The Ideological Evolution of American Political Thought

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The scope of this study is intended to cover the ideologies, both past and present, found in the United States which have served to shape the course of our nation. This is by no means intended to be a complete history of all the schools of political thought which have been present throughout the past 200 odd years, but rather a brief look at the beliefs present during the writing of the Constitution and subsequent years, with main emphasis on the ideologies which confront American citizens today. This paper will not deal intensively with ideologies of the distant past but will describe significant events which affect the shaping of ideologies today. Integration of current information in a manner which is useful in predicting the future ideological course of our nation is the goal of this paper.

Essential to the understanding of this paper is a clear knowledge of the term ideology which will be directly referred to and indirectly alluded to throughout this study. The term originated from France as a product of the Enlightenment and stood for a science of ideas. Contemporary thought held that this new science would enable them to extract precise scientific understanding and control of thoughts which were previously stated only in a commonsensical manner. This would enable ideology, as the science of politics, to formulate the ideal plan for the best possible political system. Needless to say, the new science of ideology failed to achieve its mission and was soon viewed as "a naive logical construct notable for its abstract neatness but lacking a genuine understanding of the complex givens of human nature and of historical reality."
For the purposes of this paper ideology will be defined as any consistent set of beliefs in the political realm. It is important to realize that very few people in the United States today have a completely consistent set of beliefs. However, this fact does not reduce the usefulness of the term since any large-scale political belief is ideologically significant, regardless of whether or not it is 100% pure as it filters down through average citizens. The leaders of public opinion do have consistent ideologies which make the study of ideologies relevant to the understanding of the course of our nation.

Even a brief study of American history reveals the fact that America was founded with hopes of bringing change. Although some of the earliest colonists hoped to find wealth in the New World, the majority of the settlers wanted a new lifestyle. Oppression was a way of life in European countries, as the basic freedoms of religion and speech were not granted. The situation was the worst for the poorest classes, causing them to seek an escape. The natural place to go was the New World which had virtually no government or authority figures of any sort. All kinds of freedoms were in vogue as long as you were in the right part of the country. Settlements like the Puritans in Massachusetts Bay would not permit any freedoms except the limited ones they expressly granted, but there were plenty of other places to settle outside their jurisdiction. There were other groups which were also exclusive, but the vast expanses of land allowed room for each lifestyle to operate under its own rules and not bother those who would disagree.
Taken as a whole, the colonists were most afraid of any centralized power which might usurp their newfound freedoms. It was found to be advantageous to form local colonial governments which would protect the idiosyncracies and unique identity of each separate settlement. They were opposed to any federal government which would take them a step closer to the absence of rights which they had experienced in Europe. The early settlers felt very strongly that individual freedoms were vital to the attainment of happiness. This is evident by looking at the hardships they endured to attain them. For families who were lucky enough to be able to afford passage to the New World, the sheer shock of leaving almost all friends and possessions behind to take a dangerous voyage across the Atlantic and settle in an area which might not provide enough food for basic survival was a tremendously harrowing experience. Some people sold themselves into slavery as indentured servants for periods of normally about seven years in order to obtain passage into a new way of life. All in all, these people were extremely hearty and independent. How is it that these people were led to a system of government which has evolved with monstrous powers in its capabilities to control our lives? The answer to this question is the same as to the original question of why the colonists moved to America: freedom from oppression.

Since a large percentage of the early colonies were set up by England and/or English companies, they felt that they should be able to control these settlements. The theory of mercantilism held that the colonies existed for the good of the mother
country and proved to be justification for a series of laws and acts which established Great Britain's dominance over the colonies. These restrictions included the Navigation Acts which were limitations on foreign involvement in colonial shipping, the Stamp Act which placed stiff excise taxes on virtually all printed material in the colonies, the Townsend Acts which introduced new taxes on glass, lead, paints, paper, and tea, and numerous other attempts to control the colonists.

These usurpations on the rights of the colonists caused much chagrin. Unfortunately, the English were adamant in their convictions, believing that the colonies must be subordinate and a tool to their growing world dominance. The first step toward a centralized government was taken when Massachusetts called upon all colonies to send delegates to a meeting to discuss common action to be taken against England. This body assembled in Philadelphia and all colonies were represented except Georgia in this initial meeting of the First Continental Congress. Thus the colonies were drawn together in varying degrees of cohesiveness, resulting in the writing of the Constitution.

