LEABHARLANN CHOLÁISTE NA TRÍONÓIDE, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH | TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY DUBLIN
Ollscoil Átha Cliath | The University of Dublin

**Terms and Conditions of Use of Digitised Theses from Trinity College Library Dublin**

**Copyright statement**

All material supplied by Trinity College Library is protected by copyright (under the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 as amended) and other relevant Intellectual Property Rights. By accessing and using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you acknowledge that all Intellectual Property Rights in any Works supplied are the sole and exclusive property of the copyright and/or other IPR holder. Specific copyright holders may not be explicitly identified. Use of materials from other sources within a thesis should not be construed as a claim over them.

A non-exclusive, non-transferable licence is hereby granted to those using or reproducing, in whole or in part, the material for valid purposes, providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. Where specific permission to use material is required, this is identified and such permission must be sought from the copyright holder or agency cited.

**Liability statement**

By using a Digitised Thesis, I accept that Trinity College Dublin bears no legal responsibility for the accuracy, legality or comprehensiveness of materials contained within the thesis, and that Trinity College Dublin accepts no liability for indirect, consequential, or incidental, damages or losses arising from use of the thesis for whatever reason. Information located in a thesis may be subject to specific use constraints, details of which may not be explicitly described. It is the responsibility of potential and actual users to be aware of such constraints and to abide by them. By making use of material from a digitised thesis, you accept these copyright and disclaimer provisions. Where it is brought to the attention of Trinity College Library that there may be a breach of copyright or other restraint, it is the policy to withdraw or take down access to a thesis while the issue is being resolved.

**Access Agreement**

By using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you are bound by the following Terms & Conditions. Please read them carefully.

I have read and I understand the following statement: All material supplied via a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of a thesis is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

# Old Liberals, New Politics: The Americans for Democratic Action and the Transformation of American Liberalism, 1947-1976

A Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2016

Scott Kamen

Trinity College Dublin

TRINITY LIBRARY
0 8 MAR 2017
DUBLIN
Thesis 11303

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository or allow the library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement.



## Abstract

"Old Liberals, Polics" examines the instrumental but frequently overlooked role played by the veteran s othe Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) in the transformation of Am liberalism ushered in by the New Politics movement that emerged alongside Eugene Mc's 968 presidential campaign and later coalesced around the presidential campaignorg McGovern in 1972. Far from the out of touch has-beens they are frequently portrayiavg become by the time of the New Politics movement, the longtime leaders of th—ie most prominent liberal organization in the United States for more than a quarter ceafte World War II— remained influential political actors and a vital source of liberal hrcghout the 1960s and into the 1970s. They retained their political and intellectuere by adapting the American liberal tradition to changing socio-economic condinevgeopolitical realities, and the demands of civil rights leaders and other voices in theong rights revolution. Even more importantly, the continued relevance of the ADA g lidership demonstrated that the liberal tradition they had long embodied—a traditionurig the postwar years been defined by anti-Communist foreign policy and a New Deawdk too often assumed to be resolute in its patriarchal and racially exclusive politics—could provide a compelling intellectual and political foundation for addresscllenges faced by the U.S. during the civil rights and Vietnam War era. By examiningheADA and its "old liberals" reshaped the American liberal tradition as they constrtheoundation drawn on by the New Politics movement and came to the fore in guiding tiveent's development, this thesis sheds new light on the profound malleability calm as a political ideology.

As important adcCrthy and McGovern campaigns are to the story of the New

Politics movement, the roots of the movement and its lasting ipatch far beyond the two presidential campaigns most commonly associated with it. Thinintours of what would become the New Politics started to take shape when John Kerethraith, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and other "old liberals" from the ADA partedvay some of the most central tenets of postwar liberalism. When those "old liberalsbechallenge the notion that economic growth held almost limitless potential for socialprcin the 1950s and came to reject the policy of global anti-Communist containment dungcalation of the U.S. war effort in Vietnam during the 1960s, they charted a new carsberalism that made the emergence of the New Politics movement possible. Historianhauently depicted the New Politics as a watered down version of the New Left refaior entry into the mainstream of electoral politics. Bringing the influential intelctu the ADA into the long narrative of the New Politics movement allows "Old LiberalsNetics" to demonstrate how the New Politics grew not out of the radicalism of the Nv Lt from a transformation of the ideas that animated liberal politics durir thwar era and continue to shape the contours of liberalism in the twenty-first century

## Contents

Acknowledgments ..... v

List of Abbreviations ..... viii

Introduction: Transformation in the Face of Presumed Demise ..... 1

Chapter One: Debating the Politics of Growth: Qualitative Liberalism in the Affluent Society ..... 26

Chapter Two: Rethinking the Cold War: The Vital Center and the Vietnam War ..... 80

Chapter Three: Moving Beyond Civil Rights: Poverty and the Struggle for Racial Equality ..... 129

Chapter Four: Initiating a New Politics Movement: The Vietnam War and the Promise of the New Class ..... 183

Chapter Five: Shaping the New Politics: Old Liberals, Neoconservatives, and the Legacy of Liberalism ..... 238

Epilogue: From New Politics to Neoliberalism ..... 292

Bibliography ..... 305

## Acknowledgments

The writing of a thesis entails many hours alone in front of a computer screen. The journey that accompanies the writing of that thesis, however, depends upon many people. I am grateful to the mentors, archivists, librarians, friends, and family whose help and support made the completion of this project possible. Gary Huey, a longtime family friend and history professor at Ferris State University, first sparked my interest in pursuing a career in history. My undergraduate thesis supervisor at Western Michigan University, Edwin Martini, inspired me through his example as a scholar and a teacher to pursue postgraduate study in history. At the University of Maryland, Saverio Giovacchini guided me through the challenges of writing a master's thesis and impressed upon me the importance of taking ideas seriously.

Quite simply, this thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and support of my supervisor, Daniel Geary. Dan's thorough emails and willingness to work through issues over the phone helped to get this project off the ground during my first year in the Ph.D. program at Trinity College Dublin, when we were on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean. His challenging comments, timely encouragement, and sense of the relevance of my research during its early stages improved this thesis immensely.

The completion of this thesis also owes much to the financial support of Trinity College Dublin. A Postgraduate Studentship provided me with funding for three years of my work on this project. Generous grants from the Grace Lawless Lee Fund enabled me to make essential research trips to Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.

I would like to thank the numerous archivists and librarians who assisted my research over the past four years. The staff at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, the New York Public Library, and the Wisconsin Historical Society were generous with their time and

uniformly helpful. Tal Nadan at the New York Public Library helped me to track down a stubbornly difficult-to-find pamphlet and reminded me that sometimes a document simply isn't in the collection no matter how hard you look for it.

Friends across the world have helped me in innumerable ways. Jane Burns provided me with a place to stay and human interaction outside of the archive over the course of numerous research trips to Wisconsin. Marie Mapes and Seth Gitter gave me a place to sleep during a research trip to Washington, D.C. Friends in the History Department at Trinity College Dublin have been a continual source of support and helped me to retain some sense of sanity. Lunchtime conversations on the blocks in the Arts Building were a necessary reprieve from research and writing. I am grateful to Séan Brady, Stephen Carroll, Leah Hunnewell, Cáitlín Higgins Ní Chinnéide, Conor McCann, Neasa McGarrigle, Felim McGrath, Léan Ní Chléirigh, Séan O'Reilly, and Ciarán Wallace for their friendship. I would especially like to thank Tomás Irish and Sarah Frank for helping me settle in to a doctoral program in a foreign country and Alex Dowdall for reading and commenting on the draft of a chapter. I am also indebted to Ryan Huey, a friend of mine long before my time at Trinity, for reading and providing comments on a number of chapters.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to my family for all of their support. My father, Roger Kamen, encouraged and supported my study of history in countless ways despite his initial—and understandable—misgivings about my decision to pursue a field of study with difficult employment prospects. My mother, Marcy Parry, has been a pillar of support and copyedited drafts of multiple chapters. Though she cannot read this, Gwen, my retired racing greyhound, has been a source of companionship and much-needed excuses to put my thesis down and go for a walk. My wife, Caitlin Wells, cannot be thanked enough for her contributions to this

project and everything she has done to enrich my life. She copyedited drafts of this thesis from start to finish and her unwavering confidence and belief made its completion possible. It is to her, as well as the love and balance that she brings to my life, that this thesis is dedicated.

## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ABM | Anti-ballistic Missile |
| ACLU | American Civil Liberties Union |
| ADA | Americans for Democratic Action |
| AFDC | Aid to Families with Dependent Children |
| CADA | Campus Americans for Democratic Action |
| CAP | Community Action Program |
| CCF | Congress for Cultural Freedom |
| CDM | Coalition for a Democratic Majority |
| CEA | Council of Economic Advisors |
| CORE | Congress of Racial Equality |
| CPUSA | Communist Party USA |
| DAC | Democratic Advisory Council |
| DLC | Democratic Leadership Council |
| ERA | Equal Rights Amendment |
| FAP | Family Assistance Plan |
| GAI | Guaranteed Annual Income |
| HRC | Human Rights Campaign |
| ILGWU | International Ladies Garment Workers Union |
| IVI | Independent Voters of Illinois |
| MAP | Minority Advancement Plan |
| MAPA | Mexican American Political Association |
| MFDP | Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party |
| NAACP | National Association for the Advancement of Colored People |
| NALC | Negro American Labor Council |
| NARAL | National Abortions Rights Action League |
| NCC | National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam |
| NDC | New Democratic Coalition |
| NLF | National Liberation Front |
| NSC-68 | National Security Council Report 68 |
| NUL | National Urban League |
| NWRO | National Welfare Rights Organization |
| PCA | Progressive Citizens of America |
| PETA | People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals |
| SANE | National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy |
| SCLC | Southern Christian Leadership Conference |
| SDS | Students for a Democratic Society |
| SNCC | Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee |
| SPA | Socialist Party of America |
| UDA | Union for Democratic Action |
| VMC | Vietnam Moratorium Committee |
| WSP | Women Strike for Peace |

## Introduction: Transformation in the Face of Presumed Demise

In the wake of the tumultuous 1968 presidential election, a young liberal activist described the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) as "tired and old, very old."[1] Such sentiments were not uncommon among political observers—young and old alike—as the 1960s drew to a close. The fate of the most prominent liberal organization in the United States during the postwar era has been described similarly in historical accounts that frequently depict the aging, white, heterosexual men who held the bulk of leadership positions in the ADA as stuck in the mindset of the liberal Cold War establishment and unresponsive to the social movements that dotted the American political landscape during the 1960s and 1970s. Far from the out of touch has-beens they have frequently been portrayed as, the veteran leaders of the ADA remained influential political actors and a vital source of liberal ideas throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. They retained their political and intellectual influence by adapting the American liberal tradition to changing socio-economic conditions, new geopolitical realities, and the demands of civil rights leaders and other voices in the burgeoning rights revolution. Even more importantly, the continued relevance of the longtime ADA leaders demonstrated that the liberal tradition they had long embodied—a tradition that during the postwar years been defined by anti-Communist foreign policy and a New Deal framework too often assumed to be resolute in its patriarchal and racially exclusive policy positions—could provide a compelling intellectual and political foundation for addressing the challenges faced by the U.S. during the civil rights and Vietnam War era. By examining the instrumental but frequently overlooked role of the ADA and its "old liberals" in the transformation of American liberalism ushered in by what came to be known as the New

[1] Robert C. Maynard, "Left-of-ADA Democrats Nursing a Coalition," *Washington Post,* April 27, 1969.

Politics movement, "Old Liberals, New Politics" sheds new light on the profound malleability of liberalism as a political ideology.

Too often ignored or given little more than a passing mention, the New Politics movement that emerged alongside Eugene McCarthy's 1968 presidential campaign and later coalesced around the presidential campaign of George McGovern in 1972 is a vital thread that connects the liberals of the early postwar period to those who have assumed the mantle of liberalism in the years since its oft-presumed demise. During the tense early years of the Cold War, liberals sought to demonstrate that they were second to none in their commitment to confronting Communist expansion on the world stage and viewed politics as consisting primarily of the bread-and-butter issues that had defined the New Deal political agenda. In contrast, liberals in the twenty-first century have railed against militaristic foreign policy and focused much of their attention on social and cultural issues such as gay rights, equal pay for women, and climate change that would have seemed alien to many of their postwar predecessors. As important as the McCarthy and McGovern campaigns are to the story of the New Politics movement, the roots of the movement and its lasting impact stretch far beyond the two presidential campaigns most commonly associated with it. Bringing the influential intellectuals of the ADA into the long narrative of the New Politics allows us to understand not only what constituencies and politicians supported the New Politics movement, but also what that movement stood for and how the ideas that animated it continue to shape the contours of liberal politics in the twenty-first century.

The tendency of historians to downplay or ignore the role played by the ADA in the development of the New Politics and to tether its lasting identity to a static conception of postwar liberalism frequently reflects just how important the organization had been to the

reformulation of American liberalism in the years following World War II. By drawing on a desire to continue the social democratic project initiated by the New Deal along with the purpose and energy of the Cold War, the ADA quickly emerged as the foremost architect and representative of postwar liberalism after its founding in 1947. Members of the nascent organization looked to the New Deal and anti-Communism as the twin pillars of American liberalism. In the realm of domestic politics, the anti-Communist commitment of ADA liberals entailed a rejection of the Popular Front's collaboration with Communists as a means of achieving liberal goals. In the formulation of foreign policy, the organization's anti-Communism took the form of support for global containment of Communism by means of aggressive policies against what appeared to be a monolithic Communist bloc beholden to the Soviet Union. Though an independent and nominally non-partisan political organization committed to advancing liberal politics, the ADA continually found itself acting as a lobbying group seeking to push the Democratic Party towards more liberal positions. At the time of its founding, the ADA assembled a cast of some of the most distinguished liberal intellectuals and political figures in the country, featuring Hubert Humphrey, John Kenneth Galbraith, Reinhold Niebuhr, Joseph Rauh, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., among others.[2]

No written work better encapsulated the tenets of the ADA's liberalism during its early years than Schlesinger's seminal liberal treatise, *The Vital Center*. Published in September 1949, *The Vital Center* offered a playbook for American liberals—both within and outside of the ADA—who insisted on engaging the Cold War on political terms that combined a commitment to domestic social progress with firm anti-Communism. In distinguishing the

[2] "Founders of Americans for Democratic Action," Folder 3, Box 9, M97-135, Americans for Democratic Action Records, Additions, 1943-1995, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI (hereafter cited as M97-135, ADA).

"vital center" of liberalism from the dangers he saw on the right and the left, Schlesinger provided a compelling intellectual framework for the ADA's opposition to conservative Republicans and to Progressives who rallied to the presidential campaign of Henry Wallace. *The Vital Center* called on liberals to take a stand against both Republicans who sought to restore the power of the business community and the aspirations of Progressives whose misguided faith in the essential goodness of man led them to solicit Communist support and adopt naïve approaches to foreign policy. Drawing on the work of Reinhold Niebuhr and with Wallace's Progressives firmly in mind, Schlesinger looked to the formation of the ADA in 1947 as "the watershed at which American liberalism began to base itself once again on a solid conception of man and of history."[3]

*The Vital Center* offers an unequivocal articulation of the particular current of liberalism embraced by a significant number of prominent American liberals during the early postwar years, but the variety of diverse and often conflicting meanings attached to the term ensures that defining "liberalism" is never a straightforward task. Much of the difficulty in defining "liberalism" can be found in the way the meaning of the term varies substantially depending on the national context in which it is employed. In European politics, the "liberal" label generally refers to an insistence on individual liberty with an accompanying commitment to laissez-faire economics. Although "liberal" in American politics implies a similar dedication to individual liberty, American liberals since the New Deal have generally viewed activist state intervention in the economy and the welfare state as fundamental to the

[3] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1949), 11-34, 35-50, 166.

protection of individual liberty.[4] Efforts to define "liberalism" are further confounded by the wide range of meanings the term has carried throughout U.S. history or what historian Gary Gerstle calls the "protean character of American liberalism." Many of the principles that comprised the liberalism found in *The Vital Center* and espoused by the ADA in its early years differed both from those that defined the Progressive Era that preceded it and the New Politics movement that followed it. Despite its history as a variable and flexible political philosophy, Gerstle insists that American liberalism is not unconditionally malleable. Regardless of how much liberalism has changed, he maintains that it has never deviated from three fundamental principles: emancipation, rationality, and progress. According to Gerstle, transformations of American liberalism can be best understood as an ongoing effort to reinterpret the aim of emancipation of the individual, commitment to rational political processes, and belief in the potential for social progress in response to new and changing circumstances.[5]

The New Politics movement that emerged in the wake of McCarthy's challenge to Lyndon Johnson in the 1968 Democratic primaries on the issue of the Vietnam War provides a vivid example in the long history of applying the foundational principles of American liberalism to new circumstances. The New Politics movement emerged in 1968 out of a focused desire to mount a challenge to the Vietnam War through the existing two-party political system, but ultimately came to include a diverse array of causes and issues that included a sweeping challenge to the Cold War national-security state and interventionist foreign policy, the need for a more participatory system of party politics, and a far-reaching politics of race, gender, and sexuality. Frequently associated with the McCarthy campaign of

---

[4] For a useful and succinct analysis of the history of liberalism and its varied meanings see Michael Freeden and Marc Stears, "Liberalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, ed. Michael Freeden, Lyman Tower Sargent, and Marc Stears (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 329-347.

[5] Gary Gerstle, "The Protean Character of American Liberalism," *American Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (1994): 1045-1047.

1968 and McGovern's campaign in 1972, the New Politics movement has been examined by historians who have produced valuable studies of its politicians and constituencies but have displayed little interest in the ideas and principles that guided the movement. Inadequate attention to the intellectual foundation of the New Politics has led many of those historians to portray the New Politics movement as a watered down version of the New Left refashioned for entry into the mainstream of electoral politics.[6] The New Politics movement was not a sanitized variant of the New Left, but instead an effort on the part of liberals to adapt the core principles of liberalism to circumstances faced during the civil rights and Vietnam War era. At its core, the New Politics represented a desire for emancipation of the individual from a rigid bureaucracy and unresponsive political establishment, commitment to rational opposition through accepted political channels to a war and foreign policy that seemed to defy all rationality, and the belief that fundamental social progress could be achieved by fostering the inclusion of long marginalized social groups.

Characterizations of the New Politics movement as essentially a moderate version of the New Left have greatly contributed to the neglect of the role played by the ADA and a number of its longtime leaders in the emergence and development of the movement. Those characterizations owe much to the prevalent view that liberalism was inherently unable to face the social, cultural, economic, and political challenges of the 1960s that has invited a tendency among historians to assume that the impetus for the New Politics must have come from

---

[6] For example, see Kenneth S. Baer, *Reinventing Democrats: The Politics of Liberalism from Reagan to Clinton* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), esp. 19-20; Richard D. Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), esp. 145-165; Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010), esp. 81-109; Ronald Radosh, *Divided They Fell: The Demise of the Democratic Party, 1964-1996* (New York: Free Press, 1996), esp. 133-182; Sidney M. Milkis, "Lyndon Johnson, the Great Society, and the 'Twilight' of the Modern Presidency," in *The Great Society and the High Tide of Liberalism*, ed. Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 33; Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 252.

outside of the liberal tradition. From the perspective of those historians, the inability of liberalism to effect the change necessary to meet the increasingly pressing circumstances of the 1960s has meant that the source of liberal transformation is to be found not within the confines of liberalism but from the pressure and influence of a New Left that emerged just prior to the New Politics movement.[7] As a result, historians have often rendered the New Politics movement not as an adaptation of liberalism to new circumstances and challenges but as an effort to transpose the energy of the New Left into the existing party structure and electoral system that leaves little room for the ADA and its veteran liberal leaders as influential intellectual and political actors in the movement. The contributions of veteran ADA leaders to the New Politics movement have been furthered obscured by static characterizations of them as stodgy representatives of the postwar liberal order that frequently lead historians to emphasize younger figures not previously associated with the ADA as the driving force behind the organization's close relationship with the movement.[8]

Despite persistent characterizations as staid and unchanging embodiments of the

---

[7] For example, see Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 270, 343-44. Matusow's *The Unraveling of America* influenced a generation of historians with its metaphor of liberal "unraveling" and portrayal of liberalism as fundamentally ill-equipped to deliver on the promises of orderly social progress made by liberal politicians. Matusow argues that liberals raised expectations that they could not possibly meet because they "were constrained to act within a political culture that imposed severe limits on the extent of permissible change." Accordingly, he looks to the youthful rage of the New Left as the primary cause of the leftward movement among mainstream liberals in the late 1960s who desperately sought to maintain their "capacity to shape events."

[8] For example, see Steven M. Gillon, *Politics and Vision: The ADA and American Liberalism, 1947-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), esp. 177-224 and Jeffrey Bloodworth, *Losing the Center: The Decline of American Liberalism, 1968-1992* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 136. Gillon does not discount the role of John Kenneth Galbraith, Joseph Rauh, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and other ADA veterans in the changes seen in the organization during the late 1960s but he nevertheless emphasizes their hesitancy towards those changes and looks instead to a new generation of leadership and the influx of younger grassroots members as the primary factors responsible for the ADA's turn to the New Politics. With a greater propensity to see the labels of "postwar liberal" and "Cold War liberal" as interchangeable, Bloodworth assumes that few changes in the political outlook of the ADA's established leadership took place during the years since onset of the Cold War in delivering a blunt assessment of the transformation of organization. According to Bloodworth, "New Politics activists gained effective control of the ADA" during the mid-1960s and used "the organization's considerable heft as a launching pad" to take over the Democratic Party.

postwar liberal establishment, some of the ADA's longest serving and most visible leaders consistently adapted their political thought and outlook to meet new circumstances and in doing so developed an intellectual framework that would be drawn on by the New Politics movement. Images of older ADA leaders as representatives of Cold War liberalism are often based on the period of the early Cold War when they and the broader liberal community—despite differences in desired approaches—joined with conservatives in a consensus on the overriding goals of expanding the economy and containing international Communism wherever it might rear its head. Some, though by no means all, of the ADA's leadership began to diverge from the scriptures of that pervasive consensus in the 1950s when Galbraith and Schlesinger questioned the transcendent importance of economic growth and asserted that a variety of cultural, moral, and social issues that affected the quality of life in an increasingly affluent American society were as much legitimate objects of liberal concern as the bread-and-butter issues that had defined the political agenda of the New Deal.

Many of those in the ADA who shared Galbraith and Schlesinger's concern with the nation's myopic fixation on economic growth further distanced themselves from the postwar liberal consensus when their understanding of the far-reaching implications of polycentric Communism led them to a more committed opposition to the Vietnam War than has typically been recognized. Though they pursued unrealistic and ineffective means of advancing their opposition to the war, a significant number of the ADA's longest serving leaders were not the half-hearted critics of the Vietnam War that they have frequently been portrayed as but rather devoted opponents of a conflict that they saw as underscoring the fundamental inadequacies of the reflexive anti-Communism that had underpinned U.S. foreign policy since the beginning of the Cold War. Taken together, the response of Galbraith, Schlesinger, and others from a

prominent core of longtime ADA leaders to new socio-economic conditions and their understanding of what they took to be profound changes in the international geopolitical landscape provided an intellectual framework that guided the emergence and development of the New Politics movement. When it took shape in the years that followed Eugene McCarthy's long shot 1968 campaign, the New Politics movement shared their expansive vision of what liberal politics could—and should—address as well as their aversion to interventionist anti-Communism as a basis for foreign policy.

In contrast to other veteran figures who continued to look to economic growth as the foundation for liberal politics, remained firm in their commitment to the dogmas of Cold War foreign policy, and eventually receded into the background or parted ways with the organization, the "old liberals" at the center of this thesis charted a course of political thought and action in the ADA that would ultimately have a transformative effect on the trajectory of American liberalism. With Galbraith and Schlesinger in a leading role, Richard Goodwin, Joseph Rauh, Leon Shull, James Wechsler, and other "old liberals" from the ADA shaped a consensus in the organization on the transcendent importance of the Vietnam War as a political issue that set the course for that liberal transformation. Those "old liberals" began to reevaluate the broader significance of the Vietnam War when the civil rights movement awakened them to a scale and depth of poverty in the U.S. that had previously been lost to their assumptions of widespread American affluence. Increased awareness of poverty and economic inequality led many in the ADA to become skeptical of economic growth as a social panacea and renewed a commitment to social democratic values in the organization that had wavered throughout much of its early history. Whether they insisted on a costly structural approach to poverty that went far beyond the training and services approach of the War on

Poverty or found much to commend in the general orientation, if not the scale, of the Johnson administration's antipoverty initiatives, the bulk of ADA liberals came to see the struggle against poverty as a continuation of the struggle for civil rights. With the ongoing escalation of the Vietnam War, many of those individuals began to insist that U.S. intervention in the conflict represented the first hurdle to progress in that struggle. As they rejected the notion that the country could have "guns and butter," the "old liberals" of the ADA increasingly saw the Vietnam War and its appropriation of funds needed for domestic social programs not simply as a misguided foreign policy blunder or one issue among many, but as a transcendent issue that defined the liberal agenda.

Acting on their conviction that there would be little possibility of domestic social progress so long as the U.S. remained committed to waging a senseless and unwinnable war in Vietnam, that influential contingent of "old liberals" pushed the ADA towards an endorsement of Eugene McCarthy that established the organization as a crucial and enduring center of organizing activity for the New Politics movement. The decision of those "old liberals" to throw their substantial weight behind McCarthy's doubtful campaign did not, however, represent an act of unmitigated idealism but instead reflected in substantial measure their belief in the liberal potential of the rapidly growing numbers of white-collar, middle-class voters and activists who frequently hailed from suburbs and had come to be termed a "New Class" by a variety of political observers. Emboldened by their view that the New Class represented a vital component of the post-New Deal coalition upon which the future electoral success of liberal politics depended, Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other like-minded "old liberals" broke ranks with their fellow ADA veterans and organized labor leaders in order to endorse McCarthy and deeply involve the organization in the development of the emerging

New Politics movement. By tracing the roots of the New Politics to long-term trends in the political thought of those "old liberals" and the contributions of those trends to the instrumental involvement of the ADA in the New Politics movement, "Old Liberals, New Politics" demonstrates how the New Politics grew not out of the radicalism of the New Left, but rather from a transformation of the ideas and constituencies that sustained liberalism during the civil rights and Vietnam War era.

The far-reaching transformation of liberalism propelled by the New Politics movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s continues to reverberate in the liberal politics of the twenty-first century. Despite the abundance of historical accounts that emphasize the irreparable decline of liberalism after the 1960s, the liberalism that continues to have a significant presence in the nation's political discourse owes much to a New Politics movement that transformed liberalism during the years of its supposed demise. When Barack Obama extolled avoidance of unnecessary military intervention as a sign of courage and emphasized gay rights, equal pay for women, and the dangers of climate change during his second inaugural address in 2013, the media widely deemed his speech to be a forthright expression of modern American liberalism.[9] Regardless of whether or not Obama can be accurately described as a liberal or the broader salience of liberalism in contemporary politics, the response of political observers to his address reveals the significant ways in which the accepted notion of what liberalism is understood to be in the twenty-first century has been informed by the New Politics movement. The media's assumption that Obama's critical perspective on

[9] "President Obama's Inaugural Address," *New York Times*, January 22, 2013; Peter Baker, "Obama Offers a Liberal Vision in Inaugural Address: 'We Must Act,'" *New York Times*, January 22, 2013; Paul West and Christi Parsons, "For His Second Term, A Sweeping Liberal Vision," *Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 2013; "Mr. Obama Reboots," *Washington Post*, January 22, 2013. The *New York Times* pronounced the address "a robust articulation of modern liberalism in America" while the *Los Angeles Times* saw it as offering "a sweeping liberal vision."[9] According to the *Washington Post*, Obama's address represented "something approaching a liberal manifesto."

interventionist foreign policy represented a liberal position indicated a conception of liberalism that has far more in common with the New Politics than the Cold War militarism that suffused liberalism during the early postwar years. Similarly, when media outlets cited Obama's call for marriage equality, pay equity for women, and action to fight climate change as evidence that his address represented a clear expression of modern liberalism, they drew on an understanding of liberalism rooted in the insistence of the New Politics that quality of life issues and a politics of race, gender, and sexuality encompassing far more than the economic issues that defined the New Deal should be regarded as crucial components of the liberal agenda. The "old liberals" of the ADA have featured only peripherally in accounts of the New Politics. Fully incorporating the supposedly out-of-touch intellectuals of the ADA into the narrative of the New Politics movement enables this thesis to illuminate the malleability of the liberal tradition that sustained that movement and continues to shape liberal politics to this day.

More broadly, examining the contributions made to the New Politics by the "old liberals" of the ADA—both as sources of intellectual influence and as political actors in their own right—enables "Old Liberals, New Politics" to challenge and supplement existing scholarship on the ADA, neoconservatism, and postwar liberalism. By following the continuities and changes in the political thought of those "old liberals" and the broader ADA leadership through the 1960s and into the 1970s, this thesis sheds light on the organization's deep and ongoing involvement in the New Politics movement that has received limited attention from a body of existing scholarship that displays a tendency to focus on the formative stage of the ADA during the early years of the Cold War. This thesis also advances an understanding of the New Politics that incorporates the contributions of the "old liberals" of

the ADA in order to contribute to a historiography of neoconservatism that often ignores the New Politics or fails to adequately distinguish it from the New Left. Most importantly, engagement with the transformative changes in political thought among those "old liberals" who played a pivotal role in shaping the New Politics allows this thesis to challenge a declension narrative pervasive in the historiography of postwar liberalism that has frequently limited the reach of existing scholarship to a narrow focus on the factors that led to a seemingly inevitable liberal demise and conservative ascendency.

Despite the central role of the ADA in the history of postwar liberalism, scholars have produced remarkably few comprehensive studies of the organization. The first monograph focused on the ADA, Clifton Brock's 1962 book, *Americans for Democratic Action*, provides a systematic analysis of the legislative hurdles faced by the organization in its efforts to promote liberal legislation. Brock's work, however, is limited through no fault of his own by having been written before the variety of sweeping developments seen in American politics and the ADA in the latter half of the 1960s.[10] The ADA has frequently appeared in the indexes of books on the political and intellectual history of the postwar period but has featured only once more as the subject of a monograph in the years since the publication of Brock's study.[11] The most recent monograph on the ADA, Steven Gillon's 1987 book, *Politics and Vision*, follows the history of the ADA from its founding as the successor to the Union for Democratic Action (UDA) to its waning years in the 1980s. Still, the core of Gillon's effort to examine

[10] Clifton Brock, *Americans for Democratic Action: Its Role in National Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1962).

[11] The ADA has, however, been the focus of two doctoral dissertations. Robert Clayton Pierce, "Liberals and the Cold War: Union for Democratic Action and Americans for Democratic Action, 1940-1949" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1979); Douglas Steven Gallagher, "'Walking the Tightrope': Americans for Democratic Action in the South, 1947-1963" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 2008). Pierce's dissertation examines the contributions of the ADA and its predecessor organization, the UDA, to the growth of the Cold War during the early postwar years. Gallagher's dissertation, the most recent major study of the ADA, explores the organization's largely unsuccessful effort to establish chapters in the South and better the fortunes of liberal politicians in the region during the postwar period.

what he sees as the ADA's continual struggle to reconcile political expediency with liberal ideals rests on the earlier years of the organization's existence. When Gillon turns his attention to developments in the ADA during the late 1960s, he contends that the Vietnam War shattered the delicate balance upon which that reconciliation depended as the moderate leadership of the Galbraith-Schlesinger faction reluctantly concluded that the organization's future depended on the idealism of a new generation of reformers. According to Gillon, the ADA's abandonment of political pragmatism in favor of idealism that began with its endorsement of Eugene McCarthy's longshot campaign in 1968 led the organization down the path to the political irrelevance that it has suffered since the 1980s.[12]

Lost in Gillon's interpretation of what he sees as a disregard for political realism that put the ADA on the fast track to political triviality, however, are both a serious consideration of the rationale behind the decision of its "old liberals" to establish the organization as a vehicle for the New Politics and attention to the significant influence enjoyed by the ADA after its supposed turn to idealism. Convinced that the undeniable decline later suffered by the ADA provides confirmation of its abandonment of political pragmatism in the 1960s, Gillon ignores the ways in which Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "moderate" leaders acted on a strong—albeit ultimately misguided—belief in the political prudence of aligning the organization with the interests of a growing bloc of New Class voters. Far from heralding their demise, the ADA and its "old liberals" wielded as much influence on the direction of Democratic and liberal politics in the years following the McCarthy endorsement as they did at any point in the organization's history. By highlighting the ongoing political influence of those "old liberals" and probing the factors that led them to willingly turn to the New Politics

[12] Gillon, *Politics and Vision.*

movement and a new generation of leadership in the first place, "Old Liberals, New Politics" brings the ideas that guided that movement and continue to shape liberal politics in the twenty-first century into a sharper focus.

The histories of the New Politics and neoconservatism are deeply intertwined yet much of the existing scholarship on neoconservatism either ignores the New Politics as a major source of impetus for neoconservatives or treats the New Politics and the New Left as virtually interchangeable. While the emergence of the New Left was one of a number of important developments that shaped the concerns of early neoconservatives, youthful radicalism often plays an oversized role in accounts of the ongoing development of neoconservatism. Peter Steinfels set the stage for New Left prominence in scholarship on neoconservatism when he produced the first book-length study of the topic in 1979. In *The Neoconservatives*, Steinfels offers a penetrating analysis of the intellectual origins of neoconservatism, but his overriding focus on the role played by the New Left in pushing neoconservatives to the right leads him to disregard the ways in which the New Politics became the primary target of neoconservatives in the 1970s.[13] With almost no mention of the New Politics movement, there is no place in Steinfels' account for the neoconservatives who founded the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM) in an effort to take control of the Democratic Party from New Politics liberals.[14] The neoconservatives of the CDM were neither the first neoconservatives nor the only representatives of neoconservatism in the 1970s. They were, however, the first to mount a concerted effort to move neoconservatism from the pages of intellectual journals such as *The*

[13] Originally published in 1979, *The Neoconservatives* was re-released with a revised title and a new forward by the author in 2013. Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979); Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Origins of a Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

[14] For a study that addresses the New Politics movement and the CDM yet still places overwhelming emphasis on the New Left as a source of animus for neoconservatism, see John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1994* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

*Public Interest* into the realm of party politics. Crucial actors in the long journey of neoconservatism from its origins as a dispute among liberal intellectuals to its later role as a wellspring for policy advisors in the Republican Party, the leaders of the CDM had a greater impact on the development of neoconservatism than some of the most widely cited studies of the topic would suggest.

In the years since the publication of Steinfels' *The Neoconservatives*, a number of historians have given greater attention to the interplay between the CDM and the New Politics in their accounts of neoconservatism. Many of those historians, however, have tended to uncritically reproduce the perspective of neoconservatives who deliberately sought to conflate the New Politics and the New Left in order to cast the New Politics beyond the bounds of acceptable liberalism and establish themselves as the legitimate claimants to the liberal tradition. Justin Vaïsse, for example, treats the terms New Politics and New Left as nearly synonymous in his 2010 book, *Neoconservatism*.[15] While Vaïsse and other historians who fail to adequately distinguish the New Politics from the New Left do not share the political aims that underpinned the intentional conflation of those two political movements by neoconservatives, they have nevertheless perpetuated an interpretation that obscures the deeply intertwined roots of the New Politics and neoconservatism in the liberal tradition.[16] By bringing the "old liberals" of the ADA into the narrative of the New Politics movement and distinguishing the roots of that movement from those of the New Left, this thesis is able to frame the organized response of neoconservatives to the New Politics not as a clash of radicalism and liberalism but as a contest for the legacy of the liberal tradition with a lasting

[15] Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*.

[16] For examples of other studies that examine neoconservatism and use the terms New Politics and New Left almost interchangeably see Baer, *Reinventing Democrats*, esp. 19-20, 33; Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal*, esp. 145-165.

impact on the trajectory of liberal politics.

Incorporating those "old liberals" into the history of the New Politics movement also enables "Old Liberals, New Politics" to challenge a declension narrative that runs through much of the existing scholarship on postwar liberalism and obscures both the reasoning that led influential liberals to steer liberalism in the direction of the New Politics and the continuing impact of that reasoning on contemporary liberalism. No work has played a larger role in establishing the declension narrative that continues to suffuse the historiography of postwar liberalism than Allen Matusow's *The Unraveling of America*. Often taken to be the definitive history of 1960s liberalism since its publication in 1984, *The Unraveling of America* stresses the intrinsic limitations of liberalism throughout a narrative that ends in tragedy with the "rout" of liberals in the 1968 election in order to situate the history of postwar liberalism within the confines of that decade.[17] For Matusow, the 1968 election represents little more than a stepping-stone to the election of 1980 and the conservative "Reagan Revolution" that followed. Some nuance is provided by the passing attention he gives to the narrow nature of Hubert Humphrey's loss to Richard Nixon and the majorities maintained by Democrats in the House and the Senate in 1968. However, his tendency to read the conservative ascendency in presidential politics during the 1980s back to events in the 1960s combined with an insistence on the fundamental shortcomings of liberalism renders those observations as mere details tangential to a linear narrative of inevitable liberal decline. Lost in an interpretation that holds the late 1960s and the entire decade of the 1970s to be little more than a prelude to the election of Ronald Reagan are the influence that liberal Democrats maintained in Congress during those years and the emergence of a New Politics movement that laid the foundation for

[17] Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*, esp. 395-439.

contemporary liberal politics.

Whereas Matusow looks to the inherent inadequacies of liberalism as the primary cause of its demise, other historians have found the decline of liberalism to be less predestined and highlight instead a variety of external factors and circumstances to explain its waning influence. In his 2004 book, *When America Was Great*, Kevin Mattson offers a sympathetic view of postwar liberalism and its fundamental values that emphasizes pressure from the New Left and the fallout from the Vietnam War as the developments most responsible for the decline in liberalism's fortunes. According to Mattson, the Vietnam War, in particular, contributed to the decline of liberalism by shattering consensus among liberals and delegitimizing the political philosophy in the eyes of many.[18] Mattson expresses great hope in a revitalization of the values that sustained postwar liberalism but his insistence on the defeat of liberalism in the face of challenges from the New Left and the Vietnam War leads him to disregard the ways in which many of those values did not simply vanish with a presumed liberal demise but instead continued to inform the transformed liberalism of the New Politics.

In contrast to Mattson's emphasis on foreign policy challenges and pressure from the New Left, other writers have looked to domestic issues that paved the way for a conservative ascendency as central to the decline of liberalism. Thomas and Mary Edsall, in their 1991 book, *Chain Reaction*, deem reaction among many working- and middle-class whites to what they saw as the disproportionate concern of the Democratic Party with the interests of racial minorities and their related aversion to the rights and entitlement "revolution" unleashed by the Great Society to be the primary causes of liberal decline and conservative ascendency.[19] In

---

[18] Kevin Mattson, *When America Was Great: The Fighting Faith of Postwar Liberalism* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[19] Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

his 2005 book, *Law and Order*, Michael Flamm approaches the abandonment of the Democratic Party and liberalism by a substantial number of working- and middle-class whites with a wider lens, bringing attention not only to issues of race and racism but also the far-reaching effect that widespread perceptions of imperiled personal security had on the nation's politics. Evoking imagery used by Matusow, he argues that the "unraveling of liberalism" resulted from a loss of popular faith in the ability of liberalism to ensure personal security based on the growing sense of American voters in the late 1960s that the Great Society had failed to curb social unrest and may even have contributed to it.[20]

Flamm sees the overwhelming attraction of the electorate during the 1968 presidential election to conservative appeals for law and order over the liberal hopes of the Great Society as an ideological triumph for conservatism with far greater lasting implications than Nixon's narrow electoral victory over Humphrey would seem to suggest.[21] Flamm, the Edsalls, Mattson, and other scholars who follow the general contours of the declension narrative differ as to the relative importance of various contributory factors, but nevertheless direct their narrative towards a point of eventual demise in the 1980s that serves to marginalize the important and lasting changes in liberal politics seen over the course of the late 1960s and the 1970s. As Mathew Lassiter has argued, all too often historians and other writers who have examined postwar liberalism have adhered to a teleological approach "in which almost anything that happened after about 1938 culminates in the Reagan revolution of the 1980s."[22]

Some of the most prominent examples of that approach can be found in scholarship that assigns primary responsibility for liberal decline and conservative ascendency to the New

---

[20] Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[21] Flamm, *Law and Order*, 10.

[22] Matthew D. Lassiter, "Political History beyond the Red-Blue Divide," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 3 (December 2011): 761.

Politics movement. Gareth Davies, in his 1996 book, *From Opportunity to Entitlement*, finds the source of liberal decline in its turn from the "opportunity liberalism" of the Great Society to the "entitlement liberalism" of New Politics liberals with little appreciation for the tradition of American individualism or the work ethic of "Middle America." Despite devoting a significant portion of his text to the New Politics, Davies displays an interest in the movement only so far as it contributed to liberal acceptance of what he sees as radical and widely unpopular notions of entitlement such as the Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI).[23] Preferring to cast New Politics liberals as scapegoats, Davies makes little effort to understand the ideas that motivated them or their roots in the liberal tradition. Similarly, Dominic Sandbrook heaps blame on the New Politics movement and its limited upper-middle class appeal as the cause of liberalism's demise in his 2004 book, *Eugene McCarthy*. From Sandbrook's perspective, the growing power in the Democratic Party of New Politics liberals "who seemed more interested in moral rectitude than electoral success" put the party on the path towards "the tax revolts of the 1970s and the mass desertion of the Reagan Democrats in 1980 and 1984."[24]

Jeffrey Bloodworth provides a more extensive treatment of the New Politics movement in his 2013 book, *Losing the Center*, than Davies, Sandbrook, and most other historians who have approached the topic, but his firm adherence to the declension narrative ultimately leaves us with a similarly incomplete picture of the movement. Bloodworth sees the New Politics movement as the primary culprit of liberal decline and, consequently, examines the movement primarily in terms of the culpability he believes it bears for the years that Democrats and liberals have spent in the electoral wilderness. In his view, the capture of the Democratic Party

---

[23] Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996).

[24] Dominic Sandbrook, *Eugene McCarthy: The Rise and Fall of Postwar American Liberalism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), esp. 221-223.

by New Politics liberals and the party's subsequent jettisoning of the Vital Center liberalism that had sustained its electoral success sealed the demise of liberalism. By giving agency to liberals who he maintains brought upon their own demise by adopting the New Politics, Bloodworth differs from historians who stress conservative ascendency as the central cause of liberalism's decline but he nevertheless ends up with a result that differs little in its portrayal of the New Politics or the legacy of liberalism.[25] Like many historians who have approached the New Politics from the framework of the declension narrative, Bloodworth displays less of an interest in illuminating the ideas that animated the New Politics movement or the continuing salience of those ideas than in assigning blame to the movement for a demise that serves as a seemingly natural symbolic bookend for the topic.

Historians who have deviated from the declension narrative that guides much of the existing scholarship on postwar liberalism have found ways to shed valuable light on aspects of liberal transformation during the postwar era that have often been overlooked.[26] Lily Geismer refutes the widely held view that the tide of the Reagan Revolution entailed the demise of liberalism in her 2015 book, *Don't Blame Us*. Geismer maintains that liberalism did not simply vanish as a meaningful political force as is sometimes assumed but rather saw a shift in its center of gravity from the labor hall to the suburbs that led to the development of a political agenda that reflected the interests of its new electoral base. By moving away from a linear narrative of liberal decline that frequently rests on the experience of white, male union

---

[25] Bloodworth, *Losing the Center*.

[26] For example, see Bruce Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment: The McGovern Insurgency and the Identity Crisis of the Democratic Party* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009). Miroff offers valuable insights into the trajectory of liberal politics in the years since George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign by bringing attention to a variety of lasting implications from the campaign that have been frequently lost to the assumptions of liberal demise that abound in the historiography of postwar liberalism. His study demonstrates that while McGovern's landslide defeat in 1972 became a rationale for the Democratic Party's drift to the center that has blunted the political impact of liberalism, it also transformed the strain of liberalism that continues to have an important—though consistently subdued—presence in the party.

members from the Rust Belt, she uncovers the continuing sway of liberalism in suburbs and high-tech hubs across the country.[27] Geismer's overriding focus on the social and demographic forces that drove the transformation of postwar liberalism, however, leads her to largely avoid delineating the New Politics as a distinct political movement or probing the ideas that animated it. As a result, the New Politics movement features in her study as little more than a precursor to the neoliberal "Atari Democrats" who staked a claim to the banner of liberalism in the 1980s.

This thesis examines the intellectual roots of liberal transformation during the years of a widely presumed liberal demise in order to reveal both the extraordinarily protean nature of American liberalism and the ways in which the ideas that shaped the New Politics into a unique and meaningful political movement continue to play a crucial role in our understanding of what it means to be liberal in the twenty-first century. Liberalism has seen a distinct decline in its attractiveness as a label in the years since politicians such as John F. Kennedy actively and proudly identified themselves as liberals even when the actual liberalness of their policies could be called into question. After years of conservative efforts to make "liberal" a toxic word, it is not uncommon for political figures who are generally described by commentators as liberal to display aversion to the "L-word" and prefer identifying themselves with the seemingly more innocuous label of "progressive" despite the historical baggage carried by the term.[28] Still, whether or not those liberals readily embrace the "liberal" label, the substance of liberalism continues to define both their political outlook and left-of-center politics in the U.S. more broadly. While the general rightward trajectory of American politics in the latter decades

---

[27] Lily Geismer, *Don't Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[28] E.J. Dionne Jr., foreword to *Liberalism for a New Century*, ed. Neil Jumonville and Kevin Mattson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), vii-viii.

of the twentieth century indicates that the diminished fortunes of liberalism have not been confined to its rhetorical status, liberalism has endured through years of difficulty to remain an important and influential political philosophy in the nation's politics. By parting ways with the familiar declension narrative that has largely obscured the lasting influence of a New Politics movement that owed much to the ideas and efforts of the "old liberals" of the ADA, "Old Liberals, New Politics" demonstrates that whatever the relative political decline of liberalism from its earlier heights, the liberalism that continues to be a significant presence on the American political landscape bears the stamp of the liberal transformation ushered in by the New Politics.

This thesis explores the contributions of those "old liberals" to the New Politics movement in five thematic chapters that proceed in a roughly chronological fashion. Chapter one locates the origins of the New Politics movement in the "qualitative liberalism" initially advanced by Galbraith and Schlesinger in the 1950s. When Galbraith and Schlesinger began to sketch the contours of a qualitative liberalism that brought into question the transcendent importance of economic growth and insisted that a broad array of cultural, moral, and social issues were legitimate subjects of concern for liberals, they put the ADA on a path towards what would later become the New Politics movement. Chapter two explores how Galbraith, Schlesinger, and their fellow "old liberals" further shaped that path when their committed opposition to the Vietnam War during the early years of major U.S. involvement in the conflict led them to draw far-reaching conclusions from the profound changes they saw in the international geopolitical landscape and reject the policy of global anti-Communist containment that had been a pillar of American postwar liberalism. Chapter three examines how the civil rights movement reawakened the "old liberals" of the ADA to the pressing

problem of poverty and pushed many of their colleagues to a renewed commitment to social democratic values that ultimately led the organization to prioritize opposition to a war that sapped funds needed for the costly domestic social programs they saw as necessary to continue the fight for civil rights and full racial equality. Chapter four follows those "old liberals" as they acted on their conviction that the Vietnam War represented a transcendent issue and drew on their belief in the liberal potential of the growing ranks of New Class voters to lead the ADA towards a presidential endorsement of Eugene McCarthy in 1968 that established the organization as a vehicle for the New Politics movement. Chapter five analyzes the ways in which the ongoing contributions of Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" shaped the development of a New Politics movement that provoked an organized response from neoconservatives who founded the CDM in an effort to win control of the Democratic Party and establish themselves as the genuine representatives of the liberal tradition at the expense of New Politics liberals. An epilogue assesses how the New Class voters who those "old liberals" had looked to as the key social base for the future of liberal politics ultimately drove the neoliberal turn of the Democratic Party and took liberalism in a direction that carried on many of the social and cultural values of the New Politics movement while shedding much of the commitment to economic and social justice that had been central to the movement.

"Old Liberals, New Politics" illuminates the remarkable malleability of American liberalism by examining the instrumental role played by the "old liberals" of the ADA in the transformation of liberal politics during the civil rights and Vietnam War era. Defined by Cold War militarism and the bread-and-butter issues of the New Deal agenda during the early postwar period, liberalism has since come to be identified with the type of neoliberal economics, dovish foreign policy, and liberal social and cultural values found in Barack

Obama's second inaugural address. The New Politics movement that serves as an essential though often-overlooked link between postwar liberalism and the liberalism of the twenty-first century did not develop along the precise lines that those "old liberals" had hoped for and never achieved the lasting legislative and electoral successes tallied by the New Deal coalition that preceded it. Still, the emergence of the New Politics movement did not usher in the presumed demise of liberalism that abounds in studies of American liberalism during the second half of the twentieth century. By exploring the roots and continuing impact of the New Politics movement, this thesis demonstrates that liberalism did not simply wither away—as historians have too often assumed—but instead has taken on new forms, enabling it to remain a vital force in the nation's politics.

## Chapter One: Debating the Politics of Growth: Qualitative Liberalism in the Affluent Society

When John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. sketched the contours of what came to be called "qualitative liberalism" during the Eisenhower and Kennedy years, they left behind powerful images that shaped how many American liberals both inside and outside of the ADA saw the social and economic changes taking place in their midst. From Schlesinger, they had the image of the typical American as a suburbanite who, thanks to the achievements of the New Deal, had "a job, a square meal, a suit of clothes, and a roof" over their head.[1] Galbraith left them with the image of the shiny, feature-packed car—typically with extravagant tailfins—alongside an appallingly maintained public park.[2] Together, those images painted a powerful picture of the United States as a society that had achieved tremendous private prosperity but suffered from a public squalor that inhibited the quality of American life. Foremost among the "old liberals" of the ADA, Galbraith and Schlesinger drew on this understanding of social imbalance as they sought to establish the array of quality of life issues produced by widespread prosperity as legitimate objects of liberal concern. The insistence that the cultural, moral, and social issues that affected the quality of American life should be treated as political concerns ushered in a transformation of liberalism that would define the most significant political developments of the 1960s and find its clearest expression in the New Politics movement.

From John F. Kennedy's New Frontier and Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society to the New Left and the New Politics, liberal and radical politics in the 1960s reflected the fundamental conviction of qualitative liberalism that political solutions could and should be

---

[1] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The Challenge of Abundance," *Reporter*, May 3, 1956, 9.

[2] See John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1958), esp. 194, 251-269.

found to address the pressing non-material issues faced by an increasingly prosperous nation. Common to the most visible political developments of the 1960s, this expansive vision of politics took shape in response to the political, economic, and social circumstances of the 1950s. The dawn of the age of abundance in the 1950s made it possible to develop a broad liberal vision that went beyond the scope of the bread-and-butter issues that had defined the New Deal and Fair Deal while the political circumstances of that decade made it necessary. In a post-scarcity era, in which the productive output of the American economy surpassed the material needs of its people, Galbraith and Schlesinger could urge liberals to turn their attention from economic growth to the issues that determined the quality of American life. Motivated by the growing importance of middle-class voters and the assumption that in the age of abundance pocketbook issues would no longer draw the votes they once had, Galbraith and Schlesinger looked to quality of life issues from education and equal opportunities for minorities to the state of the nation's mass media as the key to Democratic electoral salvation after the devastating defeat of 1952.

The demands of the Cold War and the danger of falling behind the Soviet Union not only in technological and military prowess but also as a source of inspiration for the world further convinced the ADA and its "old liberals" of the need to look beyond economic growth and consumer opulence as they cast about for a greater sense of national purpose. When Galbraith and Schlesinger highlighted the dangers of a society that pursued tailfins at the expense of classrooms, they found the ADA a ready audience for their concerns if not for the specifics of their policy prescriptions. Political expediency contributed much to the difficulty that ADA liberals faced with embracing the policies that underpinned qualitative liberalism. While the qualitative liberalism of Galbraith and Schlesinger warned of the inflationary

dangers of economic growth and urged the reallocation of resources from the private to the public sector by means of expanded sales taxes, Leon Keyserling and his fellow partisans of economic growth in the ADA called for no such sacrifices. So long as ADA liberals continued to believe that economic growth could achieve far-reaching liberal goals without the burden of increasing taxes or questioning the consumerism that drove the American economy, the specific policies called for by Galbraith and Schlesinger would face an uphill struggle in the ADA.

Still, many in the ADA expressed affinity with a qualitative liberal vision advanced by Galbraith and Schlesinger that provided a compelling lens into the prevailing social and economic trends of the postwar years. Even if they could not bring themselves to support policies that remained politically painful, the attraction of ADA liberals to a critical perspective on consumerism and social imbalance reflected a growing liberal disillusionment with the values, priorities, and direction of American society. The attention to post-scarcity concerns of the "affluent society" spurred by that disillusionment would ultimately take center stage in the policy resolutions of the ADA and establish the organization as a launching pad for the New Politics movement. Schlesinger did not hesitate to highlight the role that he, Galbraith, and other architects of qualitative liberalism had played in making the New Politics possible. When he surveyed the American political landscape in 1969, he observed that "the combination of the affluent society and the electronic revolution is bringing into existence what has come to be known as the New Politics."[3] By tracing the New Politics back to questioning of the transcendent importance of economic growth in the 1950s among the "old liberals" of the ADA that established a broad new range of issues as legitimate liberal

[3] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Crisis of Confidence: Ideas, Power, and Violence in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 248.

concerns, it becomes clear that the New Politics movement sprang to life not from the radical politics of the 1960s but from a broad and protean liberal tradition that has encompassed far more than bread-and-butter issues throughout much of its history.

**Growth Consensus**

The contours of the qualitative liberalism sketched by John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. took shape against a backdrop of general preoccupation with economic growth that stretched across the political spectrum. John Kenneth Galbraith observed wryly in 1958 that belief in the transcendent importance of the production of goods and economic growth "is common ground for the general secretary of the Communist Party, the Chairman of the Americans for Democratic Action, the President of the United States Chamber of Commerce, and the President of the National Association of Manufacturers."[4] While liberals moved more quickly to this common ground than their conservative counterparts and established themselves as second to none in the pursuit termed "growthmanship" by commentators in the 1950s, they themselves had only recently converted to the cause of economic growth.[5]

During the Great Depression, many liberals saw the U.S. as an overdeveloped, mature economy that resulted in an economics of scarcity. Liberal doubts about the desirability of growth in an economy that required, above all, basic security would be coupled with uncertainty as to whether or not significant growth was even possible in a highly developed capitalist economy. The doubt and ambivalence displayed by liberals in the years of the Great Depression quickly dissolved when mobilization for World War II and the growing influence

---

[4] Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 122

[5] Robert M. Collins, *More: The Politics of Growth in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), x.

of Keynesian economists in the Roosevelt administration decisively moved the context of liberal economics from the economics of scarcity to the economics of expansion.[6]

Drawing on the economics of expansion but reflecting a fear of return to the economics of scarcity, the Employment Act of 1946 represented both an extension of the economic concerns that defined the Great Depression and a departure from them. Though greatly enfeebled in contrast to original aims for the bill, the Employment Act of 1946 made a formal—albeit non-binding—declaration of the federal government's responsibility "to promote maximum employment, production, and purchasing power" and established the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) to assist the president in carrying out programs toward those ends. With enactment of the Employment Act, the official aim of the nation's economic policy made the fundamental shift from resurrecting a damaged economy to maintaining and promoting the growth of an increasingly functional one.[7]

Few individuals played a more influential role in the rise of economic growth on the liberal and broader national agenda in the postwar years than Leon Keyserling. A highly visible member of the three-person CEA, Keyserling's hand in the council's 1949 report ensured that the document amounted to a declaration of the principles that guided his belief in the social and political potential offered by a growing American economy. Reflecting Keyserling's trademark forcefulness, the report framed growth not merely as a fundamental economic goal among others but as an aim that could be seen as the new organizing principle for the American postwar political economy. Keyserling's aggressive, forward-looking economic outlook found a ready audience among liberals. When Edwin Nourse resigned his position as the first chairman of the CEA in October 1949, liberals rallied around Keyserling

[6] Collins, *More*, x, 4-6, 10.

[7] Collins, *More*, 16; Stephen Kemp Bailey, *Congress Makes a Law: The Story Behind the Employment Act of 1946* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 228-232.

as their candidate for the post.[8]

With his appointment as chair of the CEA by President Truman in the spring of 1950, Keyserling made use of the council as a commanding pulpit from which to press the importance and potential of economic growth upon the nation's political thinkers and leaders. During his second term, Truman, the president who had previously been a target of liberal derision and disappointment, increasingly adopted Keyserling's outlook and rhetoric. As mobilization for the Korean War gained pace, the Truman administration embraced Keyserling's expansionary economics and the country produced the rapid economic growth the CEA chair had been advocating for. Economic growth greatly buoyed Truman's support among liberals but its impact would not be confined to the liberal end of the political spectrum. With an increase in the nation's gross national product from $285 billion in 1948 to $350 billion in 1952, the administration demonstrated economic results that firmly established the power and potential of the American economy in the minds of liberals and conservatives alike.[9]

Unlike many conservatives, however, the bulk of liberals looked to economic growth not simply as a source of business profits but as an essential instrument of social progress that provided the foundation for a rising tide of material prosperity. Describing the commonly accepted ideas or "conventional wisdom" of the postwar era in his influential 1958 classic, *The Affluent Society*, Galbraith noted that great progress recently experienced in the material well-being of the average American citizen had come not from a redistribution of income but the tremendous economic growth of the preceding decades. With acute awareness among

---

[8] Donald K. Pickens, *Leon H. Keyserling: A Progressive Economist* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 94-95; "The Proceedings in Washington," *New York Times*, October 20, 1949.

[9] Collins, *More*, 20-21; Alonzo L. Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 297, 302, 415, 453-454.

liberals to that fact, the goal of an expanding economy became fundamental to the "conventional wisdom" of American liberalism. According to Galbraith, equality, security, and the other more ancient concerns of economics had given way to a preoccupation with production and the need for its continual increase. Seen as the means to defuse tensions once associated with inequality and the solution to privations previously associated with economic insecurity, concern for production, paradoxically, grew in measure with the continued growth of production. As Robert Collins argues, economic growth provided what many in the U.S. saw as the means for the nation to "square the circle and reconcile its love of liberty with its egalitarian pretensions." With production stimulated by the government's successful application of Keynesian economic principles resulting in in reduced unemployment and higher living standards, the aim of economic growth became, in Galbraith's words, the liberal's "program, and it established something akin to a monopoly over his mind."[10]

When Keyserling joined the ADA in 1953 following Dwight D. Eisenhower's election and his departure from the CEA, his influence ensured that the organization's economic perspective differed from the liberal consensus sketched by Galbraith only in its even more fervent belief in the far-reaching potential of economic growth. From its earliest years, before Keyserling joined the organization, the economic policy resolutions of the ADA stressed the importance of economic growth. Recession under Eisenhower's economic stewardship and the heavy hand of Keyserling in the drafting of the organization's economic policy, however, ushered in a marked shift in emphasis towards the seemingly limitless benefits to be found in growth. Economic policy resolutions passed in the years after the ADA's founding in 1947 reflected a quiet assumption in the importance of economic growth but expressed more

[10] Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 96-97, 119-20, 188-89; Collins, *More*, 240.

concern with preventing a postwar depression than optimism in the broad potential of what growth could achieve. The organization's 1950 economic policy resolution warned that the continuation of full production and full employment should not be taken for granted and would require vigilant action and cooperation from government, business, and labor. With attention to economic growth as a means of averting depression, the resolution declared, "Depression and mass unemployment bring serious denials of personal freedom. Government action to assure an expanding and full employed economy…is a perquisite to the preservation of maximum personal freedom."[11]

Within his first year of involvement in the ADA, Keyserling responded to a changing economic environment to make his mark as the economic policy of the organization came to reflect the general shape and confident passion for economic growth that would sustain it well into the 1960s. With the largely stable economic expansion of the postwar years increasingly displacing memories of the Great Depression, concerns in the ADA shifted from the return of depression to the potential gains lost during recession. The Eisenhower administration's nominal embrace of government responsibility for fostering economic growth and employment coupled with the post-Korean War recession provided an opening for Keyserling to guide the ADA's economic policy away from the defensive posture of its early years towards a confident assertion of the benefits to be achieved through economic growth and the opportunities to be missed through its absence.

The ADA's 1954 economic policy resolution condemned the complacency of the Eisenhower administration for insisting that the American people should be satisfied if the economy remained at its current level of output or did not fall more than 5 percent below its

[11] "Economic Policy: Full Production and Employment," *ADA World*, April 1950, 1-A.

existing level. Merely maintaining existing levels of production over the coming year, the resolution insisted, would mean millions more unemployed and billions of dollars needlessly added to the federal deficit. Worse yet for the long term outlook for employment, the federal budget, and the broad array of unmet social needs in the country would be the lost years of potential growth that could never be reclaimed. According to the resolution, "this waste of potential plenty is our great and true national economic deficit."[12]

Contrast with the conservative budget balancing and complacency of the Eisenhower administration gave shape to the ringing endorsement for economic growth and its potential for social progress that would suffuse the ADA's economic policy resolutions over the coming decade. With words that would make their way into the organization's economic policy resolutions for years to come, the 1954 resolution declared, "We subscribe to the concept of full employment in an expanding economy as the cornerstone of American economic policy. With continuous full employment we can year by year gain mightily in domestic strength and world security. Without full employment, we can only lose ground and court disaster." The economic growth sustained by full employment, the resolution estimated, would raise the gross national product from the 1954 level of $365 billion to $500 billion by 1960. Offering an alluring picture of what that growth could mean for liberal objectives, the resolution highlighted 10 million additional jobs, significant reductions in poverty levels, much-needed expansion of welfare services, and an increase in the American standard of living of at least 25 percent as tangible benefits. If a level of economic growth clearly within the capabilities of the U.S. economy were maintained the resolution insisted that all of these advances could be

[12] "Full Employment in an Expanding Economy," *ADA World*, May 1954, 2M.

achieved without increased taxation and with a balanced buget.[13]

For the ADA, economic growth would also be esserial to the military outlays deemed necessary to the protection of U.S. interests and security in ıe Cold War. According to the resolution, the economic growth of a fully employed U.S. eonomy would provide "the economic strength to carry forward whatever economic andmilitary programs conform best to our needs at home and to our participation in the joint effon of the free world." In response to the Eisenhower administration's incipient pivot away from he large military expenditures of the Truman administration, the resolution condemned "anyvithdrawal from our world responsibilities in the mistaken notion that our economy canot bear the essential security programs which it has already demonstrated its capacity to upport." When the Eisenhower administration put forward its budget-conscious "New Loo" foreign policy the following year, the ADA responded with a strong rebuke of the admiıstration's overreliance on nuclear weapons for security. The ADA's 1955 economic policy reolution maintained that military weakness invites aggression and looked to economic growt as a means of maintaining the large-scale conventional military forces necessary for flexile responses to the demands placed upon American foreign policy in the Cold War.[14]

Keyserling further developed the confident belief ingrowth as a means for progress at home and abroad that he had instilled in the ADA's econory policy over the preceding years in his 1956 "national prosperity budget." Taking great careo distinguish his budget from the centralized five-year economic plans of the Soviet Union, leyserling framed his budget as a starting point for a national discussion through which the Anerican people would decide how best to meet the opportunities and responsibilities of a grovng economy. In regards to the

[13] "Full Employment in an Expanding Economy," 1M-2M.

