7A  
 Proportion of Roll Calls on Which a Majority of Northern Democrats  
 Voted in Opposition to a Majority of Republicans,  
 84th-100th Congresses (Consensual Votes Excluded)



David W. Rohde, "The Electoral Roots of the Resurgence of  
 Partisanship Among Southern Democrats in the House of Representatives,"  
 1991.

conflict rather than consensus."<sup>4</sup>

In the review essay that follows, I shall consider what five books have to tell us about what has happened to our party system. For a change, three are about the Republican party, going from the related phenomena of liberal Republicans in decline to Christian conservatives in the ascendant to a study of varieties of conservative thought and activism. By contrast, there is a book on how activists in both parties reacted to and were themselves changed by issues surrounding race, issues central to the crucial divisions between adherents of equal opportunity and of greater equality of condition.

Rightly noting that the Republican party is vastly understudied, no doubt due to the fact that it is liberal Democrats who self-select themselves into the political science profession, and that party factionalism, especially on the Republican side, has been neglected, Nicol Rae proceeds to provide an excellent narrative history "about the decline and fall of a once-dominant faction [liberal Republicans] within a major U.S. political party."<sup>5</sup> Liberal Republicans, in his understanding, believe more in federal government intervention in the economy while "Conservative Republicans have been traditionally isolationist or militantly anti-Soviet in

foreign policy, and vehemently opposed to federal government regulation of the American economy."<sup>6</sup>

The loss of a presidential nomination contest need not necessarily signify the loss of control over a party. What stands out from Rae's account are not the reasons usually given, from Lyndon Johnson's excellent campaign management to new sources of electoral support (after all, Goldwater lost by a landslide) but rather the fact that he and his views attracted a large activist following and Republican liberals were unable to do the same. Where activists matter, candidates with dedicated followings win. This was demonstrated recently in that both Jesse Jackson on the Democratic side and Pat Robertson on the Republican side won the 1988 Michigan primaries where activism and not total numbers mattered. I should add that Goldwater himself later regretted his vote against the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Nevertheless, as badly as Goldwater lost the election, defeated 61 percent to 38.5 percent in the popular vote and 52 to 486 votes in the electoral college, his backers won in the Republican party. An ominous note was that whereas Richard Nixon won 32 percent of the black vote in 1960, Goldwater's share of that vote dropped to 6 percent.

Republican liberals had a small cadre of activist

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intellectuals organized around The Ripon Society, which wrote many papers and had some influence in making Republican party policy at national conventions and in Congress. But it was not a grassroots organization with a substantial and devoted following available to help liberal candidates in different parts of the nation. The only Republican liberal journal, Advance (useful for trivia games), and the once-vigorous New York Herald Tribune, were out of business by 1968.

Congressional liberals like Senator Charles Percy of Illinois, Governor William Scranton of Pennsylvania, and Mark Hatfield of Oregon, among quite a few others, were elected to state houses and to Congress. But their personal following among party activists remained slim. No liberal Republican was able to manage strong primary opposition to Richard Nixon. Liberal Republicans in Congress tended to become party mavericks both because they were further and further away ideologically from their Republican colleagues and because their lack of party support made them want to jump the traces. Consequently, in 1976, liberal (or progressive, as they were sometimes called) Republicans did not have a candidate to contest the primaries against either Gerald Ford, a moderate conservative, or Ronald Reagan, the genuine article.

As Rae explains what happened to weaken liberal

Republicans,

The drift away from the Democrats among southerners and northern ethnics augmented the ranks of the conservative Republicans and reinforced the minority status of the liberal wing, which had consistently argued that the path to Republican electoral success lay in courting the so-called frontlash voters, those socially liberal suburban professionals who were becoming ever more ideologically and culturally alienated from the majority of Republican activists.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the most politically active among them became Democratic liberals. Answering in the affirmative, Rae concludes that "it is valid to ask whether there was an identifiable constituency for liberal Republicanism."<sup>8</sup>

As liberal Republicanism declined, conservative Republicanism grew. One sign was the increasing tendency of Republicans to oppose civil rights legislation until, by the late 1970s, southern Democrats were voting more in favor than were Republicans. Another sign was the decline of Republicanism in general in the northeast and its rise in the south and southwest and Pacific and coastal areas. As



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Republican conservatism grew so did the ideological homogeneity of the party as well as its Democratic opponents. Another sign of the times was that throughout the late 70s and 1980s Republican and Democratic cohesion reached record levels in Congress. What the (in)famous American Political Science Association Committee on Political Parties thought ought to be done by presidents coercing congressmen, which they called party discipline, has been replaced by high levels of party cohesion due to growing ideological uniformity. The last bastion of liberal Republicanism is the United States Senate. There the "gypsy moths," as they are called, still have clout. But their numbers are falling and there appear to be few young Republicans eager to take their place.