As a young nation, America groped for a path to lead them to a just political system. This course was and is one of constant vacillation; however, Andrew Jackson ushered in an age that would forever leave a mark on the destiny of our nation. Before Jackson, our nation had taken on a very aristocratic air, playing to various factions but ignoring the masses who were not organized in political matters. As a commoner, Jackson reversed this precedent through his faith and trust in the average citizen.
According to historian Claude G. Bowers, "The Jackson administration was the first in our history to take the mass of the people into its confidence as to its actions and motives." Jackson was willing and able to take the average citizens into account for two basic reasons. The first was that he was the first chief executive to rise from poverty to the presidency. This served to make him closer to the people because he understood their problems from first-hand experience. The second and probably most important reason was that his right to sit in the oval office came from average people and not from special interests. "He had been swept into office despite the opposition of a major part of the press, the moneyed element, and the political leaders of long-established reputation." The significance of Jackson's grass roots support is in the fact that many of the voters were newly enfranchised. This is an indication that they supported the government and change would come about in an orderly manner. The outstanding exception to this rule is the Civil War which was not a conflict of political ideologies, but rather one of moral values.

The fact that Jackson won the support of average people for his administration is important but not nearly as significant to the development of our nation's over-riding ideology as the fact that he started party politics. "At the time of Jackson's election all men posed as members of the party of Jefferson, and a democracy with but one party is as dangerous as one with none." This is because with only one party there is no group to stand back and criticize. Criticism begats change and the absence of
it is found in totalitarian regimes, not democratic societies. Elections with only one party tend to be elections of men and their personalities rather than a struggle of competing ideologies.

By the end of Jackson's term in office (1836), it became clear that America would not embark upon a single ideological course, but rather competing factions would constantly battle for the right to lead our nation and to control its overall ideological perspective. This precedent, established in 1828, has withstood the test of time, fending off civil wars and world wars, economic depression and economic prosperity, feelings of great national pride and feelings of intense national embarrassment and shame. From this time henceforth, America's ideology will waver with the will of those in power.

In the late 1800's a new political coalition was formed called the Populists, which has helped to shape the course of our nation. The People's Party, as it was formally called, was basically composed of western farmers who sought to bring about a change in the government.

Their problems were caused largely by the fact that the development of the land west of the Mississippi was, in great measure, based on speculation by Eastern financial interests. The financiers made loans readily available to settlers on the hope of lucrative returns on rich farm lands. During the 1880's consecutive years of drought caused widespread crop failures which proved to be the downfall of the speculators who backed out on their loans. Many farmers went bankrupt and those who did manage
to eke out a living in these troubled times were squeezed by high middleman profits from the railroads who discriminated against the small shippers in favor of larger ones.

Faced with these problems and little hope of gaining redress from a highly centralized government in Washington, the farmers formed the Populist Party which held local meetings from 1889 through 1891 and their first national convention in 1892. They chose General James Weaver as candidate for President. He met limited success as he captured over a million popular votes and 27 electoral votes. The People's Party lost its autonomy in 1896 as it endorsed the Democratic candidate for President, William Jennings Bryant.

Despite the fact that the Populist's Party no longer exists as such, it has never been forgotten by subsequent political leaders. The tenants of Populism are constantly spewn forth by leaders who advocate isolationism, sweeping tax reform to relieve the burden from the lower classes, less centralized government, more involvement of the people in government, and countless other reform measures.

There were three major events in the first half of the twentieth century which have left an indelible mark on the America of today. The first was World War I which was the first total war in history. The total resources and energies of our nation were turned over to the military who virtually ran the country and in effect centralized its power. This was counter-productive to many previous movements, including that of the Populists, which sought to bring power to the people. Another major event was
World War II which furthered that which World War I started, only on a grander scale because the scope, intensity, duration, and cost of it was far greater than that incurred in the first conflict.