[14] "Full Employment in an Expanding Economy," 2M; "Building Mitary Strength," *ADA World*, April 1955, 2M.

latter, he saw the strength of the U.S. economy not as a reward or an end but as a challenge and a means by which American society could proceed towards widespread prosperity and justice. Granting that economic growth does not automatically result in progress against deprivation and injustice, Keyserling's budget made abundantly clear that a context of economic stability and growth contributed greatly to their solution. Accordingly, he insisted on the vital responsibility of the federal government to maintain growth since "both our world security and our domestic well-being demand that we build this [economic] strength to the optimum limits of our technology and brains, instead of being content with the 'satisfactory' growth rates of the distant past." Stressing the grave responsibilities but not overlooking the far-reaching opportunities of economic growth, Keyserling boldly declared, "there is almost nothing within reason that the American economy cannot accomplish" with awareness "of the urgency but even more of the promise of our times."[15]

**Democratic Defeat and the Birth of Qualitative Liberalism**

The Eisenhower victory that in 1952 led Keyserling and the ADA to push for more of the same in form of a more vigorous and fully formed program for growth liberalism prompted among others in the organization a period of deep liberal introspection. With Eisenhower's landslide victory over Adlai Stevenson and the capture of both houses of Congress by Republicans, some in the ADA began to wonder if the economic program of the New Deal and Fair Deal had run dry politically. Touching off a far-reaching debate on the implications of the 1952 election for liberalism and its future political prospects, Schlesinger wrote an article for the *Reporter* in the wake of the election that characterized the New Deal

[15] Leon H. Keyserling, "For a National Prosperity Budget," *New York Times*, March 25, 1956.

and Fair Deal as victims of their own success. According to Schlesinger, the New Deal reforms that sustained the domestic programs of Roosevelt and Truman had been put in place to respond to the desperate national needs of the time, had largely succeeded in meeting those needs, and had since become such an integral element of the political landscape that Republicans were unable or unwilling to dismantle them. With general Republican acquiesce to New Deal reforms, liberal Democrats faced increasing difficulty in trying to portray those initiatives as live political issues. Liberal leaders, Schlesinger insisted, wastefully "expended their energy in summoning the American people to ancient crusades, in sounding the bugle for wars won and forgotten."[16]

For Schlesinger, the revolt of the suburbs and the widespread prosperity they represented were fundamental to understanding the Democratic defeat. Prosperity, Schlesinger suspected, had cost the Democrats more Catholic votes than Joseph McCarthy. In Schlesinger's estimation, years of full employment and increases in the American standard of living had allowed millions of immigrants and their offspring to move from the cities into the suburbs, abandon tenements for bungalows, and buy new automobiles. Having been enabled by the economic reforms of preceding Democratic administrations to, in Schlesinger's words, "live like Republicans, the new suburbanites ended up by voting like Republicans." In contrast to Democratic leaders who shaped campaign rhetoric around the narrative of prosperity versus depression, he recognized that the suburbs and the new generation of voters increasingly populating them would not be drawn to a Democratic Party bent on reiterating the issues which had won elections in the 1930s. Uncertain as to what new issues and programs might provide liberal Democrats with a road back from the political wilderness, Schlesinger

[16] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "Which Road for the Democrats," *Reporter*, January 20, 1953, 32.

nevertheless remained certain that it was only as liberalism "expresses the possibilities of the future—and not as it revives the memories of the past—that it can once again recover its central place in American life."[17]

Schlesinger may have been unsure as to where the issues that would define the discourse and future possibilities of American politics would come from, but Leon Keyserling remained firmly convinced that they would be found in the realm of economics. Offering his own response to the Democratic defeat of 1952 in a privately circulated memorandum to liberal, labor, and Democratic leaders, Keyserling called not for Democrats to turn their focus away from economic issues but to retool the party's economic platform for the challenges and opportunities of American prosperity in the 1950s. Like Schlesinger, Keyserling highlighted the failure of New Deal reforms to inspire votes in 1952. The New Deal package, he acknowledged, "may contain ingredients which are out of date" and suffered from a "depression 'hangover.'" As he had in his shaping of ADA economic policy, Keyserling urged liberals to turn their attention from the possibility of depression to the prospects of economic growth. According to Keyserling, "the most salient fact of American life today is not that we are in danger of losing what we have, but that we have only commenced to realize the full promise of America." Accordingly, he called on liberals to popularize a program of economic growth in specific quantitative terms that would lift the total output of the American economy by more than 100 billion dollars within the next decade. This expansion, Keyserling contended, would make possible much needed improvements in social security, health services, education, and the American standard of living. From Keyserling's perspective the American people were only prosperous in contrast to their earlier condition; "they by no

[17] Schlesinger, "Which Road for the Democrats," 32, 34.

means have reached the frontiers of prosperity when measured against what we can achieve."[18]

While Schlesinger and Keyserling differed in their certitude and interpretation of the underlying causes of Democratic failure in the preceding election, both approached the task of redeveloping the liberal program with a clear sense of political pragmatism. Writing to Keyserling in response to his memorandum, Schlesinger expressed considerable skepticism towards his fundamentally economic approach. Short of a severe recession or outright depression, Schlesinger doubted the potential for prosperity and economic security issues to draw enthusiasm from the American electorate. He suspected that for "people who are already enjoying a full meal" the economic proposals outlined by Keyserling would have a "pie-in-the sky air." Responding to Schlesinger's charge, Keyserling insisted that he was alert to the question of whether a prosperous people would be moved by still greater prosperity but would not accept "the proposition that the American people, because they are now well fed, have become contented cows." For Keyserling, the tendency to "think of the people as being well fed, while tending to forget how many are not well fed and how many would like to be better fed" provided evidence of a loss dynamism in the liberal perspective.[19]

Schlesinger's response to Keyserling confirmed the growing gulf in their political perspectives and indicated the Harvard historian's desire to develop and accentuate a non-material foundation for a liberalism geared to the needs of the age of abundance. With an acute concern for the electoral viability of liberalism, Schlesinger did not discount the continued existence of poverty but considered the poor a shrinking minority in a growing sea

---

[18] Leon H. Keyserling, "Looking Ahead on Economics and Politics," memorandum, June 12, 1953, pp. 1-3, 7-8, 13, Box P-17, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. Personal Papers, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA (hereafter cited as AMS-JFK).

[19] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to Leon Keyserling, July 5, 1953, Box P-17, AMS-JFK; Leon Keyserling to Arthur Schlesinger Jr., July 10, 1953, p. 2, Box P-17, AMS-JKF.

of American prosperity. Displaying his belief that the expanding ranks of affluent suburbanites were increasingly replacing the unemployed and the working class as the constituency most essential to Democrats, he remained unconvinced that Keyserling's economic program by itself could meet the political needs of liberals in the 1950s. He did not believe that was because the American people were becoming "contented cows" but "because in a state of full employment, they will tend to prefer the most painless route to even greater opportunity—and thus will tend to be seduced by the Republican promises." Schlesinger harbored no opposition to the further development of liberal economic policies but felt that political prospects on that front would be limited and stressed the need to develop a political vision that tapped "some new form of political and moral resources."[20]

The desire to draw on the new political and moral resources needed for liberal political viability would lead Schlesinger to sketch the contours of what he and other liberal thinkers termed "qualitative liberalism." Touching off a firestorm of debate, Schlesinger developed the themes of qualitative liberalism in a privately circulated memorandum as he began to provide answers to the probing questions he first proposed in the wake of Democratic defeat in 1952. With an eye to the upcoming 1956 presidential election, Schlesinger further developed the ideas expressed in his memorandum with a widely read and influential article for the *Reporter*. In that article, he gave shape to qualitative liberalism by distinguishing it from "quantitative liberalism" and its essential concerns of economic recovery, mass living standards, minimum wages, social security payments, and the myriad of other material challenges to subsistence and survival. Believing that quantitative liberalism had been, on the whole, a "brilliant success," Schlesinger offered the provocative assessment that "instead of talking as if the

[20] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to Leon Keyserling, August 18, 1953, Box P-17, AMS-JFK.

necessities of living—a job, a square meal, a suit of clothes, and a roof—where still at stake, we should be able to count that fight won and move on to the more subtle and complicated problem of fighting for individual dignity, identity, and fulfillment in a mass society."[21]

To face those challenges, Schlesinger called for a new liberalism attuned to the miseries produced by the age of abundance. He tempered an otherwise blunt assessment of American material security with recognition of the continued existence of poverty and the firm belief that the new liberalism would not repudiate quantitative liberalism but would rather absorb and build upon its achievements in approaching the new qualitative issues of a prosperous mass society. With the old liberalism as its foundation, Schlesinger looked to a new liberalism that addressed the qualitative challenges faced by American society as the means to liberal and Democratic electoral redemption. Whereas the quantitative liberalism that came of age in the Great Depression concerned itself with the struggle to secure the economic basis of life, the qualitative liberalism of the age of abundance would be dedicated to bettering the quality of life.[22]

Rooted not in the more easily measured and articulated economic concerns that had long been essential to liberals but rather in a slippery and often subjective notion of "quality," qualitative liberalism proved difficult to define in concrete terms. Schlesinger exhibited considerable vagueness in his first article on the topic and others that would follow as he grappled with the difficulties inherent to outlining qualitative liberalism in terms of tangible issues and programs. Still, with an insistence on prioritizing the public interest and welfare over economic growth as his starting point, he highlighted the need for improved education and medical services, more equal opportunities for minorities, better mass media and popular

[21] Schlesinger, "The Challenge of Abundance," 8-9.
[22] Schlesinger, "The Challenge of Abundance," 9.

culture, and more deliberate urban planning as some of the issues the new liberalism would need to address itself to. Evoking a theme that would be developed further by Galbraith in *The Affluent Society*, Schlesinger lamented a nation that grew ever richer yet devoted a decreasing share of its riches to the public welfare. When the country allowed "the production of consumer goods for the sake of profit [to] achieve a sort of moral priority in our culture," he believed the consequences became visible to all as "our schools become more crowded and dilapidated, our teachers more weary and underpaid...our cities dirtier, our roads more teeming and filthy, or national parks more unkempt."[23]

Writing in a period defined by general liberal agreement on the transcendent importance of economic growth, Schlesinger's plea for a redefinition of the aims and outlook of liberalism produced seemingly contradictory responses from liberals who professed their general agreement with the Harvard historian despite their fundamental criticisms. Seymour Harris, a fellow member of the ADA, counted himself an avid supporter of his Harvard colleague's new liberal vision but remained skeptical that the age of abundance upon which it was based would continue indefinitely.[24] While Keyserling insisted that he agreed with the "general trend" of Schlesinger's outlook, he rejected its fundamental distinction between quantitative and qualitative liberalism as neither "comprehensive to the average citizen or correct in substance." According to Keyserling, "effective liberalism, in a free society, does not change its basic characteristics every decade or two." He did not doubt that the "quality of life" issues highlighted by Schlesinger were new and different from the issues that grabbed liberal attention a generation ago but maintained that when ultimately discussed in terms of actual programs they were no less quantitative than those of the New Deal. Improving the

[23] Schlesinger, "The Challenge of Abundance," 9-10.
[24] Seymour Harris to Arthur Schlesinger Jr., November 14, 1955, Box P-16, AMS-JFK.

quality of education, for instance, would require defining the number of additional schools needed, budgeting of the dollars required to build them, and generation of the political will needed to allocate the necessary "quantitative" resources. Keyserling took Schlesinger's reliance on citing figures as soon as he began articulating the "new" liberal issues as the clearest evidence of the inherently quantitative basis of "qualitative" liberalism.[25]

Despite Keyserling's rejection of the distinction between qualitative and quantitative liberalism, Schlesinger's vision for a liberalism geared towards the quality of life issues of an age of abundance represented a significant departure from the New Deal and Fair Deal roots of the political tradition. The seemingly permanent economic growth of the postwar era allowed liberals such as Schlesinger to take growth for granted and emphasize the need for liberalism to concern itself not only with the pocketbook of the American citizen but with their potential for cultural, moral, or spiritual development in a society of unrelenting conformity. Initially motivated by the assumption that pocketbook issues would have a diminishing political draw in the age of abundance and the desire for electoral redemption in the wake of Democratic defeat in 1952, Schlesinger's call for a revitalized sense of public interest marked the beginning of a broad transformation of American liberalism. That transformation would be guided by Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" from the ADA who accepted the inadequacy of economic growth as the foundation for the public interest in the age of abundance and began casting for new ways to define the public interest and the nation's purpose. The desire to develop and articulate a national purpose for the post-scarcity era came to transcend the immediate political calculations that had set the initiative in motion and would ultimately find expression in the New Politics that emerged in the late 1960s.

---

[25] Leon Keyserling to Arthur Schlesinger Jr., December 12, 1955, pp. 1-2, Box P-17, AMS-JFK; Leon H. Keyserling, "'Liberal' Government is Not Enough," *Reporter*, May 31, 1956, 17-18.

**Qualitative Liberalism and the Cold War**

When Galbraith reflected on *The Affluent Society* in the preface to a later edition of the book, he revealed that prior to publication he had held no high expectations for its reception. He feared the book would be dismissed by the politically concerned public "as another semi-socialist case for public spending" and by his Keynesian friends as "apostasy." When the Soviet Union launched the first Sputnik in the autumn of 1957, Galbraith no longer harbored such concerns and knew his book "was home."[26] Demonstrating Soviet scientific and engineering advances as well as military potential, the launch of Sputnik dramatically called into question existing American values, priorities, and sense of national purpose. For many in the ADA and much of the American public, the demands of the Cold War—markedly heightened in the post-Sputnik era—provided the most visible and convincing examples of the consequences that resulted from the country's excessive focus on consumer goods and myopic commitment to economic growth. In the context of tense competition between the world's two superpowers, the efforts of Galbraith and Schlesinger in the 1950s to develop a qualitative liberalism rooted in the search for a greater national purpose than economic growth found the Cold War interests of the U.S. to be a natural source of inspiration for that search. Yet as much as Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" from the ADA saw the demands of the Cold War as a valuable means of advancing the public expenditures they desired, their appeals to the importance of strengthening the standing of the U.S. in its power contest with the Soviet Union also reflected a genuine commitment to waging the Cold War that stood in stark contrast with the foreign policy outlook they would adopt less than a decade later.

---

[26] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), xxviii.

While some historians have interpreted the qualitative liberalism of Galbraith and Schlesinger as reflecting the belief that the death of Joseph Stalin meant that the contest for military superiority with the Soviet Union could be given a lower priority, the new liberal vision they developed owed much to a desire to more vigorously engage the Cold War on all fronts, including the balance of military power between the world's superpowers.[27] As they contributed to the search for a new national purpose that gained momentum in the prosperous postwar years, Galbraith and Schlesinger advanced a two-fold argument for more dynamic American commitment to the challenges presented by the Cold War. As a starting point, they urged greater allocation of resources for the military as they highlighted the dangers of President Eisenhower's "New Look" foreign policy. Providing the necessary resources for the military would require a reorientation in priority from production of consumer goods to production of the military equipment needed to keep parity with—or surpass—the Soviet Union. Secondly, Galbraith and Schlesinger looked to qualitative liberalism and the search for a new national purpose as the means to once again make the U.S. an inspiring model for the many nations uncommitted or wavering in a world then seemingly defined by binary Cold War competition. Drawing on Galbraith and Schlesinger, Adlai Stevenson famously asked, "With the supermarket as our temple and the singing commercial as our litany, are we likely to fire the world with an irresistible vision of America's exalted purposes and inspiring way of life?[28]" For the ADA's two leading advocates of qualitative liberalism, the quality of life issues produced by the age of abundance would be a guiding light for addressing the concerns

---

[27] For example, see Kevin Mattson, *When America Was Great: The Fighting Faith of Postwar Liberalism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 140-171. One of the most extensive studies of qualitative liberalism, Mattson's chapter "Hopes: Liberalism and the Quality of Public Life," characterizes the qualitative liberalism of Galbraith and Schlesinger as reflecting a desire to renegotiate American engagement with the Cold War on less militaristic terms.

[28] Adlai Stevenson, "America's Image of Greatness," *Life*, May 30, 1960, 97.

raised by Stevenson's probing rhetorical question.

The excessive preoccupation with consumer goods Galbraith and Schlesinger saw during the Eisenhower era also represented for them a clear detriment to the military demands placed upon the U.S. in the Cold War. Galbraith, Schlesinger, the ADA, and a great many liberals in the 1950s vocally and repeatedly raised their concerns with the dearth of foreign policy options left to the U.S. as a result of the Eisenhower's administration's desire to wage the Cold War on the cheap. Schlesinger believed that military power became a controlling factor in the formulation of foreign policy not when there was too much of it but when there was too little. Highlighting the lack of flexibility produced by the nuclear-reliant "New Look" foreign policy of the Eisenhower administration, he remarked that the policy "gives us the choice between making faces at the enemy and blowing up the world."[29] For Schlesinger, it was that tense Cold War context and the failings of the Eisenhower administration that raised the stakes involved in the search for a new national purpose. By making that search a necessary element of the Cold War, Schlesinger's initiative became more readily defensible against charges that his critique of the mass consumption economy simply represented disdain of what he and others elites saw as the crass materialism of the masses. Reflecting both a desire to fend of such charges of elitism and a genuine response to the realities of the Cold War, Schlesinger insisted that the world struggle with the Soviet Union rendered the need for a new conviction of national purpose not a "matter of taste but a matter of desperate necessity."[30]

Galbraith and Schlesinger's critique of the "New Look" foreign policy shared the insistence of the later-released National Security Council Report 68 (NSC-68) on the vital

---

[29] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "Military Force: How Much and Where?," *Reporter*, August 4, 1953, 13, 15.
[30] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "The New Mood in Politics," *Esquire*, January 1960, 58.

necessity and economic feasibility of a massive defense establishment to counter Soviet power but diverged from the outlook of that document with questioning of the utility of economic growth for military production. The classified NSC-68 and the policies of the Truman administration both prioritized economic growth as a means of providing the funds required for massive rearmament and a vast expansion of the nation's global security responsibilities.[31] In contrast, Galbraith saw belief in the direct correlation between national military power and economic growth as a pervasive but ultimately dangerous illusion. Putting himself at odds with the "conventional wisdom" that had coalesced in the years since World War II, Galbraith stressed in *The Affluent Society* usable military production rather than gross economic output as the factor that would determine American military might in the Cold War.[32]

Galbraith's criticism of economic growth as a measure of military potential rested not on an opposition to economic growth in its own right but an objection to the nature of the growth that existed in the U.S. The size of the American economy increased, he noted, by increasing the demand for what it produced. Since consumer goods comprised the bulk of the nation's production, economic growth fundamentally depended upon increasing the public's desire for those consumer goods. Galbraith saw the widespread belief in the direct relationship between economic growth and actual or potential military power to be founded on a faulty and uncritical assumption. This assumption held that in the event of an emergency consumer wants could be swiftly suppressed with little trouble and the production that had fulfilled those desires would be made readily available for the military production demanded by the situation. In Galbraith's estimation, a society that achieves economic growth by expanding consumer wants will never have a significant margin available beyond its seeming needs. He

[31] Collins, *More*, 24.

[32] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1958), 164, 166. All subsequent citations refer to this edition.

convincingly observed that a society which during times of peace ascribes the satisfaction of consumer wants a transcendent importance and teaches its people that meeting those desires is vital to survival and basic happiness would not be able to "divest itself of those attitudes as simply and naturally as a man removes his nightshirt on arising." With the understanding that needs carefully nurtured through commercial advertising and political pressure would not be easily forgotten, Galbraith saw the nation's economic growth—sustained as it was by the production of consumer goods—not only as offering a poor indicator of potential military power but also as jeopardizing U.S. security interests in the Cold War.[33]

Schlesinger, like Galbraith, highlighted the inherent dangers of the American consumer goods economy to the military position of the U.S. in the Cold War. Channeling a national anxiety that lingered for some years after the launch of Sputnik, Schlesinger lamented that the Soviet Union, with a gross national product just 45 percent of that of the U.S., nevertheless maintained parity with American education and defense expenditures. By spending more than twice as large a proportion of its gross national product on education and defense, the Soviet Union trained the physicists and engineers that he believed had allowed it to take the lead in the production of intercontinental ballistic missiles and the contest for space.[34] While the so-called "missile gap" is now known to have been non-existent, the significance of this seeming failure of the U.S. to keep up with the Soviet Union in the production of nuclear missiles was a major source of anxiety for Schlesinger.[35] For Schlesinger and his many colleagues in the ADA who shared his concern over the "missile gap," the military demands of the Cold War remained real and pressing. The reason for the supposed "missile gap," he contended, was not

---

[33] Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 167-68.

[34] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "America's Domestic Future: Its Perils and Prospects," *Spelman Messenger*, February 1961, 17.

[35] On the myth of the "missile gap," see Christopher A. Preble, *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004).

that the U.S. could not afford to keep up with the Soviet Union but its detrimental prioritization of private interests over the public interest. Striking a hawkish tone grossly at odds with the foreign policy outlook he would assume in the coming years, Schlesinger maintained that when "the production and consumption of consumers' goods is regarded as the be-all and end-all of existence, the public sector—from schools to missiles—is systematically starved."[36]

While Galbraith and Schlesinger remained fully committed to maintaining the military power they deemed necessary to protect U.S. interests in the Cold War, they did not limit their understanding of the global struggle with the Soviet Union to military matters. As founding members of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), they were acutely attuned to the dynamics of the "Cultural Cold War" and believed strongly in the importance of the U.S. establishing itself as a positive and inspiring model of democratic freedom for intellectuals and nations across the world. The primary mission of the CCF in the years after its founding in 1950 involved the organization of non-Communist left intellectuals from the U.S and Europe with the aim of drawing upon their cultural influence to sway the intelligentsia of Western Europe away from its lingering sympathies with Communism. While it would be exposed in 1967 that the CCF had received the majority of its funding from the Central Intelligence Agency and had undoubtedly been influenced to some degree by the interests of its principal sponsor, the organization nevertheless expressed the genuine belief of many of its participants that American-style democracy and liberalism could be compelling to European intellectuals.[37] The effort to reach out to left-leaning European intellectuals who remained unconvinced by either Soviet Communism or American capitalist democracy would not be

[36] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "The Coming Shape of American Politics," *Progressive*, September, 1959, 26.
[37] Scott C. Kamen, "The Demise of the Congress for Cultural Freedom: Transatlantic Intellectual Consensus and 'Vital Center' Liberalism, 1950-1967" (M.A. thesis, University of Maryland, 2011), 1-4, 10-13.

helped by the materialistic consumer culture that permeated the political and social landscape of the U.S. Active involvement in the Paris-based CCF instilled in Galbraith and Schlesinger a sensitivity to how non-Americans perceived American culture and the effect that projections of crass materialism could have on those perceptions.

The Cold War context of the cultural sensibility that Galbraith and Schlesinger brought from the CCF to their critique of American consumer culture and popular culture helped to defend against charges that they were simply expressing subjective snobbery. Galbraith and Schlesinger were not alone among American intellectuals who found the Cold War an effective medium through which to advance cultural and social criticisms that would have otherwise had limited influence. When Vice President Richard Nixon bluntly equated kitchen appliances with freedom during his famous 1959 "Kitchen Debate" with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, many American intellectuals found a ready audience for their probing critiques of the alarmingly narrow vision of American freedom being broadcast to the world.[38] Before the Kitchen Debate put the issues of consumer politics before an international audience, Galbraith found the Cold War an effective arena for articulating cultural and social criticisms that he would have held to be true regardless of the struggle between the world's superpowers. Still, the context of a Cold War struggle that pitted the American and Soviet ideologies against each other magnified the meaning of those criticisms and demonstrated Galbraith's genuine concern that a shallow and materialistic conception of American democracy would serve as a poor source of inspiration for the world. Projecting his conviction that the U.S. had more to offer to the world than dishwashers and clothes dryers, he charged that those who identified freedom "with the greatest possible range of choice of consumers' goods are only confessing

[38] Mattson, *When America Was Great*, 147.

their exceedingly simple-minded and mechanical view of man and his liberties." Galbraith believed the U.S. stood its best chance of success in the Cultural Cold War not by adhering to a "supermarket theory of liberty" but by a revitalization of American culture, society, and politics that would reveal the true potential of its system to the world.[39]

Schlesinger, like Galbraith, saw the state of American society as an integral element of American foreign policy. Despite accusations from liberals such as Max Ascoli and Leon Keyserling that his views smacked of isolationism, he remained firm in his insistence on the direct relationship between conditions at home and influence abroad. Avowing of his internationalist credentials in response to such criticism, Schlesinger highlighted the prioritization of private wants as one of the greatest impediments to the projection of American power—both hard and soft—in the Cold War. While Americans "overstuff" themselves as individuals, Schlesinger opined, the public sector needs so vital in the context of the Cold War went unmet. Schlesinger firmly believed that the existing prioritization of private wants over public needs would have to be corrected if the U.S. were to compete with Communism. He maintained that "we cannot convincingly champion free opportunity and civilized values abroad when too many of our own people linger at home in economic want and cultural mediocrity." Advances in American society and culture would, in his opinion, generate an enthusiasm across the world with untold benefits for the position of the U.S. in the Cold War. According to Schlesinger, "nothing would go farther to restore world confidence in American leadership and purpose than a resumption of forward motion in our own society."[40]

---

[39] John Kenneth Galbraith, "How Much Should a Country Consume?," in *Perspectives on Conservation*, ed. Henry Jarrett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958), 96; Cristina Carbone, "Staging the Kitchen Debate: How Splitnik Got Normalized in the United States" in *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European Users*, ed. Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 70-71.

[40] Max Ascoli, "The Scarcity of Ideas," May 3, 1956; Keyserling, "'Liberal' Government is Not Enough," 18; Schlesinger, "The Coming Shape of American Politics," 26, 29.

The search for a national purpose greater than economic growth urged by Galbraith and Schlesinger proved highly responsive to the times. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the Cold War provided a ready justification and vital source of energy for that search. Their pursuit of a greater national purpose, however, had no intrinsic ties to the Cold War and would later find outlets in other fields of American life. When Galbraith and Schlesinger along with their political descendants in the New Politics movement continued the search for a greater national purpose in the latter half of the 1960s, the civil rights movement, opposition to the Vietnam War, and the development of a more participatory political system sustained the pursuit in much the same way the Cold War had a decade earlier. Just as the Cold War had provided Galbraith and Schlesinger with a compelling defense to charges that their critique of economic growth and consumer culture reflected a desire to impose their elite and subjective views on American society, the major goals of the New Politics allowed its advocates to imbue their search for a greater national purpose with a broad sense of meaning and necessity. While the search for a new national purpose in the post-scarcity era would later lead the "old liberals" of the ADA and the activists of the New Politics to reject many of the dogmas of the Cold War, the origins of that search owed much to the concerns that defined the global power struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

**Spiritual Unemployment**

Reflecting on the pervasive conformity and dwindling idealism that accompanied growing prosperity in the 1950s, Schlesinger declared at the close of the decade that "spiritual unemployment can be as powerful a motive for change as economic unemployment."[41]

[41] Schlesinger, "The Coming Shape of American Politics," 25.

Schlesinger's secular perspective meant that his notion of "spiritual unemployment" entailed no specifically religious or theological concerns but did express his understanding of the failure of consumer abundance to alleviate the mounting non-material discontents of American society. He saw the growing "homogenization" of American society as a major source of the cultural, moral, and psychological anxieties that increasingly plagued the nation. The growing reality of a society in which the people watched the same television shows, listened to the same singing commercials, and bought the same consumer products filled Schlesinger with considerable dread but also represented for him a challenge that could serve as a source of revitalization for liberalism. Diverging from the class- and labor-based traditions that had long sustained liberalism, he called on liberals to see "that the present enemy is not a conspiracy of wealth seeking to grind the faces of the poor, but a conspiracy of blandness, seeking to bury all tension and conflict in American life under a mess of platitude and piety—not the hard-faced men, but the faceless men." The most urgent task for liberalism, according to Schlesinger, would be to develop the social and political means to provide the nation with "the benefits of a mass economy without the cost of a mass culture."[42]

Engagement with the threat of totalitarianism profoundly shaped how Galbraith and Schlesinger viewed the consequences of mass popular culture for the autonomy of individual Americans and the vitality of American society. The rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s provided them and many liberal intellectuals of their generation with a distinct awareness of the dangerous potential held by mass media and culture to isolate individuals from each other, form them into a uniform audience, and manipulate that audience

[42] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "Where Does the Liberal Go From Here?," *New York Times Magazine*, August 4, 1957, 38.

through propaganda.[43] The active involvement of Galbraith and Schlesinger in the CCF during the 1950s further heightened their sensitivity to totalitarian manipulation of the masses. Created to repudiate and oppose totalitarianism of both the left and the right, the CCF provided an institutional outlet for European intellectuals who had directly experienced the horrors of Communism and fascism. The experience of working with prominent European intellectuals such as Raymond Aron and Ignazio Silone under the auspices of the CCF instilled in Galbraith and Schlesinger a vivid appreciation for intellectual freedom and autonomy.[44]

While the perspective of Galbraith and Schlesinger on the dangers of mass culture grew out of their experience with totalitarianism, neither thought American society faced a genuine internal totalitarian threat. They believed the eminent danger to American society was not to be found in the prospect of it becoming totalitarian but a consumer culture that developed and encouraged conformity. Schlesinger saw in "the pursuit of spiritual cure-alls, in the obsession with gadgets, in apathy and in boredom" a threat to the national instincts that sustained individual autonomy in American society. The danger to individual autonomy would not be addressed simply by maintaining legal protections for intellectual and cultural freedom. The real challenge, he maintained, was not just to bring about a society in which people can speak their minds but to bring about a society in which they want to speak their minds and have something to say. Schlesinger believed that McCarthyism had confused the nation about the real threat to intellectual freedom. For Schlesinger, conformity was "the greater danger not when it is coerced but when it is sought—when any deviation from what sociologists call the peer-group fills the individual with anxiety and guilt."[45] In his estimation, the potential for this

---

[43] Mattson, *When America Was Great*, 145.

[44] Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and Post-war American Hegemony* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 14, 42-44, 114.

[45] Schlesinger, "Where Does the Liberal Go From Here?," 38.

willful drive towards conformity would become more acute if the American people in an age of growing opportunity for leisure sought distraction through a mass media that rendered them increasingly indistinguishable from one another.[46]

Expressing similar concerns with the harmful potential of conformity, Galbraith saw the dangers of mass culture as deeply intertwined with the incessant demand for ever increasing production. In *The Affluent Society*, he advanced a probing critique of the ways in which businesses manufactured consumer demand for their goods and services to sustain otherwise seemingly unnecessary increases in production. In an age of abundance, he contended, desire for the fruits of increased production did not arise from spontaneous consumer need. Rather, consumer wants had become a servant to the process of production. Galbraith made clear his considerable misgivings with an arrangement in which a near universal insistence on continued increases in production demanded that consumer wants "be effectively contrived" through "the forces of modern salesmanship" wielding the powerful force of mass culture.[47]

Although Galbraith and Schlesinger often articulated their criticism of a mass culture defined by commercial interests as a detriment to the U.S. position in the Cultural Cold War, they strongly believed that this trend represented a source of concern in its own right. When detached from the imperatives of advancing American Cold War interests, however, criticism of mass consumer culture in the U.S. faced a much higher level of scrutiny and required far greater efforts of justification. Schlesinger faced the heightened difficulty of justifying his critical perspective on consumerism apart from the demands of the Cold War by planting the seemingly new social and cultural concerns of qualitative liberalism firmly within the liberal

[46] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "Our New-Found Leisure Won't Bore Us If Some of It Is Employed in Reading," *Saturday Evening Post*, April 18, 1959, 10.
[47] Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 152-160.

tradition. He looked to the deeper roots of an expansive liberal tradition that stretched far beyond the bread-and-butter perspective that sustained the New Deal and Fair Deal to demonstrate the historical basis for treating the quality of American culture and society as a decidedly political issue and legitimate object of liberal concern. Putting forward his understanding that American liberalism has sprung from two main sources, Schlesinger insisted that the "vindication of the individual against moral and spiritual frustration" represented a traditional wellspring of liberalism just as much as the "vindication of the individual against economic privation and despair.[48]

Schlesinger further established the liberal legitimacy of the social and cultural issues that he believed would define liberalism in the age of abundance by insisting that the predominately economic outlook of the New Deal and Fair Deal represented a greater aberration from the main current of the liberal tradition than the perspective of qualitative liberalism. In the series of articles in which he sketched the contours of qualitative liberalism, Schlesinger reminded his readers that despite the immediacy of the Great Depression and the New Deal, the struggle against economic depression had not been the central issue of traditional American liberalism. Illustrating the point, he contended that while depression had produced the New Deal, it was not the impetus for "the ages of Jefferson or Jackson or Lincoln or Theodore Roosevelt or Wilson." Rather, the central concern of liberalism throughout American history had been the status of and development of individual freedom and autonomy in a mass society. With the understanding that this concern was not only political and economic but also moral and cultural, Schlesinger insisted Walt Whiteman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Herman Melville be seen as embodiments

[48] Schlesinger, "Where Does the Liberal Go From Here?," 7.

of the liberal tradition just as much as Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson.[49] Schlesinger hoped that by highlighting the historical roots of liberal concern with non-material issues, qualitative liberalism would be seen not as a departure from the liberal tradition but as a return to its deeper essence.

Schlesinger's call for a liberalism attuned to the less tangible needs of the post-scarcity era sparked significant debate and attracted considerable criticism from fellow liberals who took issue with what they rightly saw as the Harvard historian's complacency on economic deprivation. The criticism drawn by Schlesinger's assertion of the pressing importance or the moral, social, and cultural dimensions of liberalism in an age of abundance conveys the significant difficulties to be found in justifying the non-material concerns of liberalism in isolation from the demands of the Cold War. As the leading voice of such criticism, Leon Keyserling expressed little patience for Schlesinger's claim that "the economic problem at home seems to be fixed up for the moment." For Keyserling, the urgent and essential task for liberals continued to be improvement of the material wellbeing necessary to sustain the genuine freedom of individuals. In contrast to Schlesinger, he saw this economic task as having been the central concern of the American liberal tradition. While Schlesinger maintained that economic circumstances had not been the driving factor behind Jeffersonian democracy, Jacksonian democracy, the anti-slavery movement, or the Progressive movement, Keyserling believed that these movements "were directed toward the improvement of the relative and absolute economic and social status of the common man; they were not interested in what he read." By making light of the elitist and subjective overtones he sensed in Schlesinger's political perspective, Keyserling sought to place cultural matters beyond the

[49] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The Challenge to Liberalism," in *An Outline of Man's Knowledge of the Modern World*, ed. Lyman Bryson (Garden City, NY: Nelson Doubleday, 1960), 472-73.

remit of liberal politics. Unlike Schlesinger, Keyserling insisted he "would let each citizen decide for himself whether he prefers Melville to Mary Roberts Rinehart, or whether he would rather listen to the Fifth Symphony than Elvis Presley."[50]

The relative complacency of Schlesinger on economic issues in contrast to his pressing concern with the mass culture as a political issue, however, ran fully in line with the central intellectual currents of the time. Sales of over 50 thousand copies of *The Affluent Society* in hard copy, hundreds of thousands of copies of David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* and William Whyte's *The Organization Man* in paperback, *Dr. Zhivago*'s place atop the bestseller list, the boom of religious figures such has Billy Graham, and the rise of the Beat Generation all represented for Schlesinger "the desire for reappraisal, the groping for something better." These examples of discontent, he believed, marked a turn from the stagnation of the Eisenhower era that would provide a much-needed source for liberal Democratic electoral redemption and renewed sense of national purpose.[51]

Schlesinger also came to the conviction that the weariness of the Eisenhower years was drawing to a close through his understanding of an inherent cyclical rhythm to national affairs that he inherited from his father—the influential Harvard historian, Arthur Schlesinger Sr. Adapting his father's historical perspective, the younger Schlesinger saw the Eisenhower era as the result of national exhaustion after two decades under activist presidents who had called for the intense political commitment of the American people in response to a nearly perpetual torrent of crises. The "Eisenhower lull," he contended, represented a natural and predictable example of the way in which change in the U.S. had "always taken pace by fits and starts, with the nation rushing ahead until stopped by exhaustion and then standing still until boredom plus

[50] Leon Keyserling, "Eggheads and Politics," *New Republic*, October 27, 1958, 17.
[51] Schlesinger, "The Coming Shape of American Politics," 24.

the piling up of new problems induce forward motion." Schlesinger cited the example of the 1920s as a compelling example of what was to come. From his vantage point, spiritual and psychological discontent characterized the 1920s just as much as material prosperity. Schlesinger saw the defection of writers such as Charles Beard, Sinclair Lewis, H. L. Mencken, and Walter Lippmann from the "official creed" of the existing social order of the time as highly symptomatic of the period's mounting non-material discontents. From his perspective, the 1920s had become "a decade of billowing ferment and criticism and agitation and hope" that would likely have soon produced a new political dynamism and Democratic electoral renaissance even without the disruptive impact of the Great Depression. Schlesinger conceded that "it may seem odd to ask working politicians to pay attention to cultural matters" but cited the example of the 1920s as strong evidence that "a period of acute intellectual discontent is likely to foreshadow a period of political revolt."[52]

The political revolt against the complacent consensus of the Eisenhower era that Schlesinger expected to emerge out of the period's intellectual and cultural discontents represented for him a means of providing the American people with a sense of dedication and purpose that had been lost in the age of abundance. The emerging political epoch that he anticipated would be defined by a search for the dynamism and purpose that had once been provided by events such as the Great Depression and World War II. Schlesinger opined that although the threat of Communism and danger of nuclear annihilation ought to provide a similar source of inspiration they did not seem to do so. Where the Cold War failed to provide such answers to questions of national purpose, he believed the existing goal of adding to

[52] Schlesinger, "The Coming Shape of American Politics," 22-24.

material comforts would certainly do no better.[53] Historians have cast doubt as to whether any political initiative would be able to address the myriad of intangible discontents that Schlesinger and Galbraith took to be indications the country lacked a compelling and meaningful sense of national purpose. Christopher Lasch maintained that liberals and radicals had long called for the betterment of American culture but had seldom believed so clearly that the answers could be found in a purely political approach.[54] Given the contention of Galbraith and Schlesinger that the central issues in the age of abundance were cultural, moral, and psychological, Richard Pells expressed skepticism as to how a political solution could achieve the improvement in the *quality* of life they desired.[55] While these and other similar interpretations raise important skepticisms of the potential for their means to achieve their aims, Galbraith and Schlesinger did not believe that politics would provide all of the answers to the problems of prosperity that they detailed. They did, however, consider a shift in the social balance away from private wants to the needs of the public interest to be an effective starting point.

Whether or not politics held the potential to address the types of issues highlighted by Galbraith and Schlesinger, the 1960s would see the development of a far-reaching conviction that they could as the belief that a wide range of new cultural and moral issues were integral to politics came to sustain the outlook of the decade's most visible political developments. Liberal politics from the New Frontier to the New Politics as well as the radicalism of the New Left all reflected a clear belief that politics held both the potential and the responsibility to address the array of new non-material issues that defined the post-scarcity era. Though

---

[53] Schlesinger, "The Coming Shape of American Politics," 24.

[54] Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 310.

[55] Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 173.

Galbraith would find a growing number of intellectuals, activists, and politicians in the 1960s who shared his understanding of the urgency of facing these new issues, he was under no illusion that the task would be a straightforward one. Whereas the older economic and material aims were clear and direct, the challenge of improving the quality of American life would be anything but. That this imitative would require a willingness to pay for it, however, he was very clear. For Galbraith, one certainty was that "most of the things we must do to reveal the quality of our society will cost money—public money."[56]

**Social Balance in an Affluent Society**

Often vague and abstract, the ideas that underpinned the qualitative liberalism of Galbraith and Schlesinger would be put into their most concrete terms over the course of a far-reaching debate on social balance. As it rose to second place on the *New York Times* best-seller list—an unlikely place for a book written by an academic economist—*The Affluent Society* focused national attention on the issue of social balance.[57] In one of the most memorable and oft-quoted passages of the book, Galbraith painted a stark picture of the consequences of social imbalance:

> The family which takes is mauve and cerise, air-conditioned, power-steered, and power-braked automobile out for a tour passes though cities that are badly paved, made hideous by litter, blighted buildings, billboards, and posts for wires that should have long since been put underground. They pass on into a countryside that has been rendered largely invisible by commercial art...They picnic on exquisitely packaged food from a portable icebox by a polluted stream and go on to spend the night at a park which is a menace to public health and morals. Just before dozing off on an air mattress, beneath a nylon tent, amid the stench of decaying refuse, they may reflect vaguely on the curious unevenness of their blessings. Is this, indeed, the American

[56] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Liberal Hour* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1960), 27, 62.
[57] Collins, *More*, 132.

genius?[58]

Although the passage clearly demonstrated Galbraith's aesthetic aversion to what had become of the American landscape, it also reflected his more pressing concern with the "private opulence and public squalor" that he believed defined the postwar era.

In the book, Galbraith traced the roots of pervasive preoccupation with private production at the expense of public services back to an era of scarcity that had only recently come to a close. In the world into which the study of economics was born, the four most urgent requirements of human life were food, clothing, shelter, and physical security. As the first three lent themselves to private production, public services came to be seen at best as a necessary evil. Galbraith saw the prevailing economic attitudes of the postwar era as anachronistically rooted in the material scarcity of that earlier time. From his perspective, the failure to genuinely adjust to a world of affluence in which private production no longer needed to be enshrined with transcendent importance contributed to the highly uneven relationship between the supply of privately produced goods and services and those of the state or what he termed the "social balance." For Galbraith, scenes such as the feature-loaded family car in a repugnant public park would be commonplace so long as private wants continued to be seen as inherently superior to public desires.[59]

As it challenged the "conventional wisdom" of the postwar era and stirred an ongoing national debate on social balance, Galbraith's influential 1958 book found a highly receptive audience in the ADA. Unsurprisingly, Schlesinger celebrated a book that confirmed his views on the failure of the richest country in the history of the world to allocate the necessary public

[58] Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 253.
[59] Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 2, 3, 133-134, 255, 267.

resources to build an effective educational system, maintain its roads and parks, keep up with the Soviet Union, or to even run a decent postal system.[60] When Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois—a founding member of the ADA and former professor of economics at the University of Chicago—presented the Tamiment Institute Annual Book of the Year Award to Galbraith for the *The Affluent Society*, he praised the book and agreed with the premise that the next advance in American society should be the satisfaction of pressing public needs and wants.[61] In a glowing review of the book, Carl Auerbach, also a founding member of the ADA, declared that "to read it is to acquire an understanding of the realities of American economic society, and a new vision of its possibilities."[62] Even Leon Keyserling, unquestionably the organization's leading partisan of economic growth, hailed the book as a "ringing declaration of the primacy of our neglected public needs" as he gave copies of it to his friends with the insistence that "everyone should read the book."[63] Years after its publication, the influence of *The Affluent Society* still ran high in the ADA. Speaking before an audience of ADA members in 1964, ADA National Director Edward Hollander drew on Galbraith's understanding of the revolutionary implications of postwar affluence with repeated references to the age of abundance, private opulence and public squalor, poverty in the midst of plenty, and other major themes from the book to explain the economic and social circumstances faced by the

---

[60] Schlesinger, "The Coming Shape of American Politics," 24, 26.

[61] Paul H. Douglas, "How Affluent Is Our Society?," *New Leader*, February 2, 1959, 17; "Founders of Americans for Democratic Action," p.2, Folder 3, Box 9, M97-135, ADA. Douglas served on the faculty of the Department of Economics at the University of Chicago before the department's near-universal turn to conservative economic perspectives. In the 1920s and 1930s, Douglas earned significant recognition for his groundbreaking work on growth economics. For more, see Richard Parker, *John Kenneth Galbraith: His Life, His Politics, His Economics* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 324.

[62] Carl Auerbach, "Economic Realities," *Progressive*, August, 1958, 25; "ADA's Co-Founder Resigns," *New York Times*, February 28, 1968.

[63] Leon Keyserling to John Kenneth Galbraith, July 3, 1963, Box 40, John Kenneth Galbraith Personal Papers, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA (hereafter cited as JKG); Leon Keyserling to John Kenneth Galbraith, November 14, 1958, Box 40, JKG.

country.[64]

The primary point of contention between Galbraith and other ADA liberals was not to be found in his insistence on greater expenditures for public services. Few liberals at the time would have taken issue with a call for greater public spending. Rather, Galbraith ran afoul of the leading economic policy makers in the ADA with the specifics of how he believed improved public services and other shared liberal goals could and should be met. Galbraith pushed up against deeply entrenched assumptions of liberal economic thinking when he highlighted the inflationary dangers inherent to the ever greater push for economic growth. In contrast to many of his ADA colleagues who displayed an unwavering confidence in economic growth as the foundation for social progress, he did not see the specter of inflation as a bogeyman created by conservatives to justify opposition to public spending. According to Galbraith, not only did increased production fail to offer a solution for inflation, growth itself and the consumer purchasing power that resulted from it represented one the most significant inflationary factors in the American economy. Furthermore, he contended, the need to provide the jobs that sustained such growth necessitated an unhappy choice between an economy under the constant inflationary strain of the wages paid by those jobs or the consignment of some part of the labor force to unemployment. Citing the general inability of wages for public employees to keep up with rising prices and the resulting deterioration of public services during past periods of inflation, Galbraith characterized inflation as one of the first enemies of social balance.[65] When Galbraith addressed the ADA's Annual Roosevelt Day Dinner in 1959, he further underscored the danger of rising prices as he gently chided his fellow liberals for

---

[64] Edward D. Hollander, Speech delivered in Akron, Ohio to the ADA Ohio State Convention, December 5, 1964, p. 1, Folder 3, Box 33, M97-135, ADA.

[65] Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 215-16, 265-266, 291, 293

undue complacency on the "highly reactionary phenomenon" of inflation.[66]

Even more than the issue of inflation—a concern that Galbraith and growth advocates in the ADA shared, if to varying degrees—support in *The Affluent Society* for sales tax as a means of redressing social imbalance proved to be an unavoidable sticking point for many of the book's liberal readers. As the burden of sales taxes fell disproportionately on those with lower incomes who could least afford them, the ADA and American liberals more broadly had long opposed sales taxes and championed the merits of the progressive federal income tax. Opposition to sales taxes, Galbraith bemoaned, "made the liberal the effective enemy of social balance." He looked to an expanded use of sales taxes not as a substitute for the progressive income tax but as a complementary source of revenue that would provide the necessary resources for public services that income taxes had continually failed to provide. All too often, Galbraith maintained, revenue from income taxes were pre-empted for military purposes or compromised when the debate steered toward issues of economic inequality that inevitably resulted in a liberal-conservative truce for lower taxes at all income levels and thus no hope of an improvement to social balance. Holding the view that American society was affluent in privately produced goods but poor in public services, he believed the most obvious solution to be the taxation of the former to provide for the latter. Though Galbraith conceded that expanded sales taxes would present some hardship for the poor who would have to procure the essentials of life at a higher cost, he insisted that improvement of social balance represented both the nation's most pressing challenge and one of the first prerequisites to raising the poor out of poverty.[67]

---

[66] John Kenneth Galbraith, "The State of Liberalism," Address at the Annual Roosevelt Day Dinner, January 31, 1959, Washington, D.C., pp. 8-9, Box 862, JKG. Excerpts from this address were published in "Some Unfinished Business of Liberals," *New Republic*, February 9, 1959, 7.

[67] Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 312-16.

Many in the ADA embraced and celebrated *The Affluent* Society's call for an improved social balance in principle but rejected Galbraith's prescriptions for achieving that balance and remained essentially unmoved in their commitment to economic growth. Senator Douglas celebrated Galbraith's call for greater public services but believed the book exaggerated the reach of affluence and underestimated the scale of poverty that continued to exist. In a provocation not to be taken kindly in liberal circles, Douglas charged Galbraith with "carrying on an antiphonal chorus with the National Association of Manufacturers and urging the adoption of the sales tax."[68] ADA National Chairman Robert Nathan challenged Galbraith's preoccupation with the danger of inflation when he maintained that during the past century there had been almost no inflation except that associated with war and declared that he did not consider the prospect of inflation to be a major problem.[69]

Keyserling echoed these criticisms and advanced others as he became the most outspoken liberal critic of *The Affluent Society* and the strongest voice of opposition to its key principles within the ADA. Though he praised the book for bringing attention to the nation's neglected public services, he diverged from Galbraith in viewing a concerted effort for greater economic growth not as impediment to improving public services but as the only viable means of producing the resources necessary for that improvement. The former CEA chairman maintained that Galbraith's desired expansion in pubic expenditures would entail such an increase in spending that it could not be achieved solely by a shift from private expenditures. High levels of economic growth would be needed.[70] Keyserling saw Galbraith's "curious"

---

[68] Douglas, "How Affluent Is Our Society?," 17.

[69] ADA Board Meeting, Discussion Summary, October 1959, p. 1, Folder 199, Americans for Democratic Action Records, 1932-1965 (Microfilm Corporation of American Microfilm Publication, roll 46) (hereafter cited as ADA-MF), Box 67, Series 2, Mss 3, Americans for Democratic Action Records, 1932-1965, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI (hereafter cited as Mss 3, ADA).

[70] Keyserling, "Eggheads and Politics," 14-17.

insistence that improved public services could only be achieved through the sacrifice of equally important economic growth and private consumption not as "new" but as a "reversion to earlier 'equalitarian' thinking, based upon the economic and political impracticability of suppressing one valid interest in order to serve another." Like Galbraith, Keyserling believed that material progress in the postwar years had fundamentally rewritten the rules of the American economy, but differed strongly with the Harvard economist on the meaning and implications of that economic revolution. For Keyserling, the "promise of the new technology" that had vastly enlarged the country's productive capacity meant that choice between public and private affluence that Galbraith sought to foist upon liberals was wholly unnecessary. With a continually growing economy, America could have tailfins and better parks.[71]

Differing understandings of the reach of poverty and affluence in the U.S. provided the fundamental basis of the differences between Galbraith and Keyserling on the issue of social balance. Keyserling convincingly insisted that the living standards of the more than 40 million Americans who lived in some form of poverty would not be improved simply by a greater prioritization of public services. Galbraith's belief in an improved social balance as a remedy for poverty, he charged, amounted to a writing off of those who currently lived in poverty on the basis of a distant hope that improved education and other public services would eventually allow for their children or grandchildren to escape poverty. According to Keyserling, the removal of poverty was essentially a matter of improving the income of individuals through advances in production which provided work for more people at better pay, social security expansion, improved minimum wage laws, and other measures directed at increasing private

[71] Leon Keyserling, "Leon Keyserling on Economic Expansion," *New Republic*, November 17, 1958, 17.

income. With the understanding of poverty as insufficient income to consume enough clothing, housing, food, and other necessities, he found it odd that those such as Galbraith "who disparage the expansion of private consumption stress the liquidation of poverty." Accordingly, Keyserling had little patience for what he saw as the "fashionable" call made by Galbraith and other liberals to cut back on the private consumption of both luxuries and necessities using expanded sales taxes in order to make resources available for public needs.[72]

The critiques leveled by leading voices in the ADA at the call for a prioritization of public needs over private incomes advanced by Galbraith and Schlesinger underscored the essentially middle-class orientation of the qualitative liberalism they espoused. Galbraith and Schlesinger were not blind to the continued existence of poverty in the 1950s, but generally did not see material insecurity and economic inequality as pressing issues until the civil rights movement focused national attention on the enduring scale and depth of poverty in the 1960s. Initially developed in response to Democratic losses in the 1952 elections, the qualitative liberalism of Galbraith and Schlesinger rested more on a desire to reach out to the growing ranks of middle-class voters and define the quality-of-life issues that concerned them than an impulse to address the plight of those who had yet to benefit from the nation's growing affluence.

As much as liberals were drawn to the vision of a post-scarcity society painted by Galbraith and Schlesinger, the desire to appeal to an electorate broader than the middle class

---

[72] Leon H. Keyserling, "Less for Private Spending," *New Republic*, May 23, 1960, 15-16. The issues that defined Keyserling's criticism of *The Affluent Society* in the late 1950s and early 1960s would continue to inform his insistence on the fundamental inadequacies of existing antipoverty programs for years to come. For examples of how his critical perspective on *The Affluent Society* and Galbraith's general emphasis on improved social balance as a means of addressing poverty shaped his later criticism of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty, see A. Philip Randolph Institute, *A "Freedom Budget" for All Americans: Budgeting Our Resources, 1966-1975 to Achieve Freedom from Want* (New York: A. Philip Randolph Institute, 1966), esp. 38-42; Leon H. Keyserling, "What Has Happened to ADA?," memorandum, January 17, 1968, pp. 12C-21, Folder 16, Box 36, M97-135, ADA.

and the unappealing nature of their specific policy recommendations ensured that Keyserling's views on the vital importance of economic growth continued to define liberal politics both inside and outside of the ADA. The debate carried on between Galbraith and Keyserling in the pages of the *New Republic* and in the ADA also came to the fore in the Democratic Advisory Council (DAC). A policy group created after the loses of the 1956 election to develop ideas for bringing Democrats back to power, the DAC featured Keyserling on its advisory committee on economic policy and Galbraith as the committee's chairman. Keyserling effectively won the debate in the DAC, with the group in 1958 committing to an annual economic growth rate of 5 percent that would later be enshrined in the 1960 Democratic Party platform.[73]

Keyserling's growth perspective enjoyed a similarly successful fate in the ADA. A widely distributed ADA pamphlet on inflation bore the mark of Keyserling's influence in presenting rising prices not as a possible consequence of economic growth and full employment but as an empty specter utilized by the Eisenhower administration to justify opposition to federal spending that it would have opposed irregardless of inflationary dangers.[74] Even more than the publication of that pamphlet and other publications similarly suffused with Keyserling's perspective, the policy resolutions passed by the ADA during the Eisenhower and Kennedy years served to identify the organization with the former CEA chairman's far-reaching belief in economic growth. Without Galbraith's presence on the ADA National Board or the domestic policy commissions that developed and revised the organization's policy resolutions, Keyserling ensured that his position was displayed, in his

---

[73] Collins, *More*, 16.

[74] Précis of Pamphlet on the Budget and Inflation, January 18, 1960, p. 1, Folder 200, (ADA-MF, roll 46), Box 68, Series 2, Mss 3, ADA.

own words, "on all fours with the ADA platform."[75] As the vice-chairman charged with economic policy, Keyserling secured an ADA resolution in 1959 calling for a commitment to a 5 percent growth rate that differed little from the one he had recently pressed through the DAC. That same year—less than a year after the publication of *The Affluent Society*—the ADA rejected one of the book's primary policy recommendations when it advanced a newly explicit denunciation of sales taxes with the insistence that they were a fundamental element of the nation's "economically wrong and socially unjust tax policies."[76]

The early 1960s saw little change in Keyserling's heavy influence on the ADA's economic perspective. In 1960, the ADA went further in its rejection of sales taxes, insisting that they were wrong in principle and should be replaced by a sufficiently progressive income tax. Expressing little affinity with Galbraith's concerns for growth as a source of inflationary pressure, the economic policy resolution passed that year plainly declared, "we reject categorically the view that inflation is the nation's most serious problem, or even the nation's most serious economic problem." The answer to inflationary pressures, the resolution insisted, was to be found in still greater levels of production, employment, and growth.[77] The far-reaching belief in growth that underpinned that and other economic resolutions would be put on display for all to see when the ADA selected "Growth for the Future" as the theme for its 1962 convention.[78]

As the American economy gained steam under the Kennedy administration, belief in the far-reaching potential of economic growth and the demands of political pragmatism

---

[75] Leon Keyserling to Editor of *ADA World*, March 28, 1959, p. 2, Folder 117, (ADA-MF, roll 83), Box 13, Series 4, Mss 3, ADA.

[76] "Goals for America," *ADA World*, May, 1959, 3A; "Domestic Policy, Fully Employment," *ADA World*, February-March, 1959, 1A.

[77] "Domestic Policy, An Expanding Dynamic Economy," *ADA World*, February, 1960, 1A, 2A.

[78] "Call to the ADA XV Anniversary Convention, Mayflower Hotel, Washington D.C., April 27-29," convention pamphlet, Folder 134, (ADA-MF, roll 84), Box 14, Series 4, Mss 3, ADA.

combined to ensure that the ADA's economic outlook would continue to be shaped by Keyserling. Robert Lekachman—a professor of economics at Columbia University, sometimes participant in ADA conferences, and close associate of many in the organization—saw clearly the political difficulty to be found in following Galbraith's recommendations. The "Galbrathian liberal," he observed, would face the "painful necessity of gritting his teeth and seeking to reallocate demand from private to public purposes via higher taxes."[79] Keyserling, on the other hand, called on developers of liberal policy and the American taxpayers to make no such sacrifices. As long as leading liberals continued to believe that economic growth could remedy poverty and improve the nation's social balance without any substantial tax increases, Galbraith's proposals would struggle to find widespread acceptance.

Nevertheless, the celebration of Galbraith's insights into the economy and society of postwar America by liberals in and outside of the ADA—despite the political difficulty of acting on them—reflected a widespread liberal disillusion with the values and direction of American society and politics that would significantly shape liberal political thinking in the years to come. Many liberal observers shared Galbraith's concern with a society that pursued cars with extravagant tailfins and other unnecessary consumer goods at the expense of the parks, roads, schools, and hospitals needed to improve the quality of American life. Although he conceded that Keyserling's proposals were understandably more "ingratiating" than those of Galbraith, Lekachman reflected the sentiment of many liberals when he associated the former with the status quo and lamented that "no sensitive person can rejoice at the image we present to others and the image we present to ourselves."[80] When liberals came to accept the limitations of economic growth for achieving their goals in the 1960s, the ideas developed by

[79] Robert Lekachman, "Liberals and the U.S. Economy," *New Leader*, January 26, 1959, 6.
[80] Lekachman, "Liberals and the U.S. Economy," 6.

Galbriath and Schlesinger in the 1950s would no longer be limited to attracting intellectual sympathy. They would have a profound political impact.

**The Legacy of Qualitative Liberalism**

At the onset of the 1960s, with the Vietnam War and other divisive developments that would emerge during the decade yet to appear on the horizon, the significance of divergent liberal understandings of the post-scarcity era developed over the past decade remained indistinct. With few concrete issues apart from inflation and sales taxes to separate them, Galbraith, Schlesinger, and Keyserling continued to see and articulate their differences as differences of emphasis rather than substance. Their desire to emphasize consensus was, in fact, well grounded by their positions at the time. Galbraith and Schlesinger harbored no opposition to economic growth per se just as Keyserling offered no disagreement with the need for improved public services. The differences between them seemed to center not on goals but on the means for achieving them and their relative priority. The significant consensus between Galbraith, Keyserling, and Schlesinger and their frequently displayed desire to accentuate that consensus, however, masked the degree to which qualitative liberalism represented a substantial divergence from the liberalism that had initially taken shape in the postwar years.

The impulse of ADA liberals to present a united front against conservatives and other genuine opponents of shared liberal goals coupled with the political difficulty of acting on the policies that underpinned qualitative liberalism obscured much of the meaning and significance of the political vision developed by Galbraith and Schlesinger. Consequently, many historians have overlooked both the substantive departure of qualitative liberalism and

the meaning of its critical socio-economic perspective in their portrayals of liberal thought in the 1950s and early 1960s. Allen Matusow and Doug Rossinow characterize postwar liberals as displaying no inclination to challenge the economic power of corporations, redistribute wealth, or restructure existing political, economic, and social institutions. In other words, they, and other historians who share their assessment of postwar liberalism, charge postwar liberals with lacking the fundamental criticism of the capitalist system that had driven their liberal and Progressive predecessors. According to this narrative of liberal affinity with the promise of the American capitalist economy, postwar liberals discarded with all ideological commitments with the exception of anti-Communism.[81]

Such notions of postwar liberalism as standing for little other than anti-Communism are complicated by the attraction of ADA liberals to the understanding of the post-scarcity era advanced by Galbraith and Schlesinger. The sympathy among ADA liberals for a political perspective that reflected the direction of socio-economic changes they increasingly saw taking shape around them, demonstrates that even if they were not yet able or ready to act, influential liberal intellectuals harbored significant concerns with American capitalism. By insisting on a shift in national priorities from the satisfaction of private wants to the fulfillments of public needs that fundamentally challenged consumerism, the call for an improved social balance represented a penetrating critique of the foundation of American capitalism, even if the measures proposed—such as increased sales taxes—were far from radical. That critique, though it differed from the class-based perspective of socialists and many liberals during the New Deal era, nevertheless brought into question the transcendent importance of the consumer goods production that comprised the preponderance of the

[81] See Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), esp. 11; Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), esp. 9.

American economy and drove the bulk of its growth.

Frequently obscured by their desire to present a united front and stress common goals, occasional outbursts between Galbraith, Schlesinger, and Keyserling exposed the substantive divergence from existing liberal consensus entailed by this critical perspective on consumerism. Writing to Galbraith, Schlesinger relayed an encounter with Keyserling after giving a speech on the issue of social balance at the 1960 Midwestern Democratic Conference in Detroit. According to Schlesinger, Keyserling "got very indignant and attacked me bitterly in a press conference." Schlesinger believed that Keyserling's outburst was the result of his regarding him as a "Galbraith stooge" and expressed his regret at the former CEA chairman's "compulsion to transform all differences of emphasis into differences of principle."[82] Like Schlesinger, Keyserling also insisted that the differences between them were only a matter of emphasis and heaped blame on the other side for needlessly magnifying issues of emphasis into issues of substance. The private correspondence between Galbraith, Schlesinger, and Keyserling, however, demonstrates that despite insistences to the contrary from all parties, there were more than issues of emphasis at stake. Their correspondence reveals a far sharper edge to the debate than was typically seen in its public airing in the pages of the *New Republic* or the boardrooms of the ADA as it raised fundamental questions of what it meant to be liberal in the age of abundance.

The significant disagreement that emerged when Galbraith and Keyserling collaborated on a policy pamphlet for the DAC in 1960 exemplified the ways in which their differences in emphasis on the issue of social balance were rooted in liberal perspectives that had genuinely diverged in response to the changes ushered in by the post-scarcity era. As they

[82] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to John Kenneth Galbraith, March 29, 1960, Box 59, JKG.

traded drafts of the pamphlet back and forth, an unusually bitter debate developed that centered on the urgency of improving public services as compared to bettering private incomes. In response to a draft of the pamphlet, Galbraith objected to a passage that he believed effectively equated his views on the nation's social imbalance with support for the "repression of private economic progress."[83] Keyserling agreed to drop the offending section but not without letting Galbraith know that he believed there to be "altogether too much talk about private affluence and public poverty." Keyserling saw the public and private sectors as equal in their need of attention and remarked that he was "deeply disturbed" by the extent to which Galbraith and others prioritized the improvement of public services as the expense of expanding private incomes and private consumption. Pointing out that "the number of well-known people all over the country who have interpreted your book to contrast private affluence with public poverty are legion," Keyserling stressed the need to express his own differing viewpoint "firmly and without equivocation."[84]

The ensuing exchange illustrated the fundamental gulf that had emerged from Galbraith and Keyserling's respective efforts to define the meaning of liberalism in the post-scarcity era. Although they had already reached an agreement to cut the passage that sparked their confirmation, Galbraith interpreted Keyserling's assertion of his need to express his own contrasting view as indicating that the former CEA chairman wanted to incorporate those views into the pamphlet. Accordingly, Galbraith expressed his belief to Keyserling that the pamphlet in that form would not only be directly contrary to his own position but to what he took "to be sound liberal policy." Galbraith asserted that he could neither accept nor "be in any way identified with" such a pamphlet and furthermore could not imagine that the

---

[83] John Kenneth Galbraith to Leon Keyserling, May 24, 1960, p. 1, Box 40, JKG.
[84] Leon Keyserling to John Kenneth Galbraith, May 31, 1960, pp. 1-2, Box 40, JKG.

"[Democratic Advisory] Council would sponsor what critics would deem an attack on those who have been arguing for a larger allocation for public services."[85] Keyserling responded by accusing Galbraith of displaying "considerable pigheadedness" about his views and expressing resentment that Galbraith resorted to "veiled threats" as to whether the DAC would approve his positions. Most of all, Keyserling took exception to Galbraith's calling into question the liberal merits of his position and insisted that he had had won at least as much of a right as the Harvard economist to express his views through the Democratic Party machinery. The postscript that concluded Keyserling's lengthy and frank letter to Galbraith ended with a declaration that the DAC "did not intend to set anybody up as an arbitrator or to erect the theory of the affluent society into an untouchable Party principle."[86]

Ultimately, they stuck to their original agreement to exclude the section of the pamphlet that Galbraith believed attacked his views on social balance but the fundamental nature of their disagreement meant that the two never came to an accord on the deeper issue of liberalism's primary mission in the age of abundance.[87] Keyserling continued to define liberalism in quantitative terms and to find the pressing and necessary purpose of liberalism in the challenge of raising individuals and families out of poverty through increased levels of private income. Galbraith, along with Schlesinger and a contingent of ADA liberals that would grow in the coming years, had come to find liberalism's new challenge in improving the public services that would disproportionately benefit those in living in poverty while simultaneously improving the quality of life of all Americans. Leading them as it did to fundamentally divergent answers, the question of whether public services or private incomes were in more urgent need of improvement represented a question of emphasis but also the

[85] John Kenneth Galbraith to Leon Keyserling, June 7, 1960, Box 40, JKG.
[86] Leon Keyserling to John Kenneth Galbraith, June 9, 1960, Box 40, JKG.
[87] Leon Keyserling to John Kenneth Galbraith, June 13, 1960, Box 40, JKG.

basis for the fundamental question of what it meant to be liberal in the post-scarcity era. By finding a core component of the liberal agenda in the improvement of public services needed to better the quality of American life, Galbraith and Schlesinger broadened the mission of liberalism to include a wide array of non-material issues. Still, so long as the differences between qualitative liberalism and growth-centric quantitative liberalism on matters of concrete policy remained limited to inflationary concerns and sales taxes, Galbraith, Schlesinger, and Keyserling could continue to project the general consensus of their respective political perspectives. During those years of minimal disagreement on policy they would also remain close personal friends.[88]

The united liberal front and close friendship maintained by Galbraith, Schlesinger, and Keyserling during those years would seem a distant memory in the latter half of the 1960s when a newfound awareness among ADA liberals of economic inequality and differences over the Vietnam War combined to unmistakably reveal the substantial divisions that had been simmering under the surface in the organization for years. In the 1960s, as the civil rights movement focused national attention on the deep relationship between economic and racial inequality, the bulk of ADA liberals came to see the struggle against poverty as a continuation of the fight for civil rights and the Vietnam War's appropriation of funds desperately needed for antipoverty programs as the first hurdle to progress in that struggle. ADA liberals increasingly embraced Galbraith and Schlesinger's qualitative liberalism and their critique of economic growth during years of escalating U.S. military commitment to the Vietnam War that discredited Keyserling's far-reaching hopes for economic growth and the related conviction that the country could have both "guns and butter."

