

Realignment on the Right?

Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

In our February issue, we published an article entitled "Conflict on the Right: Traditional Conservatism and 'Neo-Conservatism.'" This provoked Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr., President of the influential Ludwig von Mises Institute in Burlingame, California (also at Auburn University and the University of Nevada) to develop this theme in a revealing and provocative manuscript which we publish below. From this it will be clearly discerned that the Conservative Movement is multi-faceted, rather than uniform, and its proponents hold a healthy variety of vigorous opinions which they are not afraid to advance with vigor.

THE REAGAN COALITION, unlike the Goldwater movement, contained many diverse elements. Two of the most prominent were the traditionalist (or paleo) conservatives, and the anti-traditionalist (or neo) conservatives. Barely speaking at the best of times, these two groups are now at war.

Opposing Views

THE PALEO-CONSERVATIVES are cultural traditionalists who reject the egalitarian movements that have wilded their way through America. To a certain extent they identify with the libertarian perspective which shares the Founding Fathers' distrust of large standing armies, looks to the original American foreign policy of isolationism as a guide to the post-Cold War era, and sees the welfare state as a moral and Constitutional monstrosity.

They are opposed to the post-FDR belief in mass democracy - which they see as leading to the welfare state - and they reject internationalist crusades to spread global democracy.

Patrick J. Buchanan, the most important conservative in the country, speaks for paleo-conservatives (and libertarians) when he calls for "a new foreign policy that puts America first, and not only first, but second and third as well."

The neo-conservatives, on the other hand, are cultural modernists who endorse the forced integration and redistributionism of civil rights. They believe in an imperial presidency, the welfare state, and mass democracy, and they seek to enact these ideas worldwide through U.S. military intervention. (So devoted are they to democracy that neo-con theologian Michael Novak once compared the "birth of democracy in history" to the "birth in Bethlehem," a metaphor uncomfortably close to sacrilege for a Christian.)

The neocons can be summed up as "New Class" intellectuals seeking to "rationalize, legitimize, defend, and conserve the managerial regime" of the New Deal and the Great Society, says journalist Samuel T. Francis. From that regime they derive their social and political power, and in its service they have sought to co-opt the Right.

A Short History of Neo-conservatism

WHEN THE NEOCONS JOINED the conservative movement in the late 1970s to fasten themselves to the Reagan campaign, conservatives were delighted. The neocons may have come from the Left, but they were staunch anti-communists and top intellectuals, or so their publications proclaimed.

Most conservatives didn't realize this was not the neocons' first conversion. Some neocons started out as Trotskyite communists, then became democratic socialists, then liberal Democrats, then conservative Republicans. Others remained social democrats. The neocon leaders made effective use of the Marxist tactics they had learned in the internecine battles at City College of New York. Functioning as a disciplined cadre, they systematically put their followers in positions of power and punished anyone who stood in their way. "They operate exactly like a Communist cell," says a writer for *The Wall Street Journal*, itself heavily influenced by the neocons.

Here's a minor case study in how the neocons function. In 1988, neocon academic Allan Bloom invited budding neocon Francis Fukayama of the State Department to the neocon Olin Democracy Center at the University of Chicago. There he delivered a paper, which was published last year in the neocon journal *The National Interest* and trumpeted in *The New York Times* and its Sunday magazine as the most important article of 1989. Fukayama then received a lush book contract from a neocon-influenced publisher; his future is assured.

Fukayama, a right-wing Hegelian, claimed in his article, "The End of History?," that socialism has been eternally vanquished by the democratic welfare state. There will be no more ideological battles, only an "endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands."

All varieties of determinism repudiate the proper view of history as the sum of purposive human actions, but as with Hegel and Marx, there is a sinister purpose to Fukayama's inevitability theory.

We can think of Hegel, confirms philosopher David Gordon of the Ludwig von Mises Institute, as the first neocon. Hegel agreed to a role for the

market and private property, but only if regulated by the state; he endorsed the sort of conservative welfare policies later enacted by Bismarck; he believed in war as necessary for the moral health of the people; and he endorsed a sovereign executive unfettered by the laws of morality.

Fukayama wants us to believe that a similar system is inevitable for all time, courtesy of History. But despite Fukayama and the neocons, the real issue is not socialism vs. the welfare state, but freedom vs. statism, an option they seek to obliterate for conservatives, and for America.