"An observer of the 1984 Republican party convention," Rae notes, "would have had difficulty discovering any vestiges of liberal Republicanism either on the floor or on the platform." Rae concludes with the important observation that ideology appears to be more important at the national than at the state and local level. Is it just that national politics has become more visible through the mass media? Or is it that state and local candidates adapt to their electoral situation in ways that result in candidates going to Congress who are ideologically anomalous compared to the voters who elect them?

Though it has little in the way of original research, Steve Bruce, in his The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America 1978-1988, makes imaginative use of secondary data and, best of all, brings strong theoretical perspectives to bear on what data there is. It is evident from polls that many citizens dislike the idea of religious figures in politics. The new Christian right, as Bruce terms it, is strong enough to have its issues debated but not, in his opinion, strong enough to have its agenda enacted. Either the goals of these Protestant fundamentalists would be bargained down by the necessity for alliance with other Republicans or their internal divisions over public policy will render them weaker than their numbers appear. True. However, this proposition does not take into account the importance of adding significant numbers of political activists (especially charismatic Christians) to the Republican party so that they, like their egalitarian counterparts, exercise influence on a daily basis.

Bruce begins by making the excellent theoretical point that it is not the status of evangelical Christians but their culture, their way of life, I would say, i.e., hierarchy and individualism, that they feel is threatened. As he says, ". . . what social groups are not status anxious? If the deprived

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are anxious about their lack of status, and the majority of those with status fear losing it, who is left contented and secure?"<sup>9</sup> Giving these so-called extremists credit for having normal human motives, I agree, helps a lot. Ask and they will tell you what their grievances are: strong government and strong media penetrate their communities and threaten their ability to reproduce their cultures--the authority of the Bible, the belief that God is imminent in human life, deference to authority, self-help, justification by faith, the Commandment to obey the law. Anyone who has listened to the major media knows that these concerns are ridiculed. If the communal values of fundamentalists are threatened, so is their belief in individual salvation. Bruce puts it well: "individuals, not groups, get saved."<sup>10</sup>

In a section on secular humanism, which he calls "Identifying the Enemy," I think Bruce goes wrong in denying that it identifies "a coherent body of people."<sup>11</sup> I know. I was there. In my teens, after hearing sermons by John Haynes Holmes and Donald Harrington in New York's Unitarian Community Church, I went to meetings of the Ethical Culture Society. Yes they do deny "the soul, life after death, salvation and heaven, damnation and hell . . . the Biblical account of creation."<sup>12</sup> They did teach that there were no absolutes and

that male and female roles were not distinctive; they also approved of intercourse between consenting adults and an absolute right to abortion. They did think patriotism vulgar. And while it would be an exaggeration to say that these relatively well-off people wanted an equal distribution of wealth, they were primarily concerned with greater equality of condition. The caricature, in short, captures the essence of the real thing. The difference is that, way back then, secular humanists were a curiosity; now their views are dominant within the activist core of the Democratic party.

In his chapter on the new Christian right's weaknesses, Bruce rightly observes that their talk about making America a Christian country again puts off Jews and a lot of other people. I personally do not consider comments to the effect that in our time Jews have been good at moneymaking to be anti-Semitic. It is not a totally true statement but it is largely true. Alliance between conservative Catholics and Mormons as well as conservative Jews is not out of the question. But it would require at least a revamping of vocabulary and a more ecumenical feeling than many fundamentalists of all faiths can muster.