[88] Leon Keyserling to John Kenneth Galbraith, March 11, 1961, Box 40, JKG. Until the latter half of the 1960s, Galbraith, Keyserling, Schlesinger, and fellow ADA member Seymour Harris frequented dined with and visited each other in Cambridge, Washington, D.C., and at Galbraith's summer retreat in Vermont.

For his part, Keyserling characterized infatuation with the ideas of qualitative liberalism and *The Affluent Society* in the ADA over the preceding years as "destructive trends" that had pushed the organization towards what he saw as a dangerous and futile effort to "dump" President Johnson over the Vietnam War in 1968. With no doubts that the American economy had the resources for both "guns and butter," Keyserling willfully disregarded the impact of the Vietnam War on domestic social programs. As a result, he deemed the ADA's acceptance of qualitative liberalism and its prioritization of opposition to the Vietnam War to be evidence of a turn away from serious consideration of the nation's urgent economic and social problems.[89] By maintaining both the belief in economic growth as an almost limitless engine for social progress and the distinctly quantitative liberal perspective that had defined the organization during its first two decades of existence, Keyserling would ultimately find himself out of step with the ADA as it came to emphasize qualitative issues and focus ever more of its energy on opposition to the Vietnam War.

The eventual turn to the perspective of qualitative liberalism in the ADA represents an important but often overlooked element in the transformation of leading postwar liberals from ardent Cold Warriors preoccupied with the bread-and-butter concerns of the New Deal political agenda into forthright opponents of the Vietnam War who made central contributions to the New Politics movement. Retracing the links between the qualitative liberalism of Galbraith and Schlesinger and the New Politics revolt against Johnson in 1968 brings into question the historiographical tendency to portray the New Politics movement as an effort to direct the energy of the New Left into the existing party structure and mainstream electoral politics. When New Politics activists sought a political means of ending the Vietnam War,

[89] Keyserling, "What Has Happened to ADA?," pp. 1-1A, 12C-21.

they drew not on the radicalism of the New Left but on a qualitative liberalism that represented a return to a long established liberal tradition that did not limit itself to the bread-and-butter issues that preoccupied New Deal and Fair Deal liberals. The path to the New Politics began when questioning of the transcendent importance of economic growth established a broad new array of issues as legitimate subjects of concern for liberals. The ADA would continue further down that path when its "old liberals" voiced opposition to the growing U.S. military intervention in the Vietnam War as they called into question a doctrine of anti-Communist containment that had once stood alongside the promise of economic growth as a pillar of postwar liberalism.

## Chapter Two: Rethinking the Cold War: The Vital Center and the Vietnam War

In the early 1960s, well before the Vietnam War registered as a pressing issue in American society, the ADA and a number of its "old liberals" became some of the earliest critics of the growing commitment of U.S. military forces to the conflict. The ADA went on the record in 1962 in opposition to American military intervention in what it saw as a civil war in a country of marginal strategic importance to the U.S, while Galbraith, then the U.S. ambassador to India, wrote to President Kennedy more often about the dangers of committing additional forces to Vietnam than he did about his ambassadorial post.[1] Still, the ADA and, in particular, its "old liberals," have often been seen as less than genuine opponents of the Vietnam War. Noam Chomsky famously assailed Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and other "academic apologists" of the U.S. government for insisting on circumstances for negotiations that could only lead to a continuation of the conflict and the American military presence in the country.[2] In his influential study of American liberalism in the 1960s, Allen Matusow depicts veteran ADA leaders and other liberal critics of the Johnson administration's Vietnam War policies as differing little from the administration they pilloried when it came down to the fundamental issues at stake.[3] Steven Gillon characterizes the established leaders of the ADA as less committed to opposing the Vietnam War and more likely to see the conflict as part of the Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union than their younger colleagues in the organization.[4]

---

[1] "Foreign Policy: Viet Nam," *ADA World*, April-May 1962, 2A; David Halberstam, "The Importance of Being Galbraith," *Harper's Magazine*, November 1967, 54.

[2] Noam Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," *New York Review of Books*, February 23, 1967, 16-18, 24-25.

[3] Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 378-379.

[4] Steven M. Gillon, *Politics and Vision: The ADA and American Liberalism, 1947-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), esp. 180-82, 193-95. Gillon's characterization of veteran ADA leaders as less committed in their opposition to the Vietnam War than younger leaders in the organization owes much to the distinction he draws between the "traditional," "moderate," and "reform" factions in order to describe and explain the tensions in the ADA during the latter half of the 1960s. The inflexible and limiting nature of that framework leads him to

Despite the ongoing prevalence of historical accounts that question the nature and degree of their commitment to opposing the Vietnam War, the "old liberals" of the ADA were far from the half-hearted opponents of the conflict they have frequently been made out to be. Historians have rightly highlighted the ineffectiveness of their opposition to the war and its failure to have an immediate impact on the course of the conflict. However, as unsuccessful as it was in bringing any significant pressure to bear on the Johnson administration, the committed opposition to the war mounted by the ADA and its "old liberals" made vital contributions to the intellectual and political foundation that would later be drawn on by the New Politics movement by demonstrating that postwar liberalism could shed the reflexive anti-Communist foreign policy that had been among its most central tenets.

The ineffectiveness of the ADA's opposition to the Vietnam War owed much to the tendency of the organization and its members to see themselves as a "vital center" surrounded by irrational extremes on both the right and left. Drawing on Schlesinger's seminal 1949 book of the same name, the ADA's continued adherence to a "vital center" framework precluded involvement in mass antiwar demonstrations where radical activists could always be expected to have some presence. Unable to work with the mass demonstrations of the emerging antiwar movement as a means of putting pressure on the Johnson administration, the ADA had to settle on an ultimately ineffective petition-gathering initiative as the focus of its antiwar efforts. Constraints on the ability of the ADA to back up critical rhetoric on the Vietnam War and the Cold War with actions that could have a meaningful impact on the direction of U.S. foreign policy obscured the significant ways in which the organization's members had departed from the tenets of Cold War liberalism.

---

overstate the differences that distinguished Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other older leaders that he groups under the "moderate" banner from younger leaders in the ADA that he places under the "reform" banner.

The legacy of the ADA's opposition to the Vietnam War has been further complicated by the support displayed by some of its leading figures for the policies of the Johnson administration during the earliest stages of major U.S. escalation. Most notably, Schlesinger's defense of administration policy at a national teach-in in Washington, D.C, in early 1965 often shrouds the opposition to the war advanced by others in the organization at the time.[5] Still, the position adopted by Schlesinger in the months that followed and opposition from the ADA to U.S. military intervention in Vietnam that stretched back to the days of the Kennedy administration expressed a rejection of the policy of global anti-Communist containment that liberals and conservatives alike had unquestionably embraced since the onset of the Cold War and pointed the way towards an eventual withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam.

The tendency to assume that the "old liberals" of the ADA were tepid in their opposition to the Vietnam War has been reinforced by historians who portray postwar liberals as having been pushed leftward towards a more critical position on the Vietnam War by an ascendant New Left and evaluate the foreign policy posture of those liberals against the straightforward call for unilateral withdrawal demanded by radical antiwar activists.[6] In contrast to the political trajectory depicted in those accounts, the foreign policy outlook and position on the war adopted by those "old liberals" over the decade owed little to direct pressure from radicals. The revival of leftist politics with the emergence of the New Left had

---

[5] Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era*, with the assistance of Charles Chatfield (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 115; Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), 32.

[6] For example, see Ronald Radosh, *Divided They Fell: the Demise of the Democratic Party, 1964-1996* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 75; Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*, 344. With frequent attention given to the divide between liberals and radicals in the antiwar movement, the historiography of the Vietnam antiwar movement generally mitigates New Left pressure as a principal factor in the development of liberal positions on the Vietnam War. Interpretations of liberals as moving towards the left and a more critical position on the Vietnam War in response to New Left pressure can, however, be found throughout the historiography of the postwar liberalism. One of the most developed expressions of this interpretation can be found in Matusow's influential *The Unraveling of America*. Matusow contends that the insistent challenge of the New Left put mainstream liberals on the defensive and required them to move left or lose their capacity to shape events.

an indirect impact on the ADA by allowing it to frame its opposition to the war as a responsible "vital center" position, but that very positioning sustained the unyielding divide the ADA leadership insisted on placing between themselves and radicals. As a result, ADA liberals had limited interaction with the New Left and even less interest in its ideas. Whereas radical antiwar activists frequently emphasized corporate interests and imperialism in their opposition to the Vietnam War, ADA liberals highlighted polycentric Communism and the rise of nationalism as developments that rendered the political composition of the South Vietnamese government an issue of somewhat limited strategic importance to the U.S. Evaluated on its own merits, the opposition to the Vietnam War advanced by the "old liberals" of the ADA appears not as a less "pure" version of the dissent against the conflict mounted by the New Left, but as a dedicated, if less than effective, opposition to U.S. military intervention in a distant civil war. Despite pursuing limited and ineffective means of opposition to the Vietnam War, the ADA and its "old liberals" fostered a genuine opposition to the conflict that would take them further down the path to the New Politics that they initially embarked on when they began to question the transcendent importance of economic growth in the 1950s.

**The Development of Dissent**

When the ADA first came out in opposition to U.S. military intervention in the Vietnam War in 1962, the conflict in Southeast Asia was not yet on the radar of most Americans. U.S. involvement—which began in 1950 as economic assistance to France in support of their war effort against the Viet Minh to regain control of their colonial territory in Indochina—had transformed into economic and military aid to the new state of South Vietnam that saw the involvement of over 11,000 American military personal by the end of 1962. Still,

so long as the U.S. military presence in Vietnam remained officially confined to advising the South Vietnamese military, the media and policy makers devoted little attention to the mounting American involvement and occupied themselves instead with developments in Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and elsewhere.[7] By bringing attention in the early 1960s to the very real prospect of being drawn into direct conflict with China and the Soviet Union in order to support a repressive regime in a country of minimal strategic importance to the U.S, the ADA and its "old liberals" began to develop a dissent against U.S. policy in Vietnam that would ultimately lead to a broader rejection of the principles that had sustained U.S. foreign policy since the earliest days of the Cold War.

It would be some years before he became outspoken in his dissent, but John Kenneth Galbraith demonstrated an early awareness of the stakes involved in Southeast Asia when as U.S. ambassador to India he repeatedly wrote President Kennedy to voice his concerns about the U.S. military presence in Vietnam.[8] Writing to Kennedy on March 2, 1962, Galbraith expressed his belief that he continued to be "sadly out of step with the Establishment." His letter made clear that he saw Ngo Dinh Diem's government in South Vietnam as making no real effort towards political or social reform and believed the U.S. was increasingly replacing the French as the colonial military force. In a series of dissents against administration policy, Galbraith questioned the strategic value of Vietnam and puzzled over what benefit the U.S. could gain from alliance with an "incompetent government and a people who are so largely indifferent to their own salvation." Offering advice that would prove to be all too true, Galbraith urged Kennedy to keep up the threshold against the commitment of U.S. combat

---

[7] Larry Berman, *Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 10; George McT. Kahin, *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1986), 139; DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 82-85.

[8] Halberstam, "The Importance of Being Galbraith," 54.

forces because "a few will mean more and more and more. And then the South Vietnamese boys will go back to the farms. We will do the fighting."[9]

In the months that followed Galbraith's telling warning to President Kennedy, the ADA echoed the Harvard economist's criticism of administration policy in Vietnam with a foreign policy resolution that registered the organization's objection to the growing U.S. military commitment to the conflict. The ADA became one of the first political organizations with a national presence to go on the record in opposition to U.S. policy in Vietnam with the passage of a foreign policy resolution at its 1962 national convention that dissented on several grounds. The resolution took issue with unilateral American military intervention in South Vietnam that had been undertaken without the approval of the United Nations, in contradiction to the Geneva Accords of 1954, and with no clear justification to Congress or the public. The resolution refuted the administration's claims that the Communist insurgency was the result of foreign intervention and expressed vigorous opposition to "the unilateral commitment of America's own military power and prestige to sustain governments in Asia or elsewhere against the resistance of their own people." The greatest concern expressed by the resolution, however, would be reserved for the danger inherent to intervention in a country of limited strategic importance that threatened to bring the U.S. into a conflict with China or the Soviet Union with the potential to "imperil the whole future of America."[10]

The profile carried by Vietnam in national discourse grew considerably the following year when Americans took in scenes on the evening news of a Buddhist monk named Tich Quang Duc committing self-immolation in protest of the Diem regime. The position of the Kennedy administration in Vietnam became increasingly precarious as the Saigon government

[9] John Kenneth Galbraith to President John F. Kennedy, March 2, 1962, pp. 1-2, Folder 35, Box 1, M97-135, ADA.

[10] "Foreign Policy: Viet Nam," 2A.

continually balked at its calls for political reform but remained the only force that seemed capable of establishing a viable non-Communist nation state in the South.[11] Reflecting growing anxiety over the situation in Vietnam, the foreign policy resolution passed by the ADA National Convention in 1963 stepped up the organization's dissent by specifically calling on the U.S. to halt its escalation policy and the commitment of American personnel to combat operations in South Vietnam. The more explicit language of the 1963 resolution also called into question the practice of unconditional support for the South Vietnamese government with the insistence that future American aid to Diem needed to be contingent on the basic political, social, and economic reforms undertaken by his regime.[12]

Events moved rapidly in the months that followed the ADA's clear expression of concern over the direction of the Kennedy administration's policy in Vietnam. On November 1, 1963, a military junta staged a successful coup against the Diem regime, assassinating the widely despised president. Three weeks later, on November 22, President Kennedy was shot and killed while riding in an open-air limousine during a parade in Dallas. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson succeeded Kennedy as president when he was sworn in later that day aboard *Air Force One* at Love Field Airport in Dallas. Though encouraged by Johnson's mounting achievements in liberal legislation, ADA liberals became increasingly attentive to and concerned with his administration's continuation of the gradual expansion of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam seen under the Kennedy administration. What had been a creeping escalation of the American military commitment to Vietnam took on stark new dimensions after the U.S. Navy made the second of two reports of dubious reliability detailing torpedo attacks by North Vietnamese forces on American destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin on August

---

[11] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal,* 86-87.

[12] "Southeast Asia," Foreign Policy Resolutions, *ADA World,* May 1963, 3.

4, 1964. In response to the supposed attack on U.S. naval ships, Johnson sought and won prompt and overwhelming approval from Congress for a resolution on Southeast Asia "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." Popularly known as the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, this seemingly limited Congressional action provided the legal basis for Johnson's later shift of U.S. military personnel from an advisory to combat role.[13]

Despite the growing concerns of ADA liberals and other early critics of administration policy, the public expressed overwhelming support for Johnson's response to the Gulf of Tonkin crisis with public approval of the president's handling of the Vietnam conflict surging in the wake of the Resolution. Having demonstrated a firm response to apparent North Vietnamese aggression, Johnson assured the American public he intended neither to widen the conflict in Vietnam nor to abandon South Vietnam to Communist aggression. With the Vietnam War not yet more than a peripheral concern and the prospect of Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater taking the country "back to the 19th century," the ADA did not hesitate to put aside its objections to the administration's policy in Vietnam and endorse Johnson for president in 1964. The overwhelming majority of American voters harbored no such nagging concerns to brush aside. The American electorate decisively opted for Johnson's professed moderation on the conflict, delivering the incumbent president a landslide victory over the hawkish Goldwater.[14]

Despite campaign rhetoric that contrasted his moderation with Goldwater's call for the bombing of North Vietnam, Johnson responded to an attack by the Vietcong on U.S. forces at

---

[13] Melvin Small, *At the Water's Edge: American Politics and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005), 28-30; Message and Draft Text in Congress," *New York Times*, August 6, 1964.

[14] Melvin Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 28; "Board Endorses Johnson-Humphrey," *ADA World*, September 1964, 1.

Pleiku on February 6, 1965, by ordering an immediate retaliatory air strike on North Vietnam. The Air Force followed up its initial response with regular bombing raids on industrial and military targets in the North as part of a policy of "sustained reprisal" called Rolling Thunder.[15] While later escalation of the war would lead to increasingly divergent views on the wisdom of the administration's policy among the ADA leadership, virtually all leading members came together in opposition to the continued bombing of North Vietnam. The ADA quickly responded to Rolling Thunder by issuing a public statement calling for the U.S. to immediately halt the bombing of North Vietnam and announce its willingness to negotiate a settlement to the conflict.[16] With an eye to the counterproductive implications of bombing for producing peace talks, Galbraith pointed out that those responsible for air intelligence in World War II learned that in almost every case bombing not only failed to weaken the will to fight of those under attack it actually hardened their morale. In the case of Vietnam, Galbraith argued that bombing stiffened the resolve of the North Vietnamese and proved largely ineffective in disrupting the supply routes of the Vietcong, who utilized virtually invulnerable jungle supply routes and made extensive use of local resources.[17]

While continuing the bombing campaign in North Vietnam and further escalating the deployment of U.S. ground troops, President Johnson sought to reach out to doves by announcing for the first time in a speech at Johns Hopkins University his decision to engage in "unconditional discussions" with the relevant governments and to offer a $1 billion program for the economic development of the Mekong River Valley.[18] Though the ADA represented one of the primary audiences that Johnson sought to reach with his April 7 Johns Hopkins

---

[15] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 98, 104.
[16] "Halt Viet Nam Bombs; Negotiate Instead," *ADA World*, March 1965, 1, 6.
[17] John Kenneth Galbraith, "Suspension of Air Attacks Urged," *New York Times*, April 27, 1965.
[18] "Text of the President's Address on U.S. Policies in Vietnam," *New York Times*, April 8, 1965.

speech, leading members expressed mixed reactions to a speech that offered much hope in the way of rhetoric but little in the way of concrete policy changes. An editorial in the April issue of the organization's monthly magazine, *ADA World*, expressed no question about the "sincerity of the President's offer nor the magnitude of the step it represents in achieving peace in Viet-Nam," but pointed out that the prospects for negotiations were dim so long as the U.S. continued to bomb North Vietnam.[19] Roy Bennett, former *Correspondent* editor and a key figure in the development of ADA foreign policy, contended that as long as the administration continued to believe that the bombing raids were productive in shifting the military balance in favor of the U.S., the Johnson administration would be unlikely to accept much less than a settlement based largely on American terms.[20] Bennett remained concerned about the continued military focus of the administration's policy but saw the Johnson Hopkins speech as an important first step that justified "some timid optimism."[21]

Despite airing skepticism as to whether the president's overtures at Johns Hopkins would be reciprocated by an actual change of course in the war, the bulk of the ADA leaders continued to emphasize the domestic achievements of the Johnson administration. Although leading figures in the ADA consistently coupled praise for the administration's domestic initiatives with attention to their fundamental limitations, they nevertheless stressed the historical significance of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act, and the broader

---

[19] "Initiatives In Viet-Nam," *ADA World*, April 1965, 2

[20] Roy Bennett, "President's Speech Sheds Light on Viet-Nam Crisis," *ADA World*, April 1965, 2. The journal *Correspondent* played an early and important—though often neglected—role in distancing liberalism from the reflexive anti-Communism that had suffused mainstream American politics since the start of the Cold War. The short-lived journal also pointed the way towards collaboration between liberals and the New Left with contributions from prominent left-of-center intellectuals such as Daniel Bell, Lewis Coser, and David Riesman as well as younger leftists such as Todd Gitlin, Tom Hayden, Staughton Lynd, and Howard Zinn. For more on *Correspondent*, its relationship to the New Left, and its impact on both liberal and radical politics, see Daniel Geary, "The New Left and Liberalism Reconsidered: The Committee of Correspondence and the Port Huron Statement," in *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto*, ed. Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 83-94.

[21] Bennett, "President's Speech Sheds Light on Viet-Nam Crisis," 2.

set of legislation intended to transform the U.S. into a "Great Society." Schlesinger expressed his appreciation for the president's accomplishments when he told the 1965 ADA convention "this is the greatest opportunity for constructive liberalism in a generation."[22] When Galbraith delivered the keynote address at the ADA National Convention the following year, he told his audience that the "antique doctrines and humorless achievements of the unimaginative men who got us into the jungle of Viet Nam must not be allowed to obscure the merits of far more liberal and astute achievements at home." Though still advancing criticism of American policy in Vietnam that he had begun during his years as ambassador to India, Galbraith asked for perspective from his fellow liberals and reasoned that the gains of the Johnson administration on civil rights far outweighed American losses in support of the South Vietnamese government.[23] Together, the expressions of appreciation for the domestic achievements of the Johnson administration offered by the ADA and its "old liberals" and the muted nature of their dissent on U.S. policy in Vietnam masked the full implications of an emerging outlook that rejected the Cold War dogmas at the heart of American foreign policy.

**A Cold War Mystique at Odds with the Reality of the World**

When the Johnson administration expanded the U.S. military presence in Vietnam from what had been officially limited to an advisory role into a massive bombing campaign and large-scale ground war that saw the deployment of almost 200,000 American troops by the end of 1965, ADA liberals began to more overtly stress the profound changes to the

---

[22] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Keynote Address at the Annual ADA National Convention, Washington, D.C, April 2 1965, p. 9, Folder 7, Box 328, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Papers, 1922-2007, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, New York Public Library, New York, NY (hereafter cited as AMS).

[23] John Kenneth Galbraith, Keynote Address at the ADA National Convention, April 22, 1966, p. 5, Box 868, JKG.

international geopolitical landscape seen during the past two decades.[24] Speaking before an ADA audience at a Roosevelt Day Dinner in early 1965, John Kenneth Galbraith considered the changes that had befallen the world during the postwar period and declared the existence of a "Cold War mystique" increasingly at odds with the reality of the world. The Cold War mystique, Galbraith insisted, required the world to be organized against the power of monolithic Communism, and for all military, political, diplomatic, and economic decisions to be made in accordance with the needs of that struggle. The worldview perpetuated by that mystique could only be credible if Communism remained monolithic and united in its hostility toward capitalism.[25] The ADA had started to distance itself from the Cold War mystique described by Galbraith some years earlier with its criticism of U.S. policy in Vietnam during the early 1960s. When the ADA and its "old liberals" first began to criticize military intervention in a country they repeatedly described as having no clear strategic importance to the U.S., they drew on an understanding of the far-reaching implications of splintering among Communist states in what they had once believed to be a unified Communist bloc. In a world of polycentric Communism, where the establishment of a new Communist regime did not entail an automatic expansion of Chinese or Soviet power, many in the ADA came to see U.S. military intervention in Vietnam not just as a one-off strategic error but rather as clear evidence of the need to reject the reflexive anti-Communism that had underpinned the foreign policy of American liberals and the U.S. government since the beginning of the Cold War. As the U.S. military commitment in Vietnam grew in scale and scope, the implicit objection to anti-Communist containment as a foundation for American policy that had run through earlier

---

[24] Phillip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War: The History: 1946-1975* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 395.

[25] John Kenneth Galbraith, Address at Roosevelt Day Dinner, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 30, 1965, pp. 4-5, Box 866, JKG.

expressions of ADA opposition to American involvement in the war would become increasingly explicit.

The earliest ADA criticism of U.S. military intervention in Vietnam frequently drew on and expressed an underlying recognition of the ways in which the emergence of polycentric Communism necessitated fundamental changes in American foreign policy. When Galbraith stressed the minimal strategic importance of Vietnam in his 1962 letter to President Kennedy, he was not simply offering his assessment of the country's geographical distance or its limited commercial, economic, and military value to the U.S. but also his understanding that a Communist government in Vietnam would not necessarily bolster the strength of China or the Soviet Union.[26] The foreign policy resolution passed by the ADA later that year demonstrated a similar consideration of polycentric Communism and its implications for the Cold War when it characterized the conflict in South Vietnam as a civil war and consequently deemed the stakes involved to be of relatively little importance to the strategic interests of the U.S.[27]

Hinted at in earlier ADA dissents against U.S. policy in Vietnam, rejection of the Cold War dogmas that had sustained American foreign policy for almost two decades became far more overt after 1965 as the organization and its "old liberals" responded to the rapid escalation of the U.S. military presence in the country. Written over the course of 1966 and published in early 1967, Schlesinger's *The Bitter Heritage* approached U.S. policy in Vietnam primarily in terms of the need to advance a "middle course" out of the country that recognized and acted upon the ways in which the Cold War had changed since the early postwar years. In his widely read booklet, Schlesinger noted that in the mid-1960s, after half a dozen years of vocal quarrelling between China and the Soviet Union, the State Department still referred to

[26] John Kenneth Galbraith to President John F. Kennedy, March 2, 1962, p. 1.
[27] "Foreign Policy: Viet Nam," 2A.

"instruments of Sino-Soviet power" and frequently framed the Cold War in terms of "the Communists" and "their world Revolution." Schlesinger acknowledged that even though the State Department and the Johnson Administration seemed to have belatedly come to accept the reality of the Sino-Soviet split, they still failed to grasp the greater implications of polycentric Communism.[28]

Like many in the ADA, Schlesinger saw the Sino-Soviet split not simply as a conflict between two Communist powers but a rewriting of the rules of the Cold War. The schism of China and the Soviet Union, Schlesinger contended, had set Communist states free to pursue their own national policies.[29] Though it has since become clear that some degree of tension and disunity had always existed in the Communist bloc, Schlesinger and the bulk of ADA liberals nonetheless believed that, despite later fractures, the Communist movement had in fact been monolithic and unified in the early postwar period.[30] Expressing a view shared by many of his ADA colleagues, Schlesinger maintained that during those years the seizure of power by Communists in a country meant an extension of Soviet power and an inherent threat to the security of all democratic nations. In contrast, the expansion of Communism in the 1960s did not inevitably extend the reach of Chinese or Soviet power. While he clearly believed the establishment of new Communist regimes to be neither desirable nor without consequence, Schlesinger saw the issue as involving far lower stakes than had once been the case. Communist expansion would mean that countries had "succumbed to a dismal and dogmatic

---

[28] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy: 1941-1966* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), 68.

[29] Schlesinger, *The Bitter Heritage*, 68.

[30] While most political observers in the early postwar period accepted the monolithic nature of the Communist world as a virtually unquestionable fact, a large body of scholarship has since demonstrated that some measure of divergence had always existed among Communist nations. An early analysis of the historic disunity in what many had assumed to be a monolithic Communist bloc can be found in Norman J. G. Pounds, "Fissures in the Eastern European Bloc," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 372 (July 1967): 40-58.

creed," but in Schlesinger's eyes did not necessarily represent a serious threat to the security of the democratic world.[31] Schlesinger further encouraged a reassessment of the threat posed by Communist expansion when he observed that Communism had largely failed as a revolutionary movement. From the historian's vantage point, he noted that despite the explosion of new states in the years since World War II, Communists had come to power in only three developing nations.[32]

The growing attentiveness to the transformative implications of polycentric Communism displayed by the ADA and its "old liberals" in the 1960s owed much to the increasing sway of nationalism and diminishing hold of ideology that had become ever more apparent with the escalation of the U.S. military presence in Vietnam. Galbraith revisited the theme of a harmful Cold War mystique over the course of 1967 in a series of influential articles that examined the Vietnam War in terms of the relationship between Communism and nationalism. For Galbraith, a fundamental flaw of that mystique could be found in its insistence that Communism could never successfully identify with nationalism. Drawing on the example of French and Italian Communists who were known to give their ultimate loyalty to Moscow, the worldview perpetuated by the Cold War mystique held that Communists could never be patriots. Galbraith conceded that while Communism and nationalism were generally incompatible in Europe, postwar history had plainly demonstrated that such was not the case in Asia. In China, the Communists stressed their nationalist credentials in their rise to power. In Vietnam, both North and South, Communists staked a far stronger claim to nationalism than

[31] Schlesinger, *The Bitter Heritage*, 68-69.

[32] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in "Liberal Anti-Communism Revisited: A Symposium," *Commentary*, September 1967, 69-70.

a Saigon government indebted to colonial bureaucracy and propped up by American support.[33]

Galbraith's writings in 1967 emphasized the nationalist ambitions of the North Vietnamese government and the National Liberation Front (NLF) in order to frame the conflict as one in which the U.S. faced not a centrally directed Communist threat but a nationalist uprising.[34] Galbraith's interpretation of the conflict, and much of his language, found expression in a resolution on the Vietnam War adopted by the ADA National Board in September 1967 that characterized the U.S. as facing forces which, if irrefutably Communist, had nevertheless seized the "banners of nationalism and social reform." The resolution cited the history of the decolonization movement and stressed that "western powers cannot defeat by military means the forces of indigenous nationalism and if they are wise they do not try."[35] Schlesinger earlier came to a similar conclusion when he argued in *The Bitter Heritage* that U.S. efforts to oppose nationalism in Vietnam might not only be unwise but, if successful, could even be counterproductive. For Schlesinger, the most effective bulwark against an aggressive Communist state could sometimes be found in neighboring Communist states driven by a nationalist agenda. Schlesinger maintained that if the ultimate aim of the U.S. in the Vietnam War rested on a desire to contain China "a communist Vietnam under Ho might be a better instrument of containment than a shaky Saigon regime led by right-wing mandarins or air force generals."[36]

When the "old liberals" of the ADA advanced criticism of U.S. policy in Vietnam during the mid-1960s that brought attention to the fallacies of what Galbraith had termed a

---

[33] John Kenneth Galbraith, "The Galbraith Plan to End the War," *New York Times Magazine*, November 12, 1967, 124.

[34] Galbraith, "The Galbraith Plan to End the War," 124.

[35] Resolution Adopted by the National Board of Americans for Democratic Action, "Vietnam and Political Policy," September 23, 1967, p. 1, Folder 14, Box 10, M97-135, ADA.

[36] Schlesinger, *The Bitter Heritage*, 75.

Cold War mystique, they made sure to exclude President Johnson from those who they believed to be under the spell of that mystique. In 1966, after more than a year of significant escalation of the U.S. military effort in Vietnam, Galbraith still considered himself among those "who regard the President as a force for restraint—and for change in the old policy."[37] Galbraith was not alone in his assessment of Johnson. During the first two years of major American military commitment to Vietnam, the bulk of the "old liberals" in the ADA who would later push the organization towards more forceful opposition to the war continued to believe that even if the president did not necessarily share their views on the implications of a transformed Cold War, he nonetheless executed the Vietnam War with no particular relish. In their view, Johnson would gladly bring the conflict to a close in order to refocus his energy on domestic aims if circumstances allowed him to do so. One of those "old liberals," Richard Goodwin, a member of the ADA National Board and former advisor to Kennedy and Johnson, believed that a show of popular opposition to the escalation of the Vietnam War would help the president restrain the war by providing a counter pressure against hawks both within and outside of the administration.[38] Goodwin's assumption that the president, if emboldened, would stand up to the hawks echoed the assessment expressed earlier by Galbraith and shared by many of his fellow "old liberals" that Johnson had allowed his administration's Vietnam policy to become captive to the hawkish Cold Warriors of his cabinet and in the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[39] In their eyes, Johnson's instincts on the Vietnam War did not necessarily correspond with the more hawkish views of those who surrounded him. With that assumption, hope remained that the president could be pressured to change the course of the war. Still, the

---

[37] Galbraith, Keynote Address at the ADA National Convention, April 22, 1966, p. 21.

[38] Speech by Richard N. Goodwin at the National Board Meeting of Americans for Democratic Action, Washington, D.C., September 17, 1966, p. 15, Folder 3, Box 33, M97-135, ADA.

[39] Galbraith, Keynote Address at the ADA National Convention, April 22, 1966, pp. 13-14, 25-26.

question remained as to how ADA liberals would put pressure on a president who they continued to publicly celebrate and upon whom they depended for political influence.

**The Boundaries of the Vital Center**

As ADA liberals faced a U.S. policy in Vietnam that failed to live up to the hopeful rhetoric of President Johnson's 1965 Johns Hopkins speech and appeared to be moving no closer towards a negotiated settlement, a growing antiwar movement emerged alongside the continued escalation of the U.S. war effort. On March 24, 1965, the nation's first "teach-in" at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor drew over three thousand people who debated the issues surrounding the Vietnam War into the early hours of the morning. Teach-ins quickly became a major source of debate and dissent on administration policy in Vietnam with over a hundred taking place at colleges and universities across the country in the months following the Ann Arbor event.[40] A demonstration organized by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) on April 17 attracted some twenty thousand people to Washington, D.C., the single largest antiwar demonstration ever organized at that point in the nation's history. The fall International Days of Protest, organized by the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam (NCC), saw nearly a hundred thousand people in eighty cities across several countries protest the war, resulting in cases of civil disobedience and arrests in a number of locales.[41] As the antiwar movement attracted national attention over the course of 1965, the insistence of the ADA and its leading figures on adhering to a "vital center" position deeply rooted in the organization's history that called for opposition to both the conservative right and radical left ensured that they played no part in a movement largely comprised of and shaped

[40] Wells, *The War Within*, 24.
[41] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 111-12,125.

by radicals in its early stages.

The term "vital center" entered into regular usage with the publication of a widely-read article by Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in the run-up to the 1948 election but the notion that responsible liberals needed to be on guard against the extremes of both the right and the left had defined the political outlook of the ADA since its founding in 1947.[42] When the founders of the ADA sought to establish the organization as a base of opposition to conservative Republicans who served business interests and liberals who espoused Popular Front collaboration with Communists, they faced a political landscape that differed greatly from the one seen only a few years later. While anti-Communism soon became one the most pervasive and fundamental characteristics of postwar liberalism, the issue of anti-Communism as a political principle represented a major point of contention for liberals in the years immediately following World War II. On December 29, 1946, Franklin Roosevelt's former vice president, Henry Wallace, took charge of the newly formed Progressive Citizens of America (PCA) and sought to establish the organization as the legitimate heir to the legacy of Roosevelt and the New Deal.[43] Less than a week later, on January 4, 1947, members of the Union for Democratic Action (UDA) and other liberals who rejected the Popular Front convention of collaboration with Communists formed the ADA with a desire to claim that legacy for themselves.[44]

Not confined to the political battles of the late 1940s, the fallout from the bitter struggle between the ADA and PCA to become the standard bearer of American liberalism defined the contours of acceptable mainstream liberalism for decades to come. While the PCA characterized their differences with the ADA as minor and issued calls for unity among

---

[42] See Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "Not Left, Not Right, But a Vital Center," *New York Times Magazine*, April 4, 1948, 7, 44-47.

[43] William R. Conklin, "Wallace Charts Policies for 1948 in Liberal Merger," *New York Times*, December 30, 1946.

[44] "130 Liberals Form a Group on Right," *New York Times*, January 5, 1947.

liberals, ADA members deemed the PCA's acceptance of Communist support significant, naïve, and unacceptable. In contrast to PCA efforts to maintain the Popular Front framework in order to protect liberal legislation from what they saw as an inevitable postwar turn to conservatism, the ADA charged that liberal ends could never be achieved by means of alliance with totalitarians.[45] The membership of the PCA drew heavily from the ranks of liberals who rejected the ADA's strident anti-Communism yet also featured members and fellow travelers of the Communist Party (CPUSA). Whether they hailed from solidly liberal backgrounds or operated further to the left on the political spectrum, members of the PCA stressed the benign intentions of Soviet foreign policy and quickly established the organization as a vehicle for Wallace's 1948 presidential campaign.[46] Despite initially encouraging signs of popular support, Wallace found his vision for a united liberal front soundly rejected by voters, coming away from the election with just over a million votes and no representation in the Electoral College.[47] When Wallace's vision for liberalism fell victim to an emerging Cold War consensus that both rejected any form of association with Communists and stressed the need to contain the Soviet Union on the world stage, the ADA was left to delineate the boundaries of the liberalism that took shape in the postwar era.

Galbraith later reflected that when the leaders of the ADA became the foremost architects of liberalism during the early years of the Cold War, Wallace's legacy had required them to shirk no opportunity to show they were just as "hard-boiled" as conservatives on

---

[45] Gillon, *Politics and Vision*, 16, 24; Kevin Mattson, *When America Was Great: The Fighting Faith of Postwar Liberalism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 47. Mattson's study—like much of the scholarship on American postwar liberalism—frames the ADA's attack on Henry Wallace's 1948 presidential campaign as the formative event of Cold War liberalism.

[46] For more on the influence wielded by Communists in the PCA and the Progressive Party see Graham White and John Maze, *Henry A. Wallace: His Search for a New World Order* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 257-59, 261-62.

[47] John C. Culver and John Hyde, *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 501.

issues of foreign policy.[48] When he wrote *The Vital Center* in 1949, Schlesinger believed responsible liberalism rested upon firm adherence to anti-Communism in domestic politics and support for aggressive Communist containment on the world stage. In his highly influential book, he distinguished liberals from conservatives not in terms of their degree of opposition to Communism, but by their insistence that a tough anti-Communist stand had to be accompanied by efforts to address the unfinished reforms of the New Deal. Schlesinger, like Galbraith, drew on the lessons of the 1948 presidential election to interpret the form that liberalism was to take in the postwar years. When he surveyed the political circumstances of the Democrat Harry Truman's victory in the 1948 presidential election, Schlesinger saw an electorate that had repudiated both Wallace's cooperation with Communists and the Republican Party's effort to restore the power of the business community.[49]

Laying the groundwork for the hypervigilance the ADA and its "old liberals" would later display towards the radical activists of the antiwar movement, Schlesinger conveyed an acute sensitivity to the dangers he saw on the left in *The Vital Center*. Throughout the pages of *The Vital Center*, Schlesinger defined the "vital center" he believed had been emboldened by the 1948 election in contrast to the irrationality that he saw on both the right and the left but, like many liberal thinkers of the period, focused his attention primarily on positions left of the political center. Writing one year after the publication of *The Vital Center*, the leading literary critic Lionel Trilling famously declared, "In the United States at this time liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition." Trilling maintained that while impulses to conservatism or reaction certainly existed, and could in fact be quite strong, one would try in vain to find genuine conservative or reactionary ideas in general circulation

[48] Galbraith, Address at Roosevelt Day Dinner, January 30, 1965, pp. 4-5.

[49] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1949), 169.

among intellectuals. For Trilling, the conservative impulse expressed itself not as ideas but "only in action or in irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas."[50] Drawing on a similar, if less blunt, assessment of conservative intellectual contributions to political discourse, Schlesinger saw liberals as defining the terms of intellectual debate and setting the general climate of political opinion. Accordingly, Schlesinger devoted far more attention to distinguishing the "vital center" from Wallace's Progressives than from conservative Republicans.

The sustained attack on the Progressives who rallied to Wallace's campaign mounted by Schlesinger in *The Vital Center* provided a fundamental component of the intellectual and political framework that animated the ADA and its "old liberals" during the postwar era. Schlesinger centered much of his indictment of Progressives on what he saw as their sentimental belief in progress. Progressives, he contended, drew on a misguided faith in the essential goodness of man that led them to believe that all individual or social shortcomings would eventually be redeemed "by the benevolent unfolding of history." With what Schlesinger characterized as an irrational faith in progress, Progressives saw no need to safeguard against potential tyranny and thus saw no danger in allying with Communists to achieve progressive aims. In contrast, Schlesinger's "vital center" drew on the lessons of founding ADA member Reinhold Niebuhr to stress the inherent flaws of human nature and reject the Progressive acquiescence of Communist support in the dangerous drive to establish utopia. Schlesinger demonstrated a keen awareness of the dangers to democratic values to be found in utopian aspiration when he framed the "vital center" as an expression of "the great tradition of liberalism" based on "a reasonable responsibility about politics and a moderate

[50] Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: Viking Press, 1950), ix.

pessimism about man."[51]

With Wallace's Progressives firmly in mind, Schlesinger looked to the formation of the ADA in 1947 as "the watershed at which American liberalism began to base itself once again on a solid conception of man and of history."[52] Schlesinger's colleagues in the ADA may not have shared in all of the specifics of his intellectual assessment of the Progressives but the notion of the ADA as a "vital center" tasked with facing the irrationality of both the right and left quickly became the predominant framework through which members viewed the organization and determined its potential political allies. Though the rejection of reflexive anti-Communism as a basis for American foreign policy by a significant number of ADA liberals in the mid-1960s represented a significant recasting of the "vital center" of the early postwar years, those in the ADA who insisted on a U.S. foreign policy attuned to the new geopolitical realities of the world continued to see themselves and the organization as representing a "vital center" in the political landscape.

The continued insistence of ADA liberals that their political position represented a "vital center" flanked by irrationality on both the right and left meant that the organization's leadership never entertained the prospect of involvement in an emerging antiwar movement shaped by SDS, NCC, and other radical organizations. In the context of the polarized political environment produced by the escalation of the U.S. war effort in Vietnam and the corresponding growth in antiwar demonstrations, the trend towards conspiratorial thinking that ADA liberals saw on both the right and the left provided the basis for a framework that stressed the fundamental irrationality that existed on either side of the organization's "vital center." That framework held that while those on the right saw a Communist conspiracy that

[51] Schlesinger, *The Vital Center*, 35, 38, 165-166.
[52] Schlesinger, *The Vital Center*, 166.

fomented antiwar demonstrations in the U.S. and those on the left saw U.S. Vietnam policy as dictated by a capitalist conspiracy to secure markets and expand profits, the ADA and those within the confines of what Schlesinger had termed a "vital center" accepted the complex subtleties of the situation.[53] The ADA's persistence in delegitimizing positions to its left and right ensured that the radicals who staged the earliest antiwar demonstrations were placed unquestionably outside the boundaries of the vital center. The commitment of ADA liberals to the "vital center" and their understanding of its boundaries would face a new test when liberals began to stake their own territory in the antiwar movement.

**The Perils of Mass Demonstration**

When liberal antiwar activists from the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) and other liberal organizations sought to establish a liberal foothold in the antiwar movement in late 1965, they contrasted their plans for a November 27 March on Washington with the radical image perpetuated by the April SDS demonstration and the recent International Days of Protest.[54] Many—though by no means all—participants at those earlier events called for the unilateral withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, undertook civil disobedience, and displayed Vietcong flags. In contrast, organizers of the November march stressed that their orderly event would be free of civil disobedience and call on the U.S. government to stop bombing North Vietnam, halt escalation of the war, push for a cease-fire, and engage in negotiations with all concerned parties, including the Vietcong. Along with a

---

[53] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "McCarthyism is Threatening Us Again," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 13, 1966, 12.

[54] Founded in 1957 by a group of liberal "nuclear pacifists," SANE sought to bring attention to the danger of the nuclear arms race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Like the ADA, SANE was an early critic of U.S. military intervention in the Vietnam War. With the escalation of the U.S. war effort in Vietnam, SANE increasingly focused its attention and efforts on mounting opposition to the war. For more on SANE, see Milton S. Katz, *Ban the Bomb: A History of SANE, the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1987).

host of measures familiar to ADA ears and similar in content and tenor to recent ADA resolutions on the Vietnam War, organizers insisted that while the U.S. could not negotiate an end to the war by itself there were a number of initiatives the American government could take that could greatly enhance the possibility of a negotiated settlement.[55] Still, despite growing opposition to the Vietnam War in the ADA and its general agreement with the march organizers on the issues at stake, the insistence of the organization and its leaders on a "vital center" framework that precluded cooperation with radical antiwar activists greatly complicated their relationship with a demonstration where it was inherently impossible to control the composition of those who participated or the message they projected. That relationship would be further imperiled by the basic resistance of ADA leaders such as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to mass demonstrations as a means of bringing pressure to bear on complex foreign policy issues.

Throughout their preparations, organizers of the November march expended considerable energy trying to facilitate the involvement of liberal opponents of the Vietnam War from organizations such as the ADA. In a series of memorandums to local organizers, the march coordinator, SANE's Sanford Gottlieb, took great pains to ensure the respectable and moderate nature of the demonstration. To safeguard against the presence of Vietcong flags, the memorandum stressed that only U.S. and United Nations flags would be permitted at the march. In an effort to provide a more respectable appearance than had characterized earlier antiwar demonstrations, detailed instructions emphasized the need for neat dress and outlined instructions for navigating the "delicate problem" of "young people who cherish their informality." In order to control the message and overall perception of the demonstration, all

[55] "March on Washington for Peace in Vietnam: A Call to Mobilize the Conscience of America," pp. 1-2, Folder 39, Box 21, M97-135, ADA.

signs would carry messages from a list of pre-approved slogans and would be provided by organizers in Washington, D.C. Participants would only be allowed to bring signs indicating their local city, state, or school.[56] The issue of permitted flags and sign slogans presented a particularly difficult problem for organizers as confusion surrounded the question of what to do with participants who insisted on joining the demonstration with Vietcong flags, signs calling for American withdrawal from Vietnam, or other unpermitted items. Despite reports in the *New York Times* that organizers would appeal to police for assistance with groups who joined the demonstration with unauthorized signs, Gottlieb insisted that police assistance would not be sought and expressed the hope that those who refused monitors' requests to discard unauthorized signs would simply become "lost in the sea of humanity around them."[57]

Still, despite such efforts to distinguish the November march from the earlier antiwar events, Gottlieb nervously complained that the press tended to "blur any distinctions between the November 27 event and previous actions" and "merge all critical activities in one unified movement."[58] The lack of subtlety in the press coverage of the November march further deepened the already divisive question of the ADA's participation in an antiwar demonstration. However, since the march was to be sponsored not by organizations but by individuals, the issue of the ADA's relationship to the event never came up for formal debate or a vote by the national board.[59] Technically adhering to the neutrality necessitated by the none-vote on the issue, national director Leon Shull, with the support of national chairman

---

[56] Sanford Gottlieb, "March on Washington for Peace in Vietnam, Report No. III," pp. 1-2, Folder 39, Box 21, M97-135, ADA.

[57] Sanford Gottlieb, "March on Washington for Peace in Vietnam, Report No. IV," November 22, 1965, p. 1, Folder 39, Box 21, M97-135, ADA; John D. Morris, "Peace Marchers Bar Pacifist Signs," *New York Times*, November 21, 1965.

[58] Sanford Gottlieb, "March on Washington for Peace in Vietnam, Report No. II," October 20, 1965, p. 1, Folder 39, Box 21, M97-135, ADA.

[59] National Board Meeting Minutes, September 28, 1965, p. 4, Folder 36, Box 9, M97-135, ADA.

Don Edwards, sent a memorandum to the national board and local chapters to provide information on the November 27 march and note that although the ADA was not endorsing the event, members were free to participate as individuals. Shull's memorandum echoed Gottlieb on the need to distinguish the November march from earlier antiwar demonstrations and emphasized both the moderate nature of the planned event and its shared positions on the Vietnam War with the ADA. Shull informed the ADA board and chapters that march organizers would be cooperating closely with local police to ensure order and conveyed his understanding, likely based on the *New York Times* coverage of plans for the march, that police assistance would be sought in order to prevent unauthorized signs from being displayed during the march.[60]

Regardless of its ostensibly neutral stance on the November march, the memorandum from Shull fanned the flames of growing tension in the ADA over the question of participation in the demonstration. Shull's misinformation on the planned use of police assistance to separate individuals with unauthorized signs from the bulk of the demonstration might have served to soothe the concerns of those in the ADA who wanted to participate but feared being associated with hecklers waving Vietcong flags. Still, significant elements of the ADA leadership remained concerned about any prospect of ADA association with the event regardless of whether or not police assistance would be sought in an effort to control the demonstration's appearance. With some already seeing Shull's memorandum as an implicit endorsement of the march, the placement of an advertisement for the November 27 march in the *ADA World* alongside two editorials defending the rights of antiwar demonstrators and an article providing additional details about the event provided further evidence for those in the

[60] Leon Shull to Chapters and Board, Re: March and rally in Washington, Folder 19, Box 22, M97-135, ADA.

ADA who feared the organization had effectively endorsed the demonstration.[61]

The ADA's seeming endorsement of the November march unleashed a flurry of critical responses that illuminated the fraught nature of the organization's relationship to the antiwar movement. In response to Shull's memorandum, Henry Meigs, a national board member and leading figure in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter of ADA, wrote to the ADA national director to disassociate himself from those who were supporting the November march and insist that he did not like the implication that the ADA had eschewed an official endorsement in order to avoid bringing attention to the significant discord in the organization surrounding participation in an antiwar demonstration. Though clearly missing the fact that the event was to be sponsored by individuals—not organizations—Meigs' belief that the ADA leadership had decided to "fudge the issue by merely encouraging others to participate" indicated the depth of the difficulties that the ADA would have faced had it needed to seek broader support on the national board for an endorsement.[62] ADA national board members Samuel Beer and Paul Seabury earlier expressed similar disapproval of the organization's apparent support for the November march when they wrote to Edwards to express their "grave reservations about lending ADA's support to a very problematical enterprise."[63]

In an effort to distinguish the November 27 march from the general focus on American responsibility for the conflict displayed at earlier antiwar demonstrations, march organizers tactfully sent a telegram to North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh insisting that North Vietnam come to the negotiation table. The telegram also warned Ho that while

---

[61] "The Right to Dissent," *ADA World*, October 1965, 2; Ed Wynn, "Freedom To Demonstrate Supported," *ADA World*, October 1965, 3; "National Vietnam March Planned," *ADA World*, October 1965, 4; "The March Call," *ADA World*, October 1965, 4.

[62] Henry Meigs to Leon Shull, October 14, 1965, Folder 29, Box 2, M97-135, ADA.

[63] Samuel Beer and Paul Seabury to Don Edwards, October 20, 1965, p. 1, Folder 14, Box 36, M97-135, ADA.

demonstrations would continue, they would not lead to the withdrawal of U.S. forces.[64] Such gestures made little impact on Beer and Seabury, who condemned the "moralistic unilateralism which sees only the violence of one side" and contended that the large number of "literate Americans who read newspapers" would have no respect for any organization that lends itself to the "deception" they believed the march would perpetuate. Unconvinced by the claim made by march organizers to Ho that the demonstration alone would not thwart the American will to fight, Beer and Seabury raised their concern that the more "visible" protests against the war became, the more Hanoi would begin to doubt American commitment to the war and the less likely they would be to negotiate. Even with all evidence pointing to plans for an event painstakingly focused on maintaining order and a moderate appearance, they insisted that by joining those who "roam the streets," the ADA would become associated with "extremist clamor, every bit as dishonest as that of the John Birch Society" and do little "to prepare the mood of the American public" for negotiations. More to the point, Beer and Seabury stressed that the leadership of certain protest groups who would turn up at the November march were not at all interested in peace as such but rather in a Vietcong victory. In their view, ADA members should not lose their nerve or feel that they were losing their "liberal masculinity by refusing to join the fashionable protestors."[65]

As the November 27 march approached, opposition to the ADA's cooperation with the demonstration gained greater currency within the organization when Arthur Schlesinger Jr. sent a letter to Edwards expressing his desire to "very strongly associate" himself with the earlier letter from Beer and Seabury. Schlesinger concurred with Beer and Seabury that the march's ostensible goal of negotiated settlement in Vietnam would only be damaged by

[64] For the text of the telegram sent to Ho see "Burning of Cards at Protest Foiled," *New York Times*, October 29, 1965.

[65] Samuel Beer and Paul Seabury to Don Edwards, October 20, 1965, pp. 1-3.

signaling to the Vietcong and Hanoi that domestic protest in the U.S. would lead to a de-escalation of the U.S. military effort or even the outright withdrawal of American forces. Betraying a disdain towards popular participation in the formulation of foreign policy, Schlesinger further challenged the merits of the event on the grounds that a mass demonstration did not represent a serious way to advance the discussion of foreign policy and made no "serious intellectual contribution to the debate." Schlesinger conveyed even greater doubts as to the motivations and honesty of the march organizers than did Beer or Seabury with the suggestion that for a number of the participants, the ostensible goal of a negotiated settlement would really be "a mask behind which to organize pressure for an American withdrawal and even perhaps to begin a reconstitution of the popular front of the thirties." He urged the ADA to reverse its decision to cooperate with a "half-baked, un-thought-through demonstration" that would only "place a weapon in the hands of every enemy of the ADA in the country."[66]

The emphatic protests of Beer, Meigs, Schlesinger, and Seabury highlighted the significant opposition within the ADA to any prospect of the organization's cooperation with antiwar demonstrations but did little to change the organization's connection to an event to which it had no official relationship. ADA members who responded to the organization's publicity with a desire to attend the November 27 march joined individuals from other organizations such as SANE and the Women Strike for Peace (WSP), clergy, and thousands of other Americans from largely liberal, middle-class backgrounds in preparing for the event.[67] In the weeks preceding the march, the NCC decided to hold its annual meeting in Washington, D.C., the same weekend as the November 27 March on Washington. Organizers of the

[66] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to Don Edwards, October 21, 1965, Folder 29, Box 36, M97-135, ADA.

[67] John Herbers, "Typical Marcher: Middle-Class Adult," *New York Times*, November 28, 1965; "Throng of 20,000 Marches in Protest of Vietnam War," *Washington Post*, November 28, 1965.

November march had little sympathy for the NCC's efforts to establish a radical alignment for peace that was both anti-imperialist and antiwar.[68] Though the NCC maintained that it simply sought to lend support to the demonstration through the likely presence of its roughly 1,500 delegates and members, many of those in the ADA who planned to participate in the march were unhappy with the development.[69] National board member Louis Braun failed to look kindly upon the NCC's offer of support and wrote to other individual sponsors in the ADA to express his concern that the participation of individuals from the NCC and its constituent groups such as the May 2nd Movement and W.E.B. Du Bois Clubs would cloud both the original purpose of the march and its moderate image. Still, he recognized that the NCC had every right both to hold its annual convention the same weekend as the November march and to encourage its members to participate in the event.[70] By spelling out the basic right of individual members of society to take part in events such as the November march, Braun raised the crux of the ADA's difficult relationship with antiwar demonstrations: the essential inability to control the participation and message of mass demonstrations.

Among the roughly 25,000 people who assembled around the Washington Monument on November 27—the largest antiwar demonstration ever seen at that point in the nation's capital—a smattering of activists from the NCC, SDS, and other radical organizations could be seen, but the overwhelming majority of demonstrators were middle aged, middle class, neatly dressed, and decidedly non-radical.[71] The lineup of speakers on the stage displayed a

---

[68] "The Antiwar Left and Its 'March on Washington,'" *National Observer*, November 22, 1965.

[69] Thomas Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home: Vietnam and the American People, 1964*-1968 (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1984), 90.

[70] Louis J. Braun to Fellow Sponsors, November 17, 1965, pp. 1-2, Folder 39, Box 21, M97-135, ADA.

[71] "March for Peace," *Christian Century*, December 8, 1965, 1501; Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participants Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 112; Adam Garfinkle, *Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997), 79; Powers, *Vietnam*, 92; Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves*, 69; "The Biggest Peace Demonstration in the History of Washington," *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, December 6, 1965, 2; Wells, *The War Within*,

political composition similar to the thousands packed into the National Mall. The march organizers tasked with lining up the speakers for the event had faced the difficult task of avoiding alienating liberals from organizations such as the ADA with concerns about the demonstration taking on a radical tenor while also reaching out to the student antiwar movement and its insistence on a strong stance against the war. Compromises were reached in a lineup that included mainstream political figures such as Coretta Scott King, Dr. Benjamin Spock, Norman Thomas, and future ADA national chairman Joseph Duffey, excluded radical antiwar activists such as David Dellinger and Staughton Lynd, but included SDS President Carl Oglesby as the lone radical to take the podium.[72]

The negligible presence of radicals on the stage and in the crowd did not stand in the way of overwhelmingly positive responses to the event in the press but continued to be a major sticking point for many of the ADA's leaders. Reflecting on reactions to the march, Gottlieb wrote that the media expected "a crowd of beatniks and found middle-class America.[73] The *New York Times* approvingly characterized most of the marchers as "middle-class whites in a holiday mood" who "far outnumbered the student groups and the radical left." Though acknowledging a speckling of Vietcong flags in the crowd, the *Times* noted that authorized signs carried by members of organizations such as the ADA, SANE, Women's International League, and Women Strike for Peace were predominant throughout the

---

62. Though estimates of participation at the November 27 March on Washington vary from 20,000 to 50,000—with estimates around 25,000 most prevalent—most sources describe the event as the single largest antiwar demonstration ever held in the nation's capital at the time it took place. Some sources go further to characterize the march as the single largest antiwar demonstration the country had ever seen in November 1965 with a greater number of participants in one location than any of the individual demonstrations that comprised the earlier International Days of Protest.

[72] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 131; John D. Morris, "March in Capital Selects Slogans," *New York Times*, November 24, 1965.

[73] Sanford Gottlieb, "March on Washington for Peace in Vietnam, Final Report," December 9, 1965, p. 1, Folder 39, Box 21, M97-135, ADA.

demonstration.[74] *Christian Century* echoed the *Times* characterization, describing the crowd as "conservatively dressed" and "orderly" as it contended that the event may in retrospect "be viewed as one of the few sane events in an insane age."[75] Still, for many in the ranks of leadership in the ADA, the display of Vietcong flags—however limited in number—and the introduction of the chant "Hey, hey, L.B.J., how many kids did you kill today?" into the vernacular of the antiwar movement discredited the entire event. Leading figures in the ADA also likely found a source of anxiety in the message from the NLF president expressing his best wishes for the "brilliant success" of the march and announcing that the NLF had released two American prisoners of war to demonstrate their solidarity with the demonstration.[76]

Despite widespread celebrations of the November 27 march in the press, the event would be the last instance of ADA cooperation—official or otherwise—with an antiwar demonstration until 1969. Positive press reactions had little impact on those in the ADA who had opposed participation in the event since its announcement. Many of the ADA liberals opposed to the march harbored an aversion to antiwar demonstrations that went beyond the inherit inability to control the composition and message of an event. Schlesinger expressed a view shared by many of his colleagues on the ADA National Board when he insisted that while activists had every right to organize protests, mass demonstrations—even orderly ones—served to lower the level of debate and ultimately undermined the greater potential for real changes to policy offered by political opposition. Months after the March on Washington, at a panel discussion featuring prominent New York-based scholars, writers, and artists, Schlesinger drew a clear distinction between the effective and reasoned opposition of senators

---

[74] Herbers, "Typical Marcher: Middle-Class Adult."

[75] "March for Peace," 1501.

[76] Melvin Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds* (Lanham, MD: SR Books, 2002), 42; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975* (New York: Owl Book, 1984), 64-65.

and certain elements of the intellectual community on one hand and the counterproductive and often hysterical efforts of antiwar demonstrators on the other. The City University of New York professor recalled a conversation with an unnamed Senate dove who told him that if the demonstrations kept up the only result would be the silencing of senatorial opposition to the war. Facing a chorus of boos and gasps from the audience, Schlesinger insisted that opposition to the war would be best served by advancing arguments through political and electoral means rather than engaging in demonstrations that thwarted doves in the Senate and served only to provide an "emotional orgasm" for participants. Offering a blunt assessment of the November 27 march, he declared, "I think the speeches of senators Church, McGovern, Fulbright, Robert Kennedy and so on, have had more influence in changing policy than the March on Washington. If the point is to be effective, you don't carry Vietcong banners."[77]

Schlesinger's highly critical stance on the November march revealed more than his objection to events that included the participation of radicals. While the presence of even a limited number of Vietcong flags irked Schlesinger and led him to question the effectiveness of the march, much of his opposition to the event rested on a general rejection of mass demonstrations as a means of influencing complex foreign policy issues. Schlesinger further developed his position on demonstrations later that year when he wrote that while mass demonstrations could certainly be effective in cases such as civil rights, where the intellectual and moral issues were clear and self-evident, they did not serve the cause of rational debate when the issues were complex and ambiguous, as in the Vietnam War. In his estimation, any initiatives that would lower the rationality of the debate represented a self-defeating tactic for intellectuals, who, he maintained, would always lose to reactionary anti-intellectuals in a

[77] "A Band of New York Intellectuals Meets with Prof. Schlesinger for A Talk-In on Vietnam," *New York Times Magazine*, February 6, 1966, 79.

"competition in demagoguery and hysteria."[78]

Even for those in the ADA who did not share Schlesinger's general opposition to mass demonstrations as a means of influencing foreign policy, the tendency of ADA liberals to see themselves and the organization as a "vital center" surrounded by irrationality on all sides made participation in mass demonstrations virtually impossible. While it should come as little surprise that the "vital center" framework placed radical antiwar activists beyond the pale, the insistence among ADA liberals that the position of their organization represented a "vital center" also thwarted the potential for participation in antiwar demonstrations organized by liberals. The general insistence that positions to the left and right of the ADA failed to apply the reason necessary to address the complex issues of the Vietnam War perpetuated an intolerance of alternate views and strategies that limited the organization's participation in mass antiwar demonstrations where the ability to provide strict control of the participation and message was inherently infeasible. For those in the ADA who did not already oppose antiwar demonstrations in principle, the likelihood that radicals could be counted on to have some degree of presence at mass antiwar demonstrations ensured that such initiatives remained off the table as an option for expressing the mounting opposition to the Vietnam War found in the organization.

Edwards, Galbraith, and other important voices in the ADA offered their approval of the November march, but their support for the demonstration proved far less vigorous than the opposition of those in the organization categorically or strategically opposed to cooperation with antiwar demonstrations.[79] With strident opposition to participation in antiwar demonstrations held by enough members on the ADA national board to block cooperation

[78] Schlesinger, "McCarthyism is Threatening Us Again," 12.

[79] Don Edwards to Paul Seabury and Samuel H. Beer, November 2, 1965, pp. 1-2, Box P-1, AMS-JFK; Gottlieb, "March on Washington for Peace in Vietnam, Report No. III," p. 1.

with even liberal antiwar demonstrations, the organization deprived itself of what could have been a valuable source of pressure on the Johnson administration to change the course of the Vietnam War. Unwilling to participate in the demonstrations that drove the growing antiwar movement, the ADA found itself with limited options as it sought to translate its opposition to the Vietnam War into tangible and effective action.

**A Vital Center Antiwar Initiative**

As the scale and momentum of the antiwar movement continued to grow, Joseph Rauh joined Martin Luther King Jr. on April 24, 1967, in announcing a petition gathering initiative aimed at putting pressure on the Johnson administration to take steps that they believed would make the realization of a negotiated settlement to the Vietnam War possible.[80] With John Kenneth Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger, and a host of other ADA liberals among its prominent list of sponsors, the initiative, Negotiation Now!, sought to collect one million signatures on a petition that supported the call by United Nations Secretary General U Thant for an unconditional cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam, a de-escalation of the fighting in South Vietnam, and negotiations between Washington, Hanoi, Saigon, and the NLF on the establishment of a cease-fire.[81] Historians have sometimes portrayed Negotiation Now! as an effort to co-opt the antiwar movement by socialists and liberals who harbored no genuine opposition to the Vietnam War but desired to be seen as doing something to bring the conflict to an end.[82] While such characterizations undoubtedly describe the motivation of some of the individuals involved in Negotiation Now!, they do not accurately depict the aims of the bulk

---

[80] "King Asks Million Signers for Plea to End Bombing," *Washington Post*, April 25, 1967.
[81] Negotiation Now! Petition Statement, *Negotiation Now! Bulletin*, June 21, 1967, 4.
[82] For example, see Maurice Isserman, *The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 271-72; Gillon, *Politics and Vision*, 194.

of the campaign's sponsors who looked to the initiative as the best available prospect of bringing the war to an end. The ADA and its "old liberals" placed their hopes on Negotiation Now! not because they were insincere or uncommitted in their opposition to the war, but because their inability to participate in antiwar demonstrations left them with little choice but to focus their antiwar efforts on an initially promising but, ultimately, limited and unsuccessful petition gathering initiative seen by many of its supporters as a "vital center" in a polarized Vietnam War debate.