The First Battle

THE FIRST INTRA-RIGHT BATTLE in the Reagan administration took place over the directorship of the National Endowment for the Humanities. This bureaucracy dispenses many millions in academic patronage, and the neocons knew that not only do ideas have consequences, but that paid dispensers of ideas were essential to their planned control of conservative think tanks and foundations. NEH grants could buy them a lot of influence in the academic world, where the average professor - conservative, liberal, or libertarian - will sell his soul, such as it is, for a few thousand dollars.

Using *The New York Times*, which managing editor A.M. Rosenthal turned into a virtual neocon house organ, they attacked the president's first choice for the NEA, Southern historian and literature professor M. E. Bradford - a paleocon. Bradford, a scholar of immense learning and gentle character, was called a southern reactionary and Neanderthal. There was even a whispering campaign to brand him as a racist, though no evidence was ever produced.

Paleo-conservative godfather Russell Kirk said - in one line of a long talk at the Heritage Foundation - that some neocons "mistake Tel Aviv for the capital of the United States." Decter, a Heritage trustee, called the remark a "bloody piece of anti-Semitism."

An open charge, one the *Times* harped on, was that Bradford was insufficiently respectful of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln - a proponent of big government, federal hegemony, the income tax, a dictatorial presidency, loose construction of the Constitution and fiat-paper money - is a hero to neocons (even though his racial views resemble David Duke's). But why should uncritical approval of Lincoln have been a Reagan litmus test in the 1980s?

Another accusation was that Bradford opposed federal control of education. This was supposed to be Reagan's view, so it ought not to have been effective,

no matter how shocking the *Times* found it.

Day after day, Bradford was called a caveman. As is so often the case, the smear worked and Irving Kristol's choice, William Bennett, was installed in Bradford's place.

Bennett used the NEH effectively to reward neocons, and they in turn promoted him for Secretary of Education. When he got that job, he made effective use of its even larger slushfund and bank of jobs, while drastically expanding the central government's control over local schools. The neocons, who tend to think civilization starts and ends in New York City, see all local - and especially rural and small-town - influences as baleful prejudices to be stamped out. Thus their centralizing mania.

Along with the National Endowment for the Humanities, the neocons took over the grant-making National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for Democracy; not to speak of entire divisions of the National Security Council and the Defense and State Departments through neocons Richard Perle and Elliott Abrams.

A Neocon Decline?

EVERYTHING SEEMED TO BE GOING their way until the Iran-Contra affair - largely a neocon operation - was exposed and Abrams, a crown prince of neocondom as son-in-law to Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter, was accused of giving false testimony to Congress.

During Iran-Contra, neocons were gradually forced out of the State, Defense, and the National Security Council, and even where they remained, they lost power. Contributing to this decline was the poor performance in the Republican primaries of their candidate, Jack Kemp, despite years of coaching by Kristol.

The neocons still wield a lot of power through Carl Gershman's National Endowment for Democracy, Jack Kemp's HUD, Bennett's Drug War, and Dan Quayle's office under Kristol's son, Bill, but the White House - now controlled by an older North-eastern elite - is much less friendly.

Anti-Semitism and the Neocons

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE JEWS on both sides of the conservative battle, most neocons are Jewish. That ought not to make any difference. But given the neocons' willingness to use any weapon in their battles, perhaps it was inevitable that anti-Semitism would be ascribed to their opponents.

Anti-Semitism is a ghastly philosophy, and a charge of anti-Semitism can therefore do great harm. As it ought to, when true. But when untrue, it must be accounted the most vicious smear in American politics.

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But that is nonsense.

The neocons do see a unique role for Israel, both as foreign-aid recipient and as a hinge of U.S. foreign policy. In the 1970s, some became conservatives specifically, they said, to protect Israel from the "post-Vietnam neo-isolationism" of the Left. The neocons have the right to disagree with Kirk; they do not have the right to smear a scholar and man of his rectitude.

Neocons even persecuted Paul Gottfried, a Jewish paleocon, for supporting Kirk and saying that Christian anti-Semitism and "Jewish anti-Christian prejudice" are evil, and that too many neocons are guilty of the latter. Gottfried, a nationally known political philosopher, was as a result denied a teaching post at a Catholic university.