The third, and most important event in the first half of the twentieth century was the depression. As much as the wars did to add to the powers of the federal government, the Great Depression contributed geometrically more. While the wars turned the focus on Washington, it was always realized that this was for war time only, and things would return to normal as soon as the conflicts ended. The depression occurred in peacetime, making any effects it had on the governmental process more or less of a permanent nature. During the Depression the problems faced in America were so great that state and local governments lacked the resources to effectively deal with them. Unemployment reached over 21% of the work force as industry was forced to close its doors, reduce output, or cut wages. Although the farmers produced huge volumes of surplus crops, people were starving in the cities. The list of miseries endured during these difficult times goes on almost endlessly, but the important point is that it was realized that the federal government alone had the resources to deal with such an encompassing dilemma. The American way of life was changed as millions were forced to seek help from the government in a wide variety of ways, including direct food handouts, crop subsidies, jobs, and loans. The federal government increased its power as it allowed big business to create monopolies without fear of prosecution, and itself assumed dictatorial powers over the economy. Americans who were used to having control over
their lives saw a large measure of this local autonomy slip out of their hands. This power, which was freely transferred in a time of national and international disaster, has never been fully returned to the people. The depression thus had the effect of moving true democracy a step further away from reality and has forced all subsequent political ideologies to react to that which it has created.

This has been a very brief history of some of the major events which precede the current ideological conflicts in America. It is by no means intended to be complete, but rather a fair sampling of events from different periods in American history, showing how they affect the present. It is hoped that this brief excursion into history will provide proper perspective for the upcoming section which will deal only with ideologies present at this time in America and not easily examined through the sure-sighted vision of hindsight employed by historians.

INTRODUCTION TO CURRENT IDEOLOGIES

There are some who argue that it would be useless to study ideologies today because there aren't any. Daniel Bell further argued in his book, The End of Ideology, that the term ideology was applicable only to the left because "one's historical contexts defines one's usage; and the word ideology was a product of the "left" and gained a distinctive resonance in that context." Such a narrow view of the subject will never enable one to grasp any usable insight gained from the study of ideologies. An ideology must be defined more broadly and recognized for what it is -- a product of both the right and left and even of such radical
groups as fascists and socialists.

"An ideology may be held with varying degrees of specificity and intensity. For some it may be comprehensive, detailed, and integrated -- that is interconnected explanations and interpretations already exist in their minds for nearly everything they see or feel about politics. For others, it may be fragmented and/or not strongly felt."

Highly developed ideologies are of tremendous importance since it is these highly developed thoughts which prove to be the mainstay of successful governments. "All established political systems generate ideologies that explain, justify, and mobilize support for their practices." When a government is guided by a consistent ideology it is possible for others to understand actions taken and predict what future courses will be followed. When a person adopts a particular ideology, regardless of its specific tenants, it is quite possible that these beliefs will become part of the total personality which accounts for the fact that ideologies resist change. This is of course not to say that once formed an ideology is unchangeable, but rather that once formed an ideology can be replaced by other beliefs, but normally this process will either be slow or non-existent. It is also interesting to note that an ideologue will probably always be one even if his beliefs change because his attitudes take on such a comprehensive base that they can be replaced, but almost never simply abolished.

In America there are two main ideologies. These are neatly broken down into the terms liberal and conservative, but definition of exactly what these terms mean is not nearly as easy to do. Aside from these main categories there are the socialists
which are further left than the average liberal and those with fascist tendencies placed on the political spectrum to the right of the conservatives. The socialist position is by far more acceptable at this time in our country than the fascists. The socialists regularly run candidates in elections and are not harshly criticized by the masses. The extreme right is not as fortunate. They are constantly threatened with suppression, as was evidenced when the Nazi's sought to hold a public march in Michigan last year and had to go through the courts to finally gain approval. It is apparent that at this juncture of history, the extreme left is more acceptable in America than the extreme right.

CONSERVATIVES

The neat dichotomy of separating political beliefs into either liberals or conservatives is not without its problems. The biggest problem is in defining what beliefs place a person in one category as opposed to another. William F. Buckley, Jr. is probably one of the most visible conservatives today, but even he has difficulty with the question, "What is conservatism?" Buckley makes it clear that the term cannot adequately be defined in a single sentence or brief thought. He stated that when pressed to do so he would quote Professor Richard Weaver's definition stating that conservatism is "the paradigm of essences toward which the phenomenology of the world is in continuing approximation." To further drive his point home, Buckley stated that he has yet to fail "to dissatisfy an audience that asks the meaning of conservatism."
Luckily, conservatism is not as useless a term as Mr. Buckley would initially lead us to believe. He went on to say that although he might encounter difficulty in telling exactly what conservatism is, he could tell who is a conservative. Even here there are problems as liberals are more easily spotted than conservatives since,

"conservatives, under the stress of our times, have had to invite all kinds of people into their ranks to help with the job at hand, and the natural courtesy of the conservative causes him to treat such people not as janissaries, but as equals; and so, empirically it becomes difficult to see behind the khaki, to know surely whether that is conservative over there doing what needs to be done, or a radical, or merely a noisemaker, or protchnician . . ."12

William Buckley may very well be the most intellectual conservative in our country, but if one had to rely on him for a precise and easily remembered definition of conservatism it would never be accomplished.