Negotiation Now! represented just one of several new antiwar campaigns launched during the spring and summer months of 1967 that demonstrated the political diversity to be found in antiwar movement. In early 1967, the Spring Mobilization Committee emerged as a powerful force in the antiwar movement with a predominantly radical leadership that held non-exclusion of any groups or individuals as its driving principle.[83] The Spring Mobilization demonstration on April 15 in San Francisco represented a record turnout for an antiwar demonstration on the West Coast, attracting some 75,000 people to a rally at the edge of Golden Gate Park. The corresponding demonstration in New York City saw a crowd that some observers placed at 400,000 march from Central Park to the United Nations plaza. The policy of non-exclusion could be readily seen at the New York march, with a crowd that included blacks and whites, children and grandparents, Vietcong sympathizers and military veterans, hippies and church members, student radicals and white collar professionals. Many of the individuals who participated in the bi-coastal event had never before protested against the Vietnam War.[84]

Despite the impressive numbers and diversity of participants to be found at the Spring

[83] Wells, *The War Within*, 94.

[84] Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 105-106.

Mobilization demonstrations, the radical orientation of the Mobilization leadership and the provocative nature of the demonstrations precluded the participation of many liberal antiwar activists and organizations. Eight days after the Spring Mobilization demonstrations, Martin Luther King Jr., Carl Oglesby, and Benjamin Spock announced an antiwar project more specifically aimed at promoting liberal-radical cooperation. Modeled after the 1964 Mississippi Summer project of the civil rights movement, Vietnam Summer represented an ambitious effort to bring liberals and radicals together in grassroots antiwar organizing.[85] With the aim of attracting youths who had become interested in the antiwar movement in the wake of the April 15 Spring Mobilization demonstrations, Vietnam Summer encouraged students to go door-to-door in their own communities to organize existing opposition to the Vietnam War into an electoral base for upcoming local elections and presidential primaries.[86]

In contrast to the confrontational nature of the Spring Mobilization and the radical-liberal cooperation actively sought by the Vietnam Summer initiative, Negotiation Now! organizers set their sights on moderates and the political mainstream. The Negotiation Now! program grew out of the belief that the mass collection of signatures would encourage President Johnson to change the course of the war by bolstering Congressional doves and critics of the present policy within the administration.[87] Campaign organizers stressed the strength of a Negotiation Now! program that was minimal enough to appeal to the widest possible range of Americans, yet effective enough to provide a way to bring the war to an end on "honorable terms."[88]

The narrow and targeted program of Negotiation Now! held considerable appeal for

---

[85] "King Plans Anti-War Campaign," *Washington Post*, April 24, 1967; DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 182.

[86] Halstead, *Out Now!*, 291-292.

[87] Halstead, *Out Now!*, 291.

[88] "Negotiation Now! Campaign Underway; Millions of Signatures is Goal," *ADA World*, July 1967, 11.

ADA liberals. Shortly after the announcement of Negotiation Now!, the ADA threw its weight behind the petition-gathering campaign and the program quickly became the primary focus of its antiwar efforts. Leon Shull saw Negotiation Now! as "the best vehicle that has yet been created to provide the American people with a coalition program that can bring the war to an end." Hopes for the campaign ran high in its early days. With the participation of local ADA chapters, the campaign filled requests for over 700,000 petitions in the first month of the effort.[89] When delegates of the Negotiation Now! campaign met in Washington, D.C., on June 29 to kick off their petition drive and lobby members of Congress, Galbraith addressed the luncheon assembly at the Mayflower Hotel with a detailed proposal for establishing the conditions necessary for negotiations. In the speech, he outlined a plan whereby the U.S. would cease bombing North Vietnam and abandon the objective of reconquering all of South Vietnam in favor of securing selected urban areas to establish a "holding operation" for negotiations. Expressing considerable confidence in the viability of his plan, he declared, "Rarely in foreign policy is the path of wisdom so clearly etched."[90] Backed by the cheering audience of the Negotiation Now! luncheon, Galbraith's confident proposal also resonated with the broader liberal community. In the weeks that followed, the ADA received an unprecedented volume of mail—most of it supportive—in response to Galbraith's influential speech.[91]

---

[89] Leon Shull to National Board, Chapters, Officers, "Memorandum No. 6," May 22, 1967, Box 497, JKG; "Negotiation Now! Campaign Underway; Millions of Signatures is Goal," 11.

[90] Andrew J. Glass, "Galbraith Offers Viet Plan," *Washington Post*, June 29, 1967; "Delegations at Washington Make Headway in Congress for Vietnam Bombing Halt," *Negotiation Now! Bulletin*, July 4, 1967, 1, 3; John Kenneth Galbraith, "Vietnam: The Moderate Solution," Address at "Negotiations Now: A National Citizens Campaign to End the War in Vietnam" in Washington, D.C., June 28, 1967, p. 28, Box 5, Acc. 98A-048, Negotiation Now! Records (DG 196), Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, PA (hereafter cited as NEN).

[91] "Paragraph to be included in the ADA response which will be signed by Leon Shull," Box 497, JKG. Galbraith's well-received address reached an audience far beyond the audience at the Negotiation Now! gathering in Washington, D.C., with the publication of two widely-read articles based on speech. For the initial adaptation

Many in the ranks of leadership in the ADA shared Galbraith's attention to the political realities of opposition to the Vietnam War and viewed the Negotiation Now! campaign as a valuable alternative to the antiwar demonstrations that drove the antiwar movement. One month prior to the April 15 Spring Mobilization, *ADA World* editor Curtis Gans assessed the planned bi-coastal event and stressed that the Mobilization's call for the unilateral withdrawal and its branding of the Vietnam War as a "racist war" would alienate the vast majority of Americans. Gans concluded that the ADA ought to remain entirely out of the Mobilization and work on an alternative program that held some hope of attracting mass support.[92] The actions and tenor of the Spring Mobilization justified a number of Gans' concerns. While the Spring Mobilization march in New York had seen a large number of Americans from all walks of life and respectable political figures such as Martin Luther King and Benjamin Spock take a stand against the Vietnam War, the demonstration also saw widespread burnings of draft cards, the flying of Vietcong flags from a 40-foot-tall makeshift tower, and other actions deemed irresponsible and extremist by the ADA.[93]

The grassroots organizing undertaken by the liberals and radicals who cooperated in the Vietnam Summer effort represented a far more likely program for the ADA to cooperate with than the Spring Mobilization but still presented the political risks to be found in associating with unpredictable radicals. The significant autonomy provided to local groups in the loose coalition that comprised the Vietnam Summer represented a significant hurdle to the ADA's cooperation with the program. Under the prevailing rule of local autonomy for all

---

of the address for publication, see John Kenneth Galbraith, "Vietnam: The Moderate Solution," *Christianity and Crisis*, August 7, 1967, 185-190. For the version that reached a more popular audience see John Kenneth Galbraith, "Resolving Our Vietnam Predicament," *Playboy*, December 1967, 139, 142, 278-81.

[92] Curtis Gans to Leon Shull, "Re: Mobilization," March 16, 1967, pp. 1-2, Folder 37, Box 36, M97-135, ADA.

[93] Douglas Robinson, "100,000 Rally at U.N. Against Vietnam War," *New York Times*, April 16, 1967; "On Dissent," *ADA World*, May 1967, 2.

programs, Gans noted that Vietnam Summer in some places would take the form of door-to-door organizing and in other places would offer the promise of mass demonstrations and civil disobedience. The proposed plan of the national Vietnam Summer campaign to channel riots in the ghettoes into antiwar riots represented a particularly alarming prospect for Gans. Though acknowledging that the Vietnam Summer program would be a multi-faceted campaign—with the bulk of activity taking on less radical forms than ghetto riots—Gans worried about how the campaign would be represented in the media. In light of press coverage of the Spring Mobilization and other demonstrations, he warned that the national image of Vietnam Summer in the media would likely be determined by the campaign's most extreme and noteworthy activities.[94]

From the perspective of ADA liberals, Negotiation Now! offered a number of important advantages over Mobilization demonstrations and Vietnam Summer as a program of opposition to the Vietnam policies of the Johnson administration. Unlike the mass demonstrations organized by the Spring Mobilization Committee and its successor, the National Mobilization Committee, known informally as the Mobe, Negotiation Now! avoided the pitfalls of participation in mass demonstrations where control of the event's message and constituency were inherently infeasible. In the case of the Mobilization events, the policy of non-exclusion meant that not only was control of a demonstration's message and participation infeasible, it was specifically rejected. While the Vietnam Summer's campaign of door-to-door organizing with an eye towards building a political base for doves in the 1968 election shared much in common with the ADA's general orientation of political and electoral opposition to the Vietnam War, the autonomy allowed to local groups in the program proved

[94] Curtis Gans to Leon Shull, "Re: Summer Programs," May 22, 1967, p. 1, Folder 37, Box 36, M97-135, ADA.

problematic for ADA liberals who feared the radical tenor and substance efforts would assume in some locales. Even when the program of Vietnam Summer took on the more mundane tasks of door-to-door canvassing, ADA liberals raised concerns towards the types of individuals who would take part in such efforts. The Vietnam Summer's plan to draw its staff from student populations provided a source of worry for Gans who noted that the majority of the staff recruited by the program came from the "most radical and activist fringe on the campus." Gans readily conceded that such individuals might be the most highly motivated on campus, but stressed that radical students would not be the people likely to find the most acceptance with moderates who answered their doors.[95]

Unlike the mass demonstration organized by the National Mobilization Committee and the autonomous local programs of Vietnam Summer, Negotiation Now! provided a clear program with a controllable message based on seeking signatures for a petition containing a narrow statement designed to appeal to the widest possible range of Americans. The campaign would give the broader public a sense of participation in the antiwar movement while ensuring the position and message continued to be determined by the Negotiation Now! leadership rather than the press attention lavished on radical minorities as could be expected at mass antiwar demonstrations. In contrast to the efforts of demonstrators who waved Vietcong flags at Mobilization demonstrations or Vietnam Summer activists who knocked on doors and heaped blame for the Vietnam War on the U.S., Negotiation Now! would be in Shull's words "an effective peace effort" that contained "no moral condemnation of America."[96]

When Negotiation Now! efforts kicked off in the summer of 1967, the campaign faced a deeply polarized nation. In June, ADA vice chairman Joseph Rauh, former national

---

[95] Curtis Gans to Leon Shull, "Re: Summer Programs," May 22, 1967, p. 1.
[96] Leon Shull to John Kenneth Galbraith, June 20, 1967, Box 498, JKG.

chairman Don Edwards, and two dozen other individuals stood in downtown Washington, D.C., with clipboards and pens to collect signatures for the Negotiation Now! petition drive. The Negotiation Now! contingent found insults nearly as forthcoming as signatures. Rauh's efforts began at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and K Street, where he was called a "Communist S.O.B." and "a disgrace to the whole country." Another passer-by recognized Rauh and told him that he had no right to stand on the street and protest Johnson's Vietnam policies when the ADA had so actively supported the president's election in 1964: "You put him [President Johnson] in there. I gave you $1 to do it." The experience led Rauh to remark, "I've never seen such bitterness on both sides of an issue."[97]

Amid the polarization described by Rauh, members of the Negotiation Now! executive committee who organized the campaign and oversaw its day-to-day activities framed their initiative as a "vital center" that rejected the anti-Americanism they saw in the call for unilateral withdrawal at antiwar demonstrations as well as the military escalation urged by hawkish supporters of the Vietnam War. Just as the ADA had expended substantial energy contrasting its "vital center" with both Wallace's Progressives and conservative Republicans during the early postwar years, Negotiation Now! organizers devoted significant attention to distinguishing its proposals from what they saw as morally suspect and irresponsible positions on both the left and right. A front-page column in the *Negotiation Now! Bulletin* called on its readers to reject the three bad choices being presented to the American people: escalation of the war effort in a desperate attempt to win a military victory; unilateral withdrawal of American military forces and abandonment of responsibility for a stable peace in Southeast Asia; and a continuation of the administration's "limited" war that accomplished nothing and

[97] Paul Hodge, "Rauh Runs Into Critics in Viet Policy Campaign," *Washington Post*, June 27, 1967.

threatened to widen the conflict.[98] A statement later circulated among the members of the Negotiation Now! Executive Committee stressed the dangers to be found in the polarization of the antiwar movement and the potential for reactionary responses to take hold in the public debate. The statement assessed the choice faced by Americans in blunt terms: in offering an alternative, "Negotiation Now! has helped to overcome the dangerous polarization of opinion around the calls for unilateral withdrawal or all-out war as the only solutions. If the American people are forced to choose between these two solutions to the war, all indications are that they will choose the latter."[99]

The commitment of Negotiation Now! to positioning itself as a "vital center" surrounded by irresponsibility had been critical to attracting support from the ADA and other liberal organizations but proved to be a major hurdle to the campaign's goal of reaching one million signatures. As the summer progressed, Negotiation Now! organizers and the ADA expressed positive assessments of the petition gathering effort in order to obscure its lackluster response from the public. At the time of its launch, Negotiation Now! printed 700,000 petitions and campaign organizers boasted that they expected to obtain not only one million, but millions of signatures by the end of summer. Getting petitions signed, however, proved to be far more difficult than printing them. By the end of September, the plural millions quietly went missing from campaign rhetoric and Negotiation Now! instead focused on its initial goal of obtaining one million signatures. The insistence of Negotiation Now! organizers on excluding individuals and organizations who supported unilateral withdrawal—even if they agreed to mute their position on the issue for the sake of a successful petition drive—deprived the initiative of vital resources and manpower. As a result, Negotiation Now! was forced to

[98] "A Call to All Americans," *Negotiation Now! Bulletin*, July 4, 1967.
[99] "Draft Statement," Folder 4, Box 99, AMS.

rely largely on a narrow base of moderate religious organizations and community groups that left its petition gathering efforts almost certain to fail. When Negotiation Now! made it halfway to its original goal by cobbling together 500,000 signatures, organizers met in Washington D.C. to declare the campaign a success, noting that half a million signed petitions represented the largest number of names ever gathered on a peace petition in the U.S. [100]

Consensus among ADA liberals on the efficacy of Negotiation Now! had started to fall apart even before the poor tallies from the petition gathering effort came in. The ability to strictly control the message and participation of the campaign had been a key element in the appeal of Negotiation Now! to ADA liberals in the first place. The tendency of the Negotiation Now! organizers towards obsessive control and excessive attention to differentiating their proposals from alternative approaches, however, began to alienate even the campaign's initial backers in the ADA. The language of the Negotiation Now! petition sponsored by Galbraith, Rauh, and Schlesinger had only described negotiated settlement as a "more realistic alternative than unilateral withdrawal," but subsequent campaign literature and the *Negotiation Now! Bulletin* specifically rejected unilateral withdrawal and devoted more attention to delegitimizing any consideration of a pullout of American forces than making the case against escalation of the U.S. war effort.[101] An early supporter of the petition gathering drive, Gans took issue with what he saw as the transformation of Negotiation Now! from an antiwar initiative into what effectively amounted to an anti-unilateral withdrawal campaign.[102]

The preoccupation of Negotiation Now! organizers with delegitimizing unilateral

---

[100] "Negotiation Now! Campaign Underway; Millions of Signatures is Goal," 11; "Negotiation Now," *ADA World*, September 1967, 2; Sanford Gottlieb, "SANE's Relations with Negotiation Now," memorandum, September 25, 1967, p. 2, Box 2, NEN; "Draft Statement," Folder 4, Box 99, AMS; "Negotiation Now! Pronounced Success," *ADA World*, November 1967, 1.

[101] "Negotiation Now! A National Citizens' Campaign for New Initiatives to End the War in Vietnam," *ADA World*, May 1967, 16.

[102] Fritzi Cohen to Don Keyes, August 23, 1967, Folder 4, Box 99, AMS.

withdrawal has provided the basis for enduring characterizations of the campaign's collection of prominent sponsors as less than sincere in their professed opposition to the Vietnam War. The position developed by Negotiation Now! organizers over the course of 1967 was such that leaders in the Socialist Party of America (SPA)—who tacitly supported the prosecution of the war by the Johnson administration—could support the campaign as a way of being able to claim they were working to bring the conflict to an end while criticizing the broader antiwar movement as extremist and sympathetic to Communists.[103] Unlike those SPA leaders, however, Galbraith, Rauh, Schlesinger and other "old liberals" from the ADA who helped to launch Negotiation Now! genuinely sought a swift end to the fighting in Vietnam. Still, the insistence of those "old liberals" from the ADA on adhering to a "vital center" framework that precluded cooperation with mass antiwar demonstrations, if not quite as exacting as the campaign's organizers, had nevertheless left them with few options but to work with an inherently limited Negotiation Now! initiative that relied on a narrow base of organizational support.

In part, the Negotiation Now! campaign suffered from the shortcomings of insisting on a negotiated settlement to the Vietnam War that began to become increasingly apparent to many of its supporters in the months that followed the launch of the campaign. The notion that the Vietnam War could be brought to an end if all concerned parties were urged to the negotiating table had been doubtful from the earliest days of major U.S. involvement but came

---

[103] Isserman, *The Other American*, 271-72. Isserman argues that despite featuring Galbraith, King, Schlesinger, and other prominent figures among its list of sponsors, Negotiation Now! was "organizationally little more than a front group for the Shachtmanite faction of the Socialist Party." With many individuals in its organization who were neither members of the SPA nor supporters of Max Shachtman, Negotiation Now! cannot be written off simply as a Shachtmanite front group. The position of Negotiation Now! on the Vietnam War and its fervent attacks on the wider antiwar movement did, however, make the organization appealing to Shachtman and his supporters in the SPA.

to appear progressively unlikely as the conflict dragged on. By stressing the need to include the NLF in negotiations and accepting the inevitability that they would have to be included in some form of coalition government in the South in order to get their representatives and Hanoi to the negotiating table, the ADA and its leading voices of opposition to the war offered a more plausible starting point for negotiations than the rigidly anti-Communist Johnson administration. Still, proposals such as Galbraith's "holding operation" to secure urban areas in the South and press for negotiations failed to recognize the fundamental differences between Hanoi and Washington as to what they considered to be an acceptable form of government in South Vietnam.[104] It is difficult to imagine an arrangement for a NLF role in government that could have compelled them to lay down their arms while also satisfying both Washington's insistence on a non-Communist government in the South and Hanoi's basic aim of reunifying the country.

The position of the ADA on the Vietnam War during the mid-1960s, like that of Negotiation Now!, expressed both a refusal to give up South Vietnam to Communist control and a rejection of the escalation of the U.S. war effort that would have been necessary to secure the survival of a non-Communist government in the South. Even during that period of general agreement, however, the ADA never fully embraced the uncompromising refusal of Negotiation Now! organizers to even consider unilateral withdrawal as a legitimate option available to the U.S. Together, the early and consistent opposition of the ADA to U.S. escalation and an understanding of polycentric Communism held by its "old liberals" that rendered the form of government in South Vietnam a question of somewhat limited importance hinted that, if forced to choose between escalation and withdrawal, they would

[104] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 144.

choose the latter. The prospect of "losing" Vietnam as Truman had earlier "lost" China remained a politically dangerous prospect in the eyes of ADA liberals but the military circumstances of the Vietnam War and the cutbacks to domestic social programs that resulted from protracted U.S. intervention in the conflict pushed the organization and its "old liberals" towards a more decisive position on the war by eroding the middle ground the ADA had long sought to strike.

With that middle ground largely untenable by the end of 1967, the implications of the position on Vietnam War advanced by the ADA and its "old liberals" for a number of years became far more apparent. As the war neared its third year of large-scale U.S. troop involvement, Galbraith expressed little of the confidence in the feasibility of a negotiated settlement that had underpinned his Negotiation Now! speech during the summer and Schlesinger would concede that while unilateral withdrawal "would hardly be America's finest hour" it "would be greatly preferable to a policy of unlimited escalation."[105] With the benefit of hindsight, Schlesinger later confessed that unilateral withdrawal was "the position I should have taken from the start."[106] Still, as much as a negotiated settlement to the Vietnam War—like the Negotiation Now! campaign itself—represented an unlikely means of bringing the war to an end, it appeared to ADA liberals in the mid-1960s to be the most potentially effective option feasible within the context of American domestic politics. Obscured by their insistence on maintaining a "vital center" position and the limited prospects for the negotiated settlement to the conflict that they sought, the opposition to the Vietnam War developed by the "old liberals" of the ADA expressed a rejection of the insistence on anti-Communist containment that had defined the foreign policy of both liberals and conservatives since the

[105] Galbraith, "The Galbraith Plan to End the War," 128-130; Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "Thinking Aloud: Vietnam and the 1968 Election," *New Leader*, November 6, 1967, 12

[106] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. quoted in Wells, *The War Within*, 137.

early postwar years. Though their opposition to the war was unrealistic in its approach and ineffective in achieving its aims, it was not half-hearted. The ADA and its "old liberals" would begin to act on their rejection of anti-Communism as a basis for U.S. foreign policy with greater effectiveness as concerns with civil rights and poverty that had long roused their opposition to the conflict established the Vietnam War as the defining issue of liberal politics.

## Chapter Three: Moving Beyond Civil Rights: Poverty and the Struggle for Racial Equality

In the wake of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, as a Senate filibuster stalled the bill that would become the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ADA National Chairman John Roche described how "the civil rights revolution has opened the door into forgotten America.... it has revealed far more than the injustice that has been done to millions of American citizens by depriving them of their constitutional rights."[1] By putting the national spotlight on the poverty that narrowed the opportunities and restricted the freedom of a significant number of Americans, the civil rights movement fostered an awareness among ADA liberals of the enduring scale and depth of poverty that had previously been lost to assumptions of widespread affluence and excessive confidence in the social benefits of economic growth. While radical antiwar activists and the broader New Left had limited influence on the political trajectory of ADA liberals during the 1960s, the attention put on the interconnected issues of economic and racial inequality by mainstream civil rights leaders fundamentally reshaped how the ADA—an organization comprised primarily of northern whites—viewed the relationship between race and poverty. In contrast to white liberals who often proved to be less than dependable allies of the civil rights movement in the postwar era, key figures in the ADA such as Joseph Rauh displayed a thoroughgoing commitment to the cause of civil rights and reconciled principle and politics on terms that were frequently similar to those of the nation's major civil rights leaders. When the increasing momentum of the civil rights movement in the early 1960s brought a new level of visibility to the entrenched economic inequality that underpinned racial inequality, the leading figures of the ADA

[1] John P. Roche to Attendees of the 1964 ADA National Convention, memorandum, Folder 24, Box 16, M97-135, ADA.

demonstrated just how malleable the liberal tradition they had long embodied could be as their commitment to the fight for civil rights expanded to include the struggle against poverty.

A newfound commitment to tackling poverty among ADA liberals did not, however, generate a corresponding agreement on how best to attack the complex and deep-seated issue of chronic economic deprivation. In the years that followed President Lyndon Johnson's declaration of an "unconditional war on poverty" during his 1964 State of the Union Address, John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. saw considerable potential in the services and human capital development approach pursued by the administration that embodied many of the ideas central to the qualitative liberalism they had been advancing since the 1950s.[2] Despite the broad influence wielded by Galbraith and Schlesinger in the organization, most in the ranks of leadership in the ADA believed that the War on Poverty and the general orientation of the Johnson administration's Great Society initiatives failed to address structural unemployment and the related economic obstacles that would continue to perpetuate racial inequality even if civil rights and voting rights were enshrined into law. For their part, Galbraith and Schlesinger harbored no aversion to the prevailing insistence among ADA leaders on a more structural response to poverty in spite of their more optimistic assessment of the scope, if not the scale, of the existing War on Poverty and shared their conviction that poverty represented a civil rights issue.

The insistence on a structural response to poverty centered on jobs and income that formed the basis of the ADA's policy on poverty, the economy, and civil rights in the mid-1960s rested on a far more overtly social democratic outlook than the organization had

---

[2] "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. January 8, 1964" in *Lyndon B. Johnson: 1963-64: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), 1:114.

exhibited in its past. While the ADA's predecessor, the Union for Democratic Action (UDA), readily struck social democratic notes in its efforts on behalf of full employment policy in the mid-1940s, the ADA from its founding through the early 1960s looked to economic growth and private industry—with proper government planning and regulation—as the answer to the poverty that persisted in what was seen as an increasingly affluent society.[3] Prompted by a growing recognition of the economic roots of racial inequality, the turn of the ADA toward a social democratic perspective that held the federal government directly responsible for providing jobs and incomes to American citizens stood in striking contrast to both the underlying approach of the Great Society and the more indirect role for government envisioned by the organization in its early years. As it diverged from the main currents of postwar liberal economics, the social democratic outlook adopted by the ADA looked to the politics of the UDA and the New Deal left as a starting point for solutions to the deeply interconnected problems of economic and racial inequality in the 1960s. Through its efforts to tackle racial inequality by drawing on the liberalism of an earlier era, the ADA demonstrated that a New Deal framework that had been marked by racial exclusion could jettison its racially conservative policy positions and offer a stronger foundation for addressing the economic dimensions of racial inequality than the services and human capital development approach of the Great Society.

Leon Keyserling drew on the push for large-scale public works projects and a guaranteed annual income that had become central to his economic thinking and the

---

[3] For more on UDA's support on the Full Employment Bill of 1945 see Robert Clayton Pierce, "Liberals and the Cold War: Union for Democratic Action and Americans for Democratic Action, 1940-1949" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1979), 106-107, 119-120. For examples of how the ADA looked to economic growth and properly regulated private industry to address the country's remaining poverty see the ADA's 1948 economic policy in "Economic Policy," *ADA World*, March 2, 1948, 5 and its 1963 economic policy in "Compendium of ADA's Position," memorandum, p.2, Folder 136, (ADA-MF, roll 84), Box 14, Series 4, Mss 3, ADA.

increasingly social democratic outlook of ADA policy when he laid the foundation for a bold new antipoverty initiative as the chief architect of the A. Philip Randolph Institute's "Freedom Budget."[4] By offering a systematic proposal for a jobs-and-income approach to poverty that went far beyond the limited services approach of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty, the Freedom Budget managed to forge a powerful but brief consensus among a significant number of leading liberals and civil rights leaders. The confidence in the far-reaching social potential of economic growth that suffused the Freedom Budget and sustained a supportive consensus among a diverse array of liberals and civil rights leaders faced a fundamental and, ultimately, insurmountable challenge from a substantial escalation of the Vietnam War that revealed the limits of the American economy. When it became clear that the U.S. possessed neither the economic resources nor the political will to wage war on Communism in Vietnam and on poverty at home, support for a Freedom Budget campaign that rested on the assumption that the country could have both "guns and butter" evaporated just as quickly as it had emerged. With the diminishing influence of Keyserling's assertion that a growing American economy held almost limitless potential as a source for social progress, ADA liberals increasingly came to recognize U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War as the first hurdle to moving beyond civil rights and addressing the economic barriers that continued to render racial equality a distant reality.

**White Liberals, Civil Rights, and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party**

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, white liberals proved to be politically necessary though often unreliable allies of the civil rights movement. When the Mississippi Freedom

[4] For more on how Keyserling viewed the relationship between earlier initiatives and the Freedom Budget see Leon Keyserling to Bayard Rustin, October 19, 1967, p.2 Folder 4, Box 20, Bayard T. Rustin Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as BTR).

Democratic Party (MFDP) sought to be seated in place of the "lily-white" delegation of the state's regular Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, Hubert Humphrey and Walter Reuther intervened on behalf of Lyndon Johnson in an attempt to prevent a walkout of southern delegates that would damage the president's electoral prospects in the South in the November election. Both leading members in the ADA at the time of the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic Center, Humphrey and Reuther displayed a political expediency that fits the mold of white liberals found in many accounts of the civil rights movement. With emphasis on the divergence that developed between white liberals and civil rights leaders, historians have frequently characterized white liberals as easily susceptible to political pressures and insistent on confining their support for civil rights to the normal channels of established political institutions.[5] While much of the civil rights work carried out by the predominantly white and northern membership of the ADA exhibited a desire to work through the traditional institutions of the political establishment, the dedicated involvement of organization leaders such as Joseph Rauh in the effort to seat the MFDP in Atlantic City demonstrated a stronger commitment to civil rights than has been assumed in many of those characterizations. In Rauh's case, erroneous reporting on the events that transpired in Atlantic City continues to obscure the depth of his commitment to civil rights in many accounts of the movement. Rauh and other "old liberals" of the ADA were uncomfortable with some aspects of the civil disobedience practiced by the civil rights movement and the growing influence of black nationalism in its ranks, but did not differ substantially from Martin Luther King Jr., Bayard Rustin, Roy Wilkins, and other major civil rights leaders in terms of their willingness to reconcile principled goals with achievable progress

[5] For example, see Steven M. Gillon, *Politics and Vision: The ADA and American Liberalism, 1947-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 161-163; Carol A. Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 121-138.

Stretching back to its founding in 1947, the ADA provided important support for civil rights advancements by bringing its influence to bear within the institutions of the nation's political establishment. At the 1948 Democratic National Convention, the ADA spearheaded support for a civil rights plank against the desire of the Truman administration and southern delegates threatening to walk out. Humphrey's commitment to principle would later waver at the critical crossroads of the 1964 Democratic National Convention when the offer of the vice presidency was on the line, but when he was further from the levers of power in 1948 he acceded to pressure from his colleagues in the ADA and delivered the most powerful speech of the convention with an address that provided vigorous support for the civil rights plank put together by the organization.[6] In what would become the most celebrated speech of his political career, Humphrey famously declared that it was "time for the Democratic Party to get out of the shadow of states' rights and walk forthrightly in the bright sunshine of human rights."[7] The ADA achieved its first major victory when delegates approved a civil rights plank that put the Democratic Party on the record in support of an abolition of poll taxes in federal elections, a federal antilynching law, creation of a permanent fair employment practice commission, and the end of racial segregation in the military.[8] From calling on the Eisenhower administration to enforce *Brown v. Board of Education* and other pivotal Supreme Court decisions to pushing the Kennedy administration to act more urgently on its professed civil rights goals, the ADA continued to undertake consistent, if less than bold, actions to support

---

[6] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. *Journals: 1952-2000* (New York: Penguin Press, 2007), 390. According to Schlesinger, while Humphrey's inspiring speech on behalf of civil rights proved to be crucial to attracting support among delegates for the civil rights plank, the Minneapolis mayor did not want to give the politically divisive speech. In his journals, Schlesinger described Humphrey as needing to be "shamed into it, and physically transported to the convention hall, by Joe Rauh, who had written the speech."

[7] W.H. Lawrence, "Victory Sweeping," *New York Times*, July 15, 1948.

[8] C.P. Trussell, "South Beaten on Race Issue as Rights Plank is Widened," *New York Times*, July 15, 1948; "Truman's Plan Collapses," National Affairs, *Newsweek*, July 26, 1948, 20.

the advancement of civil rights during the 1950s and early 1960s.

As legal counsel to the MFDP in 1964, Rauh became deeply involved in an initiative that operated distinctly outside of the confines of the established political institutions to which the ADA had typically confined its civil rights efforts. An outgrowth of the Freedom Summer campaign and the organizational work of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) leader Bob Moses, the MFDP held elections for delegates and established precinct, county, congressional, and state conventions that paralleled the party structure of the regular Mississippi Democratic Party. Concurrently, the predominantly African American membership of the MFDP attempted to attend the precinct meetings of the regular party—meetings that they had no expectation of being admitted to—in an effort to document evidence of systematic racial exclusion. As the leadership of the MFDP organized elections for delegates and joined with leaders from SNCC and other civil rights organizations to determine future aims for the Freedom Democrats, Rauh and his staff assembled the legal briefs that would form the basis of the party's challenge to take the place of the delegates of the state's regular party in Atlantic City. John Lewis, then a young leader in SNCC working on behalf of the initiative, later described how Rauh was "right in the thick of it" from the middle of June through August when the MFDP sent local representatives to more than 1,900 precinct meetings across the state. According to Lewis, "Joe Rauh believed in the MFDP, and he came to Mississippi to help guide the Freedom Democrats through the maze of precinct, county and state elections that marked the path to the national convention."[9]

. Delegates at the ADA National Convention on May 16 demonstrated a similar belief in the MFDP when they voted to endorse the effort to seat its delegates in place of those from the

[9] Michael E. Parrish, *Citizen Rauh: An American Liberal's Life in Law and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 164-166; John Lewis, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, with Michael D'Orso (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 277.

regular Mississippi Democratic Party and directed local chapters to work on behalf of electing delegates supportive of the initiative to the Democratic National Convention.[10] In the months that followed the ADA National Convention, ADA chapters across the country mounted pressure at their respective states' Democratic conventions to support the cause of the MFDP. Members of the Massachusetts ADA secured passage of a resolution at their state's Democratic Party convention that put its delegation on the record in opposition to the seating of delegations disloyal to the national ticket and platform.[11] With the delegation of the Mississippi regular party expected to vote against Johnson in the November election in response to the president's support for civil rights legislation, loyalty requirements such as those supported by the Massachusetts Democratic Party would be tantamount to an unseating of Mississippi Democratic regulars at the convention. Though unable to get their state's delegation to commit to a position, members of the Cleveland ADA made a strong display of support for the MFDP at the Ohio Democratic Party convention.[12]

When the MFDP took their challenge to the Credentials Committee of the Democratic National Convention on Saturday, August 22, Rauh built a compelling case for the party by drawing a picture of the oppressive circumstances of African American life in Mississippi and detailing the extensive actions taken by the state's officials to prevent citizens from voting. Led by MFDP Chairman Aaron Henry, witnesses described the brutal and terrifying treatment they experienced while trying to register or vote. The most powerful testimony came from Fannie Lou Hamer, a sharecropper and established grassroots organizer, who recounted the savage beatings and arrests she suffered for trying to exercise her basic rights as an American

---

[10] "Proceedings of the 17th Annual Convention of Americans for Democratic Action," May 15 to 17, 1964, p. 7, Folder 24, Box 16, M97-135, ADA.

[11] "Massachusetts," *ADA World*, September 1964, 6.

[12] "Cleveland," *ADA World*, September 1964, 7.

citizen. "Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave," she asked the Credentials Committee, "where we are threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings?" Bringing attention to the political circumstances involved in the challenge during his closing argument, Rauh predicted that the delegation of the regular Mississippi Democratic Party would come out in support of Republican Senator Barry Goldwater the following month. Rauh concluded his case by putting forward the situation in stark moral and political terms: "Are you going to throw out of here people who want to work for Lyndon Johnson, who are willing to be beaten and shot and thrown in jail to work for Lyndon Johnson? Are we for the oppressor or the oppressed?"[13]

Infuriated by the MFDP's testimony before the Credentials Committee and intent on avoiding any action that would further jeopardize his electoral support in the South or disrupt a convention expected to unanimously nominate him as the party's presidential candidate, Johnson dispatched Humphrey and Reuther to engineer a compromise that would avoid a bruising floor battle in front of a national television audience. By dangling the vice presidency in front of the Minnesota senator and employing the considerable political leverage he held on the UAW president, Johnson compelled Humphrey and Reuther to act as liberal emissaries tasked with pressuring Rauh and the MFDP to accept a compromise. Put forward by Johnson backers on the Credentials Committee, the initial compromise offered only to make the MFDP delegation "honored guests" of the convention before being amended to allot two seats for the delegates. When delegates from the MFDP, King, Moses, and Rauh discussed the deal on Sunday evening all expressed opposition to the compromise and sought to press forward with the effort to bring the challenge to the floor of the convention where they had high hopes that

[13] E.W. Kenworthy, "Mississippi Factions Clash Before Convention Panel," *New York Times*, August 23, 1968.

it would ultimately prevail. With only eleven votes from the 108-member Credentials Committee needed to send the MFDP's challenge to the convention floor, Rauh remained unswayed by Humphrey's entreaties on behalf of the compromise.[14]

On Tuesday, the fourth and final day of the Credential Committee's deliberation on the challenge of the MFDP, the hopes of Rauh and other advisors to the Freedom Democrats for a floor fight came up against the political powers at play in Atlantic City. To ensure that a politically damaging floor debate did not take place, Johnson backers pressured liberal delegates on the credentials committee to drop their support for the MFDP. One delegate on the committee was informed that her support for the MFDP would cost her husband the judgeship he was seeking while another delegate was told that he would lose his job in the Panama Canal Zone if he persisted with support for the Freedom Democrats. With the votes needed to take the challenge to the floor dwindling and the final vote approaching, Congressman Charles Diggs of Michigan handed Rauh—who was serving on the Credentials Committee as a delegate from the District of Columbia—a note with a phone number instructing him to call Reuther. Upon calling the number, Rauh reached Reuther and was told of the final compromise offer from Johnson: two at-large seats for delegates from the MFDP selected by the administration, Aaron Henry, the party's chairman, and Ed King, a white chaplain at Tougaloo College; the requirement of a loyalty oath that would effectively toss the delegation of the regular Mississippi Democratic Party from the convention; and the barring of any state delegation from future conventions that excluded voters and delegates on the basis of

[14] William H. Chafe, *Never Stop Running: Allard Lowenstein and the Struggle to Save American Liberalism* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 197; Parrish, *Citizen Rauh*, 168-171; Joseph Rauh, interview by William Chafe, Washington, D.C., June 9, 1988, transcript, pp. 8-10, Folder 7942, Box 217, Allard K. Lowenstein Papers, 1924-1995, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC (hereafter cited as AKL); Joseph Rauh, interview by Todd Gitlin, Washington, D.C., March 1985, transcript, pp. 27-29, Folder 7941, Box 217, AKL; Richard Miller to Allard Lowenstein, May 31, 1967, Folder 1230, Box 34, AKL.

race. Unable to secure a postponement that would have allowed him to consult with Henry, Rauh voted against the compromise. When television coverage erroneously reported that the Credentials Committee had voted unanimously for the compromise, Moses and other MFDP advisors expressed bitter disappointment with Rauh and other white liberals who they believed had abandoned them.[15]

When a floor challenge became impossible, Rauh, like King, Rustin, Wilkins, and other civil rights leaders advising the Freedom Democrats, urged the delegates of the MFDP to accept a far less than ideal compromise. Nearly everyone associated with the MFDP involved in discussions on the compromise was particularly upset that not only did the deal only provide two seats for the party but that the administration had picked who the delegates would have to be, leaving sharecroppers like from Fannie Lou Hamer unrepresented. Still, Rauh pushed the compromise as better than nothing while King and Rustin spoke in favor of the deal as they stressed the importance of political pragmatism and the need for the civil rights movement to look beyond protest and begin shifting its sights to the political arena. Among the delegates of the MFDP, Aaron Henry and Ed King supported the compromise but the overwhelming majority of the party's 68 delegates rejected Johnson's offer. Hamer, speaking for the delegation, made clear that, "we didn't come all this way for no two votes." John Lewis later lamented that "when the smoke finally cleared, Joe Rauh would be seen as a villain, a traitor, a back stabber." Believing that to be "a shame," Lewis described Rauh as "a good man who worked incredibly hard to bring this moment about. It's ironic that the situation he had worked so hard to create wound up skewering his reputation, at least among the black

[15] Chafe, *Never Stop Running*, 198; Joseph Rauh, interview by Todd Gitlin, pp. 32-38; Joseph Rauh, interview by William Chafe, pp. 11- 18.

community."[16]

The failure of the Democratic National Convention to seat the Freedom Democrats' delegation sparked a wholly understandable disillusionment among members of the MFDP, SNCC, and other civil rights organizations with white liberals and the Democratic Party but that failure does not capture the efforts, motivations, and commitments of individuals like Rauh. While liberals such as Humphrey and Reuther had more to lose in opposing Johnson and quickly conceded to pressure from him, Rauh had both the political independence and commitment to the cause of the MFDP to tell Humphrey that he would have to relay to the president his efforts to broker a compromise had been unsuccessful because "Joe Rauh is an incorrigible son of a bitch."[17] Other "old liberals" in the ADA did not face the dramatic test of commitment to civil rights confronted by Rauh in Atlantic City but shared with him the belief that civil rights represented the most pressing issue on the liberal agenda in the early 1960s. Speaking before a gathering of students at Spelman College in 1961, Schlesinger insisted that civil rights represented "the overriding domestic issue of our day" and the "moral crux" of the nation.[18] During his time as special assistant to President Kennedy, Schlesinger frequently mustered what meager influence he had in the administration to urge the president to move more decisively on the civil rights front.[19] As the civil rights movement illuminated the enduring economic inequality that perpetuated racial inequality, those "old liberals" and the ADA came to see poverty as a civil rights issue. When the commitment of the ADA to civil rights expanded to include the struggle against poverty, attention to poverty that had

---

[16] Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 280-81; Chafe, *Never Stop Running*, 198; Joseph Rauh, interview by Todd Gitlin, pp. 41, 42; Joseph Rauh, interview by William Chafe, pp. 18, 21.

[17] Joseph Rauh, interview by Todd Gitlin, p. 28.

[18] Arthur M. Schlesinger, "America's Domestic Future: Its Perils and Prospects," *Spelman Messenger*, February 1961, 16.

[19] For example, see Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to John F. Kennedy, memorandum, June 8, 1963, WH-66, AMS-JFK.

sometimes receded into the background in the organization amid exaggerated estimates of the reach of the affluent society would be brought to the center of the organization's priorities.

**Poverty as a Civil Rights Issue**

John Kenneth Galbraith reflected in 1964 that ever since he wrote *The Affluent Society* he had "been accused of believing that there are no poor people left in the United States."[20] While the author of *The Affluent Society* did not believe that everyone in the country had achieved affluence, he and other "old liberals" in the ADA during 1950s and early 1960s minimized the significance of poverty as a pressing issue. As the civil rights movement gained momentum and mounted a massive March on Washington that put the national spotlight not only on the issue of civil rights but also on the deeply connected problems of economic and racial inequality, those "old liberals" and the broader leadership of the ADA revisited their earlier tendency to assume that poverty represented only a minor problem in a nation of growing affluence. Historians have frequently associated white postwar liberals with a departure from the class-based approach of the New Deal that led them to naively overestimate the impact that the enshrinement of civil and voting rights into law would have on the lives of African Americans.[21] The bulk of ADA liberals, however, demonstrated a

---

[20] John Kenneth Galbraith, "Let Us Begin: An Invitation to Action on Poverty," *Harper's Magazine*, March 1964, 16.

[21] For example, see Gillon, *Politics and Vision*, 161, 175; Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*, 121-138. Gillon argues that most liberals, including those in the ADA, overestimated the effect the 1964 Civil Rights Act would have on the daily lives of the majority of African Americans. Accordingly, he sees ADA liberals as responsible for overselling civil rights legislation that did little to help African Americans obtain the basic opportunities enjoyed by most whites. Horton finds the source of optimism among postwar liberals as to what the enactment of basic antidiscrimination laws could achieve in their rejection of the class-based politics of the New Deal that led them to ignore the structural social and economic aspects of racial inequality. Horton builds her argument on the work of historians, such as Ira Katznelson and Nelson Lichtenstein, who stress the significance of what they see as the departure of postwar liberalism from the class-based approach and social democratic orientation found in some aspects of the New Deal. See Ira Katznelson, "Was the Great Society a Lost Opportunity?," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle

forthright receptiveness to the ambitious social, economic, and political vision of the civil rights movement and engendered no misunderstanding as to the far-reaching measures that would be needed to achieve full racial equality. By focusing national attention on the millions of Americans whose poverty constrained their lives and inhibited their freedoms, the civil rights movement led ADA liberals to see poverty as a civil rights issue and reinvigorated their commitment to social democratic values that had wavered at times during a postwar period characterized by seemingly widespread material prosperity. When the commitment of ADA liberals to civil rights expanded to include a commitment to fighting economic inequality, poverty ceased to be a peripheral issue in the organization and became a central and ongoing concern.

Galbraith in the 1950s did not see poverty as a major issue or one directly related to civil rights but he nevertheless illuminated distinctive features of poverty in the postwar era that would shape the debates on economic inequality that captured far greater attention during the following decade. In the lone chapter in *The Affluent Society* devoted to the issue of poverty, he detailed the nature of a modern poverty impervious to the general advancement sustained by economic growth. Galbraith divided the intractable poverty of the U.S. in the 1950s into two broad categories. In the category of "case poverty" he placed those who due to some characteristic specific to themselves or their family—such as alcoholism, inadequate education, or intellectual disability—did not and could not benefit from the general increase in material well-being. Those who lived in various locales of Appalachia, urban ghettos or other geographic "islands" of near universal poverty cut off from broader economic progress

---

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 185-211; Nelson Lichtenstein, "From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 122-52.

comprised what he termed "insular poverty." Those who fell into either of Galbraith's categories of contemporary poverty had not only received little to no benefit from the postwar economic boom but had become a minority of the population with limited political significance. In contrast to the era when the poverty-stricken represented a significant cross section of the country with political clout to match its size, Galbraith observed that the very poor of the 1950s lived at a time when "any politician who speaks for the very poor is speaking for a small and also inarticulate minority."[22]

Galbraith's insights into the nature of modern poverty—so often obscured by a preoccupation with the book's title—came to wider public attention when Michael Harrington drew on them to frame the problem of poverty in his 1962 unexpected best-seller *The Other America*. Harrington, then serving as editor of the Socialist Party of America's (SPA) newspaper *New America*, had witnessed the devastating effects of urban poverty firsthand when he lived and worked at the Catholic Worker house in New York's Lower East Side during the 1950s. Hoping to find a wider audience for his stark depiction of poverty, he made no effort to obscure his general political perspective but avoided any specific mention of "socialism" in the book. Though the omission of an explicit avowal of socialist politics troubled his conscience, the decision opened the door to the popular and influential audiences that would lead many observers to see the work as the book that sparked the War on Poverty and Harrington as the man who "discovered poverty." Among its most dedicated of audiences, socially minded liberals—both within and outside of the ADA—devoured the book in large numbers. *The Other America* also found its way into the hands of the most influential of audiences with the book making its way onto reading lists within the Kennedy administration

[22] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1958), 325-327, 328.

and onto the desk of the president, who read Dwight Macdonald's lengthy review of the book in *The New Yorker.*[23]

In his far-reaching and influential exposition of poverty, Harrington departed from Galbraith in substantial ways but also approached the issue of poverty from a perspective that owed much to foundations laid by the Harvard economist. Before he joined the ADA National Board in 1966, Harrington praised Galbraith as one of the first writers to understand the newness of contemporary poverty and found himself in agreement with the author of *The Affluent Society* that the "new poverty" demonstrated "a certain immunity to progress." Still, he stressed the need to reevaluate the roots and scale of the poverty in order to develop a greater awareness of those whose standard of living had fallen ever further behind a broader prosperity that held nothing for them. Though in agreement with Galbraith that physical and mental disabilities were a major factor in the persistence of poverty among some individuals, he maintained that characteristics such as alcoholism that landed people in the Harvard economist's category of "case poverty" were generally the consequence of a corrosive "environment, not the biographies of unlucky individuals." Yet for Harrington, Galbraith's notion of "insular poverty" and the resulting implication that poverty was only a minor issue represented an even more "dangerous" idea. While noting that Galbraith rightly identified the poor of modern America as "the first minority poor in history," he took issue with the misleading notion of "insular poverty" in a country where the reach of poverty extended to 40 or 50 million people.[24]

---

[23] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 275-276; Maurice Isserman, *The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 196-97, 209-210; Marion Magid, "The Man Who Discovered Poverty," *New York Herald Tribune Magazine,* December 27, 1964, 8.

[24] Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 11-12. 164.

Harrington's departure from Galbraith on the origins and scope of poverty resulted in part from his socialist background but also owed much to his involvement in the civil rights movement. When he wrote *The Affluent Society*, Galbraith harbored an abstract commitment to civil rights but had virtually no direct experience with the civil rights movement that was then entering a new stage of national visibility. In contrast, Harrington joined the Manhattan branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1954, became deeply involved in the civil rights movement through his contact with Bayard Rustin, and devoted much of his time during the years in which he wrote *The Other America* to civil rights activities. Involvement in the civil rights movement heightened Harrington's attention to the issue of race and lent his politics a sense of human empathy and understanding that he and a great many liberal social commentators had lacked in the 1950s.[25] Harrington, like Galbraith, believed the intractability of modern poverty to be its defining feature but went far further than had the Harvard economist four years earlier in examining the relationship between race and the "new poverty." Whereas Galbraith had given race only the slightest attention in *The Affluent Society*, Harrington stressed race as one of the most powerful of factors that confined individuals to a life of poverty in the face of broader prosperity. Leaving no question as to his understanding of the limits of what could be achieved by civil rights legislation alone, he insisted that equal rights before the law would not address "the poverty that is the historic and institutionalized consequence of color." For Harrington, so long as that poverty continued to be the glaring reality of the nation, "being born a Negro will continue to be the most profound disability that the United States imposes upon a citizen."[26]

Similar to its impact on Harrington, the civil rights movement pushed leading figures

[25] Isserman, *The Other American*, 157-158, 183.
[26] Harrington, *The Other America*, 61-81.

in the ADA to reevaluate their understanding of the relationship between poverty and race. While media coverage at the time and popular history since have focused on the efforts of the civil rights movement to dismantle Jim Crow segregation in the South in the latter half of the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, the major civil rights organizations of the twentieth century had never limited their agenda simply to the struggle to strike down de jure discrimination. Civil rights leaders explicitly articulated an agenda committed both to the legal protection of civil rights and the advancement of broad social welfare policies aimed at improving the economic standing of all Americans who lived in the "other America." When the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom attracted over 250,000 demonstrators to the capital and brought the full agenda of the civil rights movement to the nation's attention, ADA liberals resoundingly embraced its underlying message that the struggle against poverty represented a continuation of the fight for civil rights.[27]

Historians have challenged a sanitized popular memory of the March on Washington that has obscured the economic demands of the demonstration by reminding us that the largest gathering of people ever to descend on the nation's capital to air their grievances marched not only for freedom but also for jobs.[28] When he issued the call for the march, Negro American Labor Council (NALC) President A. Philip Randolph initially envisioned the demonstration developing around the central themes of economic justice and the need for full employment.[29] Bayard Rustin, the prominent labor and civil rights organizer who served as march director

---

[27] Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*, 139, 164-165; Dona Cooper Hamilton and Charles V. Hamilton, *The Dual Agenda: Race and Social Welfare Policies of Civil Rights Organizations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 3-4.

[28] For example, see Hamilton and Hamilton, *The Dual Agenda*, 123-128; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1252-1253.

[29] Paula F. Pfeffer, *A. Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 240, 246.

and would join the ADA national board in 1965, saw economic issues as the "basic reason for the March."[30] However, with the introduction of President Kennedy's civil rights bill in June, the emphasis of the August march broadened beyond a focus on economic issues to include greater attention to legal civil rights in an effort by organizers to generate pressure in support of the president's proposed legislation.[31]

Still, despite the conscious shift in emphasis, key speakers addressed the economic injustices that affected Americans of all races but fell disproportionately hard on African Americans. In his powerful address, Randolph stressed the vital importance of passing the civil rights bill before Congress but urged the civil rights movement to work towards goals that stretched far beyond that legislation. Outlining those far-reaching goals, he declared that the "civil rights revolution is not confined to the Negro nor is it confined to civil rights, for our white allies know that they cannot be free while we are not and we know that we have no future in a society in which six million black and white people are unemployed and millions more live in poverty." Taking the podium after the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) Martin Luther King Jr., SNCC chairman John Lewis reminded the audience that "hundreds of thousands of our brothers are not here. For they are receiving starvation wages or no wages at all." While Lewis toned done the more inflammatory tone of the address he had originally drafted at the behest of Randolph and other march leaders, the speech he delivered still left no questions as to the limitations he saw in the president's civil rights bill. Endorsing the bill with "great reservations," the twenty-three year old SNCC leader vividly described the masses of poor blacks who would receive little benefit from the legislation as he stressed the nation's need for "a bill that will provide for the homeless and

[30] Bayard Rustin quoted in Hamilton and Hamilton, *The Dual Agenda*, 125.
[31] Pfeffer, *A. Philip Randolph*, 244-246.

starving people of this nation." Lewis' searing indictment of the economic circumstances that sustained racial inequality drew the loudest applause of the day after King's now historic speech.[32]

Though subdued in contrast to the initial vision for the march, the explicit connection made between civil rights and economic justice by Randolph, Lewis, and other speakers before a mass assembly of some quarter of a million Americans—most of whom were black but a significant number were white—had a profound impact on how ADA liberals viewed the relationship between race and poverty.[33] When Congress later passed and President Johnson signed into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ADA liberals joined civil rights leaders in celebrating the landmark legislative achievement while simultaneously insisting that securing legal rights represented only the beginning of the struggle for full racial equality.[34] In contrast to characterizations that have emphasized the excessive confidence displayed by white postwar liberals in the prohibition of racial discrimination as an all-encompassing means of addressing the deep-seated and multi-faceted problem of racial inequality, ADA liberals

---

[32] Full transcripts of the speeches made by A. Philip Randolph and John Lewis can be found in *The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963: Speeches by the Leaders* (New York: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1963); Susanna McBee, "Restrained Militancy Marks Rally Speeches," *Washington* Post, August 29, 1963; Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 216-18; Joseph Rauh, interview by Todd Gitlin, pp. 46-47. Lewis' prepared draft of the speech declared, "The time will come when we will not confine our marching to Washington. We will march through the South, through the heart of Dixie, the way Sherman did. We shall pursue our own 'scorched earth' policy and burn Jim Crow to the ground—nonviolently." The initial draft of the speech prepared by Lewis also insisted that "in good conscience, we cannot support wholeheartedly the administration's civil rights bill, for it is too little and too late." Key march leaders were uneasy with the provocative language of the speech that Lewis drafted but saw his refusal to fully support President Kennedy's civil rights bill as even more damaging than the rhetoric found in his original draft of the speech. With Washington D.C.'s archbishop, Patrick O'Boyle, refusing to give the invocation for the march unless Lewis changed his speech, Randolph urged the SNCC chairman to tone down the rhetoric and substance of his address. Lewis ultimately consented to Randolph's entreaties and revised his speech minutes before taking to the podium. Rauh offered a similar, if more blunt, assessment of the initial draft of Lewis' address when he later recalled that he didn't "give a shit about the rhetoric" but was concerned that the speech would indicate that the speakers at the march were not united in support of the proposed civil rights bill.

[33] E.W. Kenworthy, "200,000 March for Civil Rights in Orderly Washington Rally; President Sees Gain for Negro," *New York Times*, August 29, 1963.

[34] "Civil Rights Bill Passed 'Better Than Expected,'" *ADA World*, June-July 1964, 1, 3; "The 1964 Civil Rights Bill," *ADA World*, June-July 1964, 2.

clearly demonstrated their understanding of the essential, yet limited, reach of civil rights legislation.[35] Reflecting a ready embrace of the far-reaching social, economic, and political program advanced by the civil rights movement, the ADA's 1964 civil rights resolution committed the organization for the first time to an agenda rooted in the fundamental relationship between civil rights and economic justice. With no confusion as to the enormity of the challenge entailed by such an expansive definition of equality, the statement insisted that "dignity requires the abolition of poverty; it requires the restoration of full employment; it requires integrated and high quality education at all levels; it requires adequate nutrition; it requires excellent medical care for all ages; it requires a decent, safe, and sanitary house in an integrated neighborhood."[36]

To achieve those ends the resolution called for a "massive attack upon poverty and an all-out effort to create full employment." Aware of the political challenges to be found in pushing for a vast increase in federal expenditures, the ADA celebrated the achievements of the civil rights movement that had so effectively "dramatized the plight of the poor people in this country" as a turning point in the struggle for full employment. Buoyed by the powerful coalition of civil rights activists, members of religious organizations, labor unionists, and liberals that secured passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and would later propel President Johnson to a landslide re-election, ADA liberals acknowledged the dimensions of the task but expressed confidence in the "coalition of conscience" to "fight for the social and economic legislation to make the guarantee of rights meaningful." Bold new action to secure full employment and other measures necessary to achieve full racial equality, the resolution made

---

[35] For example, see Gillon, *Politics and Vision*, 161, 175; Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*, 121-138.

[36] "Civil Rights Resolution," May 16, 1964, p. 1, Folder 27, Box 16, M97-135, ADA.

clear, could "be the dawn of a bright new day for all Americans."[37] As ADA liberals joined together in a consensus that held the battle against poverty to be a continuation of the fight for civil rights, they would come up against the complexities of how best to attack the entrenched economic and racial inequalities that plagued American society.

**Civil Rights, the War on Poverty, and Rethinking Economic Growth**

During his 1964 State of the Union address, President Lyndon Johnson boldly committed the U.S. Federal Government to "an unconditional war on poverty."[38] In the nineteen months that followed, the country saw, in rapid succession, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act, and the Voting Rights Act. ADA liberals offered universal praise for the landmark legislative achievements of the Great Society and the ambitious goals set out by the War on Poverty. John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. saw much to like in an antipoverty initiative that embodied many of the ideas on education and other public services as key sources of personal economic advancement that they had been developing as part of their vision for qualitative liberalism since the 1950s. Still, many in the ADA believed that the domestic initiatives of the Johnson administration—bold and important as they were—failed to address the structural economic barriers to full racial equality that made realization of a great society more a distant hope than a tangible prospect. The complexities involved in tackling a problem as multi-faceted and deep-seated as poverty meant that no single approach would be embraced by all of the leading voices in the ADA. Nevertheless, whether they agreed with the basic approach of Johnson's War on Poverty but stressed the need for funding on a far larger scale or insisted on far-reaching full employment

[37] "Civil Rights Resolution," May 16, 1964, pp. 2-3, emphasis in original.
[38] "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. January 8, 1964," 114.

measures as necessary to address the nation's structural economic inequality, the shared conviction of ADA liberals that poverty represented a civil rights issue led the organization to push for far more aggressive antipoverty measures. As leading figures in the ADA called for an escalation in the scale, and in most cases, the scope, of the War of Poverty, they began to rethink their prior tendency to assume that economic growth and private industry—if properly managed by the federal government —could end the enduring problem of poverty.

From the time of its announcement, the ADA explicitly linked the War on Poverty to the cause of civil rights. The Johnson administration, in contrast, sought to mute any of the racial implications of the War on Poverty in its effort to sell the program to the American public and Congress. With the aim of putting a "white face" on the proposed initiative, Johnson toured poverty-stricken locales in Appalachia during the spring of 1964. Early literature produced by the administration on the War on Poverty concentrated on rural poverty and frequently depicted poor white Appalachians as the prototypical poor who would benefit from the initiative. There would be no mention of the anticipated benefits of the program for African Americans or northern ghettos in the administration's broader promotional efforts on behalf of the War on Poverty.[39] Unconstrained by the political considerations that shaped the administration's efforts to push its antipoverty poverty initiative, an *ADA World* editorial published soon after the announcement of the War on Poverty insisted that there was "an obvious connection between the war on poverty and the war on racial discrimination in employment, education, and housing." There could be no questioning the importance of the War on Poverty for African Americans, the editorial made clear, when "nearly one-fourth of

[39] David Zarefsky, *President Johnson's War on Poverty: Rhetoric and History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1986), 42-43; Thomas Kiffmeyer, "Looking Back to the City in the Hills: The Council of the Southern Mountains and a Longer View of the War on Poverty in the Appalachian South, 1913-1970," in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 359.

the poor are Negroes, and nearly half of the Negroes are poor."[40]

Beyond framing the relationship of the War on Poverty to the struggle for racial equality, the ADA also stressed from the moment of its announcement the fundamental limitations of the initiative. Rooted in the view that poverty was primarily the result of insufficient human capital development, the initiatives launched by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 sought to break the self-perpetuating "culture of poverty" through the provision of counseling, education, job training, and a Community Action Program (CAP) that sought to empower poor individuals.[41] An editorial in *ADA World* published shortly after Johnson's State of the Union address welcomed the president's message "as a long-awaited first salvo in the war against poverty" but regretted "that this first battle is not to be fought in greater strength." In blunt words, the editorial stated, "the poor are poor because they do not have enough money." While describing CAPs and the broader development of social services launched by the War on Poverty as "solid steps in the right direction," the editorial also recognized that it is "illusory to suppose that they are substitutes for adequate Social Security, unemployment insurance and public assistance to provide income necessary to buy enough to eat, a decent place to live, good medical care, and the amenities of life."[42] Another editorial in *ADA World* placed similar emphasis on the need to raise substandard incomes as it stressed the importance of achieving a full-employment economy. Characterizing "social, cultural, and spiritual impoverishment" as a consequence of unemployment, the editorial offered a full employment economy coupled with a dramatic increase to the "archaic standard of the employment insurance, social security, and public assistance systems" as a solution.[43]

---

[40] "Massive Efforts Required to Win War on Poverty," *ADA World*, February 1964, 2.
[41] Horton, *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*, 175.
[42] "War on Poverty Welcomed," *ADA World*, March 1964, 2.
[43] "Massive Efforts Required to Win War on Poverty," *ADA World*, February 1964, 1.

Synthesizing the views found in those editorials and in the writings of key arbiters of ADA economic policy such as Leon Keyserling, the organization's 1964 resolution on poverty emphasized that while representing "good intentions," the legislation of the existing War on Poverty "cannot be expected to eliminate poverty; at best, it may palliate some of its more festering sores." The resolution urged a "much more extensive attack" to "adequately deal with the awesome economic and motivational problems raised by the plight of millions of the unemployed, the unemployable, the underemployed, and the underpaid." Stressing an aggressive full employment program as essential to the struggle of those millions, the resolution deemed the manpower ethos of the War on Poverty a "hollow concept."[44] The accompanying civil rights resolution passed by the ADA directly tied the cause of full employment to the struggle for civil rights by making clear that there could be no excuse for discrimination but insisting nevertheless that "equal employment opportunity would be easier to achieve if there were not a desperate struggle for an inadequate number of jobs."[45] To tackle the deeply interconnected issues of racial and economic inequality, the ADA looked to the Employment Act of 1946 as a starting point for action in the mid-1960s.

The push of ADA liberals for full employment policies long predated both the ADA's attention of the economic dimensions of racial equality and the existence of the organization itself. When Congress debated passage of the Full Employment Act in response to fears of a postwar depression in the mid-1940s, the ADA's predecessor, the UDA, devoted virtually all of its resources to leading the charge for the far-reaching bill initially introduced in the Senate. The original Senate bill championed by the UDA declared a right to employment to be guaranteed by the federal government through economic policies that aimed to maximize

[44] "Poverty in America," in "A Program for Americans: 1964," p. 21, 22-23, Folder 9, Box 35, M97-135, ADA.

[45] "Civil Rights Resolution," May 16, 1964, p. 1.

private employment and public works to make up for any employment shortfall. When President Truman threw his support behind a far weaker House version and eventually signed into law the renamed Employment Act of 1946, gone were the explicit commitments and guarantees of the Senate bill. In their place, the act made a general declaration of the "continuing policy and responsibility" of the federal government to foster the conditions "to promote maximum employment" and created the Council of Economic Advisors to assist the president in carrying out a program toward that end.[46]

In the years that followed passage of the greatly enfeebled Employment Act of 1946, the ADA centered much of its domestic policy on proposals that sought to make many of the initial aims of the act a reality but missing from its efforts was the bold dedication to the right of guaranteed employment found in the UDA's earlier lobbying.[47] Rather than the expanding and contracting public works called for by the initial Full Employment bill to guarantee employment for all able-bodied Americans seeking work, the ADA in the late 1940s and 1950s looked to macroeconomic management of the economy to stimulate economic growth and foster the economic conditions necessary for private industry to provide full employment. When Keyserling joined the ADA in 1953 and brought his significant influence to bear on its economic policy, economic growth and full employment took on an even greater importance in the organization. With the growth of Keyserling's influence, however, notions of the federal government as an employer of last resort or large-scale, New Deal-style public works projects faded further into the background as the ADA placed its confidence in thoroughgoing economic planning and management by the federal government as a foundation for full employment.

---

[46] Stephen Kemp Bailey, *Congress Makes a Law: The Story Behind the Employment Act of 1946* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 75, 166, 225, 228-232.

[47] Pierce, "Liberals and the Cold War," 119.

By bringing the nation's attention to the enduring poverty suffered by many African Americans despite a growing economy and relatively low national unemployment rates, the civil rights movement fundamentally changed how ADA liberals viewed full employment measures and their basic goals. ADA calls for full employment in the early postwar years drew heavily on a desire to stimulate the economic growth needed for the high military expenditures deemed necessary in the context of the Cold War. In the wake of the growing visibility of the civil rights movement, the ADA increasingly stressed full employment as a means of eliminating poverty. Displaying a greater awareness of the significant number of individuals who faced limited to non-existent employment opportunities, the ADA in 1964 called for a $2 billion public works program to create jobs in some of the country's most economically depressed areas.[48] That awareness owed much to a civil rights movement that illuminated the ways in which economic growth and employment in private industry had passed by millions of Americans. Less confident in the ability of economic growth and private industry—even with the aid of economic planning and the fiscal toolkit at the disposal of the federal government—to provide all of the jobs that would be needed to eliminate poverty in the U.S., the ADA adopted a more overtly social democratic perspective than at any prior point in its almost two decade history. With a social democratic outlook that echoed earlier currents in the New Deal left, the ADA called on the federal government to more directly shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that employment opportunities existed for all American citizens.