Neocons organized to pressure the university into withdrawing its job offer. Gottfried was, they said, a "self-hating Jew" not dedicated to "the security of Israel." Podhoretz reproached him as "more Christian than Jewish." That struck many as an odd argument to make to a Catholic university. Even odder, it seems to have worked.

The Attack on the Rockford Institute

AT THE CENTER of the paleo/neo battle have been the paleo-conservative Rockford Institute in Rockford, Illinois, and its influential magazine, *Chronicles*. Editor Thomas Fleming had published an article by libertarian Bill Kaufman on Gore Vidal as a man of the Old Right. Despite Vidal's many ideological and cultural shortcomings, it was a persuasive piece. But no one could have seen it as a literary thermonuclear device.

After hearing Fleming make an "insensitive remark" about AIDS, Neuhaus said: "How can you say that, when we all have so many close friends who have been struck down by this terrible disease?"

"Close friends?" answered Fleming. "I don't know anyone who has AIDS. I don't know anyone who knows anyone who has AIDS." Neuhaus would never speak to Fleming again.

Like many paleocons, Fleming comes from the Southern agrarian tradition that values America's heartland farms and towns over its big northeastern cities. For these views, he has been smeared by the neocons as a "nativist." But after the Vidal article, Podhoretz and Decter declared Fleming, *Chronicles*, and Rockford "enemies" who countenanced anti-Semitism.

How so? Most American Jews tend to prefer the

cities, so criticizing urban culture smacked of anti-Semitism. And besides, Vidal was their bitter personal enemy who had called them "Israeli Fifth Columnists."

In answering these charges, Rockford pointed to *Chronicle's* Jewish editors and writers, and to the fact that nothing even remotely anti-Semitic had ever appeared in the magazine. But the neocons only redoubled their efforts, next using their disciple Richard John Neuhaus, a Lutheran minister who ran Rockford's Center for Religion and Society in New York City.

Neuhaus and Fleming had been at odds for a long time. After hearing Fleming make an "insensitive remark" about AIDS, Neuhaus said: "How can you say that, when we all have so many close friends who have been struck down by this terrible disease?"

"Close friends?" answered Fleming. "I don't know anyone who has AIDS. I don't know anyone *who knows anyone* who has AIDS." Neuhaus would never speak to Fleming again.

When Podhoretz and Decter declared war, Neuhaus gladly volunteered for "the neocons' smear campaign," a Rockford official told me. Neuhaus "badmouthed Rockford to our donors while spending our money hand over fist." An attack on Rockford from Rockford's offices by a Rockford employee using Rockford money left the Institute no alternative but to fire Neuhaus and quickly, although the action was noisily criticized by the neocons and their allies as "ill-mannered,"

The New York Times then ran a front-page story on the affair, bringing the paleo/neo fight into the open. Other national coverage followed.

Even spurious charges of bigotry are hard to refute. But in this case they didn't work, and Rockford has emerged as an even more influential advocate of traditional culture; *Chronicles* has continued to gain in circulation and prestige.

A Neocon Error

NOT SINCE IRAN-CONTRA had the neocons made a serious mistake. But Kirk, as Mr. Conservative, is widely beloved, and so is Rockford. The attacks backfired, and for the first time, the neocons themselves became the issue.

This is something they like to avoid, for despite all the resources they control, there are not very many of them. As a *Wall Street Journal* writer told me: "No one has ever found more than 37."

The neocons use "a certain amount of smoke and mirrors," added a paleo journalist. "But this split is blowing away the smoke and breaking their mirrors. The neocon edifice seems impressive, but pull back the curtain on this Wizard of Oz, and it's only Irving Kristol standing on a stool."

In an attempt to off-set their small numbers, the neocons have started to reach out to an older Establishment, and align themselves with such Trilateralist intellectuals as Samuel Huntington of Harvard, who has received millions in Olin Foundation money.