If Bruce is right in believing that the objects of fundamentalist wrath are a product of modernity, the

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substitution of science for religion, the growth of knowledge that challenges authority, universalist principles that do not make room for particularistic faiths, then the cause of the new Christian right would, as he believes, be hopeless. But I do not agree with his diagnosis partly because I do not agree with his identification of secular humanism with modernity. Who is it, after all, that is unhappy with modern technology? Fundamentalists are quite comfortable with industrialization as they are indeed with all of science except evolution. If I am correct, seeing secular humanism as another term for radical egalitarianism, the diminishing of power differences among people, then its environmental branch is much more anti-industrial than fundamentalist have ever been. It is not fundamentalists who have made modernity into a synonym for attacks on authority, including attacks on the authority of science, disparaging the work of all those dead white men who produced what used to be called the classics of Western civilization. The anti-scientific shoe, if science is what modernity is about, is on the other foot.

It is possible that the difficulties of gaining majority votes under the American plurality system will hamper the new Christian right as it has others who thought about founding third parties. It is possible that without party loyalty

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fundamentalists will be unable to fulfill their agenda and without it they will be unable to make much progress within the Republican party. But it is also possible that, at the activist level, the new Christian right will make a big difference in many states. At the present time, the only issue on which rival armies of activists throw their bodies on the line is abortion. And we see the passion that generates. Yet those opposed to a legal right to abortion are a motley crew with diverse ideologies and, therefore, are unlikely to sustain themselves. The new Christian right is much more cohesive and it is the only force I can see able to match the fervor of egalitarian Democratic activists.

In her Revival and Reaction: The Right in Contemporary America, Gillian Peele wishes to contribute to the understanding of the new right, an amalgam of groups, think-tanks and politicians from the Christian right to neo-conservatives to market-oriented individualists. Peele has written the best overview of the subject, making excellent use of her own interviews and observations as well as the academic literature. Because it is the mainstream view Peele reflects so well that I wish to counter, I shall differentiate my views from hers.

Peele's identification of culture with countries and with

religious and ethnic groups creates difficulties. She writes that ". . . one can trace to the specifically Jewish background of many leading neo-conservatives the concern with preserving the institution of the family and the emphasis on ethnicity."<sup>13</sup> It is also true that Jews are found among the leadership of many groups, including the liberal Democrats, who oppose neoconservatives.

Neoconservative support of capitalism not only as productive but as moral, and its patriotism, made it easier for its adherents, as Peele shows, to get together with other elements of the new right who shared these views. The Moral Majority's influence, she demonstrates, was limited by its dependence on independent Baptist pastors who are difficult to control and its members' abiding concern with religious rather than political matters. Since "The expiation of sin in the individual," as Peele explains, "is the primary concern of the majority of conservative Churches . . . the individual is necessarily the focus of action." That is why "Rather than emphasize the opportunities open to federal government to support families, it [the fundamentalist churches] preferred to emphasize strategies to keep government out of family life and to reassert traditional [read "hierarchical"] moral values."<sup>14</sup> Peele also does well in illuminating how the

liberal emphasis on governmental intervention to help families was countered by the religious right's desire to enhance not governmental but parental authority.

In her chapter on "Republicans and the Right," Peele restates propositions derived from the mainline political science literature that used to be true but, in my view, are not true today and will be even less true in the future. She begins by stating that ". . . it is generally agreed that the Republican Party is now more ideologically cohesive than the Democratic Party . . ." <sup>15</sup> There is, I think, a confusion here between the party in the electorate and party activists. Democratic voters remain more socially and ideologically diverse than are Republican voters. Because of their convergence upon equality of condition, however, as will become apparent in discussing the Miller and Jennings book, Democratic activists have achieved near unanimity whereas Republicans are still divided between economic and social conservatives.

In referring to "the liberal-progressive wing of the Republican Party," Peele writes that its adherents have similar views to those of many Democrats, but she then goes on to say that these liberal Republicans are "generally willing to contemplate and adjust to social change and to applaud



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governmental intervention on a case-by-case basis."<sup>16</sup> This sentence perpetuates what I consider to be the wrong-headed idea that the difference between liberals and conservatives is that liberals like and conservatives dislike change. Instead, I would substitute the proposition that people like what they like and dislike what they don't like. When any party likes what has gone before, it wants to continue it; for evidence consult the liberal desire not to have the rulings of the Warren and Burger courts disturbed. But when any party dislikes what has happened in the immediate past, i.e., Supreme Court rulings on prayer and abortion, they try to change it. A good index is the number of constitutional amendments proposed by both liberals and conservataives who have lost out in the regular political process.

