The Rise of the California Conservative Movement, 1945–1966

Triumph of the Right

Kurt Schuparra
TRIUMPH OF THE
RIGHT
THE RIGHT WING IN AMERICA

Glen Jeansonne, Series Editor

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK
For Fred and Ruth Schuparra
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The Right has appalled and consumed historians, who have barely begun to describe and analyze it. Some of them have argued that the Right has no tradition in the United States, or that it is fueled by paranoia or a religious fervor inappropriate to politics. Others have seen it as linked closely to corporate capitalism, to a wealthy elite, to Western romantics longing for nineteenth-century rugged individualism. But the Right has always been a part of American society, whether in the mainstream, on the margins, or misunderstood. For good or ill, it has affected the course of history and warrants a rich historiography (although works on the Right sometimes are confined to obscure corners of academic bookshelves).

The M.E. Sharpe series The Right Wing in America is an attempt to resurrect the Right from the substratum of serious scholarship. By publishing biographies, studies of movements, institutions, and political, cultural, and religious developments from colonial times to the present, the series will present the Right in its variety and complexity and reveal its deep roots. Books in the series are reasonably succinct, thoroughly documented, analytical, and meant to appeal to a general audience as well as scholars and students.

Kurt Schuparra’s Triumph of the Right is a major reevaluation of the conservative movement that arose in California in the 1950s and rolled East. This study of California has national implications because it shows the dynamic interaction of political leaders and grassroots activists. Fair and evenhanded, Schuparra considers the right-wing Republicans neither paranoid nor unflawed. Rather, he evaluates them realistically as major players in the era’s political contests.

Schuparra examines four key elections from the Republican perspective: William Knowland versus Pat Brown for governor in 1958, Richard Nixon versus Brown for governor in 1962, Ronald Reagan versus Brown for governor in 1966, and Barry Goldwater versus Nelson Rockefeller in the 1964 presidential primary. The ineffectual Knowland and the red-baiting Nixon suffered defeats. Goldwater’s campaign was the first to excite conservative Californians. A macho figure, his “rugged Americanism” was symbolic of the Western frontier of legend. Eastern politicians, he implied, were cowardly and incapable of defending America against communism. Liberals
condemned Goldwaterites as simpletons: the Right returned the insult by labeling their opponents wishy-washy. Goldwater edged Rockefeller on the strength of his vote in southern California, yet was trounced by Lyndon Johnson nationally. Goldwater in defeat, however, was John the Baptist to Ronald Reagan.

Reagan rode out of the West to the rescue of the conservative movement. In Reagan, right-wing Republicans found the long-sought balance between right-wing ideology and electability. In 1966, for the first time, a candidate once identified with the radical right was elected governor. In part, this was because Reagan's congenial temperament and amiable personality disarmed critics of his views. In part, it was the result of a white middle-class backlash against anti-Vietnam demonstrators, the Great Society, and the urban riots. By 1966 the public mood had changed, and the center had shifted to the right. Reagan was both a cause and a beneficiary of this development. Schuparra shows how, beginning in the 1950s, the changes in the political environment occurred as an evolution, not as a sudden lurch. With a sure hand, Schuparra leads us through the era's tribulations with riveting personality portraits and perceptive analysis.

In the next century and the new millennium, conservatives face the prospect of revitalizing their ideology, replenishing their energy, striving to unite, and finding another charismatic torch bearer. This book is a primer and an admonition.

Glen Jeansonne
Acknowledgments

Though my name alone appears on the cover of this book, I could not have succeeded in producing this study without the help of many individuals. The special collections staff at UCLA helped me get my project under way and facilitated my effort over the long term. I was also ably assisted by the staff at the National Archives in Laguna Niguel, California and at the Freedom Center at California State University, Fullerton. Staff at the Richard Nixon Library made a diligent effort to provide me with copies of documents that they had not yet fully sorted or filed. In northern California, staff at the California State Archives, the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, and the Bancroft Library at the University of California proved very helpful as well. In particular, I wish to thank Jeff Rankin and Elliott Simon at UCLA, Laren Metzer at the California State Archives, and Gail Gutierrez at California State University, Fullerton.