Who's Who Among the Neocons

- Elliott Abrams*
Ex-State Department official; son-in-law to Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter
- Kenneth Adelman
Syndicated columnist; ex-director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
- William Bennett
Drug Czar; ex-Education Secretary, ex-director, National Endowment for the Humanities
- Allan Bloom
Director, Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy, University of Chicago
- Midge Decter*
Chairwoman of the Committee for the Free World; trustee of the Heritage Foundation; wife of Norman Podhoretz
- Francis Fukayama
State Department official
- Carl Gershman
Director, the National Endowment for Democracy
- Gertrude Himmelfarb*
City University of New York; wife of Irving Kristol
- Milton Himmelfarb*
Commentary magazine; brother-in-law of Irving Kristol
- Michael S. Joyce
President, the Bradley Foundation
- Jack Kemp
Secretary for Housing and Urban Development
- Jeanne Kirkpatrick
Ex-UN Ambassador; Georgetown University
- Hilton Kramer
Editor of *The New Criterion*
- Charles Krauthammer
Syndicated columnist
- Irving Kristol*
Neocon *capo di tutti capi*; American Enterprise Institute; Basic Books; the Bradley Foundation; the Institute for Educational Affairs; The National Interest; the Olin Foundation; *The Public Interest*
- William Kristol*
Chief of staff to the vice president of the United States; son of Irving Kristol and Gertrude Himmelfarb
- Michael Ledeen
Former National Security Council official known to be close to the Israeli and Italian secret services
- Leslie Lenkowsky
Ex-USIA official; director, the Institute for Educational Affairs
- Richard John Neuhaus
Ex-Rockford Institute official; Lutheran minister
- Michael Novak
American Enterprise Institute; publisher of *Crisis* magazine
- Richard Perle
American Enterprise Institute and ex-Pentagon official
- Norman Podhoretz*
Editor of *Commentary* Magazine; most important neocon after Irving Kristol
- John Podhoretz*
Culture czar at *The Washington Times* and *Insight* magazine; son of Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter
- William E. Simon
Ex-Treasury secretary and energy czar; president, the Olin Foundation; state-connected businessman
- A.M. Rosenthal
Ex-managing editor, *The New York Times*
- Ben Wattenberg
American Enterprise Institute; syndicated columnist
- George Will
Syndicated columnist

* Ideological nepotism; the self-named ruling "collective" of the Ayn Rand cult consisted of the members of one extended Canadian family; the neocon politburo consists of the members of two New York City families, the Kristols and the Podhoretzes.

In an early Trilateral Commission study, Huntington looked back with nostalgia on the good old days when "Truman had been able to govern the country with the cooperation of a small number of Wall Street lawyers and bankers." But too many people questioned the "legitimacy of hierarchy, coercion, discipline, secrecy, and deception"; they "no longer felt the compulsion to obey" those of "superior rank."

The solution? 1) Muzzling the press, especially newsmen skeptical of "authority and institutions"; 2) tightening federal control of higher education, which too often works "at cross purposes" with elite authority; and 3) restoring the presidency to dominion over "foreign policy and international economics." These are neo-conservative goals as well.

In Irving Kristol's *National Interest*, neocon columnist Charles Krauthammer has openly endorsed the Trilateralist foreign policy: America must "integrate" with Europe and Japan in a "super-sovereign" entity that is "economically, culturally, and politically hegemonic in the world."

A Reconciliation

JUST AS THE PALEO/NEO split widens, an older break is healing, much to the neocons' alarm. For if there is anything they dislike more than paleo-conservatives, it is libertarians.

The Old Right, born in opposition to the New Deal and World War II (the neocons' two favorite historical events), encompassed people of very different ideologies, although all were cultural conservatives. From monarchists to anarcho-capitalists, they worked together against the policies of Roosevelt and Truman.

The coalition broke down during the Cold War, but with the breakdown of communism itself, the Old Right is back: paleocons are joining with libertarians against the common enemy - what Sobran calls "that 800-pound gorilla in Washington, D.C." Not just any libertarians, however, but the culturally conservative "paleo-libertarians."

It is not a difficult melding. Paleo-libertarians agree with paleo-conservatives, and disagree with neo-conservatives, on most ideological issues.

But to rescue the libertarian ideal, and make such an alliance possible, good libertarians first had to hive off what Murray N. Rothbard called "the hippies, druggies, and militantly anti-Christian atheists" of the Libertarian Party.

Inspired by Rothbard - founder of the modern libertarian movement - a fast-growing group of paleo-libertarian scholars, clergy, businessmen, and journalists has broken with the libertines. Cultural arch-conservative Rothbard spoke for them all when he said he would "concede that one may be a hippie, a moocher, a Christian-hater, and even a crook, and still be a libertarian. But I've had it with these people. Liberty isn't enough. I want liberty-plus." He favored, he said, "scraping the detritus of the libertarian movement off the soles of my shoes."