It is also important to specify the object of governmental intervention. Social conservatives may not like government intervention in the economy but they may desire government intervention to prevent abortions, or at least the use of public money to support abortion. Egalitarians very much dislike efforts of governments to intrude on the sex life of gays and lesbians while desiring greatly to increase regulation of business. After all, while the United States has long been a "welfare laggard," it is in the advance guard

of environmental regulation.

In conclusion, Peele seeks to identify the religious right and the political right with populism. Though she despairs of defining the term, Peele asserts that

However, there is little doubt that the appeal of the new right on social issues such as busing, taxation, and law and order--as well as on the whole gamut of moral themes from homosexuality to abortion--reflects a peculiarly American tradition of anti-intellectualism and hostility to government which, like isolationism, could be given a bias to either the right or the left of the party system, but which has essentially transcended it. Whether this strand of thought will remain dominant in the Republican Party remains to be seen. . . . But what the period under discussion has revealed is that the populist constituency can be married with more traditional conservatism and Republicanism to form a coalition which it may require effort to keep together but which can survive. And it has demonstrated the difficulty of translating American ideologies into European understandings of right and left.<sup>17</sup>

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Why, I ask, not merely to Gillian Peele but to the scholars whose literature she uses, are views on abortion, homosexuality, busing, law and order, taxation, on and on, not legitimate differences of opinion rather than "anti-intellectualism"? As for the difficulty of translating "European understandings of right and left" into American conditions, it should be clear by now that left and right might have been all right as a quick reference to economic issues but does very badly when referring to social issues. And not only in America.

Though studies by Warren E. Miller and M. Kent Jennings speak directly to the ideologies of party activists, their work has virtually escaped notice. (Would you pick up a book called blandly Parties in Transition?) Basing themselves on studies of Republican and Democratic convention delegates, and concentrating on the period from 1972 to 1980 (studies of 1984 and 1988 delegates show that the trends they identify have intensified), Miller and Jennings report "Striking evidence of party polarization at the elite level." And the more continuously active in party politics, the further apart these delegataes are on large numbers of issues.<sup>18</sup>

Miller and Jennings report that, as might be expected, as Democrats become more liberal and Republicans more

conservative they move further from the voters of their parties who are still centrist. And they identify a basic reason for this movement: as time goes on, the least committed activists drop out and are replaced by more conservative and more liberal activists in the Republican and Democratic parties respectively. There has been a continuing movement of activists of both parties away from the general population, from their own voters, and from one another; it should be clear that I have not done justice to the talent Miller and Jennings display in making their data speak to important propositions.<sup>19</sup>

I claim that the realignment everyone is looking for has indeed occurred but not in the place they were looking for it, the mass electorate, at least not yet, but rather within the activists of each party, and that this accounts for the difficulties both parties have in convincing voters to adopt their views.

The brilliant (original, well-argued, and well-substantiated) book by Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics, carries the question of party polarization further. The only difference is that they think that race is all while I think that it stands for something more inclusive,

namely, a coalition of forces, including feminists, environmentalists, and supporters of various rights movements around the value of greater equality of condition. I agree entirely with the authors that "the struggle over race, at its peak the dominant issue of American political life for some three years in the mid-1960s, permanently rearranged the American party system."<sup>20</sup> They are interested, as they should be, in exploring "what happened to American politics when race emerged as a political issue?"<sup>21</sup> They see the Goldwater Republican nomination of 1964 as decisive in rejecting the century-long pro-civil rights position of the Republican party from the end of the Civil War to the mid-1960s. And they take this to mean a deliberate strategy of seeking to disgorge race-conscious whites from the Democratic party. It is just as possible, in my opinion, that Goldwater meant what he said in stating that his restricted view of the powers of the federal government did not allow it to enforce desegregation. But I agree that Goldwater's position "led to severing the historic ties between the Republican party and the black electorate."<sup>22</sup>

Lyndon Johnson and all subsequent Democratic candidates and the congressional party supported civil rights in a strong way. As its most liberal (read "egalitarian") platform read:

The Democratic Party in 1972 is committed to resuming the march toward equality; to enforcing the laws supporting court decisions and enacting new legal rights as necessary, to assuring every American true opportunity, to bringing about a more equal distribution of power, income and wealth and equal and uniform enforcement in all states and territories of civil rights statues and acts.<sup>23</sup>