There are plenty of people who are willing to describe what conservatism is and how it is reflected in our country. Those on the liberal side seize this as an opportunity to degrade the movement and the people who take part in it while many conservatives use it as an opportunity to justify their doctrines and implementation of such. There will be several definitions of conservatism given without any attempt to identify the ideological beliefs of the contributor. The task of identification, however, is not difficult to accomplish by simply observing how the believers of conservatism are portrayed.

In his article entitled, "Conservatism and Personality," Herbert McClosky states that the differences between the two id-
eological camps, liberalism and conservatism, have not always been clear. This is partly because the sides have often reversed positions on such basic items as government regulation of the economy. Political parties are of no value in identifying ideology as they serve "less as ideological movements than as brokerage organizations hoping to attract majority support..."13 Although the differences are not readily apparent by political party membership or stand on certain issues, McClosky feels that differences between liberals and conservatives not only do exist but are also significant. He further stated that the differences, which can be obtained by analysis of certain psychological variables, will hold true for the entire conservative movement from Edmund Burke to the New Conservatives.

Without going into the specifics of his research, McClosky discovered that those of conservative inclinations are not the intellectually elite, but rather those who are "uninformed, poorly educated, and so far as we can determine, the less intelligent."14 Through his measures, he discovered that an increase in knowledge will result in a decrease in conservatism. Conservatives were also found to possess the traits of "submissiveness, anomie, sense of alienation, bewilderment, etc." in direct proportion to their level of conservatism.15 The author concluded from these findings on social-psychological attributes that:

"conservatism, in our society at least, appears to be far more characteristic of social isolates, of people who think poorly of themselves, who suffer personal disgruntlement and frustration, who are submissive, timid and wanting in confidence, who lack a clear sense of direction and purpose, who are uncertain about their values, and who are gen-
erally bewildered by the alarming task of having to thread their way through a society which seems to them too complex to fathom."

Fortunately for those who claim to be conservatives, there are other viewpoints explaining their position. Professor Samuel P. Huntington came up with six principles of conservatives which transcend the ages. The first states that man is basically religious and uses religion as a "foundation for society." Secondly, society is envisioned as a natural, organic product of slow historical growth which derives the wisdom of its institutions from previous generations. The third principle states that man is a creature of instinct as well as reason which causes him to value experience and prejudice over reason in evaluation of social orders. The fourth holds that the community is superior to the individual, and although evil is found in the individual, it does not manifest itself in governmental institutions. The fifth principle states that men are unequal and provisions must be made accordingly to allow for hierarchical organizational structures. The last belief is a prejudice in favor of existing institutions over new proposals. These six principles of Huntington must be recognized for what they are: his view of beliefs of conservatives. He does not necessarily speak for all conservatives and indeed runs into some trouble when a contemporary conservative is examined with respect to his belief system. Fortunately there are still more ways devised to set conservatives apart from other ideological viewpoints.

Political scientist, Andrew Hacker, provides yet another view of what comprises a conservative. Through his studies he
ascertained that they are employees as opposed to employers, with many of them working for large corporations as salesmen, engineers, and junior executives. They blend easily into society with nothing extraordinary about their incomes, homes, and backgrounds. They tend to picture themselves as being superior to those below them, upwardly mobile, and having attained their station in life as a result of their personal efforts. They are against labor unions which are viewed as crooked and tend to identify with management, fearing the political power of unions which might serve to tax hard-working people for the benefit of those unwilling to work. It is the conservative's belief that minorities would be successful if they were willing to work hard enough and that legislative action is not the answer to helping those currently deprived. They are isolationistic in foreign policy and tend to favor a strong military.

These views of what constitutes a conservative are by no means exhaustive of all the ideas taken by those concerned with the subject. They are, however, representative of modern viewpoints and will serve as a stepping stone in comparison of conservative and liberal viewpoints and an assessment of where our nation stands today. The next section will analyze the beliefs of liberals by presenting an over-view of their doctrine.

