

WASHINGTON CITIZENSHIP SEMINAR
July 26, 1965

Dr. Geyer, Miss Wolfe, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I appreciate this opportunity to participate in the Washington Citizenship Seminar. Miss Wolfe informs me that the Seminar has heard several representatives of the liberal viewpoint and has suggested that I discuss conservatism with you. First I would like to talk about the meaning of the nebulous word "conservative" and then present a "conservative" view of the legislation of the Eighty-Ninth Congress.

Conservatism is essentially a choice about history and about the purpose of American society. A conservative, perhaps intrinsically, feels he has isolated the genius of the American political system and therefore wants to preserve it.

This genius of the American political system has been defined by many articulate conservatives as "individual freedom." However, the term "individual freedom" is so vague as to be nearly meaningless. For example, does "individual freedom" mean economic equality? The liberal, if he is truthful, will probably answer, "Yes, with certain restrictions"; the conservative, if he is truthful, will answer, "No, with certain restrictions."

As you probably have heard the liberal reasoning for the affirmative answer explained to you before, I will just summarize it briefly. The principal argument is that large government spending programs give the indigent--the disadvantaged in general--more "effective choices" and therefore more individual freedom. To the conservative this argument sounds somewhat

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paradoxical. To the conservative, large government spending and more government regulations mean less control by the individual over his life and property. Large government spending in particular, thwarts individual initiative, which is the manifestation of individual freedom. Those people who have been enterprising and industrious have their rewards taken from them and those who would be industrious and enterprising are discouraged from being so. In other words, more government regulation and spending mean more conformity, more mediocrity--perhaps more security for some-- but large government spending and more government regulation do not mean more individual freedom as defined by the conservative.

If the conservative does not feel economic equality is included in "individual freedom"---What would he include? Speaking as a conservative, I would say that "individual freedom" might be defined in terms of "opportunities" on the positive side and by "unfreedoms" on the negative side.

To take "unfreedoms" first, I think the term is almost self-explanatory. Unfreedoms are the means of self-expression that one is capable of, but prohibited from doing. Of course, certain "unfreedoms"---- as laws against murder, etc.----are necessary for the preservation of society. But in general, the conservative agrees with Thoreau's motto: "That government is best which governs least."

To consider now the idea of access and opportunity as part of the definition of freedom---The role of government in American society from the Conservative point of view is not one of being a protagonist, but rather of a referee assuring access and opportunity. The government was created to make certain everyone plays under the same rules, but not to take points

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from one player's score to add to another. The government's role is to make sure all participants have access to the goal line, but not to score for anyone. Ideally, as referee, the government promotes conditions that allow each to prosper according to his own initiative and ability.

From a general discussion of conservative ideology, I would like to turn to its application in the 89th Congress. After the November 3 election, the line-up in the House was 295 Democrats (most of them liberals) vs. 140 Republicans and 68 Democrats vs. 32 Republicans in the Senate. It was readily apparent that anything the Johnson Administration and the Democratic leaders wanted could be passed despite any opposition by the Republicans. As a result, the attitude which the Republicans adopted was to perfect and promote proper Ronsideration of the "Great Society" legislation. Republicans offered many constructive amendments to the Housing Bill, Republicans offered the "Clean Elections" amendment to the "Voting Rights" Bill and Republicans offered a substitute Medicare plan that allowed more freedom for patients and doctors alike.

A second attitude taken by Republican conservatives in the 89th Congress is one of the defense of states' rights. Traditionally, conservative Republicans have opposed federal encroachment on States' rights. However, in this session, two bills facing Congress have brought the issue to the fore. One is the Dirksen Amendment in the Senate and its counterpart in the House---the McCulloch Amendment. The other is the repeal of Section 14 (b) of the Taft-Hartley Act.

Taking the former first----Many states (all with the exception of Nebraska) have patterned their legislatures after the Federal government only to have the Supreme Court rule that apportionment of seats in this manner in a state

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legislature is unconstitutional. In an effort to preserve the right of the states to apportion seats in one house according to other factors than population, the Dirksen amendment to the Constitution was offered. Simply stated, the issue is whether the Congress will refuse to give states the opportunity to ratify or reject an amendment which would permit them, under certain conditions, to apportion one legislative body of a bicameral legislature on factors other than population. As a safeguard, the amendment clearly provides that the qualified electors of a state by majority vote must approve the plan of apportionment before it is effective. In other words, those of us who support the amendment are trying to return the power to decide how the individual should be represented in the state legislature to the individual and take this power away from the Supreme Court which has usurped this fundamental right. We feel that this decision should be made by the citizen on the state level and not by a panel of judges on the federal level.

The second important issue involving the rights of states to determine basic policy is the debate which is now occurring in the House on the repeal of Section 14 (b) of the Taft-Hartley Law. The vote on this important issue will probably come up tomorrow. The question under consideration is not only the merits of a "union shop" but also the rights of states to determine important policy of a cherished nature. Kansas, for example, has made its "Right-To-Work" law part of the state constitution. This required a 2/3 majority in both Houses of the State Legislature as well as approval in a state-wide referendum. The question is: "Should the federal government pass a law superceding this Kansas state constitutional amendment when it clearly reflects the will of the people of Kansas?" Should the will of labor leaders in populous Eastern states become the law of Kansas?

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Thirdly, on the more positive side of the ledger, Republicans have set up task forces to study legislative proposals in areas such as agriculture, economic opportunity, foreign policy, and education. In the area of education--which I thought might be of particular interest to you as students and educators, the Republican Task Force has investigated various legislative approaches to assist the individual student in meeting the rising costs of higher education.

It is the consensus of the Republican Party that the merits of the tax credit program are outstandingly superior to other Federal aids to education. In furtherance of the idea of individual initiative, the tax credit proposals allow the individual taxpayer to take as credit against his final tax the amount of tuition paid for higher education. The tax credit percentages allowed are designed to be sufficient to meet the average tuition costs; thus, in effect, the program would have the heaviest benefit impact where assistance is most needed: middle and low-income groups. However, those in higher income brackets are encouraged to set up scholarship programs paying tuition costs for students unable to pay these costs. This approach permits the individual wide variety of selectivity in choosing the institution he wishes to attend and provides the taxpayer with a free choice relating to a college education.

Although the House Committee on Ways and Means has not conducted hearings on this Republican proposal in either the present or recent Congresses, the Republican Task Force on Education conducted public hearings on the tax credit proposal and received abundant testimony in favor of the tax credit approach from educators and other witnesses with a keen interest in education and its rising costs.

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In conclusion, I would like to point out the threat of a "one-party system" that the Democratic control of the White House combined with the large Democratic majorities in Congress represent. Whether you are Democrat or Republican, I am sure you will agree with me that one of the prerequisites for competent government under our Constitutional system is a two party system. Such large majorities as the Democrats now have in Congress is resulting in much hastily enacted legislation that has not been properly considered in Committee or on the House Floor. The "War on Poverty" passed last week by the House is a good example. Hearings were held for only ten days on this bill that spends 1.9 billion dollars. Or, another example, the National Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 was given only fifteen minutes consideration on the House Floor. To quote a colleague of mine, "This bill is so full of ambiguities as to puzzle the mind, paralyze the faculties and numb the imagination."

There is only one way to encourage legislative responsibility in a two party system and that is to give neither party such a large majority that it can steamroll legislation through Congress, regardless of its merit. So--in closing--for your own sake, I urge you to support the party of your choice **BUT VOTE REPUBLICAN!**