The difference between us is that Carmines and Stimson emphasize rights and race while I would emphasize as well the "more equal distribution of power" among Americans. There is no doubting their conclusion that "The Democratic party had gradually but unmistakably become the home of racial liberalism."<sup>24</sup> Using an ingenuous series of measures, Carmines and Stimson reveal the stability in voting on civil rights and racial issues from the late 1950s through the late 1970s. And by looking at voting in Congress by region, they conclude that this effect was national, present in seven out of eight regions. There had not been, by the usual standard of massive switching of party identification among voters, a critical electoral realignment; but there had been "dramatic

policy change."<sup>25</sup>

Following on the split between the parties on racial issues, Carmines and Stimson relate that in their view "Partisanship, the emerging issues of race, and the social welfare issues of the New Deal were now mutually reinforcing. As a consequence, responses to racial issues became associated with a set of liberal and conservative positions on a variety of policy issues."<sup>26</sup> There is wisdom in this statement but there are also weasel words: "became associated with," as if untouched by human hands. Earlier, the authors refer to ". . . New Deal issues and their logical descendants (e.g., federal aid to education and national health care)." The use of the term "logical" implies a syllogism, a relationship that can be deduced from a premises by anyone following agreed upon rules. So what is the premise? The closest they come is to state that "The New Deal ideology, having already justified the extension of its role for dealing with mass economic distress, provided the national government with responsibility for ending racial discrimination."<sup>27</sup> Not bad, but not quite good enough. There is no "logical reason" why national responsibility for dealing with economic welfare has to be transferred to racial discrimination. On the contrary, people of an individualistic rather than an egalitarian disposition

might have felt that race relations were matters of individual responsibility. Most important, the use of the term "racial discrimination" refers to a widely shared value--equal opportunity. Today, for instance, most everyone is agreed that instances of discrimination against individuals are actionable. The disagreement is about whether the norm of equality of group condition, in which individuals are merged into groups that should have more or less the same results as others, should apply. The 1972 Democratic platform call for equalization of power is quite different than "ending racial discrimination."

Carmines and Stimson then claim, quite plausibly, that as the political parties became polarized on racial issues, there was more "constraint," i.e., in Philip Converse's usage, more connection among issues. Before proceeding to the evidence, it should be said that "constraint" is in the eyes of the beholder. I don't mean that it is subjective in the sense that whether constraints exist cannot be demonstrated to other people. But rather that whether and to what extent constraint exists depends on ingenuity in crafting hypotheses about what is supposed to be related to which. In cultural theory, for instance, lower defense spending is related to a desire for greater equality of condition because egalitarians believe



that defense spending takes from social welfare; cultural theorists argue that environmentalism is a part of egalitarianism not because environmentalists don't care about the environment, for assuredly they do, but rather that they also use their environmental concerns to decrease the power of corporate capitalism, which they believe is responsible for creating and maintaining inequalities they find unconscionable.<sup>28</sup> Though the strength of the relationships are in dispute, the authors claim that the tie between racial and other issues has increased in recent decades.

Of greater interest, perhaps, is that among those who demonstrate what the authors consider to be higher cognitive functioning, controlling for attitudes toward race virtually wipes out relationships to other issues. This could be a demonstration of the absolute centrality of race to current political conflict. Or it could be that what is considered to be constraint needs revision. If it were true that the critical norms are equal opportunity versus equal conditions and that race is the historically central issue in which these norms conflict, taking out race would also take out equality, which would take out the entire ideological alignment based on different versions and visions of equality. Understanding this phenomena grows more important with the passing years as

we learn from Carmines and Stimson that new party identifiers have more distinctive attitudes toward race than do old party identifiers.

In order to determine what has happened, Carmines and Stimson extracted a sample of activists from the presidential surveys of the Survey Research Center at Michigan from 1952 to 1954. These activists were selected on the basis of their own reports of engaging in such activities as voting, wearing buttons, attending rallies, giving money, trying to influence other people, and participating in campaigns. Those who reported engaging in four of the six activities were classified as activists, resulting in a sample of some five to six percent of the most active elements in the populace. This creative work deserves commendation. Nevertheless, I feel that the sample is far too large, containing too many individuals who, while more active than other citizens, do not necessarily participate year-in-and-year-out in campaign and party matters. I think that is why they find that activists are "always predominantly middle-age and disproportionately Republican . . . ." <sup>29</sup> I do not doubt that these middle-age Republicans fit the criteria used, but I doubt they are the only ones who give unstintingly of their time, who put their bodies on the line, as we say, and who determine by their

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reaction whether a candidate and/or party will have a visible presence. Recognizing the anomaly with what we observe in society, the authors try to argue this away by saying that it is the young who are more newsworthy. We all agree that it is the self-defined strong Democrats and Republicans who do the most active campaign work and are most likely to respond to ideological appeals and, I would add, most likely to impose their ideology on parties and candidates. I could not agree more with the authors' view that it is past time to bring back the two-step flow of communication in which those who are more active provide a basis for those who are less active to infer party positions.