Rothbard and Fleming organized the first meeting

of the paleo alliance late last year at the Rockford Institute. Other sponsors were the Ludwig von Mises Institute and the Center for Libertarian Studies.

Called "Beyond the Welfare-Warfare State: Setting the Agenda for the 1990s," the conference brought together a host of paleos from both camps, including Bradford, Gottfried, Fleming, Rothbard, Sobran, and the present writer.

A second meeting took place in 1990 to establish a new scholarly society. Designed to promote a convergence among paleo-libertarians and paleo-conservatives, and discussion of the ideas of liberty and Western civilization, it was named after John Randolph of Roanoke. Randolph, whom Russell Kirk in his great book called a "libertarian aristocrat," said: "I love liberty; I hate equality."

The Randolph Club will have no more than 125 members - scholars, journalists, and businessmen - by invitation only. The presidency will alternate between a conservative and a libertarian, and its first meeting - in Dallas next October - will produce a paleo-alliance book.

... left libertarians are hostile to religion, family, community, and tradition. They hate the cultural values that Rockford stands for much more than they do the leviathan state. This sort of libertarian is anti-government only because he abhors all authority, private as well as public.

The officers are Fleming, president; Rothbard, vice president (and next year's president); Burton S. Blumert of CLS, treasurer; and Michael Warder of Rockford, secretary. The other two board members are Allan Carlson of Rockford and myself.

Another paleo-alliance gathering took place last month at the Philadelphia Society's annual meeting in Chicago, with a sold-out dialogue on the future of the Right featuring Rothbard, Anthony Harrigan, and Donald Devine, and sponsored by the Rockford Institute.

Paleo-libertarians vs. Left Libertarians

LIBERAL OR NIHILIST LIBERTARIANS are as bothered by the realignment on the Right as are neoconservatives. The tiny Libertarian Party is worried sick. *Liberty* magazine is foaming at the mouth. And the combine controlled by oil billionaire Charles G. Koch of Wichita, Kansas, is especially upset. Not only because any ideological shift threatens his carefully crafted cartel, but because his organizations are starting to get money from neocon foundations, which the thrifty Koch particularly likes.

This distress showed itself recently in an article

called "The Ideological Shuffle" by Virginia Postrel, editor of *Reason* magazine, in *The Washington Post* on (April Fool's Day, 1990).

Postrel is a left libertarian, a species that is pro-feminist, pro-choice, pro-egalitarian, and anti-Christian. In her article, Postrel says that the real ideological split these days is between pro-change, fast-moving dynamos like Jack Kemp and Newt Gingrich, and stick-in-the-muds like the Rockford Institute.

When FDR and JFK made this sort of point, everyone on the Right saw it as bunk. Loose talk about "getting America moving again" should make us pro-Denver Boot. Somehow, government is always driving the van.

Yet Postrel attacks Rockford, though it champions limited government, and applauds Kemp and Gingrich, though they promote big government. Even left libertarians are supposed to agree with Rockford on this issue.

Aside from the marching-orders question, the explanation is cultural: left libertarians are hostile to religion, family, community, and tradition. They hate the cultural values that Rockford stands for much more than they do the leviathan state. This sort of libertarian is anti-government only because he abhors all authority, private as well as public, legitimate as well as illegitimate. "We should fight the oppression of church and state," one sectary chirped to me.

But left libertarianism is as dead as liberalism. As paleo-libertarian Murray N. Rothbard has written, "the age of atheism is over."

Even worse than her statist arguments, however, Postrel smeared Rockford. The one hard fact in her article, on which she hung her dynamism *vs.* statist argument, was a picnic she said Rockford held to honor loony-leftist environmentalist Jeremy Rifkin. But no such picnic ever took place!

The Washington Post, itself a soft neocon newspaper, ran a "correction," but its weaselly passive voice, vague sentence construction, and additional error(!) didn't repair the slur. But what one can expect from a newspaper that, as Spiro T. Agnew pointed out, is best suited to lining the bottom of a bird cage? When it comes to the *Post*, we shouldn't trust the page numbers unless we count them ourselves.

At a time when neocons - like all statist - are intellectually bankrupt, conservatives are preoccupied with getting jobs in the state apparatus, and libertarians are still zoning in the Age of Aquarius, the paleo alliance is the only exciting development on the Right. I expect to see the people associated with the John Randolph Club set the agenda for the 1990s and beyond.

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