In contrast to the consensus on the need for full employment measures found in editorials in *ADA World* and ADA resolutions on poverty and civil rights, Galbraith and Schlesinger displayed an affinity for the general approach, if not the scale, of the Johnson

[48] "Poverty in America," p. 22.

administration's War on Poverty. Schlesinger, like most ADA liberals, addressed the problem of poverty with a greater sense of urgency as the civil rights movement gained momentum in the 1960s, but—unlike the prevailing view in the organization—found much to like in the services approach of the War on Poverty that put into action ideas similar to those he had developed as pillars of qualitative liberalism in the 1950s. Having stressed improved education and medical services, more equal opportunities for minorities, and urban renewal as necessary for both the material well-being and quality of life of the American people in the 1950s, Schlesinger displayed confidence in the 1960s that the human capital emphasis of the War on Poverty held great potential to address the nation's poverty.[49]

Similarly, Galbraith gave greater attention to poverty in the 1960s and approached the issue through the lens of the qualitative liberalism that he, too, had been advancing since the 1950s. As he had during the prior decade, Galbraith continued to see a vast expansion in public services as one of the first prerequisites for tackling intractable poverty. In 1964, Galbraith argued, as he had since writing *The Affluent Society*, that the majority of the very worst poverty consisted of those individuals who were unable to contribute to the economy and were thus unable to receive benefits from it, regardless of how high the overall economic growth rate might be. Reflecting the assumption that jobs would be available for the bulk of individuals who were properly prepared to take them, he believed substantial improvements in education, training, retraining, medical care, counseling services, public housing, urban recreational facilities, and other public services were essential for enabling individuals to take

[49] For example, see Schlesinger in 1956 on the issues that would come to define qualitative liberalism and offering praise for the approach of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty in 1965. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The Challenge of Abundance," *Reporter*, May 3, 1956, 9-10; Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Keynote Address at the Americans for Democratic Convention National Convention, April 2, 1965, pp. 9-10, Box P-1, AMS-JFK.

advantage of a growing American economy.[50] While his emphasis on the need for improved public services largely dovetailed with the approach of the War on Poverty, Galbraith consistently made clear when he addressed the issue of poverty throughout the mid-1960s that any such efforts would require "much, much more money" than was being devoted to the task by the Johnson administration.[51]

The prevailing consensus in the ADA differed substantially from Galbraith and Schlesinger in offering a far more negative assessment of the state of the labor market and its ability to provide for all poor Americans the jobs needed to rise out of poverty, regardless of their training or qualifications. At the same time, ADA liberals increasingly shared the critical perspective of the organization's leading architects of qualitative liberalism on economic growth as the central answer to poverty. The turn of the ADA to large-scale public works projects reflected a skepticism towards the notion that economic growth and private industry, however well managed and regulated, could provide employment and material security for all Americans. This stood in marked contrast to the heady optimism ADA liberals displayed in the 1950s towards the ability of the American economy, with some prodding from the federal government, to secure general prosperity. Just as ADA liberals in the 1950s had rejected most of the specific policy prescriptions offered by Galbraith and Schlesinger on taxes and other issues while adopting many of the concerns that animated their vision for qualitative liberalism, most leading figures in the organization during the 1960s came to share their critical view on the presumably inherent benefits of economic growth while pursuing nevertheless a different approach to the problem of chronic poverty. For their part, Galbraith and Schlesinger embraced the prevailing view in the ADA that the struggle against poverty

[50] Galbraith, "Let Us Begin: An Initiation to Action on Poverty," 16, 18, 23-24, 26.
[51] John Kenneth Galbraith, "The Starvation of the Cities," *Progressive*, December 1966, 16.

represented a continuation of the fight for civil rights. Under the surface of divergent views, Galbraith, Schlesinger, and the bulk of ADA liberals responded to the civil rights movement with a new passion for eliminating poverty and an insistence on approaches that differed considerably from those advanced by the organization a decade earlier. The perspective of ADA liberals on the American economy and the enduring problem of poverty would undergo still further reevaluation as the growing trend towards automation threatened millions of jobs and challenged the feasibility of full employment as a policy goal.

**Full Employment, Automation, and Guaranteed Income**

In 1966, the ADA boldly called for the establishment of a guaranteed annual income to provide every family "with a standard of income appropriate to America's productivity," placed at the sizable amount for the time of $4,000 per year for a family of four. The guaranteed annual income, an idea deemed "nutty" and "utopian" by the media in early 1964, became the subject of a National Commission appointed by the Johnson administration later that year to study it, and by 1968, gained the backing of more than 1,000 prominent economists. Largely lacking in concrete details when they first garnered national attention, guaranteed annual income proposals attracted support from politicians across the political spectrum who attached a variety of divergent meanings and purposes to the concept.[52] A number of historians have depicted liberal versions of the guaranteed annual income that sought to establish the right of all American citizens to a minimum income on the basis of need alone as a radical turn from the "opportunity liberalism" of the New Deal to an

[52] Brian Steensland, *The Failed Welfare Revolution: America's Struggle over Guaranteed Income Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 4, 18-19, 43-44; "Economists Urge Assured Income," *New York Times*, May 28, 1968.

"entitlement liberalism" that spurned the American tradition of individualism.[53] Yet, the ADA's proposal for a guaranteed annual income in 1966 did not represent a break with the New Deal tradition but rather an extension of the social democratic currents that had run through it. Building on the foundation laid by the Employment Act of 1946—the "last gasp" of the New Deal—and inspired by the visibility given to the nation's enduring poverty by the civil rights movement, the ADA and many of its leading figures came to see the establishment of a guaranteed annual income as a necessary response to structural economic inequality and the growing trend towards automation that threatened millions of American jobs.

Urban uprisings in Watts and other predominantly African American neighborhoods during the "long hot summers" of the mid-1960s imbued the ADA's push for an expansion in the scale and scope of the War on Poverty with a greater sense of urgency. However, the most powerful impetus for the organization's call for a guaranteed annual income came from the spread of automation that made the already uphill struggle for full employment even more difficult. In 1962, Michael Harrington's *The Other America* opened many eyes to the plight of individuals with limited education and training who lost their jobs and had little prospect for future employment as technological advances in industrial automation made their unskilled or semiskilled labor unnecessary.[54] A. Philip Randolph later stressed the impact of automation on the highest stage of the civil rights movement when he insisted during his address at the March on Washington that a fair employment practices act, though vital, would do little good "if

---

[53] For example, see Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996); Kenneth S. Baer, *Reinventing Democrats: The Politics of Liberalism from Reagan to Clinton* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 24-25; Jeffrey Bloodworth, *Losing the Center: The Decline of American Liberalism, 1968-1992* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 117-118. Davies argues that New Politics liberals fundamentally abandoned the American political tradition of individualism as embodied in the "opportunity liberalism" of the New Deal and the Great Society in favor of "manifestly unpopular definitions of income by right" characteristic of the ascendant "entitlement liberalism" of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Baer and Bloodworth cite and reproduce Davies' argument in their work.

[54] Harrington, *The Other America*, 20.

profit-geared automation destroys the jobs of millions of workers, black and white."[55]

As they grappled with the meaning of automation in the 1960s, ADA liberals echoed leading voices in the civil rights movement that stressed the disproportionate effects automation had on African Americans. In *The Other America*, Harrington made clear that even without the intervention of overt racism, African Americans would bear the economic brunt of automation. As the last significant group to enter into industrial employment, African Americans would be the first to be laid off when automation led to the elimination of jobs. Harrington observed that the misery of those job losses would be compounded when African Americans, facing a history of systematic oppression and denial to the skills needed to compete in the modern economy, would generally have a harder time than whites obtaining new jobs.[56] Echoing Harrington's warnings, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. highlighted the problems of automation and decaying inner city neighborhoods presumed to be predominantly African American during his keynote address at the 1965 ADA National Convention.[57] Later that year, Leon Keyserling charged that the Johnson administration fundamentally failed to understand the implications of automation for African American employment. For Keyserling, the administration's narrow focus on providing training for the unemployed—a disproportionate number of whom were African American—to prepare them for jobs that required higher-skilled labor represented a futile effort in the face of spreading automation that eliminated those very jobs.[58]

When the University of Pennsylvania law professor Louis Schwartz presented a guaranteed annual income proposal to his colleagues on the ADA National Board in early

---

[55] *The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963: Speeches by the Leaders.*

[56] Harrington, *The Other America*, 75.

[57] Schlesinger, Keynote Address at the Americans for Democratic Convention National Convention, April 2, 1965, p. 9.

[58] Leon Keyserling, "Economy Not Meeting Needs," *ADA World*, December 1965, 2M.

1966 he drew heavily on the devastating consequences of automation on the prospects for African American economic advancement as he put forward his plan in terms of racial equality and the social democratic legacy of the Employment Act of 1946. Schwartz clearly linked his guaranteed annual income proposal to the cause of civil rights with a characterization of poverty as a "dark badge" that is "worn for life by millions and transmitted to their children—an inherited status like slavery." Further evoking the language of the civil rights movement, he maintained that "poverty is a restriction of freedom" that left poor people with few choices open to them and described the guaranteed annual income as a "Twentieth Century Emancipation Proclamation." Offering an implicit critique of the training and services approach of Johnson's War on Poverty, he deemed it "evil nonsense" to withhold freedom "until the poor have been 'retrained' for jobs which may or may not materialize."[59]

Morally grounded in the cause of civil rights, the economics and politics of Schwartz's guaranteed annual income proposal rested on the tentative foundation laid by the Employment Act of 1946. Schwartz insisted that the proposal to establish an economic floor for all American families did not represent a "radical innovation" but rather a natural extension of the social democratic ethos embodied in that act and earlier liberal measures such as compulsory free education, the graduated income tax, minimum wage laws, social security, and unemployment insurance. For Schwartz, those important achievements and other similar measures amounted to "fragments of an inarticulate and uncoordinated national incomes policy." The establishment of a guaranteed annual income, he contended, would fully actualize the underlying objectives of the existing "hodge-podge of laws" and offer a "new synthesis to carry us from the liberalism of the thirties to the welfare liberalism of the sixties

[59] Louis B Schwartz, "Toward a Just and Compassionate Incomes Policy: An American Standard Family Income," p. 1, Folder 25, Box 3, M97-135, ADA.

and the seventies."[60]

Passed by the ADA national board and approved by the ADA national convention in April, the resolution based on Schwartz's proposal established the organization as an early advocate of what amounted to a sizable guaranteed annual income for 1966. Later guaranteed annual income proposals such as the Nixon administration's Family Assistance Plan (FAP) coupled work requirements with a guaranteed annual income of $1,600—lower than the benefit levels provided by Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in many northern states—in order to encourage those who received benefits to seek employment at the lower end of labor market.[61] In contrast, the ADA resolution called for a guaranteed annual income of $4,000 per year and contained no specific work requirements for beneficiaries of the proposed program. Whereas the FAP primarily sought to encourage participation in a labor market assumed to have the capacity to absorb the unemployed, Schwartz saw the establishment of a guaranteed annual income not as a means of inducing able-bodied individuals to work but as a necessary response to a process of automation that was shrinking the size of the labor market required by private industry. From his perspective, the vast majority of unemployed, able-bodied individuals were jobless not because they had been insufficiently prodded into seeking employment but because the American economy had failed to provide an adequate number of jobs and, thus, deserved nothing less than a "just and compassionate" income.[62]

The insistence of the resolution that the millions of Americans who faced unemployment and poverty through no fault of their own were entitled to a guaranteed annual

---

[60] Schwartz, "Toward a Just and Compassionate Incomes Policy," pp. 2-3.

[61] Steensland, *The Failed Welfare Revolution*, 128-29.

[62] "National Economic Policy: Broadened and Expanded Public Services and the Guaranteed Annual Income," April 22-25, 1966, p. 1, Folder 17, Box 26, M97-135, ADA; Schwartz, "Toward a Just and Compassionate Incomes Policy," p. 1.

income did not, however, reflect an innate desire to detach income from productive employment but rather a critical assessment of the state of the American labor market. The resolution maintained that "the way to end poverty is to give poor people more income, preferably derived from productive jobs that pay wages, but more income at all events." Holding the view that the willfully idle suffered from a "psychological condition" that was "itself a consequence of poverty" and constituted, in any case, a small minority of the total number of poor Americans, the ADA believed stepped-up measures that sustained a full-employment economy would ensure the ability of individuals to obtain a "decent standard of living" through productive work.[63]

The broader economic policy resolution passed by the ADA in 1966 coupled the proposal for a guaranteed annual income with the call to undertake the "democratic economic planning" and public works projects necessary to establish a growing full employment economy that the architects of the original Full Employment bill had envisioned in 1946 but still remained unfulfilled two decades later. The resolution stressed economic planning as a crucial tool to maximize economic growth and employment opportunities in the private sector, but, like the ADA's proposal for a $2 billion public works program two years earlier, it expressed the growing conviction in the organization that the private labor market could not be depended upon to eliminate poverty. The resolution called for a federally-financed five-year program to create at least five million sub-professional jobs to be made available to the jobless millions who faced dim employment prospects in a private labor market that already provided an inadequate number of jobs and looked certain to contract still further as a consequence of automation. More than an antipoverty measure in the eyes of the ADA, a plan for substantial

[63] "National Economic Policy: Broadened and Expanded Public Services and the Guaranteed Annual Income," pp. 2-3, 6.

job creation in the public services not only held the prospect to provide employment for those unable to find jobs in the private sector, but also to meet a variety of social needs that private industry had consistently failed to address. The creation of public service jobs for nurses, teaching assistants, social workers, and recreation guides, the resolution contended, would provide the manpower essential to implement many of the programs of the Great Society.[64] As automation continued to eliminate jobs and the civil rights movement focused national attention on the disproportionate consequences for African Americans, ADA liberals committed their support and intellectual energy to a new initiative that reflected their views on full employment and guaranteed income.

**The Economics of Leon Keyserling and the Freedom Budget**

At a planning session for the White House conference on civil rights in November 1965, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and honorary chairman of the conference, called for a bold and expansive "Freedom Budget" that would establish "a nationwide plan for the abolition of ghetto jungles in every city, even at the cost of a hundred billion dollars."[65] While Randolph served as an important figurehead for the Freedom Budget, Leon Keyserling developed the bulk of the budget with assistance from Randolph Institute co-founder and executive director Bayard Rustin. The Freedom Budget quickly became a primary focus of the ADA and a clear expression of its understanding of the need for a national full employment policy coupled with a guaranteed annual income. At a time of growing division in the civil rights movement, the Freedom Budget—a plan that followed the mold of Keyserling's growth-based economics and differed little from recent

[64] "National Economic Policy: Broadened and Expanded Public Services and the Guaranteed Annual Income," p. 1.

[65] "Slum Plea Made at Rights Parley," *New York Times*, November 18, 1965.

ADA economic policy—also attracted support from the country's five major civil rights organizations. Firmly optimistic about the far-reaching potential of economic growth as a vehicle for social progress, the Freedom Budget both reflected and helped to further establish consensus among a notable number of prominent liberals and civil rights leaders on the need for a social democratic response to the entrenched economic inequality that underpinned the nation's enduring racial inequality. For a brief moment, before the large-scale escalation of the Vietnam War, a significant grouping of white liberals and a variety of civil rights leaders united in support of a systematic antipoverty proposal that drew on the economic perspective of the ADA as the foundation for an initiative that made the Johnson administration's limited poverty program look more like a skirmish than a war.

With the goal of liquidating poverty in the U.S. by 1975, the Freedom Budget stressed the need for a more structural approach to economic deprivation than the services and cultural uplift emphasis that underpinned the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and the broader War on Poverty. Rather than emphasize training and education for poor Americans to prepare them for jobs that may or not materialize in the future, the Freedom Budget aimed to provide not just opportunity but to establish—as a fact and as a result—increased economic standing and security for the significant number of Americans who lived in what Michael Harrington had termed the "other America." Like ADA policy on full employment and guaranteed income being developed at the same time, the Freedom Budget owed more to the social democratic ethos that ran through parts of the New Deal and the Employment Act of 1946 than to the human capital development orientation of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty. Employing the language of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Freedom Budget articulated the goal of directly ensuring the right of all Americans to "freedom from want" through guaranteed

employment for anyone able to work with the federal government acting as an employer of last resort and guaranteed income for anyone unable to work. For Keyserling and Rustin, those proposals and the myriad of other structural approaches called for in the Freedom Budget held the promise of making Roosevelt's Four Freedoms and Second Bill of Rights a reality for all Americans.[66]

With Keyserling as the driving force behind its design, the Freedom Budget drew on the ADA's general economic perspective and its relatively newfound understanding of full employment as central to addressing the interconnected issues of poverty and racial inequality. When drafts of the Freedom Budget first began circulating in early 1966, the ADA wasted no time in offering public support for a document that largely resembled its own economic platform. Endorsements from twenty-one of its national board members for the final published version would establish the ADA as the institution with the greatest representation among the list of prestigious signatories to the document.[67] The social democratic approach of the Freedom Budget rooted in the economics of Keyserling and the ADA also held considerable appeal for the initiative's broad array of major civil rights backers who endorsed the proposal at a time in which the civil rights movement faced growing division and polarization. Though he would later remove himself from the list of signatories, Stokely Carmichael, the chairman of SNCC instrumental in its shift to black nationalism, initially joined the leaders of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the NAACP, the National Urban League (NUL), and the SCLC in endorsing the Freedom Budget. As the first instance in which the five major civil rights groups agreed to work together publically on a major national program since the rise of

---

[66] A. Philip Randolph Institute, *A "Freedom Budget" for All Americans: Budgeting Our Resources, 1966-1975 to Achieve Freedom from Want* (New York: A. Philip Randolph Institute, 1966), 2-4, 11-13.

[67] "Twenty-One ADAers Sign Freedom Budget for All," *ADA World*, 9; December 1966, 9; "Freedom Budget," *ADA World*, January 1966, 2.

tensions over the issue of Black Power earlier in the year, the Freedom Budget evidenced a striking, and for 1966, otherwise unlikely, point of agreement.[68]

The economic platform that drew support from a collection of civil rights leaders and organizations increasingly diverging from each other on a variety of other issues in 1966 largely relied on earlier efforts of Keyserling and the ADA to adapt the universalistic social democratic framework found in some aspects of the New Deal to address economic, social, and racial inequality in the mid-1960s. Highlighting the singular importance of his own contributions, Keyserling saw the Freedom Budget as the "logical progression" of his earlier "interest and efforts on behalf of translating the Employment Act of 1946 into what it was intended to be...the uniting of our economic resources with the fulfillment of our social needs." With an emphasis on full employment policy, a higher minimum wage, and other proposals that built on the achievements of the New Deal and Fair Deal, much of the Freedom Budget represented innovation not so much in its ideas as in the tremendous scale of the initiatives called for. Still, retooling the policy framework of the New Deal era into an accessible package geared towards addressing areas of racial and economic inequality that the federal government had either left untouched or actively reinforced during the time of the New Deal presented no easy task. Nevertheless, Rustin felt that Keyserling successfully created "a realistic, complex and highly developed Freedom Budget and at the same time made it comprehensible to the people in the ghetto."[69]

While Keyserling's straightforward presentation of the principles behind the Freedom Budget made it possible to appeal to a mass base for support, his overriding emphasis on

---

[68] Stokely Carmichael to Bayard Rustin, August 16, 1966, Folder 16, Box 19, BTR; "10-Year Plan Aims at Poverty's End," *New York Times*, October 27, 1966.

[69] Leon Keyserling to Bayard Rustin, October 19, 1967, p.2; Bayard Rustin to Leon Keyserling, November 4, 1966, pp. 1-2; Folder 3, Box 20, BTR.

economic growth as a means of fighting poverty allowed the document's initial backers to see what might have otherwise appeared to be a prohibitively expensive proposal as both economically feasible and politically palatable. Despite the traction gained by Galbraith and Schlesinger's decade long critique of Keyserling's often-myopic focus on economic growth, the ongoing efforts of the former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) ensured that increasing the output of the American economy remained central to the economic perspective of many liberal Democrats and key ADA figures. Following his service in the Truman administration, Keyserling founded the Washington-based Conference on Economic Progress and continued to work tirelessly on promoting economic growth as the foundation for liberal domestic policy initiatives.[70] With the resources of the Conference on Economic Progress at his disposal, Keyserling devoted significant energy to developing the Freedom Budget as a vehicle for his firmly held belief in economic growth as the basis for social progress.[71]

Buoyed by the high rate of economic growth enjoyed by the U.S. in the first half of the 1960s, the Freedom Budget encapsulated a passion for economic growth held by Keyserling that continued to resonate with many in the ADA. Based on the optimistic expectation that the good times would continue and the U.S. could maintain a rate of annual economic growth of around 4½ to 5 percent, the Freedom Budget proposed to eradicate poverty not by redistributing wealth but by making use of only a fraction of the "economic growth dividend" projected to be produced by the growing U.S. economy. Emphasizing that "we cannot enjoy what we do not produce," the architects of the Freedom Budget insisted that the goals of the

---

[70] Robert M. Collins, *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 44.

[71] "Summary of the Work of Conference on Economic Progress During 1966," memorandum, December 31, 1966, p.1 Folder 4, Box 20, BTR.

budget could only be realized by continued economic growth under policies aimed at ensuring maximum employment, production, and purchasing power in accordance with the objectives established by the Employment Act of 1946. Under the direction of such policies, the Freedom Budget projected the total national production of the U.S. (measured in 1964 dollars) to rise from $663 billion in 1965 to between $1,085 and $1,120 billion in 1975. With economic growth at those rates, the Freedom Budget looked to an aggregate ten-year increase in production of over two trillion dollars—the "economic growth dividend"—of which the Freedom Budget would require only around one seventh to fulfill its far-reaching aims.[72]

Despite the belief in and reliance on economic growth as the source of the resources necessary for a massive escalation and fundamental reorientation of the War on Poverty, the Freedom Budget did not frame economic growth and private industry by themselves—however well-managed by the fiscal tools at the disposal of the federal government —as the answer to poverty. The growing skepticism towards the ability of the private labor market to address entrenched unemployment and poverty reflected in ADA policy on full employment and guaranteed income also informed the Freedom Budget's approach to structural unemployment and economic inequality. Convinced that the private labor market would never be able to provide all of the jobs needed to eliminate unemployment, Keyserling and his collaborators on the Freedom Budget called on the federal government to make an "unqualified commitment" to create the jobs required to provide employment for all those who sought work. None of those jobs would need to be "made-work," they insisted, "because our unmet needs in the public sector are large enough to absorb beneficially this Federal effort." With the view that a guaranteed annual income would be necessary to ensure a decent

[72] *Freedom Budget*, 5, 9, 22.

standard of income for "those who cannot or should not work," The Freedom Budget echoed recent ADA policy in positioning guaranteed income as a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, national full-employment policy.[73]

The individuals involved in the development and promotion of the Freedom Budget did not see economic growth in and of itself as a social panacea, but they stressed nevertheless that the productive power of an American economy that provided far more than the resources necessary to abolish "freedom from want" by 1975 rendered the issue of poverty neither economic nor financial, but moral. In contrast to an earlier time in which the country lacked the resources to ensure material security for all of its citizens, Randolph insisted in his introduction to the Freedom Budget that the U.S. no longer had any economic or technological excuses for the its failure to eliminate poverty. In the affluent U.S. of the 1960s, he contended, "poverty is not only a private tragedy but in a sense a public crime. It is above all a challenge to our morality."[74]

While the Freedom Budget looked to the power and growth of the American economy to frame poverty as a moral issue, it drew primarily on the civil rights movement to stake and articulate the moral basis of its cause. Highlighting the goal of providing the freedom from economic deprivation and oppression necessary to give meaning to the legal and civil rights victories achieved by the civil rights movement, the architects of the Freedom Budget presented the document as providing the movement's natural next step. For those involved in

---

[73] *Freedom Budget*, 4, 32, 63-64. Like recent ADA policy, the Freedom Budget would strike some commentators as economically and politically radical but the proposal nevertheless expressed a clear commitment to traditional middle-class cultural values. Reflecting the belief of its authors and supporters in the desirability of a male-bread-winner-centered family structure, the Freedom Budget emphasized full employment policy as vital to ensuring the ability of male family heads to secure the income needed to ensure a decent standard of living for their families. In contrast to their overriding emphasis on full employment policy, contributors to and backers of the Freedom Budget saw guaranteed income as a necessary but supplemental measure that they envisioned only for the disabled, the elderly, and others unable to work or those that they believed should not be working outside of the home such as mothers with young children.

[74] *Freedom Budget*, introduction.

the development of the budget, the moral issues at stake in a genuine war on poverty were "no less compelling than those of the battle against racism."[75]

The broad moral appeal of the civil rights movement was not lost on the architects of the Freedom Budget who noted that the "unique suffering" of African Americans had gone "a long way toward awakening the American conscience with respect to civil rights and liberties." With the assertion that the most significant role to be played by African Americans in the Freedom Budget would not be as beneficiaries but as a "galvanizing force," the Freedom Budget contended that the debt owed to African Americans and their allies in the civil rights movement "will be increased many times" as they help "to win the battle against unemployment and poverty and deprivation."[76] Keyserling displayed his belief in the well-founded moral appeal of the civil rights movement that ran throughout the Freedom Budget when his urging ensured that the name of the A. Philip Randolph Institute remained readily visible on the version of the cover that ended up on the published pamphlet.[77]

The fundamental strategy described in the text of the Freedom Budget to "combine economic progress with moral purpose" attracted vigorous support from ADA liberals who saw the initiative as a compelling vehicle to advance the economic and civil rights issues they had come to prioritize in the preceding years. An editorial in the October 1966 issue of *ADA World* declared the Freedom Budget "the only proper approach to poverty." The same month, ADA national board member David Cohen joined Keyserling, Rustin, Randolph, and other key backers at a press conference in Harlem to present the finalized Freedom Budget to the public.[78] In December, Rustin's summary of the Freedom Budget reached the entire

---

[75] *Freedom Budget*, introduction.
[76] *Freedom Budget*, 19-20.
[77] Leon Keyserling to Bayard Rustin, September 28, 1966, p. 1, Folder 3, Box 20, BTR.
[78] "10-Year Plan Aims at Poverty's End;" "Twenty-One ADAers Sign Freedom Budget for All," 9.

membership of the ADA through publication in *ADA World* and had to be reprinted because of widespread demand.[79]

With the Johnson administration refusing to publically receive the Freedom Budget in any manner that would give the impression that they supported the ambitious proposal, the spirited involvement and response of ADA liberals proved to be especially important to getting the initiative off the ground. Conceding that waiting would do little to further the chances of obtaining the White House's blessing, the Randolph Institute decided to proceed without the administration and sent Keyserling and Rustin on a cross-country speaking tour in support of the Freedom Budget.[80] Speeches by Keyserling and Rustin before a 500-person rally in Philadelphia organized by the local ADA chapter generated considerable local support for the Freedom Budget and spurred the formation of an ad hoc Philadelphia Freedom Budget committee featuring 150 prominent Philadelphians.[81] The positive response of ADA liberals and others in Philadelphia to the Freedom Budget was joined by a broader outpouring of support from ADA members across the country. Leon Shull expressed with satisfaction that "ADA chapters everywhere have been enthusiastic" and that there existed "a good deal of feeling that this should be a very major project for us."[82] Just as the Freedom Budget began to gain momentum with the ADA, the broader liberal community, and civil rights leaders, the ongoing escalation of the Vietnam War would call into question the fundamental principles upon which the initiative rested.

---

[79] Bayard Rustin, "A Freedom Budget for All," *ADA World*, December 1966, 1M-4M; Leon Shull to Bayard Rustin, January 17, 1967, Folder 23, Box 21, M97-135, ADA.

[80] David C. Carter, *The Music Has Gone Out of the Movement: Civil Rights and the Johnson Administration, 1965-1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 99-100; Memorandum on Recent Developments in Support of "The Freedom Budget for All Americans," Folder 23, Box 21, M97-135, ADA.

[81] Memorandum to Endorsers of the Freedom Budget from Bayard Rustin, Re: Distribution of the popular edition of the Freedom Budget, Folder 23, Box 21, M97-135, ADA; "Rustin, Keyserling Push $185 Billion Poverty Budget," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, January 14, 1967.

[82] Leon Shull to Bayard Rustin, January 17, 1967; Leon Shull to Bayard Rustin, November 18, 1966, Folder 19, Box 3, M97-135, ADA.

**Economic Growth and the Fallacy of "Guns and Butter"**

Over the course of 1966 and 1967, the number of U.S. troops deployed by the Johnson administration to Vietnam soared from 185,000 to just under half a million.[83] As the commitment of American troops to the Vietnam War continued to grow, the notion that the U.S possessed the economic resources and political wherewithal to wage both a ground war in Southeast Asia and a meaningful War on Poverty at home became increasingly suspect to many liberals. Based on an allocation of expected economic growth rather than a redistribution of existing economic resources, the Freedom Budget attracted a powerful but short-lived consensus among leading liberals and civil rights leaders around a social democratic response to poverty that went far beyond the aims of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty. When escalation of the Vietnam War fundamentally brought into question the assertion of the Freedom Budget that the U.S. could have both "guns and butter," that consensus quickly evaporated. Many of the "old liberals" of the ADA—and a growing number of individuals at both the grassroots and leadership levels of the organization—continued to press for full employment, guaranteed income, and other measures that had been central to the Freedom Budget but diverged from the insistence of its chief architect, Leon Keyserling, that the productive power of the American economy held almost limitless potential as a source of social progress. As the influence of Keyserling on its economic policy diminished, the ADA came to stress opposition to the Vietnam War as integral to the antipoverty measures needed to achieve full racial equality.

The waning of Keyserling's long outsized clout in the development of ADA economic

[83] David L. Anderson, *The Columbia Guide to the Vietnam War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 286.

policy came not long after the organization began to commit itself to a Freedom Budget initiative that clearly displayed the hallmarks of his economic thinking. Just as the ADA started to devote significant resources to the campaign for the Freedom Budget, large-scale escalation of the Vietnam War drove a wedge into what had seemed to be a unified movement for social and economic justice only months before. While ADA liberals overwhelmingly responded in favor of the Freedom Budget and few in the organization took issue with the set of comprehensive domestic initiatives it called for, the insistence of its developers on dodging the "guns and butter" question proved to be a growing source of contention. With a general outlook sustained by confidence in the productive power of the U.S. economy, the Freedom Budget stressed that its revenue and cost projections would not require cutbacks to military spending generally or an end to the Vietnam War in particular. The text of the Freedom Budget made clear that it could "and should be implemented, whether or not an early termination of the Vietnam conflict is achieved, or even were there to be substantial increase in its economic and financial burdens."[84]

From the perspective of a number of key figures in the ADA, the Freedom Budget's projection of and accommodation for future expenditures for the Vietnam War effectively amounted to tacit approval of the U.S. military commitment in Vietnam. Herbert Gans, a major figure in the development of ADA domestic policy and early contributor to the Freedom Budget, wrote to Rustin to express his displeasure at not having had the opportunity to see the final manuscript since the attachment of his name to the document led to him getting his "share of snipping over the seeming endorsement of the Viet Nam war in the budget." For Gans, language in the budget based on "Leon's [Keyserling] casual acceptance of the war

[84] *Freedom Budget*, introduction.

effort" readily opened the effort up to such charges.[85]

Rustin wrote back to Gans to offer his agreement on the mistake of not sufficiently clarifying their position on the war in the Freedom Budget but the very non-committal stance of the text served a strategic purpose for him and those most involved in the development of the budget.[86] Keyserling would point out to detractors that the Freedom Budget specified that it took no position as to the status quo of U.S. military expenditures or policy in Vietnam despite a multitude of figures projecting a continuation or increase of present military spending. In his calculation, non-commitment to a position on the Vietnam War would allow the Freedom Budget to attract the broad coalition of support necessary to make the proposal a reality. The base for that coalition would be sabotaged, he maintained, if it was "limited to those who, for all practical purposes, act upon the assumption that these domestic purposes are unattainable unless there is a very drastic change in national policies with respect to military and space" expenditures.[87]

With rising tension in the ADA over the escalation of the U.S. war effort in Vietnam, vocal critics of the war and those who sought to downplay the war's broader significance increasingly approached the issue from divergent perspectives. While Keyserling and Rustin stressed the need to avoid the issue of the Vietnam War and consequently developed the Freedom Budget around a non-committal position aimed at attracting the broadest possible range of support, significant figures in the leadership of the ADA and other liberal organizations saw no reasonable or even feasible way in which the issue could be avoided. Robert Browne, an influential figure in SANE, wrote to Randolph to express his belief in the irresponsibility of the Freedom Budget's failure to take a position on the Vietnam War.

---

[85] Herbert Gans to Bayard Rustin, December 12, 1966, Folder 17, Box 19, BTR.
[86] Bayard Rustin to Herbert Gans, December 21, 1966, Folder 17, Box 19, BTR.
[87] Leon Keyserling to Rev. Shirley E. Greene, February 24, 1967, pp. 1-2, Folder 4, Box 20, BTR.

Browne pointed to "burgeoning war spending" as the "first obstacle to the realization of the Budget's goals" and stressed that failing to acknowledge it as such would only serve to raise false hopes.[88] Offering an even more critical assessment when he later reflected on the meaning of the Freedom Budget, Joseph Rauh bluntly deemed the budget "a fake" and an "effort to make the Vietnam War look good."[89] While both those who supported and those who criticized the non-committal position of the Freedom Budget on the Vietnam War shared a belief in the moral cause of the budget, their irreconcilable differences on the issue of the war laid the lines of a division in the organization that would only grow in significance in the coming years.

The ADA continued to provide nominal support for the Freedom Budget over the course of 1967, but the growing schism over the Vietnam War within the organization quickly dissipated the early enthusiasm for the budget. In the polarized context of an escalating Vietnam War, any feasibility that had existed for taking no position on the conflict disappeared. With non-committal on the Vietnam War off the table as a viable option, ADA liberals increasingly demonstrated little tolerance for what many took to be implicit support for the war. Keyserling and Rustin had sought to avoid the issue of the Vietnam War in order to attract a broader coalition of support for the Freedom Budget, but, in doing so, ended up losing the wholehearted support of key ADA figures and other important potential liberal allies. By October, Keyserling had no choice but to concede that the Freedom Budget's initial "army of supporters" seemed "to be vanishing into thin air." With the Freedom Budget finding little interest or support in Congress following heavy Democratic losses in the 1966 election, waning liberal support—both within and outside of the ADA—proved to be especially

[88] Robert Browne to A. Philip Randolph, October 26, 1966, Folder 3, Box 20, BTR.

[89] Joseph Rauh quoted in Helene Slessarev, *The Betrayal of the Urban Poor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 50.

damaging to the budget's already meager legislative prospects.

The difficulties encountered by the Freedom Budget with liberal audiences amid the ongoing escalation of the Vietnam War owed much to the inherent limitations of Keyserling's economic and political outlook. The nearly exclusive preoccupation with economic growth and the tacit approval of the Vietnam War that suffused the Freedom Budget reflected beliefs deeply held by Keyserling but also bore the stamp of loyalty investigations that he and his wife, Mary Dublin Keyserling, faced during the 1940s and early 1950s. Self-described socialists in the 1930s, neither Leon nor his wife were ever members of the Communist Party or fellow travellers but their left-leaning politics combined with Mary's involvement in a number of organizations speciously classified by government authorities as Communist fronts and allegations of guilt by association to land the couple in a series of protracted loyalty investigations. Like many who had operated on the left end of the political spectrum in the 1930s, Keyserling moderated his political views during the Second Red Scare. Over years of investigations that consistently failed to find any evidence of Communist involvement, Keyserling tried to diminish the socialist currents that had run through his earlier politics by citing his firm belief throughout the postwar years that poverty could be eliminated through economic growth rather than redistribution. Through his work for the Conference on Economic Progress and the Freedom Budget, he maintained his long-standing commitment to improving the material and economic standing of the poor and working class, but parted ways with the redistributionist proposals and scathing criticism of capitalism found in his politics during the 1930s.[90]

The near total reliance of the Freedom Budget on economic growth expressed

[90] Landon R. Y. Storrs, *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 107-176

Keyserling's genuine belief in the social potential of economic growth but also indicated the unease with redistribution that entered into his politics in the wake of harrowing loyalty investigations. Similarly, Keyserling's commitment to Cold War military spending and uncritical acceptance of the Vietnam War reflected real concerns that he had towards the dangers of Communist expansion but were also—at least in part—a residual consequence of his efforts to convince authorities of his anti-Communist bona fides. With a political and economic outlook appreciably narrowed over the course of the Second Red Scare, Keyserling never entertained the option of thoroughgoing redistribution in the event of poor economic growth or questioning of a war that sapped funds that could be put to use for domestic purposes as he laid the foundation for the Freedom Budget.[91]

Less apparent in 1967, the dangers of Keyserling and the Freedom Budget's reliance on high levels of economic growth would come into a clearer focus as the 1960s drew to a close. By 1968, the ongoing escalation of the Vietnam War and the expenditures of the Great Society, however limited compared to the measures called for by the Freedom Budget and the ADA, had stretched the American economy to a breaking point. Inflation, the burgeoning balance-of-payments crisis, and the pressure put on the U.S. dollar in the international currency market forced the Johnson administration to make the very decisions that its guns-and-butter policy had tried to avoid. Economics were by no means the only factor involved, but the deteriorating economic situation faced by the country played a key role in the decision of the Johnson administration to make greater cuts to Great Society spending and halt further escalation of the Vietnam War in 1968.[92] The decade that followed the pivotal events of 1968 did not fare any better from an economic perspective. In contrast to the expectations of

[91] Storrs, *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left*, 107-176.
[92] Collins, *More*, 86-92.

economic growth of around 4½ to 5 percent that the Freedom Budget looked to as source of funding to scale up and fundamentally reorient the War on Poverty, the U.S. economy from 1968 to 1975 saw some years in which the economy contracted and an average growth rate over that period of just over 3 percent.[93]

Even before the full economic implications of the Vietnam War became apparent, waning enthusiasm for the Freedom Budget in the ADA marked the diminishing influence in the organization of Keyserling and his view of the U.S. economy as a seemingly limitless vehicle for social progress. As the end of 1967 approached, few significant figures in the ADA shared Keyserling's unbridled optimism that the growing U.S. economy had more than enough resources to wage a war on Communism in Vietnam and on poverty at home. In the face of significant cutbacks for the existing programs of the Great Society and the failure of the more extensive measures of the Freedom Budget to receive even a whiff of serious consideration from the White House or Congress, ADA liberals saw that even if it were economically feasible to have "guns and butter," the country clearly lacked the necessary political will. Unable to avoid the issue of the Vietnam War and forced to choose between guns and butter, the bulk of ADA liberals decidedly opted for butter as the country faced a new wave of urban violence during the summer of 1967.

The structural approach to addressing entrenched economic inequality championed by the Freedom Budget with little success received new consideration from the White House and Congress when the National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders released its report in 1968 on the violent uprisings seen in urban areas across the country the preceding summer.

---

[93] For the rates of expansion and contraction of the U.S. economy during the 1968 to 1975 period see George Kozmetsky and Piyu Yue, *The Economic Transformation of the United States, 1950-2000: Focusing on the Technological Revolution, the Service Sector Expansion, and the Cultural, Ideological, and Demographic Changes* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005), 99.

The report, widely referred to as the Kerner Report after committee chairman and Illinois governor Otto Kerner, depicted a startling situation in the nation's inner city ghettos and called for a federal response that went far beyond any of the Johnson administration's existing programs. With the aim of shocking and rousing the nation's conscience, the opening summary drafted by the staff of committee vice chairman and liberal New York Republican mayor John Lindsay diverged from the more muted tone found in the body of the 400-plus-page report to describe the nation's urban crisis in the starkest of terms.[94] The summary opened with what would become a famous indictment of American society, declaring, "our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." Highlighting white racism and its implications for black poverty as the fundamental factor in the previous summer's violence, the report stated, "what white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."[95]

The Kerner Report concluded that addressing the crisis of the urban ghetto would require a concerted, expansive, and sustained effort backed by the resources of the world's richest and most powerful nation. The report called for the creation of two million jobs over the next three years, extensive efforts to eliminate de facto segregation in schools, a program to bring six million new and existing homes of decent quality within the reach of low and moderate-income families, and a guaranteed annual income for all Americans.[96] Very few of the Kerner Report's commission recommendations were new. The key measures called for by

---

[94] Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement*, 204.

[95] *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, (Washington , D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1968), 1.

[96] *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, 1, 11-13.

the report read much likes pages from the Freedom Budget or domestic resolutions passed by the ADA in the preceding years. However, as the product of a presidential commission comprised of prominent figures from across the political spectrum, the Kerner Report brought those measures a great deal of attention and lent them a significant degree of legitimacy.

Spurned by the administration that had called for its investigation into the causes of urban violence, the Kerner Report found a highly receptive audience in the ADA. While President Johnson refused to endorse or even receive in an official manner a report that illuminated the limitations of his Great Society legislative achievements and called for massive increases in the federal expenditure that he saw as politically infeasible, the ADA lauded the Kerner Report and called for swift implementation of its recommendations. Speaking on behalf of the organization, ADA National Chairman John Kenneth Galbraith deemed the recommended measures to be "on a scale coordinate with the problem to be solved" and declared that there "can be no excuse that resources are needed for other purposes." Quickly turning his attention to the Vietnam War, Galbraith asserted that it should not be forgotten that hawks "who talk most unctuously about the more or less imaginary liberties of the [South] Vietnamese are usually those who have given the least practical help to advancing the cause of liberty and social justice for Negroes and other minorities here at home."[97]

With the Vietnam War seen by many ADA liberals as sapping funds desperately needed for a reorientation and escalation of the War on Poverty, opposition to the war became inseparably linked for many within the organization to the civil rights movement and the struggle for social justice. Until the release of the 1968 federal budget, Galbraith had, by his

[97] ADA Statement on the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, Box 497, JKG.

own admission, been "strung along with the idea that the Vietnam War was not affecting our domestic programs."[98] By the time the Kerner Commission reported its findings in 1968, the insistence of the Freedom Budget that the wealthiest nation on the planet could have both "guns and butter" held little credibility in the ADA. Siding clearly in favor of butter, Galbraith devoted most of the ADA's short statement on the Kerner Report not to the report itself but to the Vietnam War and its implications for domestic progress. According to Galbraith, "it would be a terrible confession of bankruptcy in a war in which Negro soldiers are carrying a heavy brunt of the actual fighting if we should now decide that there is no money to give them and their families decent, orderly, safe and socially egalitarian communities here at home."[99] With the 1968 presidential election looming on the horizon, the conviction of Galbraith and other "old liberals" in the ADA that poverty represented a civil rights issue in desperate need of a far greater commitment of resources prompted them to prioritize opposition to the Vietnam War and reevaluate their willingness to support President Johnson's reelection bid. Ultimately, the notion that the Vietnam War represented an issue of transcendent importance would lead those "old liberals" to part ways with a variety of longtime allies and establish the ADA as a launching pad for the emerging New Politics movement.

[98] John Kenneth Galbraith to Carl Auerbach, March 14, 1968, Box 496, JKG.
[99] ADA Statement on the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.

## Chapter Four: Initiating a New Politics Movement: The Vietnam War and the Promise of the New Class

In the months that followed Eugene McCarthy's stunning near-defeat of President Lyndon Johnson in the New Hampshire Democratic primary on March 12, 1968, the notion of a "New Politics" took hold among political observers and became a regular feature of political discussion. Contrasting themselves with the "old politics" of party regulars and organized labor, the activists, intellectuals, and politicians who rallied under the banner of the New Politics in 1968 sought to shift the balance of power in the Democratic Party towards grassroots activism in order to mount political opposition to the Vietnam War through the existing two-party system. Before its unexpected showing in the New Hampshire primary, the McCarthy campaign that put the New Politics movement into motion received an invaluable boost on February 10 when the ADA—the most prominent and influential liberal organization in the country—voted to endorse the Minnesota senator's long-shot challenge to the incumbent Democratic president.

The ADA's endorsement of McCarthy has often been seen as a harbinger of its later political irrelevance. In his influential history of the ADA, Steven Gillon depicts the decision to endorse McCarthy as an act of principle committed at the expense of political prudence that paved the way to political irrelevancy by settling the protracted tension in the organization between politics and vision decisively in favor of the latter.[1] The decision of the "old liberals" of the ADA to break ranks with organized labor and push their organization to endorse McCarthy did not, however, represent a hasty moment of visionary impropriety. Rather, it reflected a culmination of their growing skepticism towards anti-Communist containment and

[1] Steven M. Gillon, *Politics and Vision: The ADA and American Liberalism, 1947-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 204-224.

a long advocacy of a qualitative liberalism that underpinned their belief in the liberal potential of the college students and white-collar workers who comprised what many were beginning to term a "New Class." Instead of heralding their effective demise, the endorsement of McCarthy in 1968 enabled the ADA and its "old liberals" to play an instrumental role in shaping an emerging New Politics movement that saw them wield as much influence on the direction of American politics as at any other point in the history of the organization. By adapting a postwar liberalism that had been defined by anti-Communist foreign policy and the bread-and-butter issues of the New Deal political agenda to the new circumstances and challenges of the 1960s, the "old liberals" of the ADA not only found the means to sustain their political and intellectual influence but also demonstrated the ongoing malleability and salience of the liberal tradition of which they had long been leading representatives.

The path to the New Politics started in the 1950s when John Kenneth Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and other "old liberals" from the ADA began to see the nation's growing affluence as ushering in the demise of the liberal coalition forged during the New Deal era. Resigned to the fate of a New Deal coalition that they believed was in the process of fraying beyond recognition, those "old liberals" looked to the growing ranks of the New Class as an essential social base for the future of liberal politics. Views on the liberal potential of the New Class that the "old liberals" of the ADA had been advancing since the 1950s took on a new meaning in the 1960s with the escalation of the U.S. war effort in Vietnam and the heightened national visibility of the civil rights movement. The escalation of the Vietnam War sharpened the doubts many ADA liberals had towards anti-Communist containment and raised the stakes of criticism they had been advancing since the earliest days of American involvement in the conflict while the momentum of the civil rights movement led them to a newfound awareness

of both the enduring scale and depth of poverty in the country and its direct relationship to deep-seated racial inequality. As they approached the question of whether South Vietnam was to be ruled by a Communist dictatorship or a military one as an issue of diminishing importance in the age of polycentric Communism and came to recognize American involvement in the Vietnam War as the first hurdle to undertaking the antipoverty initiatives needed to continue the struggle for civil rights, many in the ADA came to see the war as a transcendent issue that defined the liberal agenda.

Committed to mounting political opposition to the Vietnam War and emboldened by their belief in the promise of the New Class as a political force, the "old liberals" of the ADA led the charge for an endorsement of McCarthy's struggling campaign that would establish the organization as a vehicle for the New Politics movement. When McCarthy faced a virtual vacuum of political support as other liberal organizations and politicians opposed to the Vietnam War failed to offer him their backing, the ADA's endorsement of the Minnesota senator proved critical to getting the campaign that sparked the New Politics movement off the ground. As the New Politics movement coalesced around the campaigns of McCarthy and Robert Kennedy, the ADA found itself well positioned to play a central role in the development of the movement. With activists steeped not in contemporary radical politics but a tradition of liberal reform that stretched back to the supporters of Adlai Stevenson in the 1950s and the Progressives of the early twentieth century, the New Politics movement grew out of a political and social milieu that had long seen the deep involvement of the ADA and its chapters. After the ADA's endorsement of McCarthy, ADA chapters across the country quickly mobilized on behalf of the Minnesota senator and provided the New Politics movement emerging around his campaign with a valuable network of contacts and an existing

organizational base to build upon. Beyond the furnishing of important organizational resources, the deep, shared conviction of the "old liberals" of the ADA and the activists of the New Politics movement that the political establishment responsible for the Vietnam War could be—and needed to be—challenged through the accepted channels of American democracy provided a strong basis for the organization's ongoing relationship with the movement.

Still, the desire to preserve and foster that relationship led those "old liberals" to look to a new generation of leadership whose youth and activist background would enable the organization to reach out to young people who had no sentimental connection to the ADA. The "old liberals" of the ADA paved the way to the ranks of leadership in the organization for younger figures such as Joseph Duffey and Allard Lowenstein who—despite political backgrounds and styles that differed greatly from their own—drew from the same intellectual and political wellsprings that had long sustained their politics. Increasingly young and displaying a growing preference for action over rhetoric that stood in marked contrast to the organization's long established penchant for writing resolutions as a means of advancing political issues, the new look ADA of the late 1960s and early 1970s nurtured the relationship between the organization and the New Politics movement that began with its bold endorsement of McCarthy's fledgling campaign. As the New Politics movement evolved into a major force in liberal politics, the strength of that relationship ensured that the "old liberals" of the ADA and their ideas remained an integral part of the movement.

**The Vietnam War as a Transcendent Issue**

As the commitment of the ADA to the fight for civil rights expanded to include the struggle against poverty, leading figures in the organization approached the issue of chronic

economic deprivation with a newfound urgency and emphasized the serious inadequacies of the War on Poverty and the broader initiatives of the Johnson administration's Great Society program. Yet, even those already meager efforts saw an appreciable reduction in funding and commitment as the Johnson administration continued to escalate the Vietnam War. With the war consuming more than a billion and a half dollars a month, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. lamented in 1966 that the "Great Society is now, except for token gestures, dead." Tallying the consequences, Schlesinger remarked, "the fight for equal opportunity for the Negro, the war on poverty, the struggle to save the cities, the improvement of our schools—all must be starved for the sake of Vietnam."[2] Skeptical of economic growth as a social panacea and the notion that the country could have both "guns and butter," Schlesinger and other "old liberals" in the ADA came to see opposition to the Vietnam War as integral to the antipoverty programs needed to achieve full racial equality. When those "old liberals" began to approach the Vietnam War not simply as an important issue among many but as a transcendent political issue upon which the broader liberal agenda depended, they put the ADA on a collision course with organized labor and the Johnson administration that would have lasting consequences for the organization and the trajectory of liberal politics.

The first signs of the tension that would accompany efforts to prioritize opposition to the Vietnam War in the ADA could be seen at the organization's national convention in 1966. When delegates at the convention secured passage of a resolution that expressed the hope that "Vietnam will see the end of indiscriminate anti-communism as a pillar of American foreign policy," a clear divergence emerged between those who supported the resolution and the

---

[2] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy, 1941-1966* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), 50.

largely labor-based contingent who opposed it.[3] Labor leaders in the ADA, like the bulk of labor leadership in the country, engendered no desire to jeopardize their relationship with President Johnson and provided staunch support for the administration's Vietnam War policies. Far more than a response to immediate political pressures, support among labor leaders for the policies of the Johnson administration in Vietnam was also an expression of their hardline Cold War posture with roots in a hyper-vigilant anti-Communism born out of their earlier struggles against Communists in the labor movement.[4] The absence, however, of any concrete political commitments in the ADA's 1966 resolution on the Vietnam War ultimately dulled the edges of the debate seen at that year's convention.

When questions of how critical of a stance to take on the Johnson administration's Vietnam War policy and the degree to which American policy in Vietnam should serve as a test of liberal politics pushed delegates at the 1967 ADA National Convention to far more heated disagreements, they split along lines similar to those that had developed the prior year.[5] Against the desire of International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) Assistant President Gus Tyler and other key labor representatives for a milder resolution, the ADA National Convention passed by an almost two-to-one margin a political resolution expressing "disenchantment and dismay over many aspects of administration policy in Vietnam and a parallel retreat at home." Particularly offensive to labor representatives was the resolution's suggestion that the ADA might not support President Johnson in the 1968 election if he did not correct the failures of his foreign policy that blunted any genuine hope of domestic social progress. The resolution welcomed a serious liberal challenger to the president from the

---

[3] "Vietnam Policy Resolution," *ADA World*, August 1966, 4.

[4] Penny Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 100-101; Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 116.

[5] "A Halt to Bombing of North Vietnam Proposed by A.D.A.," *New York Times*, April 2, 1967.

Republican Party—partly to dispel perennial criticism that dependence on the Democratic Party made the ADA politically ineffective but also to put genuine political pressure on Johnson. Still, the resolution walked a very fine line and reached out to the president's supporters by omitting mention of a challenger to Johnson from within the Democratic Party. The resolution also tempered its position against the president by expressing the hope that a Republican challenge would lead to "a counter attack led by the President himself in the reasoned, dedicated spirit of his 1964 campaign."[6]

The fine line walked by the political resolution passed at the national convention proved short-lived. At the following national board meeting on May 20, with only 44 of 134 board members in attendance, the majority present passed a resolution that expressed the intention of the ADA "to support in the 1968 election that liberal candidate of either major party, who offers a genuine hope for restraint in the conduct of the war in Vietnam and for its peaceful resolution on honorable terms."[7] The May 20 resolution marked a stark divergence from the political resolution passed shortly before at the national convention by welcoming a challenge to President Johnson from either major party—as opposed to the Republican Party alone—and in making Vietnam the critical factor for determining ADA support in 1968.

Passed by a bare minimum quorum of the national board shortly after the more widely attended meeting of the national board at the national convention in April, the more aggressive tone and substance of the May 20 resolution sparked a confrontation between those in the ADA who saw Vietnam as one issue among many and those who viewed Vietnam as the defining issue of liberal politics. With the support of David Dubinsky, Leon Keyserling, Robert Nathan, John Roche, Bayard Rustin, Paul Seabury, and some fifty other members of

[6] "Political Resolution," *ADA World*, May 1967, 3.

[7] ADA National Board Meeting, minutes, May 19, 20, and 21, 1967, p. 3, Folder 10, Box 10, M97-135, ADA; "ADA Independence Voted; Liberal For Peace Backed," *ADA World*, July 1967, 10.

the national board with close ties to organized labor or the Johnson administration, Gus Tyler issued a memorandum to the national board expressing his belief that the May 20 resolution would turn the organization into a one-issue organization and remove it from liberal politics in the U.S.[8] Schlesinger quickly countered Tyler's memorandum with a letter of his own to the members of the national board in which he contended that the May 20 resolution created the possibility for liberal politics in the U.S. by sending the message to Lyndon Johnson that he cannot expect unconditional support from American liberals regardless of his policies. For Schlesinger, the only way the liberal community could have leverage against the administration was to suggest that liberals did in fact have other options.[9]

Beyond tactical questions of how to push the Johnson administration on policy in Vietnam, Schlesinger's letter emphasized the break between the increasingly influential bloc of the ADA that saw Vietnam as the organizing principle of liberal politics and a largely labor-based bloc that feared the danger that strident opposition to the war posed for the liberal-intellectual-labor coalition that had long sustained the organization. In response to Tyler's charge that those who supported the May 20 resolution suffered from "monomania" on the issue of Vietnam, Schlesinger contended that supporters of the resolution were motivated by the conviction that "far from being an isolated issue, the Vietnam War is intimately related to the slowdown in the struggle for civil rights" and "the war against poverty." Schlesinger articulated a view held by a number of his fellow "old liberals" as well as the growing ranks of younger board members when he argued that the direct connection between war in Vietnam and lack of social progress at home meant that special attention to the issue of Vietnam would

[8] "The Following Have Subscribed to the Essence of Gus Tyler's Letter of June 9, 1967 to the Members of the National Board of ADA on the 'Foreign Policy' Resolution," memorandum, Box 498, JKG; Gus Tyler to Members of the ADA National Board, memorandum, June 9, 1967, pp. 1-2, Box 369, AMS.

[9] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. to Members of the ADA National Board, memorandum, June 16, 1967, pp. 1-2, Folder 15, Box 2, M97-135, ADA.

not make the ADA a "one-issue" organization.[10]

Offering a diametrically opposed view shared by the preponderance of organized labor representatives and administration supporters in the ADA, Keyserling followed up Schlesinger's memorandum with one of his own that expressed strong support for Tyler's position and fervent disapproval of both the expedient means by which the May 20 resolution was passed and the substance of that resolution. Keyserling cited the failure to inform members of the national board that discussion of a resolution representing a substantial departure from the position adopted at the national convention was to be an order of business at the May 20 meeting and the subsequent passage of the resolution by a slim majority of less than one third of the total membership of the board as evidence that fundamental principles of democratic procedure had been violated. Turning his attention to the substance of the resolution, Keyserling, writing shortly after the outbreak of the Six-Day War, took issue with the resolution's lifting of Vietnam to primacy over all other issues and cited the development of hostilities in the Middle East as the most obvious example that not all issues of importance to liberals were related to the Vietnam War. Together, those procedural and substantive objections led Keyserling to charge that the powerful minority of board members behind the resolution had compelled the ADA to give "zealous" primacy to the divisive issue of Vietnam rather than emphasize the great number of issues that united the organization.[11]

Despite Keyserling's accusation, by 1967 those in the ADA who saw the Vietnam War as an issue of transcendent importance for liberals did not represent a noisy minority with disproportionate influence but rather the majority of the organization's leadership and rank-and-file. The series of resolutions passed by the national conventions and national board of the

[10] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. to Members of the ADA National Board, p. 2.

[11] Leon Keyserling to Members of the ADA National Board, memorandum, July 3, 1967, pp. 1-3, Folder 16, Box 36, M97-135, ADA.

ADA over the course of 1966 and 1967 on the Vietnam War and related political policy demonstrated that while labor representatives and their supporters remained a sizable minority in the ranks of leadership, they were, nonetheless, a minority and a shrinking one at that. Oblivious to many of the sweeping changes taking place in the organization, labor leaders and their supporters struggled to accept that their continued belief in the need for global Communist containment had been brushed aside by a new consensus in the ADA founded on the transcendent importance of opposing the Vietnam War.

As Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" in the ADA nurtured a consensus that marginalized a significant number of their longtime colleagues, they also began to reevaluate the effectiveness of the principal campaign through which they had mounted their opposition to the war and their belief in the prospects for a negotiated settlement to the conflict. Less than six months after helping launch Negotiation Now! with the hope that a mass collection of signatures by the campaign would pressure the Johnson administration to cease bombing North Vietnam, de-escalate the war in the South, and make a more determined effort towards a negotiated settlement, Galbraith and Schlesinger called into question the basic premise of the initiative. In November 1967, Schlesinger and Galbraith published widely read articles that shared much in common, including an emphasis on the difficulties to be found in seeking a negotiated solution to the Vietnam War and the decreasing likelihood that the Johnson administration could or would bring the war to an end. Galbraith's article for the *New York Times Magazine* drew on the general contours of the plan to end the war made in his popular June Negotiation Now! address but with its emphasis on the difficult path to

negotiations displayed little of the confidence that had characterized his earlier speech.[12] Similarly, Schlesinger urged critics of the Vietnam War to be under no illusions as to the ease of a negotiated solution in a widely read article for *The New Leader*. For Schlesinger, a strong case against bombing North Vietnam could be made on the grounds of its military ineffectiveness or its moral callousness, but not on the assumption that ceasing bombing would produce negotiations. Schlesinger found a depressing irony in circumstances that meant that if the Johnson administration finally attempted a serious peace effort, no rational government in Hanoi could be expected to do anything but stall until the next administration took over. In his estimation, the looming 1968 presidential election meant that "the negotiation season will draw to a close." By challenging the link between a cessation in bombing and the path to the conference table as well as stressing the considerable difficulties that would be encountered by the parties at that table, Schlesinger's article brought into question the viability of a Negotiation Now! campaign that saw calling for an end to the bombing of North Vietnam and urging negotiations as a viable means of ending the Vietnam War.[13]

Advancing a more critical perspective on the Vietnam War than the Negotiation Now! campaign required Schlesinger to grapple with the difficulties of formulating an alternative approach to ending the Vietnam War and the questioning of support for President Johnson entailed by that effort. While pessimistic towards the prospects for negotiations, Schlesinger expressed no particular attraction towards calls for the unilateral withdrawal of American military forces from Vietnam. Still, Schlesinger expressed an openness to unilateral withdrawal as a potential—if not desirable—policy alternative with the concession that while

---

[12] John Kenneth Galbraith, "The Galbraith Plan to End the War," *New York Times Magazine*, November 12, 1967, 128-130.

[13] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "Thinking Aloud: Vietnam and the 1968 Election," *New Leader*, November 6, 1967, 11-12.

unilateral withdrawal "would hardly be America's finest hour," the option remained open to the U.S. and "would be greatly preferable to a policy of unlimited escalation." Seeing the prospects for negotiations as dim, he struggled to define an appealing and tenable alternative to unilateral withdrawal or escalation but expressed no doubts as to the failure of the Johnson administration's persistent policy of escalation over the past 32 months. With the deaths of more than 13,000 American soldiers and countless Vietnamese, an expenditure of nearly $90 billion, and an irresponsible and dangerous neglect of the great many domestic problems faced by the nation, he saw the U.S. as still no closer to winning the war or even establishing a viable government in South Vietnam. Schlesinger made clear that if the country's leadership did not change its course on the war, the country would have to change its leadership.[14]

Not alone in that assessment, Schlesinger and other "old liberals" in the ADA who shared his conviction that the organization's support in the 1968 presidential race should hinge on the transcendent issue of the Vietnam War faced the difficult prospect of pushing still further for a move likely to jeopardize the ongoing involvement of labor leaders in the organization. While those "old liberals" could count themselves among a majority on the national board committed to establishing opposition to the Vietnam War as the focus of the ADA's operations and the critical factor in its political strategy, the organization remained dependent on funding from labor unions and deeply rooted in the liberal-labor-intellectual coalition that had sustained it since its 1947 founding.[15] With the entrance of a challenger to Lyndon Johnson in the Democratic primaries and the growing numbers of white-collar, middle-class Americans as a potential base for a new liberal coalition, the "old liberals" of the ADA could see breaking ranks with organized labor to establish the organization as a base for

[14] Schlesinger, "Thinking Aloud: Vietnam and the 1968 Election," 12.

[15] Leon Shull, interview by William Chafe, Washington, D.C., February 11, 1992, transcript, pp. 3-5, Folder 7420, Box 207, AKL.

political opposition to the Vietnam War not only as a morally necessary response to dire domestic needs but as an act of political pragmatism.

**Political Pragmatism, the New Class, and the McCarthy Endorsement**

When the ADA became the first non-issue specific organization with a national standing to throw its weight behind Eugene McCarthy's campaign for president on February 10, 1968, many saw the move as an act of unmitigated idealism.[16] Before being portrayed by Steven Gillon as an act of principle and vision committed at the expense of political pragmatism, *The New Republic* characterized the endorsement as a victory of the organization's "moralists" over its pragmatists.[17] Yet, the "old liberals" of the ADA who led the charge for an endorsement of the Minnesota senator's seemingly quixotic campaign did not act without regard for the sense of political realism that had long guided them and their hopes for the future of liberal politics. Aware of the challenges ahead and the visible limitations of McCarthy as a candidate, those "old liberals" believed that his challenge to Lyndon Johnson in the Democratic Party primaries on the issue of the Vietnam War would be able to draw on the significant electoral power of the college students and well-educated, white-collar workers who comprised the ranks of a growing New Class. Similarly, they believed that endorsement of a campaign that seemed to offer little more than opposition to the Vietnam War policy of the Johnson administration would put the ADA in touch with the large number of individuals from the New Class who harbored antiwar views and an intense

---

[16] Milton S. Katz, "Peace Liberals and Vietnam: SANE and the Politics of 'Responsible Protest,'" *Peace & Change* 9, no. 20 (1983): 21, 27. On January 27, 1968, SANE became the first non-partisan organization to endorse McCarthy. The ADA's endorsement of McCarthy on February 10 represented the first from a national organization whose commitments were not limited to a specific set of issues.

[17] Gillon, *Politics and Vision*, 204-224; Paul R. Wieck, "ADA Goes for McCarthy," *New Republic*, February 24, 1968, 14.

frustration over the difficulty they encountered in trying to bring those views to bear on the political establishment. The willingness of those "old liberals" to lose the support of organized labor in order to endorse McCarthy did not represent a rash disavowal of politics in favor of vision but instead the consequence of hopes for the liberal potential of the New Class that rested on their long-held views of the changing social and political circumstances of the postwar era.

John Kenneth Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and other "old liberals" from the ADA became interested in the political potential of the New Class in the 1950s when a sizable bloc of white-collar, middle-class, largely suburban voters produced by growing postwar affluence first came to national attention. Variably articulated as the "academic and scientific community," the "socially concerned," and later as members of the "technostructure," Galbraith brought significant recognition to what he and others would frequently call the "New Class" in his 1958 book, *The Affluent Society*. The New Class described by Galbraith found itself released from the hard physical toil of manual labor and many of the economic concerns that prevailed among the working class. In order to pursue a career from which they could derive self-fulfillment, members of the New Class required an educational background that served to develop their critical faculties on issues such as foreign policy and racial equality that Galbraith and other proponents of the New Class believed to be qualitative in nature and unrelated to the material self-interest of those who comprised its ranks.[18] Individuals in the New Class derived their status and income not from the ownership of property but on the basis of an organizational position largely determined by their educational attainment. The highly educated professionals employed at corporations, government

[18] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1958), 340-346.

agencies, universities, and other large organizations accounted for most of the adults in the New Class while its youth could be found in the country's rapidly expanding colleges and universities.[19]

Enduringly difficult to define and label, those who comprised the New Class have found themselves addressed with an even wider variety of terms by scholars and journalists in the years since the publication of the *Affluent Society*. With labels ranging from the "new middle class," "professional-managerial class," "creative class," and "white-collar proletariat" to "knowledge workers" and "suburban liberals," no consensus on terminology has emerged.[20] Not without its own difficulties, the term "New Class" captures the essence of the broad grouping of students and white-collar professions whose politics appeared to many observers to hinge more on moral concerns than economic self-interest while avoiding the implication of a specific profession or living environment carried by other comparable labels.[21]

The "old liberals" of the ADA first began to look to the New Class as a potential force in liberal politics when Galbraith, Schlesinger, and others in their ranks started to recognize

---

[19] David T. Bazelon, *Power in America: The Politics of the New Class* (New York: New American Library, 1967), 307-332.