Race and the Transformation of American Politics is political science at its best. For that very reason, I wish to register a fundamental dissent from just one of the many persuasive points made by its authors. They write that

Since the flash point of the civil rights movement, however popular it undoubtedly remains among millions of American voters, open advocacy of racial segregation is no longer a reputable political stance. The issue continues; it will remain with us for a long time. But the cues have gone underground. Racial conservatives no

longer advocate the back of the bus or call for the dogs and fire hoses to deal with black demands. More likely they now support the goals of affirmative action and oppose effective means of implementation. Were it not for the activists, these cues would be lost in the noise of political communication. Because of the activists race is every bit as much alive in the politics of the 1980s as when the issues were squarely confronted.<sup>30</sup>

The remarks in italics suggest that it is not possible to oppose affirmative action for moral reasons. When Carmines and Stimson refer to the time these issues "were squarely confronted," they refer to the mid-1960s. But then the proponents of affirmative action based their case squarely on equality of opportunity and brushed aside as alarmist and false all suggestions that affirmative action meant hiring on the basis of race or gender. American opinion on race has changed. There is now strong support for equal opportunity but many, like myself, disagree with decisions based on equality of condition.

Not surprisingly, this very division manifests itself in the political science literature. What Paul Sniderman, Thomas Piazza, Philip Tetlock, and Ann Kendrick call "The New

Racism"--the thesis that racism has now become covert, disguised so as to avoid social disapproval, and that symbolic racism works by asserting that blacks do not meet traditional American values such as hard work and delayed gratification--has become a lively topic.<sup>31</sup> Using an innovative methodology that enables them to vary the race of the people who are being inquired about in regard to receiving government aid, their idea is to try "to establish the conditions under which blacks are penalized because they are black . . . to test directly for covert racism by (experimentally) supplying pretexts to permit people [to express] their racial animus . . . ." The results show that ideological conservatives actually favor help to blacks who are laid off from work and/or are single parents, providing that blacks follow the ethic of social responsibility. Conservatives treat whites who fail on this standard more harshly. Double standards are applied by people with low levels of education independent of race.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, a majority of blacks as well as a super majority of whites do not support preferential treatment. Between 1977 and 1989, for instance, the Gallup Poll repeated the question about whether preferential treatment in college placement and getting jobs should be given to minorities and women who had been discriminated against in the past or whether ability as

determined by tests should be the main consideration. Overall, only ten to eleven percent in any poll favored preferential treatment. The latest poll in 1989 shows that 56 percent of black Americans favored ability while 14 percent favored preferential treatment as compared to 7 percent of whites. Women responded in the same proportions as men.<sup>33</sup>

When the question is changed somewhat so that black people are presented as qualified and special preference is limited only to them, special preference does better. When Gallup asked such a question in the spring of 1991, 19 percent of whites agreed while 72 percent did not. Among blacks, 48 percent agreed while 42 percent did not.<sup>34</sup>

Seymour Martin Lipset sums up his understanding of public attitudes toward race

Many of the inconsistencies in American racial attitudes point to a deep contradiction between two values that are at the core of the American Creed-- individualism and egalitarianism. Americans believe strongly in both values. One consequence of this dualism is that political debate often takes the form of one consensual value opposing the other. Liberals and conservatives typically do not take "alternative"

positions on issues of equality and freedom. Instead, each side appeals to one or the other core value. Liberals stress the primacy of egalitarianism and the social injustice that flows through unfettered individualism. Conservatives enshrine individual freedom and the social need for mobility and achievement as values "endangered" by the collectivism inherent in liberal nostrums. . . .