**LIBERALISM**

Taken as an entity, liberalism is far easier to define than conservatism. Liberals view the successful capitalistic economy of the United States to be of paramount importance. Its maintenance and enhancement is the single most important objec-
tive of our government. In order to insure that the market place is kept free and competitive, there are three conditions which must be met. The first is that there must always be the freedom for individuals to voice their wants and demands. These are to be maintained through the constitutional principles which grant freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of association. The second condition is that the political parties must offer the masses distinctly different choices which serve to represent the alternatives that are really desirable rather than the choice between alternatives which are all unattractive. The third condition is that there must be a large body of voluntary organizations which will accurately represent diverse groups throughout society in order to supplement their political representation. These groups will help all Americans feel that their desires are at least being heard by the government. Interest groups are perceived to be the most important of these three necessary conditions because they take a nation of diverse views and bring it closer together by constantly bringing into the open the needs of all groups, instead of just the majority. In this manner, tolerance is taught.

Internationally, liberals view the United States as the most favored nation in the world. It is an economic giant which has produced the highest standard of living in the world via its massive production. This unique position of being the show case of the world both politically and economically is not without its drawbacks. The primary position taken by the Americans on the international front is to maintain a peaceful and stable world,
free for American business to operate in. Liberals realize that there are also responsibilities associated with being the leader of the free world. In addition to economic aid, the United States must help the weaker nations against the ideological viewpoint of communism which is thrust upon nations against their will by the leading communistic nations of the world.

The values held by the liberals might be broken down into two categories. The first deals with values concerning the creation of the good life for man and the second set of values are associated with maintaining a type of political process which will keep the market place free from artificial forces such as concentrations of power.

The main value of liberalism concerning the quality of life is individualism. The rights of individualism guarantee that citizens may seek to achieve their own interest in order that both they and society might gain from their efforts. There must be a framework in which the government is forced to operate and boundaries over which it might not step. Two important individual rights are those of property and equality. Property is the right which permits men to profit from their labors as opposed to working for the common good. Equality is the right of all men to seek to gain the advantages found in a free market system on an equal basis and also the right of all men to be equal politically. It is noteworthy to point out that the problem of equality has become increasingly complex in recent years as the question of exactly what constitutes equality is brought up. There is a strong feeling among minorities that equality is not done
justice simply by giving everyone a free hand in the marketplace because of past inequalities which place them at a natural disadvantage. Many liberals are solving this problem by redefining equality as allowing each person a minimum share in the prosperity of our nation. The main problem with this shifting definition is that it causes an increasing amount of conflicts between the rights of property and equality.

The second main value of liberals is maintaining a political process which is capable of preserving our current economic and political institutions. To this end, one of the major values is the principle of limited government. Government must be the slave of the people it serves rather than their dictator. Governmental actions may be challenged by anyone at anytime and it must vindicate itself in a court of law or reverse its position. Another right of the individual is that of due process of law. This serves to protect citizens from "arbitrary government interference with life, liberty, or property." By its insistence on the due process of law, the advantages of another dimension of individual protection is secured and the government is forced to act even more mechanically, further protecting the rights of the individuals.

Another value of the liberals which tend to protect the freedom of economics and political institutions are a faith in legalism. This tenant holds that all agreements are expressible in legal terms and any conflict can be resolved in a court of law. Another value is that of fair procedures which places all men's opinions and preferences in politics as equal.
Liberals express the viewpoint that all citizens should take an equal part in the political process in almost all their writings. There are, however, some striking exceptions. The liberals believe in an elitist system, despite all their rhetoric to the contrary. "Liberals assert that there are difficult decisions to be made and that only a few people are qualified to make them." It is also recognized that it is not in the best interests of a democracy for all to participate.

"How could a mass democracy work if all the people were deeply involved in politics? Lack of interest is not without benefits, too. True, the highly interested voters vote more, and know more about the campaign and read and listen more, and participate more; however, they are also less open to persuasion and less likely to change. Extreme interest goes with extreme partisanship and might culminate in rigid fanaticism that could destroy democratic processes if generalized throughout the community."

These are the basic beliefs of the liberal movement although they would not fit everyone who claims to be a liberal. They, along with the section on conservatives, will serve as a measure by which the ideological climate and course of our nation will be judged later in this work. The next section will compare these two ideological viewpoints exposing their differences and similarities.