[20] For more on the various terms that have been used to describe those who comprised the New Class see Lily Geismer, *Don't Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 6-7; Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 12.

[21] Lawrence Peter King and Iván Szelényi, *Theories of the New Class: Intellectuals and Power* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 57-61; Milovan Đilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Praeger, 1957); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011), 84. The term "New Class" carries a different meaning in the Communist context, where it described the bureaucrats and Communist Party officials who possessed some similarities but many differences with the individuals grouped under the New Class label in capitalist states. Milovan Đilas, a Yugoslav Communist and political theorist, brought significant attention to what he saw as the inevitable existence of a New Class in Communist states that controlled the means of production not through direct ownership but by way of a political and organizational position that demanded high levels of education with his 1957 book, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System*. Further compounding the difficulties surrounding usage of the term, influential commentators have raised doubts as to the degree to which the New Class exists in any concrete sense. Daniel Bell highlighted the far-reaching significance of the rise of a knowledge industry in advanced industrialized countries in the second half of the twentieth century, but continued to find the New Class a "muddled concept" that conflated a particular mentality with the outlines of a definable socioeconomic class.

the fraying of the New Deal coalition in the early postwar years. Schlesinger articulated variations on the theme that growing postwar affluence had dampened the political pull of the New Deal program and begun to break apart its political coalition as far back as Adlai Stevenson's loss to Dwight Eisenhower in the 1952 presidential election.[22] With a greater awareness of the continuing presence of poverty in the wake of the civil rights movement's growing visibility, Schlesinger displayed sharpened attention in the 1960s to those who remained beyond the reach of the "affluent society" but carried with him from the 1950s the conviction that liberals needed to reconcile themselves to the reality that the traditional New Deal coalition had withered away.[23]

The thinking that underpinned that conviction in the 1950s would take on new meaning and relevance in the 1960s as Schlesinger came to see the rise of general—if not universal—affluence in American society as meaning that educational attainment had displaced income as the critical factor in determining an individual's politics. Schlesinger believed that in a society of abundance, where quantitative economic issues were giving way to questions of foreign policy, racial equality, and other qualitative issues, high levels of education rather than low income had become the characteristic most common among those attracted to liberal politics. The presumption that foreign policy issues such as the Vietnam War represented a qualitative issue to be approached on largely abstract and moral terms illustrated the gulf between Schlesinger and working class families who faced a far greater likelihood of seeing their sons drafted to fight in the war than their middle-class counterparts

---

[22] For the earliest example see Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "Which Road for the Democrats," *Reporter*, January 20, 1953, 31-34.

[23] Schlesinger addressed the meaning of the collapse of the New Deal coalition for liberals across a variety of forums in the late 1960s. See Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "Is Liberalism Dead?," Address at Roosevelt Day Dinner, New York City, January 1, 1967, Folder 4, Box 4, AMS; Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The New Liberal Coalition," *Progressive*, April 1967, 15-19; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Crisis of Confidence: Ideas, Power, and Violence in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 244-253.

and, consequently, tended to see the conflict as far more than an abstract or moral issue. Schlesinger's distance from the experiences of working-class Americans also impacted his formulation of the new dividing lines of politics in the 1960s that rested in no small part on the assumption—shared by many of his fellow "old liberals" in the ADA—that the working class shared the staunch support for the Vietnam War policies of the Johnson administration displayed by organized labor leaders. Thus, even before the media crystalized images of helmeted and unionized construction workers assaulting antiwar protestors in lower Manhattan in May 1970, Schlesinger characterized lesser-educated, low-income whites as often "the most emotional and primitive champions of conservatism." While the white, working-class defenders of the status quo described by Schlesinger wanted to "crack down on the 'niggers,' imprison the long-haired college kids and bomb hell out of the North Vietnamese," the affluent and better educated tended "to care more about rationality, reform and progress."[24]

In the years since Schlesinger and other "old liberals' in the ADA joined intellectuals from a broad array of ideological backgrounds in casting a media-amplified narrative of reactionary working class whites opposed to the antiwar activism of the affluent and educated, historians and other writers have discredited many of the assumptions that narrative drew upon. Their scholarship has demonstrated not only that antiwar attitudes prevailed at a slightly higher rate in the working class than in the country at large but also that the greatest support for the war came from the privileged and the educated.[25] By assuming that level of education

---

[24] Schlesinger, *The Crisis of Confidence*, 248-249.

[25] Patricia Cayo Sexton and Brendan Sexton, *Blue Collars and Hard-Hats: The Working Class and the Future of American Politics* (New York: Vintage: 1971); Andrew Levison, *The Working-Class Majority* (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1974); Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 10; Jefferson Cowie, "'Vigorously Left, Right, and Center:' The Crosscurrents of Working-Class America in the 1970s," in *America in the Seventies*, ed. Beth Bailey and David Farber (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 84; Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks*, 141-185. In the 1970s, Levison and the Sextons produced studies that drew on polling data and other evidence to dispel the myth that a fundamentally reactionary white working class overwhelming supported the Vietnam War. Ehrenreich and

acted as the dividing line of politics in the 1960s, those "old liberals" effectively wrote off the involvement of not only labor leadership but also the working class in the new liberal coalition they sought to build on the ashes of the New Deal coalition.

However misguided those assumptions have proven to be, they served to establish the vital importance of the New Class to the post-New Deal coalition envisioned by the "old liberals" of the ADA. Schlesinger could more readily cast doubt on the liberal potential of the working class with the seven million college students and nearly three-quarters of a million professors expected to be found in the U.S. by 1970 offering a potential base for a new liberal coalition.[26] Galbraith expressed a similar optimism towards the growing ranks of the college-educated when during his acceptance speech as national chairman of the ADA, he highlighted the large capacity of the "academic and scientific community" for influence and leadership. With an explosion in numbers since the turn of the century, Galbraith painted this community in highly favorable colors: "It is literate, has good political memory and a special interest in foreign policy and it presently feels an intense sense of frustration over its difficulty in registering its views."[27]

The importance of reaching out to growing ranks of the New Class weighed heavily on Schlesinger and Galbraith as they considered the position of the ADA on the Vietnam War. Schlesinger believed that the ADA would have no hope of winning support from the independent-minded individuals of the New Class if it dismissed the Vietnam War "as just one

---

Cowie demonstrate that contrary to the image of the Vietnam War era working class as complacent defenders of the status quo, workers in the late 1960s and early 1970s engaged in the greatest wave of labor militancy since World War II. Lewis examines the ways in which intellectuals, activists, politicians, and the media contributed to an enduring image of the flag-waving, pro-war, blue-collar worker that would ultimately be put to use by Richard Nixon and other Republicans to appeal to the "silent majority" of Americans who did not vocally express their views but were depicted in such rhetoric as supporting U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. For a survey of polling dating and subsequent studies on support for and opposition to the Vietnam War among different demographic groups see Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks,* 50-54.

[26] Schlesinger, "The New Liberal Coalition," 17.

[27] John Kenneth Galbraith, "The Galbraith Acceptance," *ADA* World, May 1967, 6M-7M.

among many issues."[28] Similarly, Galbraith saw the Vietnam War as a central issue around which the ADA could reach out to the nation's vast bloc of college students and the college educated.[29] Schlesinger, Galbraith, and many of their fellow "old liberals" in the ADA hoped that by establishing itself as a major source of political opposition to the Vietnam War, the organization would become attractive to the significant number of white-collar, middle class Americans who harbored strong feelings of opposition to the war but were unlikely to join the protests of antiwar radicals in the streets. While the New Class would later be brought to wider attention as the target of neoconservative attacks in journals, magazines, and the op-ed pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, the "old liberals" of the ADA championed the students and workers of the New Class as the key to the future of both the ADA and liberal politics.[30]

Belief in the political potential of the New Class and a desire to bring those who comprised its ranks into the ADA fold emboldened those "old liberals" to push for opposition to the Vietnam War as the critical factor in the organization's political strategy, but the constraints of political pragmatism continued to shape their decisions as they navigated the events leading up to the 1968 presidential election. In the summer of 1967, Curtis Gans, the young editor of *ADA World*, and Allard Lowenstein, a recently elected ADA vice chairman, approached Joseph Rauh with the hope of utilizing the ADA as an existing base to organize a challenge to Lyndon Johnson in the Democratic Party primaries. Despite lacking a candidate, Lowenstein believe that as soon as the initiative—known as the "Dump Johnson" campaign—

---

[28] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. to Members of the ADA National Board, p. 2. Schlesinger did not use the specific term "New Class" in this memorandum, but referred instead to "independent liberals" and "the young." In his writing during the period, however, Schlesinger often used labels such as "well-informed," "issue-oriented," and "independent" to describe and refer to the New Class and makes a similar implicit reference to the New Class in this memorandum. For a typical example of the various ways in which Schlesinger referred to the New Class see Schlesinger, *The Crisis of Confidence*, 249-250.

[29] John Kenneth Galbraith to Walter Reuther, November 10, 1967, Folder 36, Box 1, M97-135, ADA.

[30] Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, 83.

demonstrated the depth and extent of dissatisfaction among Democratic voters with the Johnson administration's Vietnam policy, a viable candidate would emerge. Skeptical of a plan that involved proceeding with a challenge to Johnson without a candidate, Rauh sounded out Frank Church, Robert Kennedy, Eugene McCarthy, and George McGovern to see if they would be willing to run. Finding no takers for an uphill challenge to the incumbent Democratic president, Rauh proceeded to develop an alternative plan that would seek to secure passage of a strong "peace plank" at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. While Gans and Lowenstein went ahead with plans for the Dump Johnson campaign, Rauh made the case to his colleagues in the ADA that a push to elect delegates to the Democratic National Convention pledged to a "peace plank" would provide a far greater opportunity to show the strength of the peace movement than a Dump Johnson effort that would struggle to find support without a candidate and allow hawks to claim that the peace movement had no political strength. Reflecting both Rauh's significant influence and the prevalence of similar political considerations in the organization, the ADA National Board soundly rejected Lowenstein's Dump Johnson initiative and approved Rauh's "peace caucus" proposal by a vote of 72 to 12 when it met on September 23 to consider the two plans.[31]

Despite developing the plan and selling it to his colleagues in the ADA, Rauh had never been satisfied with the "peace caucus" approach as the basis of the organization's opposition to the Vietnam War. Even while he pushed the plan as the best option politically available to the organization, he conceded to his fellow ADA board members in private that if "Kennedy, McGovern or McCarthy" were to challenge Johnson, he would be "working for

---

[31] Curtis Gans, interview for *Citizen*, a documentary film on Allard Lowenstein, transcript, pp. 8-10, Folder 7442, Box 207, AKL; Allard K. Lowenstein, "Three Views, Politics 1968," *ADA World*, December 1967, 6M; Joseph Rauh, "The Debate Continued," *ADA World*, September 1967, 1M-2M; "ADA Leads Drive for Peace Caucuses," *ADA World*, November, 1967, 1.

one of them right now." Rauh and other "old liberals" in the ADA who had settled for the plan out of political necessity were—despite their public rhetoric—continually skeptical that a plank would be able to inspire mass enthusiasm or support. Galbraith had been sympathetic to Lowenstein's Dump Johnson campaign from the beginning and his desire to mount a more compelling campaign against the Vietnam War than the "peace caucus" plan led him to go so far as exploring the possibility of running against Johnson himself despite the constitutional hurdle of his Canadian birth. Still, in the end, Galbraith's brief consideration of an implausible presidential campaign gave way to political realities when he opted instead to commit himself to establishing the ADA as an organizational base for Rauh's "peace caucus" campaign.[32]

The political calculations that led Galbraith, Rauh, and other "old liberals" to support a far less than ideal "peace caucus" approach as the basis of the ADA's antiwar efforts changed dramatically on November 30 when Eugene McCarthy announced his intention to challenge Lyndon Johnson in the Democratic primaries on the issue of the Vietnam War. Soon after the announcement, Rauh made a television appearance to stump for McCarthy's nascent campaign.[33] With the ADA National Board not due to meet until after the turn of the year, Galbraith, as the organization's national chairman, maintained an official silence on McCarthy's candidacy but wrote to the Minnesota senator in early December to privately offer his best wishes and support.[34] Not confined to the "old liberals" of the ADA or others in the highest ranks of leadership, a majority of the organization's rank-and-file had come to support

---

[32] "ADA Defers," *New Republic*, October 7, 1967, 6; Allard Lowenstein, interview for McCarthy Historical Project Oral History Interview Series, transcript, pp. 2-3, Folder 7465, Box 207, AKL; Curtis Gans, interview for *Citizen*, p. 14; John Kenneth Galbraith, "Vietnam: Public Opinion and the Political Prospect," Keynote address before the adjourned convention of the California Democratic Council in Long Beach, California, September 30, 1967, p. 24, Box 872, JKG; John Kenneth Galbraith to Americans for Democratic Action National Board, memorandum, November 30, 1967, Box 497, JKG.

[33] "McCarthy Statement on Entering the 1968 Primaries," *New York Times*, December 1, 1967; Leon Shull to Arthur Schlesinger Jr., December 11, 1967, Folder 15, Box 2, M97-135, ADA; Joseph Rauh, interview by William Chafe, Washington, D.C., June 9, 1988, transcript, p. 37, Folder 7942, Box 217, AKL.

[34] John Kenneth Galbraith to Eugene McCarthy, December 8, 1967, Box 139, JKG.

McCarthy's candidacy by the beginning of 1968. As most labor representatives in the ADA held positions at the national level, local chapters proved even more receptive to McCarthy's candidacy than the national leadership. When he surveyed the organization's membership in mid-January, Leon Shull estimated that two-thirds of all ADA members and a smaller majority of the national board favored an endorsement for McCarthy.[35]

As support for McCarthy's candidacy took hold at all levels of the organization, it quickly became apparent that the cerebral former professor, one-time Benedictine novice monk, and devoted poet did not fit the mold of what many in the ADA would have held to be the ideal challenger to President Johnson. Writing to Galbraith on January 19, Shull sadly reported that McCarthy's campaign in California was in a state of collapse primarily because "he is simply not a good candidate." Echoing the widespread perception of McCarthy as aloof and uninspiring, Shull lamented that fund-raising events in California had demonstrated that "he arouses relatively little enthusiasm." Beyond issues of style and presentation, others in the ADA highlighted McCarthy's votes in the Senate in favor of oil and pharmaceutical interests as they questioned his voting record on issues besides the Vietnam War.[36]

Yet, in those faults, the "old liberals" of the ADA also recognized a number of McCarthy's strengths as a candidate with the ability to attract New Class voters. Rauh saw McCarthy's low-key, soft-spoken demeanor not as an impediment to his ability to generate enthusiasm but rather as a key source of his appeal to suburban voters.[37] Similarly, Schlesinger believed that while McCarthy frequently let down his immediate audiences, he sounded

---

[35] Leon Shull to John Kenneth Galbraith, January 17, 1968, Box 498, JKG.

[36] Dominic Sandbrook, *Eugene McCarthy: The Rise and Fall of Postwar American Liberalism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), xi, 94-96, 108, 114, 157-158; Leon Shull to John Kenneth Galbraith, January 19, 1968, Folder 36, Box 1, M97-135, ADA; Joseph Rauh to Eleanor Clark French, April 16, 1968, Folder 2, Box 49, AMS.

[37] Joseph Rauh, interview by William Chafe, p. 38.

"reasonable, thoughtful, reassuring" to the mass television audiences that were playing an ever greater role in the political process.[38] On the issues, McCarthy's position on the Vietnam War trumped the indiscretions that could be found in his voting record for the "old liberals" of the ADA who had come to see the war as the transcendent issue of liberal politics. Rauh would later recall that McCarthy "was right on the war, and the war was everything." In any case, Rauh could point critics to the impressive 92 percent ADA rating accumulated by McCarthy over his 19 years in Congress as evidence that the senator offered more than a forthright position on the Vietnam War.[39]

Whatever misgivings they may have had about McCarthy's personal qualities as a candidate, the "old liberals" of the ADA arrived at the organization's February 10 national board meeting with the view that an endorsement of the Minnesota senator's campaign represented both a moral response to a disastrous war that imperiled necessary social progress and a politically prudent move that would enable the ADA to reach out to a growing bloc of New Class activists. Hopeful of what an endorsement of McCarthy could do for the ADA and the future of liberal politics, those "old liberals" were also under no illusions as to the consequences that would be involved. In preparation for the labor exodus likely to result from a McCarthy endorsement, Galbraith, Rauh, and Schlesinger collaborated with fellow "old liberals" Richard Goodwin and James Wechsler to draft a statement that framed the expected walk out of labor leaders as an event from which the ADA would emerge as a stronger and more united organization.[40] Following more than seven hours of intense debate at the best-attended board meeting in the history of the ADA, members of the national board voted on a

---

[38] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The Old Politics and the New," April 9, 1968, p. 2, Folder 6, Box 413, AMS.

[39] Joseph Rauh quoted in Gillon, *Politics and Vision*, 208; Joseph Rauh to Eleanor Clark French, April 16, 1968.

[40] Arthur Schlesinger to James Wechsler, "ADA Board Meeting," memorandum, Folder 4, Box 4, AMS.

resolution endorsing McCarthy's candidacy. Written by Galbraith, the resolution would put the ADA on the record as opposing the Vietnam War not because it was "preoccupied with this one issue important though it is, but also because it is blighting every liberal and progressive program here at home." After the board adopted the resolution by a narrow 65 to 47 vote, Gus Tyler, speaking for the large minority of opposition, charged that the endorsement would "pretty much dissolve the liberal coalition of twenty-one years." Speaking for the majority, Galbraith celebrated the endorsement as a realization of the ADA's enduring commitment to reconciling principled ideals with political realities.[41]

As expected, the ADA's endorsement of McCarthy touched off a series of resignations from the organization. Those resignations, however, would not be limited to individuals with direct ties to organized labor. Within minutes of the vote, former national chairman John Roche submitted his resignation and angrily declared, "I'm through."[42] Roche's swift resignation would be followed in the coming days and weeks by resignations from Carl Auerbach, Leon Keyserling, Paul Seabury, and others who had long played pivotal roles in the organization.[43] Two days after the vote, I. W. Abel, president of the United Steelworkers of America, Louis Stulberg, president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and Joseph A. Beirne, president of the Communications Workers of America, turned in their resignations. Among those resignations, the biggest blow to the ADA's bottom line came from the departure of Abel and the resulting loss of the significant funding that his 1.1 million-

---

[41] ADA National Board Meeting, minutes, February 10 and 11, 1967, Folder 14, Box 10, M97-135, ADA; "Board Endorses McCarthy," *ADA World*, February, 1968, 1, 4; "Resolution on McCarthy Candidacy," *ADA World*, February, 1968, 4.

[42] Marjorie Hunter, "McCarthy Backed By Board of A.D.A.," *New York Times*, February 11, 1968.

[43] "ADA's Co-Founder Resigns," *New York Times*, February 28, 1968; "Board Member Resigns," *New York Times*, February 14, 1968; "ADA Goes for McCarthy," 15.

member steel union had long provided to the organization.[44]

The ADA's endorsement of McCarthy resulted in the departure of key labor representatives—and more importantly, the end of organized labor as a major source of funding—but established the organization as an appealing base for organizing political opposition to the Vietnam War among the significant number of New Class voters and activists looking for a meaningful way to act on their moral horror with the war. In the wake of its McCarthy endorsement, the ADA attracted far greater press coverage than it had seen in a number of years. When Shull reported to the national board at the end of 1968, he described a "manyfold" increase in the organization's membership and a fundraising total that nearly doubled the amount taken in during 1967. With funding increasingly based on sizable numbers of modest contributions from New Class liberals opposed the war rather than large grants from labor unions, the ADA became more responsive to its grassroots membership and less dependent on the labor representatives who remained in the organization.[45] Beyond the profound impact on its own composition and funding, the ADA's early endorsement of McCarthy provided support that would prove to be crucial to putting the Minnesota senator's struggling campaign and the New Politics movement that emerged around it into motion.

**The McCarthy Campaign and the New Politics Movement**

The grassroots organizing that propelled Eugene McCarthy to within a hair of defeating Lyndon Johnson in the New Hampshire Democratic Primary marked what Arthur Schlesinger Jr. described as the initial revolt of the New Politics movement. When Johnson withdrew from the presidential contest less than a month later, the New Politics had, in

[44] David R. Jones, "3 Union Leaders Quit A.D.A. Board," *New York Times*, February 13, 1968.
[45] Leon Shull, "National Director's Report to National Board," December 7, 1968, Box 498, JKG.

Schlesinger's words, "scored its first triumph."[46] More than an admiring commentator of the New Politics movement, Schlesinger and his fellow "old liberals" in the ADA were instrumental in producing the circumstances that made the emergence of the movement possible. By pushing the ADA to endorse McCarthy's campaign at a time when support from prominent liberals and Democrats was virtually non-existent, those "old liberals" provided backing that proved to be critical to getting the campaign that sparked the New Politics movement off the ground. Despite the abundance of historical accounts that depict the New Politics movement as a sanitized version of the New Left adapted to the circumstances of mainstream electoral politics, the New Politics movement that coalesced initially around McCarthy's campaign, and later the campaigns of both the Minnesota senator and Robert Kennedy, took its cues not from radical politics but from a deep tradition of liberal reform that the ADA and its chapters had long played a central role in. With a base drawn from the growing ranks of a New Class that dwarfed the numbers of middle-class professionals seen during the time of earlier liberal reform movements and the Vietnam War as a powerful issue around which to organize its political aims, the New Politics movement reshaped the tradition of liberal reform as it took that tradition to new heights in the political arena.

The initial excitement generated by McCarthy's announcement of his candidacy in November 1967 had, by the turn of the year, given way to the bleak reality of a campaign struggling to gain traction. A widely syndicated column published in early January painted a dim picture of the campaign, noting that McCarthy's fellow critics of the Vietnam War in the Senate such as Robert Kennedy would be giving the Minnesota senator "their moral support—

[46] Schlesinger, *The Crisis of Confidence*, 268.

but little else."[47] An editorial sympathetic to McCarthy's campaign published the same day lamented the "failure of the Bobby Kennedys, the William Fulbrights, and the Wayne Morses to come out in support of Sen. Eugene McCarthy in his challenge of President Johnson's Vietnam policies." According to the editorial, "now that there is the real opportunity to do something about changing U.S. policy—by the election of a new President this year—the loudest critics are suddenly silent when McCarthy needs help." The absence of support from established politicians, the editorial charged, had "stalled" McCarthy's campaign before it even had a chance to get going.[48]

In that vacuum of political support, the endorsement of the ADA—widely recognized as the leading liberal organization in the country—enhanced McCarthy's standing among liberals and provided a much needed boost to a campaign that was looking likely to falter before the first elections of the primary season took place. The New Politics movement that would take shape around McCarthy's campaign expressed a desire to shift the balance of politics from professional politicians and establishment figures to grassroots activists, but the support of an organization and individuals with some political stature was necessary to provide the initial momentum for the campaign that put the New Politics movement in motion. A syndicated column published in the run-up to the ADA's decisive February 10 national board meeting opined that "formal backing from the organization would be a boon to the Minnesota senator, whose campaign has been slow to gain momentum."[49] After the ADA National Board voted to endorse McCarthy at that meeting, *The New York Times* surveyed the financial and organizational problems plaguing the senator's campaign and concluded that the

---

[47] Jack Bell, "Moral Support, Little Else, That's What Sen. McCarthy Gets," *Rhinelander (WI) Daily News*, January 9, 1968.

[48] "LBJ Critics Desert McCarthy," *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 9, 1968.

[49] "McCarthy and the ADA," *Marshfield (WI) News-Herald*, February 8, 1968.

ADA endorsement had helped him to "pick up a bit of speed" and improved his position as a liberal alternative to Johnson.[50] A front-page article in *The Washington Post* deemed the display of support from the ADA to be "the most prestigious endorsement McCarthy has gotten so far."[51]

Beyond the vital impact of its endorsement, the ADA provided McCarthy's nascent campaign with an existing organizational network to draw on and much-needed leadership at the grassroots level. Support for McCarthy had been building for some time in many of the ADA's chapters but the prohibition on local chapters taking or advancing positions at odds with the national organization precluded them from becoming directly involved in the senator's campaign prior to the endorsement. The national board's endorsement of McCarthy freed local ADA chapters to devote their energy and resources to the campaign. Across the country, local ADA chapters provided McCarthy campaign groups with valuable contacts that allowed them to build on an existing organizational network. Members of local ADA chapters took on leadership positions in many of those McCarthy campaign organizations. In New Jersey, individuals from the local ADA chapter filled the ranks of leadership in the state's McCarthy campaign. Connecticut ADA Chairman Joseph Duffey took the post of chairman for the McCarthy campaign in Connecticut while Wisconsin ADA Chairman Don Peterson assumed that position in his state's McCarthy campaign organization. In New York City, the New York ADA took over a section of the McCarthy campaign office and set up an "ADA desk" to coordinate the chapter's efforts on behalf of the campaign.[52]

---

[50] "McCarthy Moves Up," *New York Times*, February 14, 1968.

[51] "ADA Endorses McCarthy, LBJ Aide Quits Organization," *Washington Post*, February 11, 1968.

[52] "ADA Chapters on McCarthy Candidacy," memorandum, January 31, 1968, Folder 14, Box 10, M97-135, ADA; Leon Shull to National Board, Chapters, and Officers, "1968 Primaries Campaign Report," memorandum, March 1, 1968, Folder 41, Box 21, M97-135, ADA; Leon Shull to John Kenneth Galbraith, March 4, 1968,

The ADA's endorsement and the widespread involvement of its members in the campaign helped to set the stage for the vast grassroots initiative that propelled McCarthy beyond all predictions for the New Hampshire primary. When the votes were tallied, McCarthy came away only 230 votes behind the incumbent president. McCarthy did in fact lose to the president but the shockingly narrow result of the March 12 New Hampshire primary demonstrated Johnson's political vulnerability and established McCarthy as a serious presidential challenger.[53] The ADA's endorsement of McCarthy and the organizational efforts of its chapters had helped to pave the way for what amounted to a symbolic victory in New Hampshire, but the state's conservative political climate limited the organization's direct impact on the outcome of the first-in-the-nation primary. When the McCarthy campaign sought to carry the momentum from its incredible performance in New Hampshire to the next primary in Wisconsin, the ADA and its chapters took on a more instrumental role. A deeply rooted liberal tradition in Wisconsin meant that the ADA's endorsement and the campaigning activities of its chapter in the state carried a far greater weight than they had in New Hampshire.[54] The greater influence enjoyed by the ADA and its members would be joined by a new influx of contributions to the campaign, a growing contingent of student volunteers, and improved name recognition to produce favorable prospects for McCarthy in Wisconsin as election day approached. With the political winds pointing decidedly against him, two days before the Wisconsin primary, Johnson announced to a shocked nation that he was bowing out of the presidential race.[55]

---

Folder 35, Box 1, M97-135, ADA; "Endorsement Triggers Intense Campaigning," *ADA World*, March-April 1968, 1.

[53] "Unforeseen Eugene," *Time*, March, 22, 1968, 12.

[54] Warren Weaver Jr., "To M'Carthy, Now, It's 'On, Wisconsin,'" *New York Times*, February 19, 1968.

[55] Lewis Chester, Godfrey Hodgson, and Bruce Page, *An American Melodrama: The Presidential Campaign of 1968* (New York: Viking Press, 1969), 4, 133-137.

As the "New Politics" entered the nation's political vocabulary after Johnson's departure from the race, Schlesinger deemed the term to be "more uttered than understood."[56] In part, the confusion surrounding the New Politics resulted from the different approaches and visions advocated by those associated with the term. Prior to McCarthy's entry into the 1968 presidential election, the notion of a New Politics typically implied working outside of the two-party political system. When over 3,000 liberals and radicals of various stripes from some 372 organizations gathered for the National Conference for a New Politics in Chicago over Labor Day weekend in 1967, general agreement could be found on the need to mount opposition to the Vietnam War and push for broader participation in the American political process. Beyond those general contours of agreement, however, no coherent plan for action emerged. For some, the New Politics entailed coalition building around a proposed presidential "peace" ticket of Martin Luther King Jr. for president and Benjamin Spock for vice president. For others more skeptical of the prospects of bringing the war to an end directly through the electoral process, the New Politics meant community organizing and grassroots education efforts. Among the delegates most disillusioned with the American political system, the New Politics implied the politics of immediate revolution.[57]

The immense gathering of leftists seen at the New Politics conference in Chicago represented the culmination of years of work to build a coalition between New Left radicals and liberals who could find common ground on the issues such as the Vietnam War, racial equality, and poverty.[58] Displaying as little openness towards cooperation with the radicals of

---

[56] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. quoted in James A. Burkhart and Frank J. Kendrick, introduction to *The New Politics: Mood or Movement?*, ed. James A. Burkhart and Frank J. Kendrick (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 1.

[57] Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era*, with the assistance of Charles Chatfield (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 191.

[58] Jack Newfield, "New Group Seeks to Wed New Politics to New Left," *Village Voice*, July 17, 1966.

the Chicago conference as they had when similar questions of collaboration with radicals emerged around the mass antiwar demonstrations staged during the early years of major American involvement in the Vietnam War, ADA leaders entertained no interest in the coalition building efforts that animated the gathering. Following the Labor Day conference, Joseph Rauh expressed his concern that the efforts of radicals at the conference—even when focused on participation within the electoral system—would ultimately undermine the goals they shared with their potential liberal allies. Rauh saw the election of a reactionary Republican president as the most likely outcome of a King presidential candidacy that would attract significant but clearly limited support. In his estimation, the Republican Party would benefit from a presidential ticket headed by King that could be expected to deprive the Democratic Party of a substantial number of African American votes and around a million votes from whites who would cast their vote for King as a protest against the war.[59]

After McCarthy's strong showing in the New Hampshire and Wisconsin primaries, grassroots activists, journalists, politicians, and ADA liberals began to refer to the New Politics not in reference to the Chicago conference but to the political movement that had spurred the Minnesota senator's campaign to unexpected heights and pulled Robert Kennedy into the race.[60] In contrast to those who advanced radical perspectives and third party politics at the National Conference for a New Politics, the liberal reformers who assumed the label

---

[59] Joseph Rauh, "A Proposal to Maximize Political Support for an End to the War in Vietnam," July 28, 1967, pp. 1-2, Folder 19, Box 22, M97-135, ADA.

[60] For examples from 1968 of the term "New Politics" used in reference to the political movement that coalesced around the campaigns of McCarthy and Kennedy see David Halberstam, "Politics 1968: McCarthy and the Divided Left," *Harper's Magazine*, March 1968, 32, 34, 36, 38-44; Marquis Childs "The New Politics of Sen. McCarthy," *Washington Post*, March 27, 1968; Richard Harwood, "Can 'New Politics' Retain Its Luster?," *Washington Post*, May 23, 1968; Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The 1968 Election: An Historical Perspective," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, December 15, 1968, 148-54. McCarthy articulated his understanding of what the New Politics represented throughout his campaign. For example, see Eugene McCarthy, "Politics as the 'Art of the Impossible,'" Address at Purdue University, April 29, 1968, Folder 7, Box 4, MSS 246, McCarthy for President Papers, Wisconsin, 1967-1968, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

insisted that any effort to end the war in Vietnam or work towards broader social change would have to take place within the existing two-party system. Like the "old liberals" who had pushed the ADA to endorse McCarthy, the New Politics activists of the 1968 Democratic primaries believed that change could be achieved by opening up the Democratic Party to greater grassroots participation and weaning it from its dependence on organized labor in favor of a post-New Deal coalition that would draw heavily from the ranks of the New Class.

Though the aims of those who carried the New Politics banner in the 1968 Democratic primaries and their allies in the ADA appeared to share much in common with the New Left's demands for an end to the war and greater participation in the political process, their politics owed little to the influence of contemporary radicalism. The "old liberals" who led the ADA to an endorsement of McCarthy and the members of local ADA chapters who filled important positions in the senator's campaign developed their position on the Vietnam War during years in which they had little direct interaction with New Left radicals and even less interest in their ideas. At both the national and chapter levels, ADA liberals who championed the New Politics did not see the movement as a watered down version of the New Left's antiwar program. Instead, they saw the New Politics as offering an effective means of opposition to the war that forced vital questions of foreign and domestic policy onto the national agenda by making the existing party system recognize those questions and move to meet them. For Schlesinger, the fundamental difference between the New Politics and the New Left could be found in the former's determination to master the existing political system and use it to bring the war to an end in contrast to the latter's insistence that the existing system had to be rejected and overthrown in order to meet that same end. Drawing the line between the New Left and the New Politics, Schlesinger characterized those associated with the New Politics as seeing the

Vietnam War as the result of particular individuals making a series of errors in a course of events that had not been inevitable. In contrast, those associated with the New Left saw the Vietnam War as "a predetermined expression of an evil system that would have imposed an imperialistic policy on whatever body of men sat at the councils of state."[61]

The New Politics activists who garnered national attention during the 1968 Democratic primaries came to politics not by way of the New Left but a deep tradition of liberal reform politics that the ADA had long played a key role in. The myth that McCarthy's campaign was driven by vast numbers of young radicals who went "clean for Gene" has demonstrated considerable staying power in historical accounts of the 1968 election, but the overwhelming majority of individuals who canvassed for McCarthy were not radicals who dispensed with beards and long hair to make a respectable appearance on the doorsteps of voters.[62] Young radicals were not likely to work for a politician who they viewed as an establishment figure. Many of McCarthy's young canvassers were students—frequently graduate students—with liberal backgrounds from elite eastern colleges and universities.[63]

Students played an undoubtedly important role in McCarthy's campaign, but a significant number of the Minnesota senator's supporters were upper-middle-class professionals who had supported Adlai Stevenson in the 1950s and been involved in a club politics movement with strong connections to the ADA. Like the largely well-educated, middle-class Progressives of the early twentieth century, the old Stevensonians who rallied to

---

[61] Schlesinger, *The Crisis of Confidence*, 252.

[62] For example, see Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 392; George Rising, *Clean for Gene: Eugene McCarthy's 1968 Presidential Campaign* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), esp. xiii-xiv, 61, 67-68. Rising does well to note that the bulk of New Left radicals refused to "sell-out" to the "system" by becoming "Clean for Gene." Nevertheless, the very title of Rising's book and the broader thrust of his arguments convey the notion that a significant number of McCarthy's youthful volunteers adopted a clean-cut image and more moderate political views presumably at odds with their earlier appearance and politics in order to volunteer for the Minnesota senator's campaign.

[63] Sandbrook, *Eugene McCarthy*, 180-181.

McCarthy in 1968 saw themselves as working for a principled leader who put issues of national interest over party loyalty or career advancement. Many of those old Stevensonians had become involved in politics through the growing club politics movement of the 1950s. The middle-class, intellectually-oriented amateurs of the club movement saw politics not in terms of individual politicians and personal benefit but rather in terms of ideas and principles. Despite their ostensible aversion to personality politics, Stevenson—with his compelling intellect and wit—became a focal point for "amateur Democrats" when his campaigns for president in 1952, 1956, and 1960 swelled the membership of amateur clubs across the country. For many amateur Democrats, Stevenson represented a genuine champion of ideas, issues, and principles in contrast to the undemocratic and unrepresentative world of political machines, party bosses, and patronage that defined the politics of many metropolitan areas.[64]

Across the country, significant overlap existed between members of local amateur Democrat clubs and ADA chapters. In some cases, the ADA chapters themselves served as the organizing base for reform-minded amateur Democrats. In Illinois, amateur Democrats established the Independent Voters of Illinois (IVI), the ADA affiliate in that state, principally to challenge the hold of the Chicago political machine on Cook County Democratic politics. New York ADA served a similar purpose in New York City where it became an important base of opposition to Tammany Hall. Whether they participated in local ADA chapters or established their own organizations, amateur Democrats and ADA liberals alike drew on a liberal reform tradition that stretched back far beyond the galvanizing, though ultimately unsuccessful, campaigns of Stevenson.[65]

Despite shared roots and similar constituencies, the New Politics movement differed

---

[64] James Q. Wilson, *The Amateur Democrat: Club Politics in Three Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 2-4, 52-58, 287-288.

[65] Wilson, *The Amateur Democrat*, 1, 44, 77-85.

from earlier reform movements in a number of significant ways. In contrast to the minuscule number of middle-class professionals in the country during the Progressive era of the early twentieth century and even the significantly more numerous white-collar workers of the 1950s, the size of the New Class and the sense of its increasing importance in the 1960s provided the New Politics with a far more powerful base of support than earlier liberal reform movements could lay claim to. Furthermore, the Vietnam War provided the liberal reformers of the New Politics movement with the clear and pressing issue that had been missing from reform politics during the 1950s. Paradoxically, the reformers drawn to Stevenson often spoke of politics in terms of ideas and issues, and have been frequently described as issue-driven, but frequently struggled to articulate clearly defined issues with broad national implications. When a critical mass of individuals from the growing ranks of the New Class—including a soaring population of college students—joined together in opposition to the Vietnam War, they drew on a long tradition of liberal reform movements but projected political power on a much greater scale than had past representatives of that tradition. The New Politics movement would further set itself apart from earlier liberal reform movements with indictments of the Vietnam War and the political establishment far more pointed than the polemics seen from middle-class reformers in the past.

**Turning Against the Establishment**

The New Politics activists of the late 1960s who called attention to the death and destruction suffered by millions in a seemingly endless war in Southeast Asia and the "old liberals" who championed their cause in the ADA displayed a far more critical perspective towards the nation's political establishment than had the amateur Democrats of the 1950s, the

Progressives of the early twentieth century, and other past standard bearers of the liberal reform tradition. Frequently described as a "constituency of conscience," the activists from the New Class who sustained the New Politics movement displayed a strong tendency to articulate their opposition to the Vietnam War and positions on other political issues in moral terms. Individuals from the "constituency of conscience" and the politicians that they were drawn to steered clear of the broad denouncement of American society insisted on by many in the New Left but often emphasized the moral horrors of the Vietnam War as they made their case against American involvement in the conflict. For their part, the "old liberals" of the ADA articulated their challenge to the political status quo that sustained the Vietnam War by taking aim at the political establishment they had once unmistakably belonged to. The "old liberals" of the ADA typically avoided moral language and instead emphasized the ways in which the political establishment and military-industrial complex harmed the national interest while New Politics activists tended to pass moral indictments on the Vietnam War and its far-reaching consequences, but under those rhetorical differences there existed a shared conviction that the political establishment that perpetuated the war could—and should—be challenged through the existing channels of American democracy. With that shared conviction as a starting point, a mutually beneficial relationship developed as those "old liberals" advanced searing criticisms of the political establishment and military-industrial complex that helped to legitimize the antiestablishment perspective of younger New Class activists who, in turn, sustained a New Politics movement that emboldened their liberal elders to push those criticisms still further.

The "old liberals" of the ADA faced an uphill battle in their effort to shed their establishment status. John Kenneth Galbraith served as the ambassador to India during the

Kennedy administration and conceded, "you can't refer to someone as 'the radical Ambassador.'"[66] As special assistant to President Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. had direct access to the Oval Office and has been frequently referred to as the administration's "court historian."[67] Galbraith and Schlesinger grew increasingly critical of Democratic leadership in the years that followed their service in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations but doubts continued to linger as to the degree to which they could be considered to have left the establishment. In an in-depth profile of the Harvard economist, journalist David Halberstam described Galbraith as a critic who "denies vehemently any Establishment association" but nonetheless "manages to keep as many lines out as possible." Offering a far more scathing assessment, Noam Chomsky assailed Schlesinger as an establishment intellectual who bore significant responsibility for leading the U.S. into the Vietnam War in the first place.[68] Despite the continuing traction of such characterizations, the positions staked during the escalation of the Vietnam War by Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other ADA leaders with past administration links had the tangible effect of putting the organization and its leading figures at a considerable distance from the levers of power. During the early years of Johnson's presidency, ADA leaders worked closely with the president and his administration on civil rights legislation and a variety of other initiatives. By the time the ADA and its leading voices came out decidedly against the Johnson administration's escalation of the war, the working relationship between the organization and the president ceased to exist. Joseph Rauh later recalled that when Johnson signed the 1968 Civil Rights Act into law, he wasn't invited to the

---

[66] David Halberstam, "The Importance of Being Galbraith," *Harper's Magazine*, November 1967, 54.
[67] James N. Giglio, *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 22.
[68] Halberstam, "The Importance of Being Galbraith," 54; Noam Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," *New York Review of Books*, February 23, 1967, 16-19.

signing ceremony even though he "was half-author of the goddamn thing."[69]

The critical perspective on the political establishment developed by the "old liberals" of the ADA during the years of growing distance between the organization and the Johnson administration fell well short of the wholesale condemnation demanded by Chomsky and other radical intellectuals but nevertheless represented some of the most penetrating criticism of the political status quo advanced by liberals during the years of the Cold War. Propelled by years of fruitless effort to bring the Vietnam War to an end through political means, the ADA and its leaders focused much of their criticism of "the Establishment"—frequently spelled with a capital "E"—on an unresponsive and unaccountable national security bureaucracy. In the view of many ADA liberals, the national security bureaucracy had assumed the prerogative of shaping foreign policy from the nation's elected leadership and pursued its own ends irrespective of the national interest or the will of the American people. A resolution passed by the ADA in 1969 channeled many of those concerns into a strident demand for the restoration of "the military establishment to its traditional place in our constitutional system, as the servant and not the master of our national purposes."[70]

ADA liberals, however, were clear in their insistence that the motivations of the military establishment and the source of its power were not to be found in the conspiracy theories that frequently accompanied discussions of the military-industrial complex. Schlesinger deemed the drivers of American foreign policy to be "neither evil men or war criminals" but "professional men trying to do a professional job and making exactly the

---

[69] Joseph Rauh, interview by William Chafe, pp. 37-38.

[70] "The Military-Industrial Complex" in "1969 National ADA Policy," pamphlet, p. 88, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA.

arguments the nature of their profession requires."[71] Similarly, Galbraith characterized those who comprised the military establishment and the national-security bureaucracy as "mostly honest men whose public and private behavior would withstand public scrutiny as well as most." For Galbraith, the military establishment posed a grave problem to the nation not because of any innate maliciousness but because it—like any great bureaucracy—tended "to develop a life and purpose and truth of its own." Bureaucracies, he contended, acted neither on behalf of the greater public interest nor in accord with the reality of the world but in pursuit of organizational interests and in response to the "bureaucratic truths" that served those interests. Thus, the "bureaucratic truth" of the national-security establishment, according to Galbraith, transformed "what was essentially a civil war between the Vietnamese" into "an international conflict with rich ideological portent for all mankind."[72]

Fostered by the continuation of the Vietnam War against both reason and popular will, the growing skepticism in the ADA towards a national-security bureaucracy ill-equipped to serve the national interest represented a dramatic transformation in the views on technocratic approaches to foreign policy found in the organization. Galbraith and Schlesinger had joined the Kennedy administration as part of a contingent of academic and industry leaders famously dubbed the "best and brightest" by David Halberstam and largely shared the confidence in technocratic solutions displayed by their fellow recruits. Despite frequently finding themselves on the periphery of the Kennedy administration, Galbraith and Schlesinger did not significantly waver in their belief that complex issues such as foreign policy were best addressed by those with the necessary expertise.[73] Schlesinger no longer held an

---

[71] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "Vietnam and the End of the Age of Superpowers," *Harper's Magazine*, March 1969, 44.

[72] John Kenneth Galbraith, *How to Control the Military* (New York: Signet Books, 1969), 16-17, 26-27.

[73] David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972), 152.

administration post during the early years of major U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War but continued to harbor significant doubt as to the capacity of the public to engage the complex subtleties of the Vietnam War with the reason and sobriety he deemed necessary.[74] By 1968, however, Schlesinger lambasted Hubert Humphrey for the implication that foreign policy should be left to the experts to whom "the mere layman must of course bow to."[75] Galbraith, in a similar fashion, denounced that year the hold of the "bloodless expert" on the determination of foreign policy as he asserted that the nation could never again afford to "have a foreign policy that is a monopoly of the military and experts" who were "divorced from public opinion and political responsibility."[76]

Despite the rhetorical attention they gave to the built-in flaws of the national-security bureaucracy and its technocratic insulation from democratic pressures, the "old liberals" of the ADA saw ultimate responsibility for the destructive direction of American foreign policy as residing with the nation's political establishment. Schlesinger considered it "foolish" to blame the national-security bureaucracy for the nature of the advice it gave and "far more to the point to blame those who take their advice."[77] Despite a more pessimistic estimation of the national security bureaucracy's grip on power, Galbraith too found the political establishment to be at fault for the circumstances that shaped the nation's foreign policy. After U.S. and South Vietnamese troops moved into Cambodia in 1970, Galbraith called on his audience at the 1970 ADA National Convention to recognize that the U.S. continued to expand the war because the political establishment had created a "vast military machine" that "makes policy and makes

---

[74] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "McCarthyism is Threatening Us Again," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 13, 1966, 11-12; "A Band of New York Intellectuals Meets with Prof. Schlesinger for A Talk-In on Vietnam," *New York Times Magazine*, February 6, 1966, 79.

[75] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to Hubert H. Humphrey, July 24, 1968, p. 3, Folder 3, Box 67, AMS.

[76] John Kenneth Galbraith, "New Foreign Policy, Old Politics," Address at the Yale Political Union, April 15, 1968, pp. 14, 16, Box 873, JKG.

[77] Schlesinger, "Vietnam and the End of the Age of Superpowers," 44.

war on its own." The support of a bipartisan collection of "parliamentary poodles," he contended, had enabled the military bureaucracy to operate outside of the political system. With the view that the problem boiled down to far more than the president simply taking or not taking the advice given to him by the national-security bureaucracy, he stressed that establishing effective control of military power would be the most pressing issue for liberals in the coming years. If liberals were to "ask the young to remain in the system," Galbraith insisted they must "also get the generals back in."[78]

The increasingly critical views on the political establishment advanced by Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" in the ADA developed over the course of frustrating years of opposition to the Vietnam War but also owed much to the rapid rise of the New Class. The substantial growth in the number of politically engaged, white-collar liberals that had enabled those "old liberals" to see breaking ranks with organized labor and the Johnson administration as a politically viable option also proved crucial to emboldening the critical views on the political establishment that had begun to take shape in the ADA. Galbraith saw 1969 as a time in which " a strong anti-establishment, anti-institutional, and particularly anti-bureaucratic, anti-military mood" was "sweeping through the country much more rapidly than would have been possible as recently as ten years ago." Galbraith believed the enormous influx of individuals into colleges and universities to be a critical impetus for the dramatic shift in the national mood that he saw taking place.[79] Like Galbraith, Schlesinger looked to the new generation of college students as a vital force in the struggle against the political establishment. Schlesinger emphasized the political importance of the growing numbers of college-educated, issue-oriented voters eager for greater participation in the decisions that

[78] "Galbraith Assails War Machine for U.S. Action in Cambodia," *ADA World*, May-June 1970, 3, 16.
[79] John Kenneth Galbraith quoted in "Paths to Peace in Vietnam," *Progressive*, June 1969, 46.

determined their life. With the potential political power of what Schlesinger described as an "aggressive new constituency" of youth and working adults from the New Class that "regards the old political establishment with mistrust," ADA liberals came to see challenging the political establishment as not only as a necessary response to circumstances that perpetuated war and impeded social progress but also as a politically pragmatic move.[80]

Often referred to as a "constituency of conscience," the New Class activists and voters who bolstered the antiestablishment posture of the ADA and provided the base of the New Politics movement frequently articulated their opposition to the political establishment by rendering political issues in moral terms. Many of those from the New Class drawn to the New Politics saw the movement as a moral crusade that drew on the energy and spirit of the civil rights and antiwar movements to challenge the "old politics" of the political establishment.[81] David Halberstam echoed many of the journalistic accounts of the New Politics movement seen during the 1968 election season with a characterization of the movement's base as primarily interested in "the moral thrust of America."[82] Lanny Davis, a young campaign staffer for Eugene McCarthy in 1968 and later a member of the ADA National Board, offered a similar assessment when he later recalled the sense of self-righteousness and moralism that had animated him and his fellow New Politics activists during that year's Democratic primaries.[83]

The activists of the New Politics movement differed from the "old liberals" of the ADA in terms of style and temperament but shared with them a desire to unseat the political

---

[80] Schlesinger, *Crisis of Confidence*, 249-250, 262-263.

[81] Lanny J. Davis, *The Emerging Democratic Majority: Lessons and Legacies from the New Politics* (New York: Stein and Day, 1974), 15-28.

[82] Halberstam, "Politics 1968: McCarthy and the Divided Left," 36.

[83] ADA National Board Meeting, minutes, March 31 and April 1, 1973, p. 3, Folder 35, Box 10, M97-135, ADA; Davis, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, 253.

establishment responsible for a seemingly endless war. While those "old liberals" generally avoided moral language and focused instead on the ways in which the political establishment and its commitment to the Vietnam War harmed the national interest, the bulk of New Politics activists were animated by the moral issues raised by the war. By articulating his opposition to the Vietnam War in a calm and reasonable, but nevertheless morally direct manner, McCarthy attracted significant support among the New Class voters who quickly became the base of the emerging New Politics movement. In a widely-read article for *Look* magazine intended to bolster his support among the "constituency of conscience" prior to the New Hampshire primary, McCarthy articulated a forceful challenge to the political establishment by detailing the human cost of the war that its policies prolonged: the physical destruction of a small, developing nation by the most powerful military on the planet; 100,000 to 150,000 civilian casualties in South Vietnam alone; the unraveling social order of a South Vietnamese population who counted one-forth to one-third of its people as refugees; and combat losses for the U.S. through December 23 of 15,944 killed and 99,305 wounded.[84] Four years later, George McGovern carried on the banner of the New Politics movement and attracted the New Class voters who had rallied to McCarthy in the previous presidential election with impassioned speeches on the Vietnam War that drew attention to its tragic moral consequences. Like McCarthy, McGovern frequently employed shocking moral language to challenge the political establishment that perpetuated the Vietnam War. In the run-up to the 1972 presidential election, McGovern drew rapt attention when he asked an audience in Los Angeles, "What is it that keeps a great and decent county like the United States involved in this cruel killing and destruction? Why is it that we cannot find the wit and the will to escape

[84] Eugene McCarthy, "Why I'm Battling LBJ," *Look*, February 6, 1968, 24.

from this dreadful conflict that has tied us down for so long?" [85]

The moral indictments of the Vietnam War and the political establishment responsible for its continuation made by McCarthy, McGovern, and the New Class activists who propelled their campaigns, benefited from the piercing yet well-reasoned criticism of the military-industrial complex and the political establishment advanced by the "old liberals" of the ADA. Owing both to their status as widely recognized arbiters of liberalism and their careful framing of the issues involved, those "old liberals" helped to legitimize forthright criticism of the military-industrial complex and the broader political establishment. By taking great care to juxtapose their critical perspective with the conspiracy theories and radical posturing that often surrounded discussion of the military-industrial complex, Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" helped to bring direct and sometimes shocking charges against the political and foreign policy establishment into mainstream political discussion by distancing the underlying ideas from the paranoid fringe and radical politics.

The challenge to the political establishment mounted by both younger New Politics activists and the "old liberals" from the ADA expressed a basic and enduring confidence in the American democratic tradition as a means of ending the Vietnam War and bringing about other necessary changes. When James Wechsler appraised the outcome of the 1968 elections the following year, he strongly refuted the argument of those who "somewhat triumphantly" insisted that the failure of McCarthy's bid for the Democratic nomination demonstrated the futility of the political system and the invulnerability of the political establishment to democratic resistance. In his judgment, the McCarthy campaign and the New Politics movement succeeded in their original objective of toppling the candidacy of an incumbent

[85] George McGovern, *An American Journey: The Presidential Campaign Speeches of George McGovern* (New York: Random House, 1974), 121.

Democratic president and bringing the escalation of the war to a close. According to Wechsler, they "did so in the face of widespread diagnosis—on the New Left and the Old Right—that neither of these objectives was remotely realizable, and that those who involved themselves in it were captives of their own idiot dreams."[86] The shared conviction of "old liberals" from the ADA such as Wechsler and the New Politics activists who rallied to McCarthy and McGovern's campaigns that it was both possible and necessary to challenge the political establishment through the existing two-party system provided a strong starting point for the ongoing relationship of the ADA and the New Politics movement. Still, a desire to reach out to the younger New Class activists needed to breath new life into the ADA and sustain the organization's relationship with the New Politics movement would lead those "old liberals" to look to a new generation of leadership with the youth and antiestablishment credentials that they clearly lacked.

**A New Generation of Leadership**

Joseph Duffey, a 37-year-old theology professor and activist in the civil rights and antiwar movements, became the youngest ever national chairman of the ADA when he succeeded John Kenneth Galbraith in 1969. On the surface, Duffey's election as national chairman appeared to mark a significant departure from the older generation of leadership that preceded him. His activist background lent him far more easily recognizable antiestablishment credentials than his predecessors could lay claim to and engendered him with a strong preference for concrete political action over the writing of resolutions. Yet, the distance between Duffey and the "old liberals' who preceded him at the helm of the ADA was far less

[86] James A. Wechsler, "Liberals and the New Left," *Progressive*, May 1969, 19.

than historians have assumed.[87] Despite unmistakable differences in their respective political backgrounds and demeanors, those "old liberals" and new leaders such as Duffey and Allard Lowenstein had similar intellectual roots and drew from the same set of fundamental liberal values. Duffey drew from the same well of Niebuhrian thought that had long shaped the political outlook of the "old liberals" from the ADA while he and Lowenstein both shared their belief that a liberalism committed to the rational political processes of the democratic system could yield tangible social progress. Duffey and Lowenstein did not come to leadership roles in the ADA in the face of reluctance or opposition from those "old liberals." Instead, the "old liberals" actively paved the way for new leaders who shared their basic political outlook and designs for the future of the organization but whose youth and unambiguous antiestablishment background enabled them and the ADA to reach out to a younger generation.

The need for the ADA to attract more young people had been a problem faced by the organization for some time. The ADA's affiliated student organization, Campus Americans for Democratic Action (CADA), never developed the mass constituency hoped for by both its leaders and the leadership of the ADA. Concerns with the lack of youth in the organization that emerged in the late 1950s continued to grow in the 1960s. Massachusetts congressman Richard Miller reflected the sentiment of many of his ADA colleagues in 1967 when he noted that he was "impressed by the fact that the median age of Americans today is 28; the average age of the group meeting last weekend was closer to 40." Few in the ADA would have argued

---

[87] For example see, Gillon, *Politics and Vision*, esp. 180-182, 193-195, 224; Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 167; Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010), 47-48. Rooted in the limiting distinction he draws between "traditional," "moderate," and "reform" groups in the ADA, Gillon emphasizes and overstates the differences between younger "reformers" such as Duffey and older "moderates" such as Galbraith. Davies and Vaïsse cite and reproduce Gillon's framework in their work.

with his observation "that there were precious few faces in the room which suggested the well springs of future leadership."

As the ADA's founders continued to advance in age and struggled to bring new blood into the organization, the ADA risked becoming, in the words of James Wechsler, "an alumni association of aging liberals."[88]

Though the bulk of the ADA's established leadership eventually came around to see the importance of cultivating a new generation of leaders who would enable the organization to reach out to young people, the prospect of passing the reins of leadership to younger, less eminent figures with political backgrounds different from their own initially raised many a skeptical eyebrow. At the fore of the charge to bring a new generation into leadership positions, Galbraith encountered much of that skepticism when he recommended Duffey, a political newcomer, to be his successor as ADA national chairman. Duffey had been a leading figure in McCarthy's campaign in Connecticut and accumulated significant activist pedigree through dedicated involvement in the civil rights movement. He organized student civil rights groups at Hartford Seminary, where he served on the faculty, as well as nearby Trinity College and was arrested in 1963 during a protest against discriminatory hiring practices at a construction site in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn. In 1965, he took part in Martin Luther King's historic march from Selma to Montgomery in Alabama.[89]

Duffey's activist, antiestablishment background was central to Galbraith's

---

[88] Joseph Rauh, interview by Todd Gitlin, Washington, D.C., March 1985, transcript, pp. 20-21, Folder 7941, Box 217, AKL; Richard Miller to Allard Lowenstein, May 31, 1967, Folder 1230, Box 34, AKL; Joseph Rauh, interview for *Citizen*, a documentary film on Allard Lowenstein, transcript, p. 17, Folder 7455, Box 207, AKL; James A. Wechsler, introduction to *Lowenstein: Acts of Courage and Belief*, eds. Gregory Stone and Douglas Lowenstein (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), xxxvi.

[89] Eric Rennie, *A Campaign Album: A Case Study of the New Politics* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1973), 12-13; Milton Bracker, "27 Pickets Seized With 17 Children In Street Blockade," *New York Times*, July 20, 1963.

understanding of what he could bring to the ADA and his appeal to the younger generation but did little to assuage the unease of those in the organization's leadership with concerns that he lacked the national prominence of past ADA national chairmen. Although he later became one of Duffey's most vocal advocates, Leon Shull had initially been stunned when Galbraith recommended him as his successor. Schlesinger was skeptical of Duffey's religious background and had reservations with the prospect of a young, relatively unknown theology professor from West Virginia as Galbraith's successor. Against the uncertainty of Schlesinger and other leaders, Galbraith continued to stress Duffey's ability to put the ADA in touch with the new generation as he lobbied on behalf of his young protégé's candidacy. Galbraith's ongoing support proved decisive. When delegates gathered for the 1969 ADA National Convention, Duffey won the election to succeed the 60-year-old Harvard economist as ADA national chairman.[90]

Just as Galbraith's influence had been key to Duffey's election to the top post in the ADA, the support and background maneuvering of other "old liberals" made Lowenstein's 1971 election as national chairman possible. Like Duffey, Lowenstein had an extensive antiestablishment background steeped in activism but little national stature when he first joined the ADA in the mid-1960s. An early and outspoken opponent of the apartheid regime in South Africa, Lowenstein became deeply involved in the Freedom Summer campaign to register African American voters in Mississippi in 1964. By the time Rauh, Schlesinger, and Wechsler approached Lowenstein about running for the post of ADA national chairman after Republican gerrymandering in 1970 cost him the congressional seat he had won two years earlier, he had gained both national prominence and a powerful reputation as a polarizing

[90] Joseph Duffey, interview by author, Washington, D.C., August 15, 2014; Ellen Hoffman, "Joseph Duffey Will Succeed Galbraith As ADA Chairman," *Washington Post*, June 9, 1969.

figure. Initially reluctant to take a position that he felt might limit the range and depth of his involvement in outside political activities, Lowentstein eventually decided to put himself forward for the post of ADA national chairman after weeks of lobbying from those "old liberals."[91]

When a stop-Lowenstein initiative that sought to draft Duffey to stand election for an unprecedented third term as national chairman began to pick up momentum, Rauh, Schlesinger, and Wechsler moved quickly to bring the initiative to a halt by convincing the sitting chairman to make it clear that he would not be running again. Those who sought to block Lowenstein's election as national chairman, Wechsler later reflected, seemed to be "oblivious" to the reality that the organization "badly needed the stimulus of a chairman who would reach out to a fresh constituency...and refurbish its reputation among a younger generation to whom it had little sentimental appeal." With the devoted support of the "old liberals" who continued to wield significant influence in the organization, Lowenstein prevailed in a divided election at the 1971 ADA National Convention.[92]

The activist backgrounds of Duffey and Lowenstein had done little to impress those who opposed their rise to the ranks of the leadership but led them to a preference for action over rhetoric that held considerable appeal to a new generation of activists often inclined to see the ADA as little more than a tired organization concerned with writing resolutions.[93] During his acceptance speech as ADA national chairman in 1969, Duffey declared, "It is not only the impatience of a new generation but also a new experience of the urgency for action and a certain disenchantment with the easy rhetoric of resolution which I must ask some of

---

[91] William H. Chafe, *Never Stop Running: Allard Lowenstein and the Struggle to Save American Liberalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), xvi, 341-353; Leon Shull, interview by William Chafe, pp. 17-18; James Wechsler to Joe Duffey, March 31, 1971, Folder 3, Box 142, AMS.

[92] James Wechsler to Joe Duffey, March 31, 1971; Wechsler, introduction to *Lowenstein*, xxxvi-xxxvii.

[93] Robert C. Maynard, "Left-of-ADA Democrats Nursing a Coalition," *Washington Post*, April 27, 1969.

you to accept with patience" that are "the marks not only of my personal temperament but of the mood of thousands of persons who today represent the ADA's only viable constituency."[94] With a similar commitment to deed over word, Lowenstein devoted much of his energy and the ADA's resources to a large-scale youth voter registration drive shortly after becoming national chairman in 1971. Putting the need for the registration drive in blunt terms, Lowenstein explained, "We are working for a country where 18-year olds won't be forced to choose exile or jail as alternatives to dying in an unjust war."[95]

Despite a clear desire for action over rhetoric and an outspoken approach to pressing political issues that appeared to mark a stark divergence from "old liberals" in the ADA who had devoted years to finessing the language of resolutions passed by the organization and whose muted style often obscured the antiestablishment substance of their politics, Duffey and Lowenstein drew from similar intellectual roots and the same wellspring of liberal values as their predecessors. Historians have sometimes assumed that the younger generation of liberal reformers associated with the New Politics movement abandoned the Niebuhrian pessimism that had guided many postwar liberals as they advanced what has been depicted in their historical accounts as passionate but simplistic opposition to the Vietnam War.[96] Yet, Duffey, like the "old liberals" of the ADA, looked to Niebuhr as a foundational influence on his own intellectual and political outlook. In the late 1950s, Duffey took charge of a parish outside of Boston principally so that he could go to the weekly lectures that Niebuhr was giving in the city at the time. A proponent of Niebuhr's views on the inherent flaws of human nature and the need for realism in the formulation of foreign policy, Duffey wrote articles that attracted

---

[94] Acceptance speech of Joseph Duffey, newly elected chairman of Americans for Democratic Action, Washington, D.C., June 7, 1969, p. 1, Folder 23, Box 28, M97-135, ADA.

[95] "ADA Pushes Youth Vote," *ADA World*, September 1971, 1.

[96] For example, see Gillon, *Politics and Vision*, 181; John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1994* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 48-49.

the attention of the eminent theologian and found publication in his influential journal, *Christianity and Crisis*.[97] Combining his Niebuhrian sense of realism and pessimism with a basic commitment to the rational processes of the democratic system, Duffey identified himself during his acceptance speech as ADA national chairman in 1969 with those who viewed the political system "with skepticism, yet who continue with a cautious will to persist, with great longings for a new America, and with a sober, chastened hope for a meaningful change."[98]

With an intellectual worldview shaped more by political than intellectual figures, Lowenstein received guidance from mentors with close relationships to the "old liberals" of the ADA such as Frank Porter Graham, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Norman Thomas as he developed an unbending confidence in the democratic process. Put to the test by the loss of his congressional seat to gerrymandering in 1970 and a defeat by the slimmest of margins in a 1972 Congressional election in Brooklyn riddled with voting irregularities, Lowenstein never wavered from his belief in the ability to affect meaningful change through the democratic system. Having worked alongside Lowenstein, Lanny Davis described him as having a "liberal-political process oriented liberal ideology that he carried around as almost a matter of religious faith." Shull deemed Lowenstein's commitment to the democratic process to be "the defining belief of his life" and particularly important to his success at operating in an organization like the ADA. He later recalled being somewhat surprised when he began to work with Lowenstein after his election as national chairman. During those years, Shull had become "used to dealing with people who were against the war, the radical youth" who didn't

---

[97] Joseph Duffey, interview by author, March 4, 2014; Rennie, *A Campaign Album*, 11. Impressed by his articles for *Christianity and Crisis*, Niebuhr later provided a recommendation for Duffey that proved instrumental to his appointment to the faculty of Hartford Seminary.