Much of the progress in the early years of the civil rights movement was made by breaking down the "compartmentalization" of the American mind and forcing the public to see that the country's attitudes and institutions fell outrageously short of our egalitarian ideals. It is the egalitarian element in the American Creed that created the consensus behind the civil rights revolution of the past thirty years. But the more recent focus of the civil rights movement, with its emphasis on substantive equality and preferential treatment, forced the country up against the individualistic, achievement-oriented element in the Creed. As a result, the consensus has been broken. . . .

Affirmative action policies have forced a sharp

confrontation between egalitarian and individualistic values. Most Americans oppose the notion of special treatment for blacks, even when it does not refer to quotas or preferences, since such treatment also violates the notion of equality across racial lines.<sup>35</sup>

Poll data reveal that most support for preferential treatment comes from the five or six percent in the population with higher education, especially educated liberals. Other Americans, according to a study by the Civil Rights Leadership Conference, see positive discrimination based on race or gender, age or disability, "as creating unfair advantages, setting up rank or class privilege in the labor market."<sup>36</sup> I cannot do better than to cite Washington Post columnist William Raspberry:

White Americans . . . do not see themselves as racists, or as opponents of equal opportunity and fundamental fairness. What they oppose are efforts to provide preferential benefits for minorities. . . . They aren't buying. How could we expect them to buy a product we have spent 400 years trying to have recalled: race-



based advantages enshrined into law?<sup>37</sup>

Whether there is racism, overt or covert, should be treated as an empirical question and not an accusation.

I think that race is the most important political problem in the United States, maybe the five most important problems. This finding is not diminished but enhanced by the connected belief that race has now become part of a general egalitarian ideology that carries in its wake many other issues and that structures contemporary political conflict.

Carmines and Stimson are right when they say that it is possible to transform parties without transforming the electorate. How and why it is possible to have major political parties going in one direction and the electorate in the other, if that is true, is a great question. How and why the losers in presidential elections convert party activists and then elected officials and ultimately party identifiers to their cause is another great subject. A lot is lost in public discourse when parties are treated like the same old ones we remember from the 1950s when, albeit in different directions, they have both been radically transformed from within.

NOTES

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2. Ibid.

3. David W. Rohde, "The Electoral Roots of the Resurgence of Partisanship Among Southern Democrats in the House of Representatives," Prepared for Annual Meeting, American Political Science Association, Washington Hilton, August 29-Sept. 1, 1991, p. 2. See also, Sara Brandes Crook and John R. Hibbing, "Congressional Reform and Party Discipline: The Effects of Changes in the Seniority System on Party Loyalty in the US House of Representatives," British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 15, pp. 207-226; and Barry R. Weingast, "Floor Behavior in the U.S. Congress: Committee Power Under the Open Rule," American Political Science Review, Vol. 83, No. 3 (September 1989), pp. 795-815.

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and Converts to Republicanism Among Campaign Activists,"  
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1991), pp. 577-597, quote on p. 595.

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University Press, 1989), p. vii.

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8. Ibid., p. 120.

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14. Ibid., pp. 89, 92.

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18. Center for Political Studies, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, "Convention Delegate Study: Report to Respondents" (Ann Arbor: 1985). Research by the University of Michigan's Center for Political Studies of 1984 convention delegates showed that the parties differed on virtually every issue, whether it concerned domestic or defense or foreign policy, prayer, abortion, social security, the environment, except for spending less on foreign aid and fighting crime. Moreover there was "a deep schism among Republican delegates, much deeper than those which separated the policy preferences of supporters of the major Democratic candidates." In 1984, busing still disunited the Democrats.

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But on most other issues, from abortion to defense spending to prayer in schools, treatment of minorities to medicare, spending on education, Republicans showed much larger divisions than Democrats.

19. Warren Miller [to be supplied].

20. Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics (Princeton University Press, 1989), p. xiii.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., p. 47.

23. The 1972 Democratic platform, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 51. Emphasis supplied.

24. Ibid., p. 52.

25. Ibid., p. 83.

26. Ibid., p. 117.

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27. Ibid., p. 116.

28. Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, Risk and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky, Cultural Theory (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990); Karl Dake and Aaron Wildavsky, "Theories of Risk Perception: Who Fears What and Why?", Daedalus 119:4 (1990):41-60; Aaron Wildavsky, "The Comparative Study of Risk Perception: A Beginning," forthcoming in Peter Wiedemann, ed., Society and Uncertainty: Risk Perception.

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21.

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