A COMPARISON OF LIBERALISM AND CONSERVATISM

The major problem associated with drawing a clear distinction between liberals and conservatives is that few Americans fully understand the difference. Philip Converse concluded that "only 10 to 17 per cent of the population can be said to have a 'contextual grasp of standard i.e., Liberal and Conservative'"
belief systems."\(^{21}\) Despite the fact that all Americans don't clearly understand the difference, Lloyd Free and Hadley Cantril have done research on "Self-Identification as Liberal and Conservative" and come up with interesting results. They discovered that most Americans believe themselves to be near the center of the ideological spectrum. Conservatism was found to rise in proportion to an increase in education and income, and occupationally they tended to be among the professional and business groups. There was also an increase in conservatism as age went up and geographically they tended to dominate the Southern states. Those who identified themselves as conservatives also tended to be more consistent in their beliefs, indicating that they were indeed reacting to the questions on an ideological basis.\(^{22}\) This study brings into focus one of the chief problems when analyzing ideologies in America.

"In brief, there appears to be little meeting of the minds concerning a proper definition of 'liberal' and 'conservative' among those who designate themselves as one or the other: the orientation of self-styled conservatives is chiefly ideological. The orientation of self-styled liberals is chiefly operational and pragmatic."\(^{23}\)

Goldwater writes that Conservatives believe in the "absolute differentness" of every individual "from every other human being."\(^{24}\) This means that some will be superior to others and would comprise a natural elite which should guide the rest of society. This makes the best system one which allows for hierarchical arrangements of men. By contrast, liberals have no such belief that the elites will actually work for the common good.\(^{25}\) For this reason it is necessary to keep all men equal so that no man might exploit another.
Liberals are more likely than conservatives to increase the size of government. Conservatives believe that the federal government should take a laissez-faire approach and keep as much power in local control as possible. This will enable those with superior abilities to rise to the top. Conversely, liberals take on a more humanistic stance believing that a minimum standard of living should be imposed throughout the country and would increase such programs as Head Start, Social Security, and Socialized Medicine. Liberals also tend to side with labor unions which are perceived to represent the good of the common man. Conservatives normally align with business consistent with their view that business is the backbone of our country.

Conservatives have faith in any existing institution simply because it has passed the test of time and prefer that any changes be slow and deliberate so that the delicate equilibrium of society is not upset. Liberals tend to see that there are always improvements which can be made and are impatient to implement changes.

Perhaps the most basic difference between the two ideological camps is their view of the basic nature of man. Faith in man's essential goodness and his ability to subdue nature highlight the liberals' thinking. Liberal doctrine further holds that civilization is improving, and most serious problems, including war, are caused by ignorance which is being corrected. It holds that appeals in the name of brotherhood will be effective in correcting injustices, at least in the end, if not now. Religously speaking, the conservatives believe in the doctrine
of the original sin which says that man fell from the graces of God in the Garden of Eden and can thus never gain perfection on earth.

"Conservatism speaks for the skeptical and cautious side of human nature, which sees all about it too many examples of man's sinfulness, frailty, and caprice. It is full of grave doubts about the goodness and rationality of man, the sagacity of the majority, and the wisdom of reform. It seeks to put the calipers on the possibilities of human attainment. It tends towards pessimism and displays a natural preference for stability over change, continuity over experiment, the past over the future." 

It is apparent that there are many differences between the ideal liberal and conservative. In the next section we shall examine events in recent history and how they have helped to support the basic beliefs of these different ideologies.

CONTEMPORARY EVENTS AND THEIR IDEOLOGICAL IMPACT

Shortly after the end of World War II, a phenomenon occurred in the United States which is referred to as the Red Scare. It grew out of fear that the Russians were trying to gain control of our country. As a result Americans fought a "cold war" with the U.S.S.R., which included propaganda, arms build-up, a technological race, but no actual fighting. This was a period in history where conservatism thrived, especially as a result of the arms race and the fact that their negative view of human nature seemed to fit the times quite well. Mistrust was rampant as the McCarthyites sought to end the internal threat of communism and the military sought to lessen the external threat. The tide started to change after Kennedy bobbled the Bay of Pigs and successfully ended the Cuban Missile crisis. Conservatism
of a fearful sort had run its course and there was a movement towards change.