[98] Acceptance speech of Joseph Duffey, newly elected chairman of Americans for Democratic Action, p. 1.

seem to him to "give a damn about democratic norms." While he, admittedly, "didn't know how to deal with" those radical activists, Shull forged a strong working relationship with Lowenstein on the basis of a fundamental liberal belief that he and other "old liberals" in the ADA shared in the potential to achieve tangible progress through the accepted channels of democracy.[99]

Much like the seemingly divergent politics of Duffey and Lowenstein, the bold new positions adopted by the ADA as the 1960s drew to a close did not represent a fundamental departure for the organization but instead a continuation of trends that Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" had been instrumental in initiating. Foremost among the striking policy changes undertaken by the ADA during those years was the organization's emphatic reversal of its long held opposition to the unilateral withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. When delegates gathered for the ADA's twenty-second annual national convention in 1969 they faced a choice between two resolutions representing dramatically different scales and tenors of opposition to U.S. policy in Vietnam. The majority report of the foreign policy commission advocated a staggered drawdown of troop levels leading to a withdrawal of around 200,000 of the 540,000 troops in Vietnam and an immediate cessation of offensive military operations. The commission's minority report instead issued the straightforward call for the Nixon administration to "withdrawal unilaterally all U.S. Armed Forces from Vietnam immediately." Hans Morgenthau, chairman of the foreign policy commission, and other veteran ADA leaders on the commission such as Robert Nathan and Victor Reuther remained steadfast in their opposition to unilateral withdrawal as they helped to push through the

[99] Joseph Rauh, interview for *Citizen*, a documentary film on Allard Lowenstein, p. 1; Chafe, *Never Stop Running*, 368-383; Lanny Davis, interview by William Chafe, Washington, D.C., February 25, 1992, transcript, p. 12, Folder 7356, Box 205, AKL; Leon Shull, interview by William Chafe, pp. 39-40.

majority resolution.[100]

The continued resistance of veteran figures on the foreign policy commission to unilateral withdrawal did not, however, reflect the views of all longtime leaders in the ADA. Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" aligned with the New Politics movement had been casting doubts on the feasibility of a negotiated settlement to the Vietnam War and advancing a line of opposition to the conflict with logic that increasingly pointed towards unilateral withdrawal for almost two years. When, after two hours of sometimes bitter debate, delegates on the floor voted by a two-to-one margin in favor of the minority report, they established the ADA as the first national political organization to call for the immediate unilateral withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. The convention's overwhelming vote in favor of unilateral withdrawal demonstrated the marginalization of veteran figures in the ADA who sought to soft-pedal the organization's position on the war but offered general agreement with the logic that had been animating the position of Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" on the conflict for some time.[101]

By pushing the ADA to turn to a new generation of leadership and pointing the way

---

[100] Foreign Policy Commission—Majority Report to Convention, "Vietnam," memorandum, June 6, 1969, Box 2, Acc. 98A-048, NEN; Foreign Policy Commission—Minority Report to Convention, "Vietnam," memorandum, June 6, 1969, Box 2, Acc. 98A-048, NEN; "Foreign Policy Commission Members," June 6, 1969, Box 2, Acc. 98A-048, NEN.

[101] "A.D.A. Parley Urges a Vietnam Pullout," *New York Times*, June 8, 1969; "ADA Asks Full Withdrawal of U.S. Troops in Vietnam," *Washington Evening Star*, June 8, 1969; "ADA—Its 25th Year," memorandum, p. 1, Folder 1, Box 18, M97-135, ADA; "The Cease-Fire Fallacy," *New Republic*, October 4, 1969, 5-6; "Correspondence: Cease-Fire Fallacy," *New Republic*, October 18, 1969, 31-32. The "old liberals" of the ADA left no question as to the their agreement with the position on the Vietnam War adopted by the delegates at the organization's national convention when the *New Republic* published an editorial months later that mistakenly associated them with the continued opposition to unilateral withdrawal from the successor organization to Negotiation Now! The editorial railed against the sponsors of the National Committee for a Political Settlement in Vietnam, formerly known as Negotiation Now!, for supporting a cease-fire proposal at odds with the political and military reality of Vietnam that ultimately undermined genuine prospects for ending the war. In response, Galbraith, Rauh, Schlesinger, Shull and others unhappy with their inclusion in the editorial fired off letters to the *New Republic* making clear that they had had nothing to do with the committee for some time, no knowledge of its recent cease-fire proposal, and believed the only realistic path to peace to be the unilateral withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam.

towards positions such as unilateral withdrawal from Vietnam that advanced the frontier of liberal politics, those "old liberals" ensured that the changes in composition and funding sources that had been touched off by the organization's endorsement of McCarthy in early 1968 gained still more momentum. With new leadership, a growing commitment to direct involvement in grassroots politics, and a forthright position on the Vietnam War, the ADA carried the excitement it generated during the 1968 election into the following year with continued growth in the organization's membership and the establishment of chapters in Beaumont, Texas; Charleston, South Carolina; Knoxville, Tennessee; and a number of other cities in regions not known for their liberal politics. The ADA's membership growth in 1969 sustained the organization's trend towards funding from rank-and-file members and enabled it to improve upon its unprecedented fundraising total from the previous year with no contributions from labor unions. Much to the pleasure of those who had long bemoaned the advancing age of the average ADA member, the organization's membership growth skewed young. The national conventions of the ADA at the close of the 1960s and the dawn of the 1970s saw less grey hair and noticeably more longhaired youth in jeans.[102] Increasingly young and drawn from the growing ranks of activists who hailed from the New Class, the new look ADA enjoyed a degree of political influence equal to the highest points in the organization's history and ensured that the contributions of its "old liberals" to the New Politics movement did not end with the endorsement of McCarthy that had been critical to getting the movement off the ground. The ongoing involvement of the ADA in the New Politics movement meant that the "old liberals" whose ideas and consideration of long-term trends in liberal politics had led the organization to endorse McCarthy's fledgling campaign would continue to play an

[102] Leon Shull, "ADA for the Past Year," memorandum, April 30, 1970, Folder 38, Box 17, M97-135, ADA; "National Convention Elects Lowenstein," *ADA World*, May-June 1971, 1.

instrumental role in shaping the movement as it came to encompass far more than the antiwar activism that had initially inspired its challenge to the political establishment.

## Chapter Five: Shaping the New Politics: Old Liberals, Neoconservatives, and the Legacy of Liberalism

The New Politics movement underwent a profound transformation during the years between the two political campaigns most commonly associated with it. Norman Podhoretz later reflected, "In the four years since I had first committed myself to Eugene McCarthy, I had grown so hostile to the New Politics that I offered my help to Muskie."[1] Podhoretz, an early opponent of the Vietnam War, could readily sympathize with the activists who sparked the New Politics movement to life when they rallied to McCarthy's campaign in opposition to the conflict in 1968. The New Politics activists of the 1968 Democratic primaries regularly insisted that their prioritization of opposition to the Vietnam War did not represent myopic obsession with a single issue but rather dedication to a transcendent issue that imperiled American society in a wide variety of ways. Still, the immediate aims and energy of the New Politics movement that came into being in opposition to the policies of the Johnson administration in Vietnam never strayed far from the particulars of that war. By the time of the McGovern campaign in 1972, the concerns that animated the New Politics movement included not only opposition to the Vietnam War but also a broadly critical perspective on the Cold War national-security state and a diverse array of domestic issues such as affirmative action, women's rights, gay and lesbian rights, party reform, and guaranteed income. When Podhoretz and others who would similarly find themselves pegged as neoconservatives formed the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM) in late 1972, they contended for control of the Democratic Party with a New Politics movement that had been shaped by the ADA and its "old liberals" as it came to encompass far more than the antiwar activism that had initially put it into motion.

---

[1] Norman Podhoretz, *Breaking Ranks: A Political Memoir* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 339.

The New Politics movement that took shape in the years after the McCarthy campaign of 1968 both confirmed and acted upon a number of ideas with deep roots in the political thought of the "old liberals" who continued to play an influential role in the ADA. The social base of the New Politics movement visibly demonstrated the shift in liberal and Democratic politics from the union hall to the suburbs, first forecast by John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. when they sketched the contours of qualitative liberalism more than a decade earlier. By reproducing the assumptions of working class conservatism and middle class liberal potential found in the qualitative liberalism of Galbraith and Schlesinger, the individuals and organizations most involved in the New Politics movement at the grassroots level further reinforced the existing middle class orientation of the movement. In the realm of foreign policy, the New Politics movement displayed an understanding of the far-reaching implications of polycentric Communism with roots in criticisms long advanced by ADA leaders as they mounted a searing indictment of the bloated defense budgets and interventionist foreign policy that movement activists believed would continue to distort the nation's priorities regardless of the future direction of U.S. policy in Vietnam. On matters of domestic policy, the New Politics movement—and, ultimately, the Democratic Party—expressed a commitment to facilitating social inclusion through recognition of the unique challenges faced by various marginalized social groups that shared much in common with the synthesis of qualitative liberalism and social democratic values championed by the ADA in the wake of the civil rights movement.

The domestic and foreign policy positions adopted by the New Politics movement during the late 1960s and early 1970s spurned some of the most central tenets of postwar liberalism. Still, the New Politics did not represent a departure from the political tradition

subscribed to by postwar liberals, but rather an effort to adapt that tradition to new circumstances and challenges. By adapting a liberal tradition that during the early postwar years had been defined by anti-Communist foreign policy and the patriarchal, racially conservative policy positions of the New Deal to new geopolitical realities and the demands of new social movements, the "old liberals" of the ADA laid the intellectual foundation for the New Politics movement. Through their contributions to that foundation and their ongoing involvement in the New Politics movement that it sustained, those "old liberals" were able to retain a degree of intellectual and political influence at odds with their frequent characterization by historians as out of touch has-beens. Even more importantly, the enduring relevance of the ADA's "old liberals" and the liberal tradition they continued to embody both depended on and exhibited a greater degree of malleability than is typically seen in the renderings of that tradition found in the historiography of postwar American liberalism.

Far from a static relic of the Cold War, the ADA became a vital vehicle for a New Politics movement that exemplified the protean nature of American liberalism. From an institutional standpoint, the organizational work of ADA liberals proved crucial to carrying the momentum of the New Politics movement past the 1968 presidential election and played an instrumental role in bringing the influence of the "old liberals" of the organization to bear on the future direction of the movement. Extensive ADA involvement from the ranks of leadership down to the grassroots helped to establish the newly formed New Democratic Coalition (NDC) as the leading organized force of the New Politics movement by bringing together former supporters of Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy. The ADA and its increasingly multi-generational membership also sustained the New Politics movement by making use of the relationships between its members and key figures outside of the

organization to facilitate a range of efforts from the Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC) to the Coalition on National Priorities and Military Policy that put young New Politics activists in contact with an older generation of liberals from the ADA. When sweeping reforms to the process of delegate selection in the Democratic Party produced a dramatic increase in the influence of white-collar, middle class Democrats, the McGovern campaign reaped the benefits and brought a New Politics movement that bore the stamp of the ADA and its "old liberals" to the highest stage of presidential politics.

The neoconservatives of the CDM who sought to roll back the New Politics ascendency in the Democratic Party faced a political movement with a far broader set of aims than the one that had existed in 1968. Many—though by no means all—of the most significant changes seen in the New Politics movement in the years between the McCarthy and McGovern campaigns resulted not from the influence of New Left radicals who kept their distance from electoral politics or the young liberal activists who dominated the media's coverage of those campaigns, but from political thought associated with the "old liberals" of the ADA and the ongoing involvement of their organization in the movement. For critics of the Vietnam War in the CDM such as Podhoretz, it was those changes and the resulting agenda that encompassed a wide variety of issues—ranging from multiculturalism to the broader role of the U.S. in the world—that motivated their response and determined the course that it took. As the CDM and its members vied with the New Politics movement for the legacy of the liberal tradition, they struggled against a number of trends in liberal politics that had been initiated or identified by the "old liberals" of the ADA over the past two decades. Despite their best efforts to overcome those trends, the stalwarts of the CDM found themselves decidedly placed under a neoconservative banner by political observers and historians alike

while the terms "New Politics" and "liberal" would become increasingly synonymous.

**The New Democratic Coalition and the New Politics after 1968**

On the night Hubert Humphrey secured the presidential nomination of the 1968 Democratic National Convention, a number of ADA liberals and several dozen other dissident Democrats met to discuss the future of their party. Out of those discussions came a commitment to establish a new organization through which to organize the Democratic Party around the participatory, issue-oriented politics that had proved highly successful for New Politics activists during that year's Democratic primaries.[2] By bringing together the activists and political leaders who had rallied behind the McCarthy and Kennedy campaigns, the resulting New Democratic Coalition (NDC) provided an organizational framework that carried the energy and ideas of the New Politics movement beyond the November election. With a number of rising stars from the ADA among its ranks, the overwhelmingly youthful leadership of the NDC involved in building that framework acted on an understanding of politics with roots in the qualitative liberalism advanced by John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. since the 1950s. In doing so, the young leaders of the NDC brought the influence of the "old liberals" of the ADA to bear on the direction of the New Politics in a way that ensured its continuing middle-class orientation.

As the NDC took shape, the organization amounted to something of an institutional alternative to the Democratic National Committee and a counterweight to the established party machinery in the states with extensive ADA involvement at both the grassroots and leadership levels. The involvement of Julian Bond, Sam Brown, Curtis Gans, Michael Harrington, Allard

[2] "The NDC...A History," Folder 30, Box 4, Donald O. Peterson Papers, 1947-1980, Eau Claire Mss BB, Eau Claire Area Research Center, Eau Claire, WI (hereafter cited as Eau Claire, DOP).

Lowenstein, and others from the ADA on the NDC steering committee ensured a strong representation of ADA views and close collaboration between the two groups. Don Peterson, chairman of the Wisconsin state ADA, and ADA national board member Paul Schrade served as co-chairmen of the nascent political organization. At the grassroots level, a significant percentage of the hundreds of thousands of individuals who participated in the 34 state NDC organizations across the country hailed from local chapters of the ADA.[3]

Although the heavy ADA presence at all levels of the NDC meant that the two organizations shared a distinctly similar political perspective, ADA liberals did not join the NDC in order make another ADA. The two organizations differed in important ways in their institutional purpose and the focus of their political activity. Unlike the ADA, the NDC was a part of the Democratic Party and primarily sought to use its role within the party to win power for New Politics Democrats. Whereas the more issue-oriented ADA concentrated its efforts at the national level, the NDC focused much of its attention on specific candidates and heavily involved itself in political organization at the local level.[4]

In practical aims and outlook, however, both the ADA and NDC sought to push Democratic politics to the left and believed that the liberal-labor coalition that had once served that goal had been fractured beyond viability by the hawkish foreign policy positions of labor leadership. As West Coast regional director for the United Auto Workers, Co-chairman Schrade was one of a very small number of labor representatives of any consequence in the organization. With a foreign policy perspective distinctly at odds with that of the established labor leadership, Schrade became one of the most outspoken critics of the Vietnam War in the

---

[3] "Steering Committee of the New Democratic Coalition," Folder 5, Box 2, M97-135, ADA; "Duffey Named Chairman at 22nd Convention, Call for Shift to Greater Local Political Action," *ADA World*, July 1969, 3; Robert C. Maynard, "Left-of-ADA Democrats Nursing a Coalition," *Washington Post*, April 27, 1969; Paul R. Wieck, "The New Politics Still Lives," *New Republic*, December 14, 1968, 21.

[4] ADA-NDC Conference Committee Meeting, minutes, March 1, 1973, Folder 1316, Box 36, AKL.

UAW as the union's leadership crept towards an antiwar position that contributed to its disaffiliation with the stanchly pro-war AFL-CIO in the summer of 1968. Having grown up in a middle-class family in New York and attended Yale University before dropping out to head west in search of factory work as a means of becoming involved in union politics, Schrade had a social and academic background closer to that of his largely white-collar colleagues in the NDC than most organized labor leaders.[5] For an organization virtually devoid of labor involvement other than the less-than-representative Schrade, the "new" in the New Democratic Coalition largely meant the inclusion of college students and college graduates at the expense of an organized labor movement considered to be beyond the pale on a variety of foreign policy issues.

With no place for organized labor in its plans, the NDC believed that college-educated liberals of the New Class, envisioned as a "constituency of conscience," together with the minorities and poor who constituted a "constituency of the oppressed" could provide the mass base for a new liberal coalition. Peterson and Schrade saw the growing ranks of the "constituency of conscience" as consisting mainly of relatively affluent people in the professions, business, academia, and "especially the new breed of militant students who by 1976 will constitute a very large part of the 40 percent of the voting public that will have been college educated." According to the NDC co-chairmen, the "constituency of the oppressed" would be comprised of African Americans, Native Americans, poor whites, Spanish-speaking Americans, and "other groups within our society that have traditionally been pacified with tokens when they clamored for justice." The organizational approach of the NDC rested on the belief that a strong coalition could be forged by joining together those oppressed by social

[5] Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 156, 207-210, 243, 245-247.

injustice and material insecurity with individuals from largely well-educated and materially secure backgrounds morally driven to champion the cause of the oppressed. Describing the NDC as "in the business to affect the course of the Democratic Party, not to be an elliptical memorandum writing group," Peterson stressed the potential political power of "a coalition of those who are most badly treated by the society and also of people who want to see politics become a moral enterprise."[6]

Making that coalition a reality, however, required an NDC leadership drawn almost exclusively from the "constituency of conscience" to actively recruit individuals and leaders from the "constituency of the oppressed." Although the participation of civil rights leaders Julian Bond and Channing Phillips alongside Bert Corona of the Mexican-American Political Association (MAPA) on the NDC's initial steering committee provided some smattering of diversity, the organization that took shape was overwhelmingly white and middle-class from its leadership down to the grassroots. Stephen Schlesinger, son of Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and an up-and-coming figure in his own right within the ADA, expressed worried disappointment with the composition of the delegation that he saw at the NDC's first national convention in February 1970. Reporting on the convention as editor in chief of *The New Democrat*, which he had recently launched with Grier Raggio as a mouthpiece for the New Politics movement, Stephen Schlesinger lamented his confrontation with "a make-up of the NDC that was quite different from its theoretical one." The young editor described the lack of minorities among the 500 delegates at the convention as "painfully apparent" and cited George Wiley, head of the predominantly black National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), as the only black leader present. Even then, Wiley had only attended, according to Schlesinger, "to tongue-lash

[6] Don Peterson and Paul Schrade to NDC Steering Committee Members and State Affiliates, memorandum, July 22. 1969, p. 1, Folder 33, Box 4, Eau Claire, DOP; "A Provisional Statement of Purposes," November 24, 1968, Folder 30, Box 4, Eau Claire, DOP; Maynard, "Left-of-ADA Democrats Nursing a Coalition."

the NDC for its lack of commitment to his campaign for a $6500 guaranteed income for a family of four." Despite all of its hopes and efforts, the NDC became and remained what Peterson and Schrade had feared it might become: "a band of white liberals lacking significant ties to those for whose rights we propose to fight."[7]

The NDC's genuine and concerted efforts to attract greater minority participation, however unsuccessful, stood in contrast to efforts to reach out to working-class Democrats that were limited at best. The NDC effectively wrote off the working class with the same brush stroke that had excluded the leaders of organized labor from their coalition-building plans. The dynamic between NDC caucuses and party regulars at state Democratic conventions vividly illustrated the organization's general lack of interest in engaging the concerns of working-class voters or in any other way working to overcome the social chasm that separated it from blue-collar Democrats and their representatives. With an institutional presence in well over half of the states in the union, many state NDCs wielded limited political influence, but the organizations in Connecticut, New York, Wisconsin, and other northern industrial states constituted a powerful political force.[8] Of the states where the NDC exercised substantial political power, few better embodied the social and cultural gulf between the organization and party regulars who represented working-class constituencies than Wisconsin.

At the 1969 Wisconsin Democratic Convention, an NDC majority easily steered through a resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam but encountered a chorus of vocal opposition when they tried to pass a resolution calling for a tripling of the state's tax on beer. Displaying little appreciation for the importance of the beer

---

[7] Stephen C. Schlesinger, *The New Reformers: Forces for Change in American Politics* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 4-5, 112-113, 135; Douglas E. Kneeland, "New Democratic Coalition Says It Will Seek a Wide Following," *New York Times*, November 25, 1968; Peterson and Schrade to NDC Steering Committee Members and State Affiliates, memorandum, July 22. 1969, p. 2.

[8] R.W. Apple Jr., "Coalition of 1968 Ponders Its Role," *New York Times*, February 15, 1970.

tax as either a symbolic or bread-and-butter issue, NDC delegates pushed the tax increase as a straightforward measure to balance the state's 1969-1971 budget. Party regulars, however, saw the proposed tax hike as an example of the NDC delegates' inability to relate to issues of importance to the state's blue-collar voters, urging the convention not to "deny the working man a good glass of beer for 15 or 20 cents" and declaring that "the Democratic party is the working man's party and beer is the working man's drink." Having displayed little inclination to reach out to or understand the party regulars or their working class constituents, the NDC failed to obtain the two-thirds majority necessary to pass the resolution calling for the beer tax increase.[9]

The absence of working class support and the general failure of the NDC to reach beyond a narrow middle-class base alarmed some of the ADA liberals involved in the organization. Michael Harrington, an early leader in the NDC who had become increasingly involved in the ADA in the run-up to the 1968 presidential election, insisted that the NDC had to draw support from the unionists, minorities, and poor people who would be essential to the construction of a liberal majority in the Democratic Party. In his view, it was "just as possible for middle and upper class liberals and radicals to be an isolated, self-righteous minority within the Democratic Party as well as outside of it." Speaking before an NDC conference shortly after his election as ADA national chairman, Joe Duffey, the son of a West Virginia coalminer, worried aloud that "liberalism has become an activity of the affluent for whom the concerns" of the working class and the very poor "emerge primarily in abstract terms and categories."[10]

---

[9] "Badger Dems Urge Troop Pull-Out," *St. Paul (MN) Sunday Pioneer Press*, June 15, 1969; James D. Selk, "Democrats Feather Doves' Nest," *Wisconsin State Journal*, June 15, 1969.

[10] Michael Harrington, "New Democrats Going Where the People Are," *Washington Star*, newspaper clipping, undated, Folder 30, Box 4, Eau Claire, DOP; "Duffey Scores Upset in Connecticut Race," *ADA World*,

The bulk of the NDC's leadership, however, saw little wrong with the organization's largely middle-class orientation and its lack of working-class support. The very notion of forging a coalition between the "constituency of conscience" and the "constituency of the oppressed" that guided the organizational efforts of the NDC drew on an understanding of politics with roots in the qualitative liberalism of Galbraith and Schlesinger that led them to effectively write the working class out of their plans.[11] Just as Schlesinger had presumed working class conservatism on the Vietnam War as he did on other issues that he considered to be qualitative in nature, Peterson and the other largely middle-class leaders of the NDC took for granted working class support for a war that they approached on moral and abstract rather than concrete terms. The presumption that only poor and minority Americans who suffered from the domestic spending cuts that resulted from the Vietnam War and members of the New Class whose affluence afforded them the freedom to see politics as a moral endeavor could be readily expected to oppose the war blinded NDC leaders to the widespread antiwar sentiments found among the working-class families who bore much of the brunt of the fighting. The tendency of NDC leaders—also shared by Schlesinger and other "old liberals" from the ADA—to conflate the views of labor leaders with those of the working class further reinforced their mistaken belief in strong working-class support for the war. With the conviction that the Vietnam War represented the defining issue of liberal politics and the assumption that the working class shared the benighted foreign policy perspective of labor leaders, the middle-class activists of the NDC could see no place for working-class Americans in the new liberal coalition they sought to build.

---

September 1970, 23; Joseph Duffey, "Forging a Winning Coalition," keynote speech as the New Democratic Coalition Western States Political Action Conference, p. 8, Folder 23, Box 28, M97-135, ADA.

[11] Peterson and Schrade to NDC Steering Committee Members and State Affiliates, memorandum, July 22, 1969, p. 1.

The NDC leaders who assumed that the working class had become conservative defenders of the social and political status quo as they placed their hopes for the future of liberal politics on the "constituency of conscience" and "constituency of the oppressed" ensured that when their efforts to reach out to the latter failed, the new liberal coalition they envisioned would be comprised almost exclusively of the former. Consequently, the political formation that emerged from the efforts of the NDC represented less a coalition than what Representative Bella Abzug once described as "an ethnic bloc—of white, middle-class, educated liberals."[12] Despite the limited reach of its base, the NDC became a powerful political force and established the middle-class orientation of the qualitative liberalism advanced by Galbraith and Schlesinger as an enduring characteristic of the New Politics. As the most visible and influential organized force working on behalf of the New Politics in the years following the 1968 election, the NDC provided a vehicle through which ideas developed earlier by the "old liberals" of the ADA continued to play an instrumental role in shaping the New Politics. The influence of Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" on the development of the New Politics movement would extend well beyond their contributions to its middle-class orientation as their call to reorder the nation's priorities became a rallying cry for the movement's activists.

**Reordering National Priorities**

As the 1960s drew to a close, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. declared, "Nothing has distorted United States foreign policy more in recent years than the military insistence that every other

[12] Bella Abzug quoted in Schlesinger, *The New Reformers*, 135.

interest be subordinated to their own."[13] The following month, at the opening session of the Congressional Conference on the Military Budget and National Priorities, John Kenneth Galbraith insisted, "We shall have accomplished very little if we get out of Vietnam and leave unchecked and uncontrolled the influences that were responsible for this disaster...and these bloated military budgets."[14] The sentiment behind those declarations drew on and contributed to what became a rallying a cry for liberals in the late 1960s and early 1970s: the call to reorder national priorities. Galbraith, Schlesinger, and many of their colleagues in the ADA came to call for a reordering of national priorities from military purposes to domestic needs by taking their understanding of the implications of polycentric Communism to its logical conclusion. As they constructed the intellectual foundation of the call to reorder national priorities, those "old liberals" also established themselves among the leading champions of the call and its far-reaching political agenda. Through their ideas, advocacy, and organizational work on reordering national priorities the "old liberals" of the ADA mounted a vigorous challenge to the Cold War national-security state that led elements of the New Politics movement to broaden their aims beyond the more narrow focus on the Vietnam War that had initially provided the impetus for the movement.

From the earliest days of the New Politics movement that emerged around Eugene McCarthy's 1968 challenge to President Johnson, leading voices in the ADA and the volunteers that drove the campaign insisted that their opposition to the Vietnam War did not represent preoccupation with a single issue but rather commitment to a transcendent issue with profound implications for American society. When declaring his intention to challenge

---

[13] Statement by Arthur Schlesinger Jr., National Vice Chairman of the Americans for Democratic Action, February 26, 1969, Folder 1, Box 7, M97-135, ADA.

[14] Statement of John Kenneth Galbraith at the opening session of the Congressional Conference on the Military Budget and National Priorities, March 28, 1969, p.1, Box 140, JKG.

Johnson in the Democratic primaries, McCarthy stressed the central role of the Vietnam War in "the failure to appropriate adequate funds for the poverty program here, for housing, for education and to meet other national needs."[15] Still, McCarthy's rhetoric, like that of the New Politics activists who flocked to his campaign, remained largely focused on the Vietnam War as the primary hurdle to domestic social progress. The call to reorder national priorities that gained momentum in the ADA and on the national stage after the 1968 election provided the New Politics with a powerful vocabulary with which to highlight, analyze, and challenge factors beyond the particulars of the Vietnam War that preempted the resources that could otherwise be made available for domestic social programs.

Historians have often looked to the New Left as the source of growing liberal attention to the harmful consequences of the military-industrial complex that sustained the Cold War national-security state. Doug Rossinow highlights as a representative case Texas liberals, who, he argues, criticized the military-industrial complex only so long as the New Left was there to prod them into doing so.[16] Leading figures in the ADA, however, came to their critical perspective on the military-industrial complex not as a rearguard response to the New Left but out of their understanding of what polycentric Communism meant for U.S. national security. The unmistakable dissolution of what once appeared to be a monolithic Communist bloc that had led many ADA leaders to reject the insistence of the Johnson administration that Communism needed to be reflexively contained on a global scale ultimately prompted them to question the need for the massive military establishment and budgets deemed necessary to protect the U.S. from a supposedly unified Communist threat.

When leading figures in the ADA mounted an indictment of the military-industrial

---

[15] "McCarthy Statement on Entering the 1968 Primaries," *New York Times*, December 1, 1967.

[16] Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 219.

complex in their call to reorder national priorities they drew on concerns with a national-security state seen as beholden to mistaken assumptions of an earlier period that they had been voicing for much of the decade. Speaking before the Congressional Conference on the Military Budget and National Priorities, the foundation of Galbraith's challenge to the military-industrial complex echoed the grounds on which he and other ADA liberals had long advanced their opposition to the Vietnam War. The reach and scale of the military-industrial complex, he contended, could be traced to the period of the 1950s and early 1960s when a pervasive fear of a united Communist threat compelled the nation to devote a substantial proportion of its resources to military purposes. In striking contrast with the unity that had seemed to describe the Communist world a decade earlier, Galbraith saw "a collage of bickering states living principally in fear of one another."[17] A column published in the *ADA World* later that year offered a similar line of thinking with the characterization of the nation's security apparatus and military-industrial complex as "implicitly based upon the assumption that there is a Communist monolith, stretching from the middle of Europe to the western shores of the Pacific Ocean." Conceding that the Soviet Union remained a great power and that China held the potential to become one, the column nevertheless stressed that the dangers then faced by the country were not the dangers that had seemed so threatening two decades earlier.[18]

By the late 1960s, the ADA no longer saw the Cold War national-security state as a necessary bulwark of freedom against a unified and expansionistic Communist threat but, rather, as a "Frankenstein monster" that undermined the nation's security and distorted its

---

[17] Statement of John Kenneth Galbraith at the opening session of the Congressional Conference on the Military Budget and National Priorities, p. 1.

[18] "'National Security' Revisited," *ADA World*, August-September 1969, 2.

priorities.[19] A resolution passed by the organization in 1969 charged the military-industrial complex with continually exaggerating the capabilities of the Communist nations and accelerating an arms race with the Soviet Union that imperiled the future of humanity. Bringing the implications of polycentric Communism to bear not only on the Vietnam War but also on a broader security establishment that consumed half of the federal budget, the resolution stressed that projected outlays for defense would soon climb to over $100 billion even if U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War could be quickly terminated.[20]

The 1969 resolution on the military-industrial complex passed by the ADA also indicated the ways in which the organization's recognition of changes in the international landscape had transformed its approach to domestic social progress. Whereas the ADA and its major initiatives such as the Freedom Budget had once looked to economic growth as a social panacea, the organization's searing resolution on the military-industrial complex urged a reordering of national priorities to address "the festering bitterness of poverty and discrimination, the growing alienation of our youth and black population, and the resulting spread of the cult of violence."[21] The resolution reflected the notion that in a country with national priorities grossly distorted by an expansive military-industrial complex, the reflexive anti-Communism that underpinned the policy of containment and sustained the national-security state represented a greater danger than the Communist nations themselves. Putting that view in practical terms at the Congressional Conference on the Military Budget and National Priorities, Galbraith succinctly noted that twenty years ago his fellow conferees were principally concerned with the advance of "Communist imperium" but that everyone then

---

[19] "'National Security' Revisited," 2.

[20] "The Military-Industrial Complex" in "1969 National ADA Policy," pamphlet, pp. 87-88, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA.

[21] Resolution on the Military-Industrial Complex, Adopted at the 1969 ADA Convention, 1969 ADA National Policy, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA.

sitting at the conference table with him seemed "far more alarmed about the crisis of our cities."[22]

ADA leaders acted on their understanding of the dangers to be found in the nation's distorted priorities as they came to the fore of efforts to focus liberal attention on the excesses of the Cold War national-security state through their work in the Coalition on National Priorities and Military Policy. Recently out of office as a U.S. senator from Pennsylvania in May 1969, Joseph S. Clark, a former ADA chapter chairman and long-time national board member, became chairman of the newly-formed organization that also saw extensive involvement from Edward Lippert and Leon Shull on behalf of the ADA. A coordinating body for several dozen peace, liberal, religious, and scientific organizations such as SANE, ADA, SCLC, and the Federation of American Scientists, the Coalition sought to reverse what it saw as the "militarization" of U.S. policies and resources. In its efforts to mount a broad and sustained challenge to the myriad of politicians and organizations with a vested interest in protecting the status quo of the national-security state, the Coalition exerted considerable influence on the New Politics movement by working across organizational lines.[23]

The institutional and personal links of ADA liberals were crucial to establishing the bridge between two generations of liberal activists that made the Coalition's inter-organizational work possible. The strong ADA presence among both the older establishment-type figures of the Coalition and the younger New Politics activists of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC) proved crucial to facilitating collaboration between the two

---

[22] John Kenneth Galbraith quoted in "The People versus the Pentagon" *Progressive*, June 1969, 16.

[23] "U.S. Priorities Views Sought," *Washington Sunday Star*, November 16, 1969; Coalition on National Priorities and Military Policy, memorandum, Box 11, Mss 577, Social Action Vertical File, ca. 1960-2002, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI (hereafter cited as SAVF); Meeting of the Coalition on National Priorities and Military Policy, minutes, January 22, 1970, Box 44, Series G, SANE, Inc. Records, 1957-1987 (DG 58), Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, PA (hereafter cited as SANE).

organizations. Organized by Sam Brown of the ADA and other young veterans of the McCarthy and Kennedy campaigns, the VMC initially developed its mission around the aim of building broad-based support for the political position of immediate, unilateral withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam.[24] To achieve that aim, the liberal leadership of the VMC organized a recurring "moratorium on business as usual" that would allow individuals to spend the day taking part in antiwar programs in their local community. The VMC scheduled the first day of the moratorium for October 15 and indicated that the moratorium would expand one additional day each month until the U.S. fully ended its military involvement in the Vietnam War.[25] Some 3 million people took part in antiwar activity in hundreds of locales, making the October moratorium the largest coordinated protest of any kind in the nation's history. The VMC continued that success with a two-day moratorium the following month that drew tremendous crowds and demonstrated the extent to which antiwar activism had entered the mainstream but also tapped the energy of activists and the commitment of politicians who had provided vital support. With interest for its planned three-day December moratorium waning, the VMC looked to cooperation with the Coalition on National Priorities as a key source of revitalization for its antiwar effort.[26]

Collaboration between the Coalition and the VMC took the form of organizing town hall meetings in some forty cities that visibly widened the aims of the Moratorium beyond the cause of unilateral U.S. withdrawal from the Vietnam War that had initially brought the effort

---

[24] Newsletter from the Coordinators of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, April 20, 1970, p. 1, Box 176, JKG.

[25] Memorandum from the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, 1969, p. 1, Folder 20, Box 22, M97-135, ADA.

[26] Penny Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 132; Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era*, with the assistance of Charles Chatfield (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 260, 261, 267; "Protests Planned in 40 Cities," *Washington Post*, December 7, 1969; "2 Groups Plan December Moratorium," *New York Times*, December 7, 1969.

into being. At the town hall meetings, both the young activists who had participated in the Moratorium's earlier antiwar demonstrations and the more established figures of the Coalition recognized the danger that, if left unchecked, the military-industrial complex would continue to distort national priorities regardless of the fate of the Vietnam War. The lively discussion at the meetings stretched far beyond the Vietnam War to highlight local needs, the military budget, and federal taxes.[27]

The success of the combined effort demonstrated the appeal that the far reaching and critical perspective on the Cold War national-security state espoused by the "old liberals" of the ADA and their coalition colleagues held for the young leaders of the VMC. With the Nixon administration's policy of Vietnamization beginning to diffuse the war as a political issue, the demand for unilateral withdrawal that had recently brought together antiwar liberals increasingly failed to provide an effective rallying point.[28] Finding that their own more narrowly antiwar agenda yielded diminishing enthusiasm, VMC leaders readily embraced the broader agenda that their more distinguished allies articulated with the call to reorder national priorities. While the new life breathed into the VMC by the town hall meetings could not make up for the endemic financial and organizational problems that resulted in the closure of its national office months later, the call to reorder national priorities that had attracted its young leaders and activists remained an enduring fixture of the New Politics movement. After the national office closed its doors, many of those who had been involved in the VMC joined other young activists and notable ADA figures such as John Kenneth Galbraith and Richard Goodwin to support congressional candidates committed to a reordering of national priorities

---

[27] "2 Groups Plan December Moratorium;" "Town-Meeting Fight on War Costs Asked," *Washington Post*, November 16, 1969; Anne Hebald and Robert F. Levey, "Moratorium Renewed on Smaller Scale," *Washington Post*, December 13, 1969.

[28] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 268-269.

as part of the Referendum '70 campaign. As they focused their efforts on the 1970 congressional elections, the campaign's cross-generational assemblage of activists secured the place of a variety of issues relating to the broader military and foreign policy establishment alongside the Vietnam War on the agenda of the New Politics movement.[29]

Among those issues, none better dramatized the concern of ADA liberals and their New Politics allies over distorted national priorities than the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system in the process of development and deployment at the turn of the decade. Described by Schlesinger as a "test case of the military's ability to continue to shake down Congress and the public," the proposed ABM system combined the prospect of limited protection from enemy missiles with a very real danger of escalating the arms race with Soviet Union and unparalleled federal expenditures for a new weapons system. With the view that the ABM issue represented the most important political struggle of 1970, the ADA devoted considerable resources to channeling criticism of the Nixon administration's support for the system into a broad-based campaign against excessive, wasteful, and often counter-productive military expenditures. Defeat of ABM could, in the words of ADA national director Leon Shull, "mark a tuning point, a new awareness in Congress that the defense budget is not sacrosanct."[30]

The large number of local ADA chapters that undertook the grassroots organizing necessary to make that goal possible found the ABM controversy to be a powerful issue for attracting the support of New Class activists who became the base of mass support for the effort. Many who became involved in the anti-ABM effort worried about the effects proposed

---

[29] Memorandum from Sam Brown, David Hawk, David Mixner, and Marge Sklencar, co-coordinators of the VMC, April 20, 1970, Box 176, JKG; James Doyle, "Political Coalition is Formed By Peace, Welfare Forces," *Washington Star*, January 5, 1970.

[30] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to John Kenneth Galbraith, March 4, 1969, p. 1, Folder 2, Box 49, AMS; Leon Shull, "Staff Report, ADA in 1970," memorandum, January 14, 1971, pp. 5-6, Folder 17, Box 9, M97-135, ADA; Edward Lippert, Foreign Policy Specialist, memorandum, May 9, 1969, Box 494, JKG; Leon Shull, "Beyond Politics: ABM Significance," *ADA World*, May 1969, 2W.

ABM sites would have on their property values, tax rates, television reception or other local concerns expressed by the cry against "bombs in the backyard." Some based their opposition on the tremendous funding required by the system that might otherwise be put to use for domestic social purposes while others cast the issue in moral terms that stressed the increased dangers of nuclear warfare. Whatever their reason for joining the struggle against the ABM system, New Class activists sustained the anti-ABM efforts of the ADA and similar campaigns directed by a variety of peace and scientific organizations that were instrumental in prompting substantial opposition in the U.S. Senate to a major weapons system for the first time in twenty years. Although the vote to halt funding and deployment of the ABM system fell short by one vote, the opposition of fully half the Senate to the system legitimized searching questions concerning the nature of the military-industrial complex and size of the total defense budget.[31] Reflecting concerns that the "old liberals" of the ADA had been raising since the early 1960s, those questions provided an intellectual foundation for the call to reorder national priorities and initiated a broadening in the outlook of the New Politics movement that would ultimately encompass far more than the foreign policy issues that had once defined it.

**Social Democracy, Qualitative Liberalism, and "Identity Politics"**

Arthur Schlesinger Jr. famously and provocatively declared in 1956 that the quantitative liberalism of the New Deal had secured the necessities of living—"a job, a square

[31] Lily Geismer, *Don't Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 134-138; Thomas A. Halsted, "Lobbying Against the ABM, 1967-1970," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 27, no. 4 (April 1971): 26, 28; "Close ABM Vote Foretells Tough Battles Ahead For Military, Renewed Attacks on ABM, Other Items," *ADA World*, August-September 1969, 1; Warren Weaver Jr., "Nixon Missile Plan Wins in Senate By a 51-50 Vote; House Approval Likely," *New York* Times, August 7, 1969. The struggle over ABM in the Senate ultimately centered on an amendment that would have halted the Safeguard system then in the process of being deployed and prohibited the deployment of other "advanced" ABM systems. Since Senate rules meant that the tie 50-50 vote would defeat the proposed amendment to the military authorization bill, Vice President Spiro Agnew's decision to cast a tiebreaking vote amounted to an unnecessary, symbolic gesture.

meal, a suit of clothes, and a roof"—for such a great many people that liberals should be able "to count that fight won and move on to the more subtle and complicated problem of fighting for individual dignity, identity, and fulfillment in a mass society."[32] The confidence in the reach of material prosperity found in that statement would later seem misplaced after the civil rights movement vividly awakened Schlesinger and his ADA colleagues to just how many Americans lacked the basic material necessities of life.

The civil rights movement also led ADA liberals to see the struggle for individual dignity, identity, and fulfillment not as the prerogative of middle-class whites but as something to which all Americans should be enabled to aspire. ADA liberals in the wake of the civil rights movement increasingly recognized that the marginalization of a variety of social groups greatly impeded the search for personal identity and dignity among the individuals who comprised those groups. Synthesizing the social democratic values of the New Deal that addressed material well being with the aims of individual identity and dignity called for by qualitative liberalism, the ADA advanced a politics of race, gender, and sexuality in the late 1960s and early 1970s that demanded the extension of an expansive social citizenship to a variety of marginalized social groups. That notion of social citizenship insisted that as members of the American polity, African Americans, homosexuals, Latinos, women, and other social groups that had been long excluded from full participation in the social, political, and economic life of the nation had a right to both their own distinctive culture, lifestyle, or identity as well an adequate level of material and economic security.

Attention to the issues of race, gender, and sexuality have been frequently derided with the pejorative label of "identity politics" and associated with trends in the New Left. However,

---

[32] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The Challenge of Abundance," *Reporter*, May 3, 1956, 9.

the politics of race, gender, and sexuality that became an integral component of the New Politics and entered mainstream Democratic politics in the 1970s had far more in common with the synthesis of social Democratic values and qualitative liberalism seen in the ADA than developments in the radical left. Important figures from the early-1960s era of the New Left such as Todd Gitlin have located the origins of "identity politics" in what they describe as the descent of the New Left from the universalist aims of its early years to the dispersion and separatism that characterized the movement after the late 1960s.[33] While those tendencies in the New Left encouraged a form of "identity politics" that would have long-term impacts on American society and politics—particularly in the academy—the politics of race, gender, and sexuality that proved so controversial for the Democratic Party in the early 1970s drew far more heavily on the social democratic outlook and perspective of qualitative liberalism cultivated by the ADA than the separatist ethos of the New Left in its later years.[34] Unlike the New Left in its twilight years, the politics of race, gender, and sexuality articulated by the ADA, the New Politics movement, and, ultimately, the Democratic Party did not represent a vehicle for separatism but rather an understanding that differences had to be recognized to make social inclusion possible.

With their long but frequently wavering commitment to social democratic values reawakened by the civil rights movement, ADA liberals sought the extension of a comprehensive social citizenship that would provide material security for individuals from marginalized social groups as a first step towards facilitating the social inclusion of all Americans. Jonathan Bell has shown that the idea of state-sponsored economic and social citizenship that gained ascendency in California in the postwar period led the way to what has

[33] For example, see Todd Gitlin, "The Rise of Identity Politics," *Dissent*, Spring 1993, 175-176; Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995).

[34] Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 243.

come to be termed "identity politics" as it coalesced with the "rights revolution" ushered in by the civil rights movement.[35] The politics of race, gender, and sexuality advanced by leading figures of the ADA who had cut their teeth on the New Deal and continued to hold stature and influence at the national level makes clear that the path from the New Deal to "identity politics" via the civil rights movement identified by Bell was not unique to California.

The impact of the civil rights movement on the ADA went far beyond the pressing concerns of material insecurity and economic inequality. The civil rights movement also transformed how the ADA articulated the struggle for individual identity and dignity that had taken hold in the organization in the 1950s as leading figures increasingly came to see that social inclusion required not only the material security provided by New Deal-type programs but also public affirmation of the characteristics that made marginalized social groups and the individuals who comprised them unique. By the late 1960s, ADA liberals demonstrated a growing awareness that the ability of individuals from marginalized social groups to establish their own identity and dignity often depended on the status and recognition of the social groups to which they belonged. Recognition of and support for the diversity of social groups in the U.S. provided one answer to concerns with the conformist pressures of mass society that had initially inspired Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" from the ADA to develop and advance a liberalism that did not limit itself to material and economic concerns.

A range of policy resolutions passed by the ADA in the late 1960s and early 1970s on issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation demonstrated the clear trajectory of the organization towards identification with an inclusive social citizenship that would recognize and encourage the diverse identities of long marginalized social groups. The far-reaching

---

[35] Jonathan Bell, *California Crucible: The Forging of Modern Liberalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), esp. 5-6, 164-165, 196, 279-280.

resolutions also demonstrated a newfound awareness among ADA liberals of the unique hurdles that prevented individuals from those social groups from enjoying the full rights of social citizenship. One of those resolutions, a statement on Mexican Americans passed in 1970, registered the ADA's growing recognition that civil rights in the U.S. was not an issue that involved only blacks and whites. In a lengthy resolution that highlighted the high rates of unemployment and poverty in the Chicano population, the ADA called for reform of public education to make it more responsive to the needs of Mexican Americans and highlighted the particular importance of developing effective bi-lingual and bi-cultural education programs.[36] With implications that stretched far beyond the confines of education policy, the ADA's support for bi-lingual and bi-cultural education reflected a wider commitment in the organization to the rights of Chicanos both to their own distinctive culture and the entitlements that came with American social citizenship. That dual right would be articulated more fully three years later with a resolution that stressed the inequities faced not only by Chicanos but also by the broader Latino population. In unequivocal terms, the ADA insisted that Latinos had the right to unfettered access to public education, social services and other benefits of social citizenship on terms that would not hinder them from "asserting their cultural identity both as a composite group and as separate ethnic groups."[37]

Resolutions passed by the ADA on the rights of gays and lesbians in the late 1960s and early 1970s demonstrated a similar albeit ultimately more limited commitment to encouraging social diversity through recognition of marginalized groups and affirming the right of the individuals who comprised them to the full benefits of social citizenship. The ADA's first

---

[36] "Mexican Americans" in "1970 National ADA Policy," pamphlet, pp. 6-7, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA.

[37] "United States Latinos" in "1973 National ADA Policy," pamphlet, pp. 149-150, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA.

resolution pertaining to the rights of homosexuals in 1968 simply established their right not to be arrested by declaring that the private sexual activity of consenting adults was not an appropriate matter for criminal or legal sanctions. Three years later, the organization began to call for state action to protect the rights of gays and lesbians with the insistence that all antidiscrimination laws on the books be extended to include discrimination against homosexuals. In 1973, the ADA passed a resolution that expressed a more inclusive notion of social citizenship as it spelled out the rights of gays and lesbians with greater specificity. Although the resolution failed to mention marriage for same-sex couples and other important civil rights that would be needed to establish the full rights of social citizenship, it put forward what represented an advanced position on the rights of gays and lesbians in the context of mainstream politics in the early 1970s. Reflecting the insistence that discriminatory notions of normative social behavior that excluded homosexuals should not determine the scope of social citizenship, however circumscribed that notion of social citizenship was, the resolution affirmed "the right of gay Americans to their lifestyle and support measures to extend to them unobstructed opportunity to achieve their full potential as human beings."[38]

Far more approachable on the national political stage than gay and lesbian rights—though still highly contentious in its own right—the struggle for women's rights offered the ADA an avenue to more fully and forcefully champion its vision for inclusive and comprehensive social citizenship through vigorous state action. In 1970, the ADA passed its first resolution that specifically addressed women's rights with a statement that recognized that women in the U.S. had been "relegated to second class citizenship" and called for

---

[38] "Civil Liberties and Sexual Practices," in "1968 National ADA Policy," pamphlet, p. 7, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA; "Civil Liberties and Sexual Practices" in "1971 National ADA Policy," pamphlet, p. 21, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA; "Gay Rights, Civil Liberties and Sexual Practices" in "1973 National ADA Policy," p. 132, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA.

"political, economic, and social equality between the sexes." In order to extend the full benefits of social citizenship to women, the resolution demanded the establishment of a range of positive rights to be made possible by robust state action. From the establishment of free child care centers and nursery schools available to all parents regardless of marital status to the right of a woman to return to her job after childbirth without loss of disability credits or seniority, the ADA sought state action in a variety of new areas to begin the process of leveling the playing field between women and men.[39]

Resolutions on women's rights passed in the following years articulated a view of positive rights that reflected the ADA's growing belief in the need for affirmative action programs to ensure not only equal opportunities but also greater participation and achievement for women and other marginalized social groups. In 1972, the ADA urged political parties to take affirmative action to include women throughout party hierarchies in proportion to their numbers in the general population. The following year, the organization called on colleges and universities to develop and implement affirmative action programs to provide equal opportunity and representation for women among students and faculty.[40] Polarizing in the greater arena of Democratic and liberal politics, affirmative action programs attracted widespread support among ADA liberals who increasingly saw them as essential to fostering diversity and extending the benefits of social citizenship to individuals from marginalized groups who had never before enjoyed its fruits.

Calls for affirmative action programs appeared in a variety of resolutions passed by the ADA on issues of race and gender in the early 1970s but found their most comprehensive

---

[39] "Women's Rights" in "1970 National ADA Policy," pamphlet, pp, 8-9, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA.
[40] "Women's Rights" in "1972 National ADA Policy," pamphlet, p. 17, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA; Women's Rights" in "1973 National ADA Policy," pamphlet, p. 131, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA.

formulation in the Minority Advancement Plan (MAP) developed by John Kenneth Galbraith with MIT economics professors Edwin Kuh and Lester Thurow. Noting that the worst discrimination in employment occurred not at the entry level but in the upper-level positions where white males held a "virtually complete monopoly," the economists detailed a plan which would require the Federal government and any company employing 2,000 people or more to bring the distribution of women and minorities within its salary hierarchy into reasonable conformity with the representation of such groups in the labor force of the surrounding area. The MAP excepted the top three executive positions in each company and provided an extended period for compliance but would apply to the institutions that accounted for well over half of all the goods and services produced by the U.S. economy. Accepting that the plan would inevitably engender hostility on the part of some white males, Galbraith, Kuh, and Thurow insisted nevertheless on mandated demographic targets as necessary to ensure both diverse representation in upper-level jobs and the right of all Americans to the full benefits of social citizenship.[41]

Despite a few token objections, the MAP found a receptive audience in the ADA. During initial discussions of the MAP at an ADA National Board meeting, David Cohen expressed his view that the plan was exclusionary and proposed that it be made to apply to all ethnic groups. Writing to Leon Shull after the board meeting, Galbraith displayed little patience for what he saw as Cohen's failure to understand the need or purpose for the plan. There was "no formula for making it useless," Galbraith charged, "that is quite so certain as having it apply to all ethnic groups." In his estimation, "one simply has to say that blacks, Puerto Ricans and women are a special problem." Shull agreed, offering his opinion that

[41] John Kenneth Galbraith, Edwin Kuh, and Lester Thurow, "The Minority Advancement Plan: A Practical Proposal for Breaking the Monopoly of Good Jobs by White Males," Folder 37, Box 1, M97-135, ADA; ADA Staff to Executive Committee, "Summary of Map," memorandum, Box 494, JKG.

Cohen, "who is a consistently very sensible man, in this instance at least is being absurd." Unswayed by Cohen's concerns, the ADA endorsed the MAP and set about getting a bill introduced in Congress.[42] Although the MAP ultimately failed to receive a hearing in Congress, the plan indicated an understanding of affirmative action that demonstrated how ADA liberals had come to see support for social diversity and recognition of the challenges faced by various social groups not as an expression of separatism or balkanized politics but as a necessary means of social inclusion.

Not confined to the ADA, the notion that social inclusion depended on recognizing the unique circumstances and differences of a variety of groups long pushed to the margins of society found its most visible expression during the period in the 1972 Democratic Party platform. A sizable contingent of ADA liberals as delegates at the 1972 Democratic National Convention played some role in the inclusion of a plank on "the right to be different, to maintain a cultural or ethnic heritage or lifestyle, without being forced into a compelled homogeneity" in the party platform. Still, the striking similarities between the resolutions passed by the ADA in the preceding years and the articulation of the rights of African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, women, the elderly, the young, and other marginalized social groups in the party platform did not simply reflect the direct influence of ADA liberals at the convention so much as the degree to which the perspective that suffused those resolutions had also come to define the political outlook of liberals more broadly.[43] Ultimately, the clear presence of the idea that social inclusion required recognition of

---

[42] ADA National Board Meeting, minutes, October 16 and 17, 1971, p. 6, Folder 29, Box 10, M97-135, ADA; John Kenneth Galbraith to Leon Shull, November 5, 1971, Folder 37, Box 1, M97-135, ADA; Leon Shull to John Kenneth Galbraith, November 11, 1971, Folder 37, Box 1, M97-135, ADA; Leon Shull to John Kenneth Galbraith, September 29, 1971, Folder 37, Box 1, M97-135, ADA; "Goals and Time Tables" in "1973 National ADA Policy," pamphlet, p. 111, Folder 1, Box 35, M97-135, ADA.

[43] *For the People: The Platform of the Democratic Party, 1972* (Washington, D.C.: Democratic Party, 1972); "ADA—Its 26th Year," p. 1, Folder 3, Box 18, M97-135, ADA.

difference in the 1972 Democratic Party platform owed as much to sweeping party reforms as to its hold on the minds of liberal activists. Through their intellectual and organizational contributions, the ADA and its "old liberals" deeply involved themselves in a process of party reform that would bring the views they had brought to bear on the New Politics movement to a new and more prominent stage.

**Party Reform, New Class Ascendency, and the McGovern Campaign**

When the overwhelming majority of the 700 delegates at the 1972 ADA National Convention voted by a show of hands to endorse George McGovern for the Democratic presidential nomination, they could relish the rising prospects of a major party candidate whose politics were closer to the priorities and political outlook of their organization than at any other point in its history. The ADA's endorsement hailed McGovern "as one of the first men in American public life to warn against escalation in Vietnam" but also made clear that he was not a one-issue candidate. McGovern, the endorsement stressed, had "been at the forefront of campaigns for welfare reform and a guaranteed annual income, for racial justice, for civil liberties, for women's rights, for amnesty, for environmental protection, for adequate benefits to Vietnam veterans, for helping the cities."[44] Less than three months later, McGovern overcame the long odds his campaign had initially faced when he secured the Democratic presidential nomination at the party's national convention in Miami. Made possible by far-reaching reforms in the Democratic Party that that greatly increased the influence of New Class voters and activists in party politics, McGovern's rapid rise breathed new life into the New Politics movement that had rallied to his long-shot campaign. By leading the way in the

[44] "ADA Endorses McGovern," *ADA World*, June 1972, 3; "A.D.A. Backs McGovern, Bars Humphrey Rebuff," *New York Times*, April 24, 1972; "Endorsement Resolution," *ADA World*, June 1972, 3.

effort to enforce those reforms and helping to legitimize the New Class ascendency expected to result from them, the ADA and its "old liberals" provided valuable support for a party reform process that enabled the McGovern campaign to bring a New Politics movement they had been instrumental in shaping to the highest stage of presidential politics.

The process of party reform that paved the way for the successes achieved by the McGovern campaign began when ADA liberals and their New Politics allies managed to push through a motion at the 1968 Democratic National Convention to establish a party reform commission. Though they failed in their efforts to derail Hubert Humphrey's nomination and pass a "peace plank" that dissented from the Johnson administration's policy on the Vietnam War, those reformers succeeded in committing the Democratic Party to a process of party reform with far greater implications for the future of the party and American politics than many of the party regulars who had gone along with the plan realized at the time. Chaired initially by McGovern and later by Donald Fraser, the commission acted on a mandate from the 1968 convention to open up the party to greater participation. Among the myriad of policies adopted by the McGovern-Fraser commission to carry out that mandate, two new requirements fundamentally transformed the procedures and composition of the Democratic Party. First, African Americans, women, and youth would have to be represented among a state's delegates at the 1972 convention in "reasonable relationship" to their numbers in the demographic makeup of the state. Second, state central committees would be able to appoint no more than 10 percent of convention delegates, making primary elections or open party caucuses a necessity for many states.[45]

---

[45] Byron E. Shafer, *Quiet Revolution: The Struggle for the Democratic Party and the Shaping of Post-Reform Politics* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983), 35-40; Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 51-55. Despite its

The ADA quickly became a major force of support for the sweeping reforms mandated by the McGovern-Fraser commission. Acting on its commitment to an inclusive politics of race and gender, the ADA established a task force that became one of the most significant bodies outside the Democratic Party in the effort to ensure that state parties complied with the new demographic requirements for delegate representation.[46] Though encouraged by the demographic requirements mandated by the McGovern-Fraser commission, the ADA remained unconvinced as to the degree to which they would be acted upon and formed the 1972 Convention Task Force in the spring of 1971 to oversee delegate selection procedures in both major parties. Nominally charged with acting as a watchdog for both parties, the task force, in practice, concentrated its efforts on the Democratic Party, which had made a much stronger commitment to fundamental reform. With 1972 looming and numerous states failing to comply with the requirements of the McGovern-Fraser commission—particularly those concerning the demographic representation of delegates—the ADA charged the task force with compelling adherence to the reform measures through all available means. By taking legal action in the courts, working with official party reform commissions, and mounting credentials challenges at the 1972 Democratic National Convention, the ADA hoped to ensure compliance among state parties with the McGovern-Fraser reforms.[47]

The new demographic requirements stipulated by the McGovern-Fraser commission and the ADA's efforts to ensure that they became reality profoundly altered the demographic composition of the delegates at the 1972 Democratic National Convention but the greater lasting impact on the direction of Democratic and liberal politics came from reforms that

---

age, Shafer's book remains the definitive study of the reform of the Democratic Party between 1968 and 1972 and lasting legacies of the party reform process.

[46] Shafer, *Quiet Revolution*, 413-414, 420, 473.

[47] "ADA Works for Party Reform," *ADA World*, September 1971, 1, 16.

expanded the influence of New Class liberals in the party.[48] Foremost among the reforms that bolstered the political clout of the well-educated middle-class individuals who comprised the New Class were the far-reaching changes to the delegate selection process mandated by the McGovern-Fraser commission. Political scientist Byron Shafer has shown that the implementation of a participatory model that required more states to use primaries and open caucuses for the selection of delegates created opportunities for mass participation that shifted the balance of power from the party's blue-collar constituency to its white-collar voters. According to Shafer, the *opportunity* for direct participation also amounted to a *requirement* of participation if individuals sought to wield influence. Since levels of participation in primary elections, caucuses, and party conventions have always varied according to social background—with those of greater education and income far more likely to participate—the implementation of an extensively participatory process of delegate selection amplified the influence of white-collar, New Class Democrats whose numbers had grown significantly over the preceding decades but who, nevertheless, still constituted a minority of the party. With organized labor, urban machines, and other institutions traditionally seen as representatives of the working class no longer able to exercise power by uncontested means, the opportunity arose for highly motivated New Class activists to direct the party towards their concerns and interests.[49]

---

[48] Ultimately, the widespread use of primaries and open party caucuses necessitated by the reforms of the McGovern-Fraser Commission largely survived efforts to rollback party reform in the Democratic Party in the wake of its 1972 National Convention, while the demographic requirements implemented by the commission were weakened or eliminated entirely. Those efforts led to the removal of mandatory demographic requirements for African Americans, women, and youth derided by critics as quotas and the establishment of new reforms that retained many of the measures that had necessitated more participatory methods of delegate selection, but restored some of the power party officials had lost with the implementation of the McGovern-Fraser reforms. For more on the lasting legacies of the McGovern-Fraser Commission and subsequent efforts to scale back its reforms see William Crotty, *Party Reform* (New York: Longman, 1983), 63-100.

[49] Shafer, *Quiet Revolution*, 131, 530-531; Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010), 88-89.

Unlike the declared goal of increasing female, minority, and youth representation, the enhanced New Class influence that resulted from the McGovern-Fraser reforms was never a stated aim of party reform but was clearly recognized by those following the reform process as the likely outcome. In the spring of 1969, some months before the McGovern-Fraser commission announced its major reforms, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. convened a conference at the City University of New York that brought together other ADA liberals, historians, political scientists, and politicians to discuss the issues of party reform. Over the course of a wide-ranging discussion, Schlesinger suggested that the growing demand for participation be seen as "a push by a certain group, namely, certain educated middle-class suburbanites who want to have a position of influence in party politics." A few months after attending the conference, former ADA national chairman Samuel Beer reflected on what he had seen at the regional hearings of the McGovern-Fraser commission in major cities across the country. The virtual absence of party regulars, organized labor, and other traditional components of the Democratic Party at the hearings made clear to Beer that party reform was "really a suburban, white, middle-class movement" with clear indications as to what direction the reforms would take and who would be most likely to benefit from them.[50]

The prospect that the McGovern-Fraser reforms would align the Democratic Party with the interests of its New Class minority worried Beer and others who had receded into the background of or parted ways with the ADA in the preceding years, but represented a positive development from the perspective of those then at the helm of the organization. ADA leaders who sought greater influence for white-collar, middle-class liberals in Democratic Party politics took great pains to legitimize the expanded political influence the New Class stood to

[50] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "Can We Improve Our Method of Nominating Presidential Candidates?," notes for conference talk at C.U.N.Y., May 10, 1969, p. 5, Folder 6, Box 413, AMS; Samuel Beer quoted in Shafer, *Quiet Revolution*, 129.

gain from party reform by stressing the moral qualities of those who comprised its ranks. By the late 1960s, many of those ADA leaders had come to see the New Class as the primary base for a "constituency of conscience" with concerns derived less from their own material self-interest than moral opposition to the Vietnam War, the military-industrial complex, entrenched gender and racial inequality, and other sources of social injustice. A leading proponent of the "constituency of conscience" in the ADA, Schlesinger consistently depicted the well-educated individuals of the New Class from which it drew its strength as better attuned to the pressing moral problems of American society than their working-class counterparts.[51]

Even Michael Harrington, a socialist long committed to the politics of class, became a vocal champion of the "constituency of conscience" both within the ADA and in the broader political world. Drawing on the recent work of David Bazelon, Daniel Bell, and John Kenneth Galbraith on the New Class, Harrington extoled the potential of the "constituency of conscience" in his influential 1968 book, *Toward a Democratic Left*. The "constituency of conscience," according to Harrington, drew from a New Class that was comprised not of the typically conservative "old middle class of small-property owners and entrepreneurs" but the growing number of "scientists, technicians, teachers and professionals in the public sector" who were inclined towards a liberal political outlook. In an increasingly post-industrial society, Harrington believed that it was possible that the economy would create a social structure that vastly enlarged a "constituency of conscience" driven by a "non-material interest in basic change."[52]

---

[51] For example, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Crisis of Confidence: Ideas, Power, and Violence in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 248-249.

[52] Michael Harrington, *Toward a Democratic Left: A Radical Program for a New* Majority (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 266, 282-291. *Toward a Democratic Left* expanded on many of the ideas originally advanced in Harrington's widely read 1967 article for the *Village Voice*. See Michael Harrington, "The New Middle Class: Whose Camp Is It In?," *Village Voice*, June 1, 1967. For insight into the influence of Galbraith's work on how

ADA liberals who shared Harrington's enthusiasm for the "constituency of conscience" sought to further legitimize party reforms expected to increase New Class influence by framing those reforms not as the means for a power grab by an unrepresentative minority but as a legitimate response to ostensibly inevitable forces. At the conference he convened on party reform, Schlesinger portrayed reforms likely to disproportionately benefit New Class Democrats as the culmination of a democratizing trend towards participation in presidential primaries that had been growing since World War II. According to Schlesinger, the moral cause of greater intraparty democracy that had put that trend into motion was reinforced and accelerated by rapid technological progress. From television coverage that put politicians in the homes of voters to sophisticated and widely publicized public opinion polls that greatly reduced the ability of political bosses to control the party, he highlighted the effect of technology on politics as transformative in its democratizing impact. In the face of a legitimate and popular demand for greater responsiveness in party politics made all the more inevitable by advances in technology, Schlesinger declared it futile to "think that anyone in any place can very long resist the forces tending to democratize party procedures."[53]

Galbraith imbued the push for party reform with a similar sense of inevitability in his depictions of the circumstances that had given rise to the initiative. According to Galbraith, the New Politics movement and its collision with the traditional brokers of political power at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago brought to light the concerns of individuals who felt that "ineluctably and without recourse, their lives are being made subordinate to organization." Such tension, Galbraith maintained, was inescapable in an advanced industrial economy dependent on the contributions of the New Class. On the one hand, he noted,

---

Harrington approached the New Class see his review of *The New Industrial State*, Michael Harrington, "Liberalism According to Galbraith," *Commentary*, October, 1967, 77-83.