The change was by no means a clear-cut move to the right or the left. In the sixties, there were three other major events which helped to determine the ideological outlook in America. On the liberal side was the civil rights movement and the assassinations of John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bobby Kennedy. The civil rights movement caused the average citizen to be more aware of the plight of those less fortunate and seemed to be a direct call from liberal dogma to raise the "equality" of the minorities. The assassinations of three of the top leaders in the country also seemed to lead to a conscience appraisal causing Americans to question the quality of life found in our society. Conservative support rallied around the Viet Nam war which was fought to stop the spread of communism. By the late sixties and early seventies, the Viet Nam war had become a thorn in the side of the conservatives as the liberals questioned the worth of a war which was killing American servicemen, spending tax dollars, not fought to win, and fought for a people who were not grateful. While the liberals blamed the war on the conservatives, so also did the conservatives blame the war on the liberals who had entered the war by recognizing their international obligations and rose to defend the freedoms of the oppressed. Despite this fact, the fact that Kennedy was the first to send in American troops, and that Johnson expanded the conflict, the conservatives have taken the brunt of public opinion against the conflict.
Oftentimes it appears that the ideological mood of the nation is decided more as a reaction against something that doesn't work than for something that does work. It is quite possible that this is the case since the scandalous Watergate affair which was undoubtedly a blow to the conservatives. Even after Nixon resigned, the administration under Ford remained basically conservative. Jimmy Carter ran a campaign which was liberal and went as far as to have hints of populism and socialism. The fact that he won over a conservative and enjoyed very high popularity ratings is a clear indication that the citizenry had turned away from conservatism which had failed them in such key issues as solving economic woes, bringing the war to an acceptable end, and retaining the prestige of the presidency. Carter, and the liberal movement, obtained a clear mandate to bring about a change in America.

The new president narrowly escaped defeat by the conservatives on the Panama Canal Treaties. Had he lost on this key issue, he would be quite restricted in the scope of any future changes he would like to make, including pending proposals like the arms sales to the Mideast, socialized medicine, and a workable comprehensive energy bill. If Carter loses control on these key issues, the future control of the liberals in government would be questionable.

WHERE IS AMERICA GOING?

America has evolved from a diverse group of people with very little in common to the most powerful nation in the world. This has been a very orderly development largely because there
were always ideological leaders ready to offer a new and acceptable path anytime a problem arose. The founders of the constitution were very radical for their time period, but their view of the limitations which should be placed on government would place them as very conservative today. This simple example is typical of the ideological changes which are taking place in our country. The liberals and conservatives constantly battle over the issues and slowly but surely the liberals are triumphing. But are they really winning?

The conservative position has always been one that clings to the past but allows slow changes. Throughout history, the changes have almost always been non-radical. Political scientist, Dr. John Rouse of Ball State University, believes that changes only occur at the edges. There is never a major change without a precipitating cause. For instance, the greatest expansion of government in peace time did not occur because some liberal felt people were being denied their freedoms, but rather because the country was gripped by the worst economic disaster in history. Even with this clear mandate from the people to save them from ruin, F.D.R. used the governmental powers too cautiously to end their misery by any measure short of entering World War II.

Taken from this perspective both the liberals and conservatives are winning in America. However, the shift has always been to the left and there is a feeling in many conservatives that the trend must be stopped. The country can only move so far left before such ideologies as socialism will be a controll-
ing force in our society. There are already Socialist Party candidates running for office, and President Carter is talking of socialized medicine and increasing the welfare above its record high rates now. There is no strong movement against Socialists in our country which indicates they are not looked on as evil, as might be the consensual reaction to Fascists or with suspicion as with the Communists. It is quite possible that the lack of any significant movement against Socialism even as we approach it once again relates back to the fact that most people are not really aware of political theories. Should the general public become aware that Socialists advocate the overthrow of our capitalistic government, whether it be by peaceful or violent means, there would undoubtedly be a public reaction that would purge them from respectability.

In summary, it appears that America will constantly be a battleground for the competing ideologies of liberalism and conservatism with neither side ever attaining a clear-cut victory. The movement will, nevertheless, proceed to the left faster than the conservatives would like to see, and slower than the liberals would like to see, but will stop short of ever entering a Socialist state.


3 Ibid., p. 87.

4 Ibid., p. 92.


6 Ibid., p. 17.


8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. 5.


11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.


14 Ibid., p. 267.

15 Ibid., p. 269.

16 Ibid., pp. 270-71.

17 Bluhm, p. 135.

18 Dolbeare, p. 66.

19 Ibid., p. 71.

20 Ibid., pp. 69-70.

21 Bluhm, p. 118.

23 Ibid., p. 49.
24 Bluhm, p. 122.
26 Ibid., p. 219.
27 Ibid., p. 220.
Bibliography