[53] Schlesinger, "Can We Improve Our Method of Nominating Presidential Candidates?," pp. 6-9.

successful operation of an advanced economy required organization and discipline. On the other hand, the functioning of such economies called for a large New Class with an educational and intellectual background that stirred critical thought and skepticism.[54] Whether they emphasized a natural desire for greater democracy in party politics, ongoing technological progress, or the tensions inherent to all advanced industrial societies, Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other leading figures in the ADA were keen for the forces that drove party reform to be seen as both legitimate and inevitable.

The reforms ultimately adopted by the McGovern-Fraser commission resulted in a composition of delegates at the 1972 Democratic National Convention that confirmed widely held presumptions that party reform would enable a far more instrumental role for New Class liberals in the party. A survey conducted by the *Washington Post* showed that 39 percent of the delegates at the convention held postgraduate degrees in contrast to the less than 4 percent of people in the U.S. who had undertaken any form of postgraduate work. The survey also demonstrated the impressive advances made in making the Democratic Party more open and inclusive since its 1968 convention: twice as many African Americans, four times as many women, far more young delegates, and fully 80 percent of the delegates attending a political convention for the first time. Still, the survey also made clear that those newcomers tended to have far more education and income than most in their respective demographic groups.[55]

Before its prominent display at the 1972 Democratic National Convention, the New Class ascendency enabled by party reform sustained McGovern's campaign throughout the primary season and established the South Dakota senator as the leading candidate for the

---

[54] John Kenneth Galbraith, "American Politics: The New Context," Princeton, NJ, December 2, 1968, pp. 1, 6-10, Folder 36, Box 1, M97-135, ADA.

[55] Haynes Johnson, "A Portrait of Democrats' New Delegate," *Washington Post*, July 8, 1972.

Democratic presidential nomination.[56] Confirming political trends that Galbraith and Schlesinger had begun to identify in the 1950s, McGovern's success in the 1972 Democratic primaries unmistakably signaled the shift of the Democratic Party toward a new center in the suburbs and among the white-collar voters of the New Class. By connecting opposition to the Vietnam War and the military industrial-complex to the economy, poverty, racial inequality, and a variety of social and quality-of-life concerns, McGovern attracted widespread support from the growing ranks of the New Class. The overwhelmingly white-collar, middle class NDC played a critical role in transforming McGovern from an outsider with little hope of winning the nomination into a genuine contender. The NDC's organization of pre-primary conventions that endorsed and then worked for McGovern's candidacy unified liberal support behind his campaign and proved decisive to his primary victories in a number of key states. Strong support for McGovern from the NDC in New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and elsewhere convinced Schlesinger that McGovern was the clear "heir of the Kennedy and McCarthy efforts, the New Politics of 1968."[57]

McGovern's success in securing the Democratic presidential nomination ensured the lasting impact of the New Politics movement that had coalesced around his campaign by taking that movement beyond the Democratic primaries and into the high-stakes politics of the general election. The New Politics movement that entered presidential politics through the McGovern campaign owed much to the ideas of the "old liberals" of the ADA and the organizational work they and their younger colleagues had taken on over the preceding years. Belief in the liberal potential of the New Class, broad criticism of the Cold War national-

---

[56] Bruce Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment: The McGovern Insurgency and the Identity Crisis of the Democratic Party* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 69.

[57] Geismer, *Don't Blame Us*, 149, 150; Schlesinger, *The New Reformers*, 119; Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The Case for George McGovern," *New Republic*, February 26, 1972, 17.

security state, and a politics of race, gender, and sexuality that recognized difference to facilitate social inclusion contributed to the development of a New Politics movement that in 1972 had far broader concerns and aims than the one that had emerged in opposition to the Vietnam War policies of Lyndon Johnson in the 1968 Democratic primaries. The rapid ascent and devastating loss of the McGovern campaign and the New Politics movement in 1972 prompted an organized response with a political impact every bit as far-reaching and lasting as that of the New Politics.

**The Neoconservative Response**

Exactly one month after George McGovern's landslide defeat to Richard Nixon, the newly formed Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM) launched itself with a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* containing the plea, "Come Home, Democrats." Turning the "Come Home, America" theme from McGovern's acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in Miami on its head, the CDM manifesto marked a new era in neoconservative politics as it urged Democrats to return the party "to the great tradition through which it had come to represent the wishes and hopes of a majority of the American people." Spurned by McGovern, the "great tradition" celebrated by the CDM rested on commitment to a vigorous and internationalist foreign policy posture, economic growth, law and order, equal opportunity, and bread-and-butter economic issues.[58] The disaffected Democrats who comprised the CDM were neither the first neoconservatives nor the sole representatives of neoconservatism in the 1970s. They were, however, the first to move neoconservatism from the pages of intellectual journals such as *The Public Interest* into

[58] "Come Home, Democrats," *New York Times*, December 7, 1972; "Come Home, Democrats," *Washington Post*, December 7, 1972.

the thick of major party politics and quickly became the most visible and consequential of neoconservatives during the period. Neoconservatism has been characterized primarily as a response to the New Left by both neoconservatives themselves and many of the historians who have examined its origins.[59] While the neoconservatism that animated the CDM developed in reaction to a diverse range of developments, including the New Left, it was prompted far less by the politics of the radical left than the transformation of liberal politics ushered in by a New Politics movement that owed much to the ideas advanced and actions taken by the ADA and its "old liberals" over the preceding decades.

In its efforts to reverse the ascendency of the New Politics in the Democratic Party, the CDM assembled an impressive array of high-profile figures. The appointment of Hubert Humphrey, a founding member and former national chairman of the ADA, alongside the ardent liberal Cold Warrior Henry "Scoop" Jackson as honorary co-chairmen provided the nascent organization with valuable name recognition. Max Kampelman, Penn Kemble, Jean Kirkpatrick, Richard Schifter, Ben Wattenberg and others with close ties to the presidential campaigns of those two standard bearers of Cold War liberalism carried out the bulk of the initial organizing work for the CDM. The list of signatories to the CDM's manifesto included many prominent figures with intellectuals such as Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Seymour Martin Lipset, Michael Novak, and Norman Podhoretz, political advisers such as Zbigniew Brzezinski and Midge Decter, and union leaders such as Albert Shanker and Louis Stulberg.

---

[59] For examples of writers who describe their own turn to neoconservatism principally as a response to the New Left see Podhoretz, *Breaking Ranks*, esp. 306-311; Ben J. Wattenberg, *Fighting Words: A Tale of How Liberals Created Neo-Conservatism* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2008), esp. 77, 110, 137, 146, 219.
For examples of historians who emphasize the New Left as an impetus for neoconservatism see Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Origins of a Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), esp. 46-51; John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1994* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 35-45; Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010), esp. 4, 43-46, 86-90. Unlike Steinfels and Ehrman, Vaïsse's portrayal of neoconservatism as largely a response to the New Left—particularly in his treatment of the CDM—owes much to a fundamental failure to adequately distinguish the New Politics from the New Left.

With the bulk of the cost for publishing the full-page manifesto paid for by union contributions, the involvement of labor leaders proved especially crucial to getting the CDM off the ground.[60]

The CDM also represented a natural destination for those who had become disillusioned with the ADA when the organization became a leading force in the New Politics movement after its endorsement of Eugene McCarthy in 1968. The membership of the CDM featured a striking number of individuals formerly or still nominally associated with the ADA. In its earliest days, Bayard Rustin and former ADA national chairman John Roche served on the organizing committee that brought the CDM together and charted its future. By the mid-1970s, the CDM had attracted Hyman Bookbinder, Leon Keyserling, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Paul Seabury, and others who could lay claim to long histories with the ADA.[61]

Whether or not they came to the CDM by way of the ADA, many in the nascent organization looked to the ADA as a model for an effective political organization despite significant differences between the nature and purpose of the two organizations. Unlike the ADA, the CDM exhibited no ambivalence as to whether it should develop into a small, elite organization along the lines of the Fabian Society or into a mass political organization. Decidedly choosing the former, the CDM never attempted to organize local chapters and relied instead on the influence wielded by its small number of well-connected members. The steadfast commitment of the early ADA to global Communist containment and the organization's success in influencing Democratic and liberal politics, however, served as an important source of inspiration for the CDM. When Kampelman, Kemble, Schifter,

---

[60] Wattenberg, *Fighting Words*, 138; "Come Home, Democrats;" Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 90, 93.
[61] "Come Home, Democrats;" Justin Vaïsse, "Complete List of CDM Members and Directors (1972-1992)," *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* – Companion Website to the Book, http://neoconservatism.vaisse.net/doku.php?id=complete_list_of_cdm_members_and_directors_1972-1992 (accessed November 14, 2015).

Wattenberg, and others met at the 1972 Democratic National Convention to discuss the formation of the CDM—a conversation that would be kept secret until after the election so as to avoid accusations of undermining the McGovern campaign—they envisioned the CDM as waging an ideological battle along the lines of the one once carried out by the ADA. Wattenberg described the initial idea for the CDM as stemming from a conversation with Richard Scammon in which his collaborator on *The Real Majority* suggested the need for "a new ADA" to counter the growing influence of New Politics. Scammon and Wattenberg believed that the ADA had come to espouse many of the same tendencies in liberal politics that the organization had derided in its formative years when it came into existence in opposition to Henry Wallace's supporters in the Progressive Party. From their perspective, "the ADA had bought into far too much of the countercultural, pro-Vietnamese, and neoisolationist ideas of the New Politics." [62]

Scammon and Wattenberg's characterization of the ADA and the New Politics as on the side of the counterculture and Vietnamese Communists was typical of neoconservative efforts to intentionally conflate the New Politics and the New Left. Beginning with the declaration in its manifesto that "the voices of common-sense liberals have been barely audible in the blare of the New Politics," the CDM frequently identified the New Politics as its primary target. While the CDM often attached the New Politics label to the politics that it stood in opposition to, much of the rhetoric from the organization and its leading voices exhibited a determined effort to diminish the differences between the New Politics and the New Left. When Podhoretz and Wattenberg detailed their respective paths from liberalism to neoconservatism in their political memoirs, they rarely mentioned the New Politics without an

[62] Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*, 264; Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 87; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Anti-New Politics Liberals," *Washington Post*, November 12, 1972; Wattenberg, *Fighting Words*, 137.

accompanying assertion of its connections to the New Left and consistently used the terms in an almost interchangeable fashion.[63] Deliberate conflation of the New Politics and the New Left served an important political aim for Podhoretz, Wattenberg, and other CDM members who sought to tar the New Politics with the brush of radicalism and establish themselves as the legitimate claimants to the liberal tradition. The broad brush strokes initially produced by neoconservatives have been uncritically reproduced by historians who harbor no such political aims but nevertheless have echoed neoconservatives in depicting the New Politics as a watered-down version of the New Left and inadequately distinguishing the two political movements.[64]

When the neoconservatives of the CDM sought to retake the Democratic Party from a New Politics movement with origins, aims, and a political perspective distinct from those of the New Left, foreign policy concerns played a newly important—though not exclusive—role in motivating them. Foreign policy issues had not always been a primary concern for neoconservatives. The foremost concerns of the first neoconservatives who coalesced around journals such as *Commentary* and *The Public Interest* in the latter half of the 1960s were primarily domestic in nature and expressed in terms of a growing skepticism towards the ability of social welfare programs and government action more broadly to achieve their stated aims.[65] With the advance of the New Politics movement, opposition to the Vietnam War and a critical perspective on the Cold War national-security state were transformed, in the words of

---

[63] Podhoretz, *Breaking Ranks*; Wattenberg, *Fighting Words.*

[64] The tendency to stress the continuity and similarity of the New Politics and the New Left or even to treat the two terms as nearly synonymous is pervasive in scholarship that examines neoconservatism. For example, see Kenneth S. Baer, *Reinventing Democrats: The Politics of Liberalism from Reagan to Clinton* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), esp. 19-20, 33; Richard D. Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), esp. 145-165; Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, esp. 81-109.

[65] Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 50; Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Origins of a Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 61-67, 71-72.

Galbraith, from "dissent into organized and legitimate political opposition."[66] Consequently, fundamental questions over the nature of the Cold War and the role of the U.S. in the world entered the arena of electoral politics and became an integral aspect of the neoconservative's critical response to the direction then being taken by liberal politics. While unequivocal expressions of alarm with what they saw as the drift of liberalism towards a position of isolationism clearly distinguished the concerns of the neoconservatives of the CDM from those of neoconservatives during the prior decade, the neoconservatism of the CDM represented a broad response to the multi-faceted New Politics movement that had taken shape by the early 1970s. The neoconservatives who joined together to create the CDM sought to oppose the growing influence of a New Politics movement whose belief in the liberal potential of the New Class, critical perspective on the Cold War national-security state, and insistence that social inclusion required recognition of difference could—in many cases—be traced back to the ADA and its "old liberals."

The very name, Coalition for a Democratic Majority, represented the conviction of the organization's members that an unrepresentative minority of New Class liberals had captured the Democratic Party. The CDM manifesto declared that "in the turbulence and confusion of the past few years, the national Democratic Party has come to be unduly influenced by forces and ideas unrepresentative of traditional Democratic principles." Despite the insistence that the developments it opposed were of recent occurrence, the CDM's attack on the New Politics took aim at assumptions of working class conservatism and New Class liberal potential that Galbraith and Schlesinger had been visibly advancing for years. According to the manifesto, the "new" in the New Politics could be found in its "contempt" for the labor unions and

---

[66] John Kenneth Galbraith, "The Case for George McGovern," *Saturday Review*, July 1, 1972, 26.

working class Americans who had long provided the foundation of the Democratic Party's electoral strength. The desertion of traditional Democratic pillars of popular support by the New Politics, the manifesto charged, had "allowed the Republican Party—a party so long and so accurately known as the party of privilege—to represent itself for the first time as the champions of" the values and concerns of "tens of millions of ordinary people."[67] From the perspective of those in the CDM, the Democratic Party had ceased to represent a mass constituency and become instead the vehicle of a New Class described by Penn Kemble and Josh Muravchik as constituting "an interest group which differs from the 'old' interest groups chiefly in its refusal to acknowledge the degree to which it hungers for political power and patronage."[68]

Criticism of the New Class articulated by the CDM and its leading voices frequently drew on a line of argument that held the moralism exhibited by New Class liberals to be a pretense that obscured ultimately self-serving aims. Michael Novak maintained that the support of New Class liberals for ostensibly moral causes such as the elimination of poverty owed less to a genuine concern for the poor than a desire for expanded government social programs to create the jobs and opportunities that would make meaningful use of their extensive skills and education.[69] Similarly, Irving Kristol argued that the efforts of the New Class to represent itself as driven by concerns for marginalized social groups and the greater good of society served primarily to mask the "simple truth" that it was "engaged in a class struggle with the business community for status and power." Although Kristol never joined the CDM, his influential criticisms joined those of Novak in becoming core elements of the

---

[67] "Come Home, Democrats."

[68] Penn Kemble and Josh Muravchik, "The New Politics & the Democrats," *Commentary*, December 1972, 84.

[69] Michael Novak, "Needing Niebuhr Again," *Commentary*, September 1972, 60.

organization's critical perspective on the New Class.[70]

The CDM coupled its fundamental questioning of New Class political motivations with a strong challenge to the goals of the New Politics movement's campaign against the Cold War national-security state. Frequently articulated as the call to reorder national priorities, New Politics opposition to the excesses of the U.S. national-security state found its most visible expression through the McGovern campaign's slogan, "Come Home, America." An explicit rejection of McGovern's "Come Home, America," the CDM's call to "Come Home, Democrats" maintained that "the belief that the security of the United States depends upon a stable and progressive world community has been challenged by the idea that the United States must withdraw from its international responsibilities and effect a serious diminution of its own power."[71]

The widening of the foreign policy aims of the New Politics movement from a more singular focus on opposition to the Vietnam War to a broadly critical perspective on the Cold War national-security state prompted the CDM's plea to Democrats to "come home" and proved to be a critical factor in determining the nature of the organization's opposition to the trajectory of Democratic and liberal politics. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Nathan Glazer, Norman Podhoretz, and a considerable number of other signatories to the CDM's manifesto favored the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam but saw the sweeping opposition of the New Politics movement to interventionist foreign policy and the Cold War national-security state as an alarming overreaction to the Vietnam War, however misguided they believed that particular war to be.[72] Expressing their point of view and making clear that the CDM did not intend to limit its membership to proponents of the Vietnam War, the organization's manifesto reached

[70] Irving Kristol, "About Equality," Commentary, November 1972, 43; Podhoretz, *Breaking Ranks*, 288.
[71] "Come Home, Democrats."
[72] Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 97.

out "to all who believe that, regardless of past miscalculations or failures of policy, United States involvement in international affairs continues to be necessary to the establishment of a stable and viable international order." With roots that stretched back to the "old liberals" of the ADA, the far-reaching opposition of the New Politics movement to the Cold War national-security state prompted Podhoretz to take what he saw as a necessary "stand against the dangers of an...indiscriminate American withdrawal from the fight against Communism." Like many in the CDM, Podhoretz saw the organization as a vital force for taking that stand.[73]

In the realm of domestic politics, the CDM focused much of its energy on the effort to roll back the demographic requirements for delegate representation mandated by the McGovern-Fraser reforms. Implicitly attacking those requirements, the CDM's manifesto asserted that "the principle of individual merit without regard to inherited status has been challenged by the idea of proportionalism in accordance with birth and group origin."[74] CDM opposition to the demographic requirements of the McGovern-Fraser reforms reflected its members' broader rejection of the politics of race, gender, and sexuality that had come to the fore in Democratic and liberal politics by the 1970s. Whereas the ADA, the New Politics movement, and the 1972 Democratic Party platform insisted on recognition of difference as a vital means of furthering social inclusion, Albert Shanker saw affirmative action that amounted to racial quotas, long-term bilingual education, and other state-supported efforts to recognize and encourage difference as harmful forms of politics that would foster separatism and balkanize Democratic politics. When Shaker and his colleagues in the CDM attacked the growing influence of the politics of race, gender, and sexuality in the Democratic Party they were responding neither to the New Left nor to what Podhoretz described as a version of the

[73] "Come Home, Democrats;" Podhoretz, *Breaking Ranks*, 338-339.
[74] "Come Home, Democrats."

New Left that had been "cleaned up" to work within the electoral system. Rather, the source of their ire could be found in long-term trends in liberal politics encouraged by the "old liberals" of the ADA with origins in the social democratic values of the New Deal era, the qualitative liberalism of the 1950s, and the civil rights movement of the 1960s.[75]

From the politics of race and gender expressed in the 1972 Democratic Party platform to McGovern's call to "Come Home, America," CDM members sought to render the various aspects of the New Politics movements as analogous to or the offspring of the New Left in order to establish themselves as the true representatives of the liberal tradition in the 1970s. Midge Decter complained in 1976 that she had been pressed to relinquish the "liberal" label "by everyone from Lester Maddox to the *Village Voice*." Still, she insisted that she "had no choice but to be a liberal" and could never be relieved of her obligation "to do battle" with those seeking to undo the achievements of the liberal tradition and "abscond with its good name."[76] Regardless of their determination to wage that battle, Decter and her fellow CDM members would face steep and, ultimately, insurmountable challenges to their aspiration of laying claim to the mantle of the liberal tradition.

**The Legacy of Liberalism**

Michael Harrington first brought the term "neoconservative" into common usage in 1973 with the publication of a widely read and influential article in *Dissent.* Harrington's article focused on Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and other liberal critics of 1960s social welfare programs but the presence of those three individuals in the CDM and the organization's general agreement with their political outlook meant that its

[75] Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal*, 156, 292; Podhoretz, *Breaking Ranks*, 326-327.
[76] Midge Decter in "What is a Liberal—Who is a Conservative?: A Symposium," *Commentary*, September 1976, 50-51.

members quickly found themselves pegged with the neoconservative label.[77] Initially termed "Scoop Jackson Democrats" by the press, members of the CDM became known as neoconservatives but many persisted nevertheless in insisting that they were liberals. Those in the CDM who continued to see themselves as liberals conceived of the organization as a force vying with the New Politics not only for control of the Democratic Party but also for the legacy of the "vital center" and the broader liberal tradition. Ultimately, the visible and ongoing commitment of the ADA to the New Politics movement frustrated CDM aspirations to lay claim to the legacy of the "vital center" while the general acceptance among political observers of the New Politics as the new standard bearer of liberalism consigned the CDM and its members to bearing the banner of conservatism in one form or another.

The roots of the New Politics in "vital center" liberalism and the continued involvement of the individuals and organization most identified with that political tradition in the New Politics greatly complicated the efforts of CDM members to present themselves as the heirs of the "vital center" tradition. No individual carried a stronger personal association with the "vital center" than Schlesinger—who coined the term in what became a playbook for liberal intellectuals in the early postwar years. Throughout its history, the ADA regularly cast itself as a "vital center" and became the most readily accepted embodiment of the political tradition that it spawned. With the escalation of the Vietnam War, Schlesinger and other leading figures pushed the ADA to formulate a new "vital center" that maintained a determined position against both the New Left and conservatism but shed the reflexive anti-Communism that had been so integral to its original incarnation. The ADA's formulation of and continued commitment to a reshaped "vital center" demonstrated that the substance of that

[77] Michael Harrington, "The Welfare State and Its Neoconservative Critics," *Dissent*, September 1973, 435-454.

political tradition could and should change to meet new circumstances. While the CDM stressed the continuity of its political perspective with the specific policy positions of the "vital center" outlined by Schlesinger in 1949, the ADA established the New Politics as a living and breathing embodiment of the "vital center" that stood in vigorous opposition to the political extremes of an increasingly polarized political landscape while facing the realities of a world that had changed dramatically since the early years of the Cold War. In the context of the 1970s, the political outlook of the CDM looked less like the dynamic "vital center" once described by Schlesinger than a rigid set of dated policy prescriptions. No matter how closely the CDM hewed to the particular policies that once comprised the "vital center" they would be unable to stake a claim to the political tradition in a way that held any genuine meaning in the latter years of the Vietnam War era.

CDM members faced similarly difficult prospects in their struggle to be accepted as liberals of any stripe, "vital center" or otherwise. As insurgents who sought to challenge the status quo of Democratic politics, New Politics activists—first in their opposition to the Johnson administration and the campaign of Hubert Humphrey and then as advocates of party reform in the years after 1968—were consistently labeled as liberals by journalists while those who stood in their way were regularly described as or implied to be conservative. David Halberstam offered a characterization typical of the period when the opposition of organized labor to the New Politics movement prompted him to describe labor unions as "fast becoming a conservative force in America."[78] Similarly, *The New York Times* reflected the general consensus of the media when it reported that "moderate and conservative spokesmen" seeking to roll back various aspects of party reform were "brushed aside by liberal backers of Senator

[78] David Halberstam, "Travels With Bobby Kennedy," *Harper's Magazine*, July 1968, 58.

George McGovern."[79] When the CDM entered the political scene in late 1972 it quickly inherited the conservative label that had been pinned to earlier opponents of the New Politics. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the charges against the New Politics in the CDM's manifesto differed little from those "made several years earlier by the Republican Party."[80]

The CDM and its members lost the battle with the New Politics for the liberal label on a variety of fronts from social and culture issues to affirmative action, but none more conclusively and with more far reaching impact than in the area of foreign policy. Elliot Abrams, a member of the CDM and special council to Jackson during his 1976 presidential campaign, insisted that the opposition of the New Politics to an interventionist foreign policy of Communist containment amounted to a rejection of "the absolute primacy of liberty as a political value" that put it distinctly outside of the bounds of the liberal tradition. In his estimation, "the sole tie between the New Politics view and traditional American liberalism is the fact that most New Politics enthusiasts are former liberals...if they are old enough to be former anythings." Still, Abrams conceded that those who did not share the "new 'liberal' views" of the New Politics had come to be deemed conservatives by the "cadres of the media, who either share the New Politics outlook or are entirely ignorant of the historical meaning of liberalism in America."[81] Gus Tyler never joined the CDM but maintained a political perspective nearly indistinguishable from it in most regards and shared Abrams' critical assessment of the state of political labels in the 1970s. From the vantage point of the mid 1970s, Tyler lamented the way in which liberalism had been "redefined during the Vietnam conflict. By a new test, doves were liberals and hawks were conservatives. This put a huge

---

[79] Marjorie Hunter, "Democratic Rules Panel Backs Sweeping Changes," *New York Times*, June 25, 1972.
[80] "Democratic Homecoming," *Wall Street Journal*, December 8, 1972.
[81] Eliot Abrams in "What is a Liberal—Who is a Conservative?: A Symposium," *Commentary*, September 1976, 34.

chunk of the old Rooseveltians in the right-wing camp, since many of them in their continuing war against Communism and isolationism were principled cold warriors."[82]

To a significant degree, the widespread adoption of the New Politics definition of liberalism described by Abrams and Tyler rested on the broader acceptance of ascribing a specific foreign policy outlook to notions of what defined the boundaries of liberalism. In the 1950s, Schlesinger argued that the quantitative material concerns of the New Deal were increasingly giving way to non-material qualitative issues such as foreign policy. When Schlesinger first outlined the qualitative issues that he believed would rise on the nation's agenda during the tense period of the early Cold War, conservatives and liberals harbored few fundamental differences in their perspectives on foreign policy. During those years of bipartisan consensus on Communist containment, developments such as the dispute over the so-called "missile gap" that raged during the 1960 presidential election brought foreign policy issues to the fore of national politics but the commitment of liberals and conservatives alike to waging the Cold War meant that the distinction between hawkish and dovish foreign policy postures had little direct bearing on ideological and partisan identification.

When the McCarthy campaign and the New Politics movement that coalesced around it brought opposition to Vietnam War into electoral politics, a once unshakable bi-partisan commitment to global anti-Communist containment began to crack. As a result, foreign policy became an ideological and partisan issue in a way and to a degree formerly unseen during the postwar era. Whereas liberalism previously had no inherent relationship to a distinct set of foreign policy positions, the growth of liberal opposition to the Vietnam War in electoral politics in the face of conservative support for the conflict meant that critics of the war came

[82] Gus Tyler in "What is a Liberal—Who is a Conservative?: A Symposium," *Commentary*, September 1976, 101.

to be termed liberals while supporters were seen as conservatives. When liberal opposition to the Vietnam War widened to include a critical perspective on the Cold War national-security state, opposition not only to that particular conflict but also to vigorously interventionist foreign policy became a critical requirement for entry into what had come to be accepted as liberal politics. As long as that requirement remained, the CDM's call to Democrats to "come home" to an aggressively interventionist foreign policy would leave them with little hope of passing the liberal litmus test.[83]

The respective directions of liberal and conservative politics at the close of the twentieth century and the dawn of the twenty-first have ensured that the legacies of neoconservatism and the New Politics remain as divergent as they have consequential. Finding little success in laying claim to the liberal tradition, many of the neoconservatives from the CDM abandoned any pretense of representing themselves as liberals and gravitated towards the Republican Party where they came to the fore in formulating foreign policy in the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush.[84] The unique synthesis of social democratic values, anti-interventionist foreign policy, and a far-reaching politics of race, gender, and sexuality found in the New Politics movement waned with George McGovern's landslide defeat but many aspects of that movement left a lasting imprint on liberal politics. From the insistence that social and cultural issues such as environmentalism, gay rights, and women's rights are central to the liberal agenda to the rejection of the bipartisan militarism that prevailed throughout much of the Cold War era, liberals have practiced a variety of politics much closer to the New Politics than the New Deal or the liberalism of the early postwar years. While the New Politics that the ADA and its "old liberals" had been

[83] "Come Home, Democrats."
[84] Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 10-13.

instrumental in shaping ceased to be a distinctive political movement and the term all but disappeared from political discussion by the late 1970s, much of what had once been known as the New Politics could, in many respects, simply be called liberalism.

## Epilogue: From New Politics to Neoliberalism

When Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas gave the keynote address at the 1980 ADA National Convention he warned his audience that "liberalism is at a crossroads. It will either evolve to meet the issues of the 1980s or it will be reduced to an interesting topic for Ph.D.-writing historians."[1] In a speech that challenged some of the most deeply held principles of those gathered at the convention, Tsongas urged liberals to make greater use of the private sector to solve commercial and social problems.[2] Pushed by Tsongas and other young Democrats frequently termed neoliberals or "Atari Democrats" by the press, the contours of a seemingly new liberalism began to take shape over the course of the 1980s. The pragmatic policy wonks who defined the neoliberalism that emerged during that decade differed in priorities and tenor from the idealistic and morally driven activists and politicians of the New Politics, but drew from the same political and intellectual wellspring that had given birth to that movement. Like their New Politics predecessors, the neoliberals of the 1980s and their descendants in the twenty-first century have emphasized an array of social and cultural issues as core elements of the liberal agenda and rejected the militaristic foreign policy outlook that defined liberalism in the early postwar era. Still, despite political roots in the New Politics movement, neoliberals since the 1980s have shed the social democratic ethos than ran through that movement and placed their hopes for achieving a more just and prosperous society on the free market and economic growth. As this thesis has shown, the ADA and its "old liberals" played an instrumental role in shaping a New Politics movement that demonstrated the profound malleability of the American liberal tradition. The neoliberal ascendency in

---

[1] Paul E. Tsongas, Keynote Address at the Americans for Democratic Action National Convention, June 14, 1980, p. 3, Folder 6, Box 19, M97-135, ADA.

[2] Steven V. Roberts, "A.D.A. Debates Role of Liberalism in a Year of Losses and Budget Cuts," *New York Times*, June 15, 1980.

Democratic politics since the 1980s has provided further evidence of the protean nature of that tradition by carrying the legacy and impact of the New Politics movement into the twenty-first century while simultaneously discarding many of the economic concerns that had been distinctive of and integral to its political outlook.

The neoliberal turn in Democratic and liberal politics began with the election of a sizable cohort of young Democrats to Congress as part of the wave of Democratic electoral success that followed the resignation of Richard Nixon in 1974. Dubbed "Watergate babies" by the press, those young Democrats largely hailed from suburban districts and practiced a variety of politics much closer to the New Politics than the New Deal. Making up more than a quarter of House Democrats in 1975, the incoming class of 1974 could count fewer than half from their ranks as having had any prior legislative experience. Many, however, drew on a background in grassroots organizing as activists in the antiwar movement, civil rights movement, or the campaigns of New Politics candidates. Bob Edgar, elected to the House of Representatives from Pennsylvania, described himself and his fellow members of the "Class of '74" as "the sixties generation that didn't drop out."[3] Despite their adoption of an approach to politics that differed in substance and style from the New Politics movement, many in the Class of '74 had been drawn to that movement like so many others by moral horror with the Vietnam War. When the Vietnam War ended, the New Politics movement lost much of its ideological unity, but those who cut their teeth on its insurgent efforts before finding themselves termed neoliberals by the press continued to carry with them the independent, antiestablishment ethos that had coursed through the movement as they mounted a challenge

[3] William Schneider, "JFK's Children: The Class of '74," *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1989, 35-58.

to the New Deal-Great Society liberalism of the Democratic establishment.[4]

No political career better displayed the potential for the New Politics to transform into neoliberalism than that of Gary Hart. Hart served as campaign manager for George McGovern's New Politics-driven 1972 presidential campaign and looked to the same growing ranks of New Class voters that had sustained that insurgent effort when he embarked on his own campaign for the U.S. Senate in 1974. Shortly after his election, Hart famously pronounced that that he and his fellow cohort of young, newly elected Democrats were "not a bunch of little Hubert Humphreys." Hart later apologized to Humphrey for the remark, but the desire to take on the tenets of New Deal-Great Society liberalism that it reflected provided the impetus for his challenge to the campaign of Walter Mondale that carried the banner of the Democratic establishment in the 1984 presidential election. Instead of the morally driven opposition to the Vietnam War, the Cold War national-security state, and entrenched racial inequality that inspired the New Politics challenge to the Democratic establishment, Hart looked to pragmatic facilitation of growth in high-tech industries, measures to make the U.S. more competitive in the global economy, and a leaner—but no less capable—military as sources of renewal for the Democratic Party. In their efforts to bring a coalition together to advance those initiatives, Hart and other neoliberals who shared similar goals sought to enlist not the low-wage workers with socially conservative but economically populist views who had long been a core constituency of the Democratic Party, but instead the socially liberal,

---

[4] Bruce Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment: The McGovern Insurgency and the Identity Crisis of the Democratic Party* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 268; Steven M. Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma: Walter F. Mondale and the Liberal Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 340-341; William Schneider, "JFK's Children: The Class of '74," *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1989, 39.

economically conservative workers and entrepreneurs of the New Class.[5]

The policies developed and advocated by neoliberals in the 1980s reflected both the liberal social and cultural values of the New Class and the growing economic anxiety among those who comprised its ranks. In the late 1970s, the national agenda shifted from foreign policy to economics as the tax revolt, the energy crisis, and rampant inflation combined to make the size and effectiveness of government the nation's most pressing political issue in the waning years of the decade. As the national debate increasingly turned on issues of taxes, spending, and regulation, budding neoliberals moved to the right of their New Politics predecessors and the Democratic establishment on matters of economic policy. Neoliberals continued to insist that despite their rightward economic trajectory and skepticism towards the feasibility of traditional liberal means, they remained fully committed to liberal ends. According to *Washington Monthly* Editor Charles Peters—who coined the term "neoliberalism"—neoliberals recognized "that there were a lot of things wrong with a lot of the Big Government solutions we tried but there was never anything wrong with the ends we were seeking—justice, fair play, and liberal ideals."[6]

Despite such avowals of shared goals with earlier liberals, the scope of neoliberal aims represented a contraction of the ends sought by the "old liberals" of the ADA and New Politics liberals who called for a far-reaching government intervention to address deep-seated social and economic inequality. Whereas the ADA and many in the New Politics movement had sought the extension of an expansive social citizenship to a variety of long marginalized social

---

[5] Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*, 268; Schneider, "JFK's Children: The Class of '74," 35, 42; Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 340-341; John Judis, "Neoliberals: High-tech Politics for the '80s?," *Progressive*, October 1982, 31.

[6] Schneider, "JFK's Children: The Class of '74," 40; Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*, 268; Charles Peters quoted in Randall Rothenberg, *The Neoliberals: Creating the New American Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 20.

groups, neoliberals tended to detach the hurdles faced by individuals from such groups from the structural economic inequalities that prevailed in American society. Neoliberal politicians and their New Class base remained committed to the abstract ideals of equality that had long guided liberals, but their willingness to bear the financial burden for the large-scale public initiatives necessary to addressing structural and economic inequality was limited at best. Thus, for example, while the New Class voters who drove the neoliberal shift of the Democratic Party provided crucial support for campaigns for legal gender equality such as the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), they proved considerably less eager to make similar efforts on behalf of subsidized childcare, public funding for abortions, welfare rights, and other issues that concerned women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Neoliberals focused their energy on initiatives that required little sacrifice from taxpayers but advanced the equality of individuals, struck a moral chord with their New Class constituents, or produced discernable improvement in quality of life such as abortion rights, antiwar activism, environmentalism, fair housing, and women's rights. When the issues involved necessitated challenges to structural social and economic inequality, required higher taxes, or jeopardized property values, neoliberal politicians and New Class voters displayed far less enthusiasm.[7]

While the growing economic conservatism of New Class voters in response to the deteriorating economic environment of the late 1970s and early 1980s had a decisive impact on the politics of the neoliberal Democrats they voted for, the political outlook of those Democrats and other individuals responsible for charting the future of their party also owed much to the lasting impact of George McGovern's landslide defeat in 1972. The New Politics movement that rallied to McGovern's campaign pointed to a shift in Democratic politics from

[7] Lily Geismer, *Don't Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 6, 228-229.

the union hall to the suburbs that would later sustain the neoliberal turn of the Democratic Party, but it was far more than the way station to neoliberalism which historians have sometimes depicted it as.[8] The New Politics movement represented a unique synthesis of a quantitative liberalism with social democratic values that harkened back to the politics of the New Deal left and a qualitative liberalism committed to a far-reaching politics of race, gender, and sexuality. In the eyes of the Democratic strategists and politicians who took the reins of the party, McGovern's bid for the presidency demonstrated the electoral pitfalls of the thoroughgoing commitment to economic and social justice expressed by the New Politics movement even more than it did the importance of suburban New Class voters. The last Democratic presidential nominee with an avowedly redistributionist economic platform, McGovern assembled a team of economic advisors that included prominent economists from the ADA. With John Kenneth Galbraith and Lester Thurow among his leading economic advisors, McGovern campaigned on an economic platform that combined a $22 billion increase in taxes on corporations and wealthy individuals with a $32 billion cut in the defense budget to fund a comprehensive redistributive program. As the November election approached, McGovern distanced himself from a poorly received "demogrant" guaranteed annual income proposal but did not retreat on his call for federally guaranteed full employment, increased benefits for Social Security and AFDC recipients, and greater spending on environmental protection, education, and healthcare.[9]

From the neoliberals of the 1980s to the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) and the presidencies of Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, the shadow of an election that saw

---

[8] For example, see Geismer, *Don't Blame Us*, 149-172; Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 152, 250-252.

[9] Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*, 1-2, 133-137.

McGovern win only the District of Columbia and Massachusetts in the Electoral College has loomed large in the formulation of Democratic political strategy and the party's turn towards the center on economic issues. While the minor victories of the McGovern campaign with New Class voters in the presidential election revealed the changing social base of the Democratic Party, the comprehensive failure of the campaign ended serious consideration of the expansive public spending advocated by the South Dakota senator among ambitious Democratic politicians. The rightward trajectory of Democratic politics that followed McGovern's dismal electoral performance in the 1972 presidential election ushered in the end of the significant political influence the ADA and its "old liberals" had wielded since the founding of the organization in 1947. The political relevance of those "old liberals" and the ADA as an organization did not dissipate with their decision to endorse Eugene McCarthy and forgo political pragmatism in favor of idealism and principle, as historian Steven Gillon argues.[10] In fact, the ADA and its "old liberals" experienced what was perhaps the zenith of their influence on Democratic and liberal politics in the years that followed their endorsement of McCarthy, when the McGovern campaign carried a New Politics movement they had been instrumental in shaping to the highest stage of American politics. Rather, the fortunes of the ADA and the political clout of its "old liberals" declined with the landslide defeat of the candidate who had embodied so much of their political vision.

Yet as much as the neoliberal ascendency in Democratic politics resulted from a weak American economy and the devastating scale of McGovern's 1972 loss, the path to the economically conservative but socially and culturally liberal neoliberals of the 1980s can also be traced back to the ideas championed by the ADA and its "old liberals. The transformation

[10] Steven M. Gillon, *Politics and Vision: The ADA and American Liberalism, 1947-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 223-225.

of the New Politics movement into a neoliberalism with more limited notions and goals of social and economic justice highlighted some of the misguided assumptions that had underpinned the contributions of John Kenneth Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and other "old liberals" from the ADA to that movement. Those "old liberals" had seen the growing ranks of the New Class as a "constituency of conscience" that would approach politics less in terms of its own material self-interest than a moral concern with the Vietnam War, the military-industrial complex, chronic racial and gender inequality, and other sources of social injustice. Many of the New Class voters that the "old liberals" looked to as the key to the post-New Deal liberal coalition when they parted ways with organized labor maintained a commitment to the abstract moral values that had drawn them to the New Politics, but their political outlook and priorities were ultimately shaped far more by their own economic concerns than their champions in the ADA had anticipated. In the 1950s and early 1960s, when Galbraith, Schlesinger, and other "old liberals" of the ADA sketched the contours of qualitative liberalism in response to growing American affluence, they grossly overestimated the reach of the affluent society. Similarly, in the late 1960s and early 1970s those "old liberals" misjudged the degree to which the attainment of a certain degree of affluence among individuals of the New Class would render them indifferent to the economic issues that affected them and free them to act out of a seemingly disinterested moral concern for social progress. When the "old liberals" of the ADA exerted considerable political energy to establish the New Class as a core constituency of the new liberal coalition on the basis of their misguided assumption that New Class voters would be as liberal on economic matters as they were on social and cultural issues, they made inadvertent—yet crucial—contributions to the foundations of the neoliberalism that gained ascendency in the Democratic Party in the 1980s.

Despite their contributions to its emergence, the "old liberals" of the ADA displayed a vigorous antipathy to neoliberalism and its implications for the future of liberal politics. The keynote address made by Tsongas at the 1980 ADA National Convention brought the views of those "old liberals" on the emerging neoliberalism into a distinct focus. Over the course of his speech, Tsongas insisted that the existing liberalism with its myopic commitment to government as the answer to society's challenges offered little hope of addressing the problems of international competiveness, rising energy costs, limited resources, and other pressing issues that that he believed would define the decade's political agenda.[11] The audience at the convention received his address and the challenges it presented with polite indifference. Speaking to reporters afterwards, Tsongas offered a more pointed articulation of his views when he deemed government to have a "deadening impact" as he derided the "Johnson-Humphrey Great Society approach" to politics and governance. Traditional liberals, he asserted, were "mired in yesterday's truisms. Listening to them is like going to an old movie." In response to the thrust of Tsongas' speech and his remarks to the press, Leon Shull offered the simple insistence that "the essence of liberalism is the use of government to intervene on behalf of people." Shull readily expressed his belief that liberals needed to change to meet the challenges of new issues and circumstances but also made clear his concern that neoliberals like Tsongas were losing sight of the basic commitment to the underprivileged that had long served as the guiding principle for liberalism. "To say these are old battles," Shull contended, "is not an excuse to stop fighting them." Offering a more blunt assessment, Schlesinger later described neoliberals as "fellow travelers in the Reagan

[11] Tsongas, Keynote Address at the Americans for Democratic Action National Convention, June 14, 1980.

counterrevolution."[12]

As much as the "old liberals" of the ADA sought to disassociate themselves from the neoliberals who came to the fore in the Democratic Party, neoliberalism continues to represent the most visible lasting legacy of the New Politics movement they had been instrumental in shaping. The liberalism that commentators almost uniformly found in Obama's second inaugural address in 2013 has its roots in the neoliberalism that took hold in Democratic politics during the 1980s. When Obama celebrated science and technology as a crucial engine for American economic growth in a "world without boundaries," he articulated a political vision that echoed the belief of the neoliberal "Atari Democrats" of the 1980s that the free market, free trade, and facilitation of a high-tech economy represented the future of liberal and Democratic politics. Like the neoliberals of that decade, Obama distanced himself from the government-centric, redistributive economics of the New Politics movement as he looked instead to the private sector and economic growth in service and technology industries to achieve the traditional liberal goal of social progress. Still, Obama's address and the politics of earlier neoliberals demonstrated the lasting impact of the New Politics with emphasis on the importance of social and cultural issues from environmentalism to women's rights that would have been alien to postwar liberals weaned on the bread-and-butter issues of the New Deal and a rejection of the militaristic foreign policy that defined the politics of those liberals during the early years of the Cold War.[13]

---

[12] Rothenberg, *The Neoliberals*, 42; Steven V. Roberts, "A.D.A. Debates Role of Liberalism in a Year of Losses and Budget Cuts," *New York Times*, June 15, 1980; Robert Healy, "New Liberalism, Old Politics," *Boston Globe*, September 12, 1980; Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "One Last Chance for the Democrats," *Playboy*, November 1982, 112.

[13] "President Obama's Inaugural Address," *New York Times*, January 22, 2013; Peter Baker, "Obama Offers a Liberal Vision in Inaugural Address: 'We Must Act,'" *New York Times*, January 22, 2013; Paul West and Christi Parsons, "For His Second Term, A Sweeping Liberal Vision," *Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 2013; "Mr. Obama Reboots" *Washington Post*, January 22, 2013.

Many of the ideas that the "old liberals" of the ADA brought to bear on the New Politics movement have been carried on by the neoliberal Democrats of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, but the organization that served as their vital platform has descended into political irrelevance in the years since McGovern went down in defeat in 1972. The fortunes and influence of the ADA waned over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, rendering the organization a political actor of little consequence by the 1990s. The ADA continues to issue its once-famous ratings of members of Congress and hold annual awards banquets that nostalgically celebrate its storied past, but possesses little of the public recognition or political influence that had made it the most prominent liberal organization in the country for a quarter century after World War II. Despite seeing a temporary uptick in youth involvement under the leadership of Joe Duffey and Allard Lowenstein in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the ADA found itself unable to attract subsequent generations of liberal activists in the 1980s and 1990s as it failed to overcome the increasing balkanization of liberal activism and to adapt to new forms of political organization and communication. The effective demise of the ADA should not, however, be seen as entailing the end of liberal activism. Since the 1980s, liberal activism has increasingly shifted from multi-issue organizations such as the ADA to a diverse array of organizations committed to more specific issues such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the Sierra Club, and civil rights organizations that have long played a central role in liberal politics. Since its founding in 1998, MoveOn has built an online network that performs some of the functions once carried out by the ADA and established itself as one of the most visible and influential multi-issue liberal organizations in the country. Still, neither MoveOn

nor any other liberal organization has emerged to offer the intellectual influence once wielded by the ADA and its leading figures on the direction and development of American liberalism.

The absence of an organization with an intellectual focus and influence comparable to that of the ADA during the long postwar era from the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s has left liberalism largely bereft of bold new ideas or directions. As a result, the legacy of the liberal transformation ushered in by the New Politics movement has remained an outsized influence on liberal politics long after anything known as the "New Politics" ceased to be a regular feature of the nation's political vocabulary. Instead of charting a new direction for liberalism, the neoliberals of the 1980s and their political descendants have accommodated the social and cultural values of the New Politics movement to the growing conservatism of the American electorate on economic issues. By moving to the center on economic policy, neoliberal Democrats managed to preserve some of the social and cultural legacy of that movement. Still, by compromising the economic perspective of the New Politics movement in order to ensure the political viability of its social and cultural values, those Democrats ushered in the end of the unique political formation of a movement that wedded a quantitative liberalism with roots in the social democratic currents of the New Deal to a pressing concern for qualitative issues ranging from foreign policy to gender and racial equality.

Despite the general neoliberal ascendency seen in Democratic and liberal politics since the 1980s, political developments in the twenty-first century have made it clear that neoliberalism is not the only legacy of the New Politics movement. The neoliberalism in Obama's second inaugural address that many political commentators took to be a full-throated expression of modern liberalism remains the most visible lasting legacy of the New Politics movement. Nevertheless, developments from the short-lived but influential Occupy Wall

Street movement to the momentum generated by the self-identified democratic socialist, Bernie Sanders, in the 2016 presidential race, and a newly vigorous liberal-labor coalition have demonstrated that the wide array of social issues that entered the liberal agenda through the New Politics movement need not be divorced from the broader goals of economic and social justice that were central to the movement and its understanding of those issues. Indeed, those political developments have made it clear that commitments to civil rights, gay rights, women's rights, and other important social causes ultimately remain limited without the economic justice that enables individuals to exercise those rights. The abandonment of the economic substance of the New Politics movement by the New Class voters who sustained the neoliberal shift of Democratic politics confounded the expectations that informed the contributions of the "old liberals" of the ADA to the New Politics. Still, in spite of the waywardness of their political forecasts, those "old liberals" transformed an organization often seen as a Cold War relic into a vehicle for a New Politics movement that continues to inspire liberal politics in the twenty-first century. Amid consistent reports of its demise, American liberalism has adapted the ideas and values of the New Politics movement to new circumstances in order to avoid being reduced to the compelling topic of research that Paul Tsongas once warned could be its sole lasting legacy.

# Bibliography

## Unpublished Primary Sources


Archival and Manuscript Collections

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA
Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Personal Papers
John Kenneth Galbraith Personal Papers,

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Bayard T. Rustin Papers

New York Public Library, New York, NY
Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Papers, 1922-2007

Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, PA
Negotiation Now! Records (DG 196)
SANE, Inc. Records, 1957-1987 (DG 58)

Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC
Allard K. Lowenstein Papers, 1924-1995,

Wisconsin Historical Society, Eau Claire Area Research Center, Eau Claire, WI
Donald O. Peterson Papers, 1947-1980

Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI
Americans for Democratic Action Records, 1932-1965
Americans for Democratic Action Records, Additions, 1943-1995
McCarthy for President Papers, Wisconsin, 1967-1968
Social Action Vertical File, ca. 1960-2002

Interviews

Joseph Duffey, interview by author, March 4, 2014.

Joseph Duffey, interview by author, Washington, D.C., August 15, 2014.


## Published Primary Sources


Newspapers and Newsletters

*ADA World*

*Boston Globe*

*I.F. Stone's Weekly*

*Los Angeles Times*

*Marshfield (WI) News-Herald*

*National Observer*

*Negotiation Now! Bulletin*

*New York Times*

*Philadelphia Bulletin*

*Rhinelander (WI) Daily News*

*St. Paul (MN) Pioneer Press*

*Village Voice*

*Wall Street Journal*

*Washington Post*

*Washington Star*

*Wisconsin State Journal*

Books and Articles

"ADA Defers." *New Republic*, October 10, 1967.

Ascoli, Max. "The Scarcity of Ideas." *Reporter*, May 5, 1956.

Auerbach, Carl. "Economic Realities." *Progressive*, August 1958.

"A Band of New York Intellectuals Meets with Prof. Schlesinger for A Talk-In on Vietnam." *New York Times Magazine*, February 2, 1966.

Bazelon, David T. *Power in America: The Politics of the New Class*. New York: New American Library, 1967.

Burkhart, James A., and Frank J. Kendrick, eds. *New Politics: Mood or Movement?* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971.

"The Cease-Fire Fallacy." *New Republic*, October 4, 1969.

Chomsky, Noam. "The Responsibility of Intellectuals." *New York Review of Books*, February 2, 1967.

"Correspondence: Cease-Fire Fallacy." *New Republic*, October 18, 1969.

Davis, Lanny J. *The Emerging Democratic Majority: Lessons and Legacies from the New Politics*. New York: Stein and Day, 1974.

Đilas, Milovan. *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System*. New York: Praeger, 1957.

Douglas, Paul. "How Affluent Is Our Society." *New Leader*, February 2, 1959.

*For the People: The Platform of the Democratic Party, 1972*. Washington, D.C.: Democratic Party, 1972.

*A "Freedom Budget" for All Americans: Budgeting Our Resources, 1966-1975 to Achieve Freedom from Want*. New York: A. Philip Randolph Institute, 1966.

Galbraith, John Kenneth. *The Affluent Society*. Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1958.

———. *The Affluent Society*. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969.

———. "The Case for George McGovern." *Saturday Review*, July 7, 1972.

———. "The Galbraith Plan to End the War." *New York Times Magazine*, November 11, 1967.

———. "How Much Should a Country Consume?" In *Perspectives on Conservation*, edited by Henry Jarrett, 89–99. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958.

———. *How to Control the Military*. New York: Signet Books, 1969.

———. "Let Us Begin: An Invitation to Action on Poverty." *Harper's Magazine*, March 1964.

———. *The Liberal Hour*. Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1960.

———. "Resolving Our Vietnam Predicament." *Playboy*, December 12, 1967.

———. "Some Unfinished Business of Liberals." *New Republic*, February 2, 1959.

———. "The Starvation of the Cities." *Progressive*, December 1966.

———. "Vietnam: The Moderate Solution." *Christianity and Crisis*, August 8, 1967.

Halberstam, David. *The Best and the Brightest*. New York: Random House, 1972.

———. "The Importance of Being Galbraith." *Harper's Magazine*, November 11, 1967.

———. "Politics 1968: McCarthy and the Divided Left." *Harper's Magazine*, March 1968.

———. "Travels with Bobby Kennedy." *Harper's Magazine*, July 7, 1968.

Halsted, Tomas A. "Lobbying Against the ABM, 1967-1970." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, April 1971.

Harrington, Michael. "Liberalism According to Galbraith." *Commentary*, October 10, 1967.

———. *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*. New York: Macmillan, 1962.

———. "The Welfare State and Its Neoconservative Critics." *Dissent*, September 1973.

Judis, John. "Neoliberals: High-Tech Politics for the '80s?" *Progressive*, October 1982.

Kemble, Penn, and Josh Muravchik. "The New Politics and the Democrats." *Commentary*, December 12, 1972.

Keyserling, Leon H. "Eggheads and Politics." *New Republic*, October 10, 1958.

———. "Leon Keyserling on Economic Expansion." *New Republic*, November 11, 1958.

———. "Less for Private Spending." *New Republic*, May 5, 1960.

———. "'Liberal' Government Is Not Enough." *Reporter*, May 5, 1956.

Kristol, Irving. "About Equality." *Commentary*, November 1972.

Lekachman, Robert. "Liberals and the U.S. Economy." *New Leader*, January 26, 1959.

Lewis, John, and Michael D'Orso. *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998.

*Lyndon B. Johnson: 1963-64: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President.* Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1965.

Magid, Marion. "The Man Who Discovered Poverty." *New York Herald Tribune Magazine*, December 12, 1964.

"March for Peace." *Christian Century*, December 12, 1965.

*The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963: Speeches by the Leaders.* New York: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1963.

McCarthy, Eugene. "Why I'm Battling LBJ." *Look*, February 2, 1968.

McGovern, George. *An American Journey: The Presidential Campaign Speeches of George McGovern.* New York: Random House, 1974.

Novak, Michael. "Needing Niebuhr Again." *Commentary*, September 1972.

"Paths to Peace in Vietnam." *Progressive*, June 1969.

Podhoretz, Norman. *Breaking Ranks: A Political Memoir.* New York: Harper & Row, 1979.

Podhoretz, Norman, ed. "Liberal Anti-Communism Revisited: A Symposium." *Commentary*, September 1967.

———. "What Is a Liberal-Who Is a Conservative? A Symposium." *Commentary*, September 1976.

Pounds, Norman J. G. "Fissures in the Eastern European Bloc." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 372 (July 1967): 40–58.

Rennie, Eric. *A Campaign Album: A Case Study of the New Politics.* Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1973.

*Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.* United States Government Printing Office, 1968.

Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. "America's Domestic Future: Its Perils and Prospects." *Spelman Messenger*, February 1961.

———. *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy: 1941-1966.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967.

———. "The Case for George McGovern." *New Republic*, February 2, 1972.

———. "The Challenge of Abundance." *Reporter*, May 5, 1956.

———. "The Challenge to Liberalism." In *An Outline of Man's Knowledge of the Modern World*, edited by Lyman Bryson, 465–483. Garden City, NY: Nelson Doubleday, 1960.

———. "The Coming Shape of American Politics." *Progressive*, September 1959.

———. *The Crisis of Confidence: Ideas, Power and Violence in America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969.

———. *Journals: 1952-2000*. New York: Penguin Press, 2007.

———. "McCarthyism Is Threatening Us Again." *Saturday Evening Post*, August 8, 1966.

———. "Military Force: How Much and Where?" *Reporter*, August 8, 1953.

———. "The New Liberal Coalition." *Progressive*, April 4, 1967.

———. "The New Mood in Politics." *Esquire*, January 1960.

———. "The 1968 Election: An Historical Perspective." *Vital Speeches of the Day*, December 12, 1968.

———. "Not Left, Not Right, But a Vital Center." *New York Times*, April 4, 1948.

———. "One Last Chance for the Democrats." *Playboy*, November 1982.

———. "Our New-Found Leisure Won't Bore Us If Some of It Is Employed in Reading." *Saturday Evening Post*, April 4, 1959.

———. "Thinking Aloud: Vietnam and the 1968 Election." *New Leader*, November 11, 1967.

———. "Vietnam and the End of the Age of Superpowers." *Harper's Magazine*, March 3, 1969.

———. *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom*. Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1949.

———. "Where Does the Liberal Go from Here?" *New York Times Magazine*, August 8, 1957.

———. "Which Road for the Democrats?" *Reporter*, January 1, 1953.

Schlesinger, Stephen C. *The New Reformers: Forces for Change in American Politics*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975.

Schneider, William. "JFK's Children: The Class of '74." *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1989.

Stevenson, Adlai. "America's Image of Greatness." *Life*, May 5, 1960.

"The People versus the Pentagon." *Progressive*, June 1969.

Trilling, Lionel. *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*. New York: Viking Press, 1950.

"Truman's Plan Collapses." *Newsweek*, July 7, 1948.

"Unforeseen Eugene." *Time*, March 3, 1968.

Wattenberg, Ben J. *Fighting Words: A Tale of How Liberals Created Neo-Conservatism*. New York: Thomas Dunne, 2008.

Wechsler, James A. Introduction to *Lowenstein: Acts of Courage and Belief*, edited by Douglas Lowenstein and Gregory Stone, xxi-xlii. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.

———. "Liberals and the New Left." *Progressive*, May 5, 1969.

Wieck, Paul R. "ADA Goes for McCarthy." *New Republic*, February 2, 1968.

———. "The New Politics Still Lives." *New Republic*, December 12, 1968.

**Secondary Sources**

Books and Articles

Anderson, David L. *The Columbia Guide to the Vietnam War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Baer, Kenneth S. *Reinventing Democrats*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000.

Bailey, Stephen Kemp. *Congress Makes a Law: The Story Behind the Employment Act of 1946*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1950.

Bell, Jonathan. *California Crucible: The Forging of Modern Liberalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Berman, Larry. *Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1982.

Bloodworth, Jeffrey. *Losing the Center: The Decline of American Liberalism, 1968-1992*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013.

Boyle, Kevin. *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995.

Brock, Clifton. *Americans for Democratic Action: Its Role in National Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1962.

Carbone, Cristina. "Staging the Kitchen Debate: How Splitnik Got Normalized in the United

States." In *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European Users*, edited by Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann, 59–81. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009.

Carter, David C. *The Music Has Gone Out of the Movement: Civil Rights and the Johnson Administration, 1965-1968*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Chafe, William H. *Never Stop Running: Allard Lowenstein and the Struggle to Save American Liberalism*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

Chester, Lewis, Godfrey Hodgson, and Bruce Page. *An American Melodrama: The Presidential Campaign of 1968*. New York: Viking Press, 1969.

Collins, Robert M. *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Cowie, Jefferson. *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*. New York: New Press, 2010.

———. "'Vigorously Left, Right, and Center:' The Crosscurrents of Working-Class America in the 1970s." In *America in the Seventies*, edited by Beth Bailey and David Farber, 75–106. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004.

Crotty, William. *Party Reform*. New York: Longman, 1983.

Culver, John C., and John Hyde. *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2000.

Davidson, Phillip B. *Vietnam at War: The History: 1946-1975*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Davies, Gareth. *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996.

DeBenedetti, Charles, and Charles Chatfield. *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990.

Dionne, E. J., Jr. Foreword to *Liberalism for a New Century*, edited by Neil Jumonville and Kevin Mattson, vii-xvii. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Edsall, Thomas Byrne, and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1989.

Ehrman, John. *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1994*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995.

Flamm, Michael W. *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Freeden, Michael, and Marc Stears. "Liberalism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, edited by Michael Freeden, Lyman Tower Sargent, and Marc Stears, 329–347. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Garfinkle, Adam. *Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Anti-War Movement*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997.

Geary, Daniel. "The New Left and Liberalism Reconsidered: The Committee of Correspondence and the Port Huron Statement." In *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto*, edited by Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein, 83–94. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

Geismer, Lily. *Don't Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Gerstle, Gary. "The Protean Character of American Liberalism." *American Historical Review* 99 (October 1994): 1043–1073.

Giglio, James N. *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991.

Gillon, Steven M. *The Democrats' Dilemma: Walter F. Mondale and the Liberal Legacy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

———. *Politics and Vision: The ADA and American Liberalism, 1947-1985*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Gitlin, Todd. "The Rise of Identity Politics." *Dissent*, Spring, 1993.

———. *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America Is Wracked by Culture Wars*. New York: Henry Holt, 1995.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd. "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." *Journal of American History* 91 (March 2005): 1233–1263.

Hall, Simon. *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

Halstead, Fred. *Out Now! A Participants Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War*. New York: Monad Press, 1978.

Hamby, Alonzo L. *Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.

Hamilton, Dona Cooper, and Charles V. Hamilton. *The Dual Agenda: Race and Social Welfare Policies of Civil Rights Organizations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Horton, Carol A. *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Isserman, Maurice. *The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington*. New York: Public Affairs, 2001.

Kahin, George McT. *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.

Kahlenberg, Richard D. *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Katz, Milton S. *Ban the Bomb: A History of SANE, the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy*. New York: Praeger, 1987.

———. "Peace Liberals and Vietnam: SANE and the Politics of 'Responsible Protest.'" *Peace & Change* 9 (July 1983): 21–39.

Katznelson, Ira. "Was the Great Society a Lost Opportunity?" In *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, edited by Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, 185–211. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Kiffmeyer, Thomas. "Looking Back to the City in the Hills: The Council of the Southern Mountains and a Longer View of the War on Poverty in the Appalachian South, 1913-1970." In *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, edited by Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian, 359–386. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011.

King, Lawrence P., and Iván Szelényi. *Theories of the New Class: Intellectuals and Power*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Kozmetsky, George, and Piyu Yue. *The Economic Transformation of the United States, 1950-2000: Focusing on the Technological Revolution, the Service Sector Expansion, and the Cultural, Ideological, and Demographic Changes*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005.

Lasch, Christopher. *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965.

Lassiter, Matthew D. "Political History beyond the Red-Blue Divide." *Journal of American History* 98 (December 2011): 760–764.

Levison, Andrew. *The Working-Class Majority*. New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1974.

Lewis, Penny. *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013.

Lichtenstein, Nelson. "From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era." In *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, edited by Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, 122–152. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.

———. *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Mattson, Kevin. *When America Was Great: The Fighting Faith of Postwar Liberalism*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Matusow, Allen J. *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s*. New York: Harper & Row, 1984.

Milkis, Sidney M. "Lyndon Johnson, the Great Society, and the 'Twilight' of the Modern Presidency." In *The Great Society and the High Tide of Liberalism*, edited by Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur, 1–49. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005.

Miroff, Bruce. *The Liberals' Moment: The McGovern Insurgency and the Identity Crisis of the Democratic Party*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009.

Osman, Suleiman. *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Parker, Richard. *John Kenneth Galbraith: His Life, His Politics, His Economics*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

Parrish, Michael E. *Citizen Rauh: An American Liberal's Life in Law and Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Pells, Richard H. *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.

Pfeffer, Paula F. *A. Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990.

Pickens, Donald K. *Leon H. Keyserling: A Progressive Economist*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009.

Powers, Thomas. *Vietnam: The War at Home: Vietnam and the American People, 1964-1968*. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1984.

Preble, Christopher A. *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004.

Radosh, Ronald. *Divided They Fell: The Demise of the Democratic Party, 1964-1996*. New York: Free Press, 1996.

Rising, George. *Clean for Gene: Eugene McCarthy's 1968 Presidential Campaign*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.

Rodgers, Daniel T. *Age of Fracture*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011.

Rossinow, Doug. *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

———. *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

Rothenberg, Randall. *The Neoliberals: Creating the New American Politics*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984.

Sandbrook, Dominic. *Eugene McCarthy: The Rise and Fall of Postwar American Liberalism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004.

Scott-Smith, Giles. *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and Post-War American Hegemony*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Sexton, Patricia Cayo, and Brendan Sexton. *Blue Collars and Hard-Hats: The Working Class and the Future of American Politics*. New York: Vintage, 1971.

Shafer, Byron E. *Quiet Revolution: The Struggle for the Democratic Party and the Shaping of Post-Reform Politics*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983.

Slessarev, Helene. *The Betrayal of the Urban Poor*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997.

Small, Melvin. *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds*. Lanham, MD: SR Books, 2002

———. *At the Water's Edge: American Politics and the Vietnam War*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee,

2005.

———. *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988.

Steensland, Brian. *The Failed Welfare Revolution: America's Struggle over Guaranteed Income Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Steinfels, Peter. *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979.

———. *The Neoconservatives: The Origins of a Movement*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013.

Stein, Judith. *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.

Storrs, Landon R. Y. *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Sugrue, Thomas J. *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*. New York: Random House, 2008.

Vaïsse, Justin. *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010.

Wells, Tom. *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam*. New York: Henry Holt, 1994.

White, Graham, and John Maze. *Henry A. Wallace: His Search for a New World Order*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

Wilson, James Q. *The Amateur Democrat: Club Politics in Three Cities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Zarefsky, David. *President Johnson's War on Poverty: Rhetoric and History*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1986.

Zaroulis, Nancy, and Gerald Sullivan. *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*. New York: Owl Book, 1984.

Unpublished Dissertations and Theses

Gallagher, Douglas Steven. "'Walking the Tightrope': Americans for Democratic Action in the South, 1947-1963." Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 2008.

Kamen, Scott C. "The Demise of the Congress for Cultural Freedom: Transatlantic Intellectual Consensus and 'Vital Center' Liberalism, 1950-1967." M.A. thesis,

University of Maryland, College Park, 2011.

Pierce, Robert Clayton. "Liberals and the Cold War: Union for Democratic Action and Americans for Democratic Action, 1940-1949." Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1979.

Websites

Vaïsse, Justin. *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* – Companion Website to the Book. http://neoconservatism.vaisse.net/ (accessed November 14, 2015).