I received thoughtful and constructive advice on my manuscript from Juan Garcia and Patrick Miller, and from Jack Putnam, whose knowledge of California politics proved invaluable. Many others, too numerous to mention, had an impact on the development of my study, but I am especially grateful for the help—as sounding boards and/or chapter critics—from Kent Anderson, Paul Carter, Matthew Dallek, Glen Jeansonne, Chris Jesperson, Kerwin Klein, and Michael Schaller. I also wish to thank the friends of mine who listened attentively and responded accordingly to my observations on American politics—probably to a far greater extent than they ever desired. Finally, I am thankful that my family encouraged me at every step in producing this manuscript, as moral support at times proved to be the most important support of all. As for the production of the book itself, Peter Coveney, Esther Clark, and Eileen Maass of M.E. Sharpe were proficient, patient, and considerate throughout the laborious process.

This book is a revised version of the manuscript I wrote to meet the dissertation requirement for my Ph.D. at the University of Arizona, Tucson. While there, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to venture into the Sonoran Desert—usually on a bicycle—whenever I needed the catharsis that the giant saguaros could provide. I am grateful for that as well, though, for scholarly purposes at least, I had to ward off romantic notions of the Old West.
Introduction

Scholarly studies of American conservatism since World War II have usually been undertaken by nonconservatives responding to upswings in right-wing activity. Until recently these studies have mostly cast conservatism in a negative light because its tenets and exponents purportedly went against the “liberal” American tradition. During the first two decades after the war, an influential group of liberal critics, predominantly in academia, found right-wing Americans to be in numerous ways as ideologically aberrant and threatening as communists who had pledged to overthrow capitalistic democracies.

In the wake of the anticommunist “witch hunts” by Senator Joseph McCarthy in the first half of the 1950s, these liberal intellectuals theorized that McCarthy’s supporters suffered from “status anxiety.” This angst particularly afflicted nouveau middle-class Americans, many of whom were resentful and fearful of government and the Eastern “establishment” and of the increased emphasis on social leveling in postwar society. In the early 1960s, sociologist Daniel Bell warned that this anxiety manifested as pathological political behavior on the part of an emergent “radical right,” and that that behavior ultimately threatened the moderate pluralism and “‘fragile consensus’ that underlies the American political system.”

Culminating with the Republican nomination for president in 1964, the rise of Senator Barry Goldwater alarmed numerous liberals and other nonconservatives of the growing “danger on the right.” Goldwater’s ascent led the preeminent historian Richard Hofstadter to identify a certain “paranoid style” as a chief characteristic of the senator’s “pseudo-conservative” backers. Hofstadter claimed that while not clinically paranoid, the exponents of the paranoid style saw a “‘vast’ or ‘gigantic’ conspiracy as the motive force in history.”

Goldwater’s failed presidential bid could be written off as an aberration born of the “animosities and passions of a small minority,” but the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980 could not. The persistence and successes of the conservative movement after Goldwater’s crushing defeat, and the concomitant decline of the GOP’s liberal wing and liberalism itself, necessitated paradigms of new explanatory power. Consequently, the status anxiety thesis and its corollaries have been reformulated or applied more precisely. Moreover, virtually all the studies of the American Right under-
taken since the mid-1960s have acknowledged at least some normative political beliefs and values among staid conservatives.

No one paradigm is currently widely employed by academics examining the American Right. Nevertheless, given the studies published in recent years, it seems fair to say that a growing number of scholars in this field would agree with historian Michael Kazin's statement that "conservative activists [need to be seen] as purposeful, flexible, and idealistic protagonists in the public dramas of their day."5 This study of the California Right from 1945 through 1966 was undertaken with that idea in mind, to avoid the pitfalls of the a priori analytical frameworks that have categorized the vast lot of conservatives of the 1950s and 1960s as extremists or otherwise marginal figures.

This is not to say that there is no analytical value in these earlier paradigms. For example, Hofstadter's notion of a right-wing paranoid style, rooted in a pathological "history as conspiracy" world view, is still a valuable analytical construct for examining certain individuals and groups on the far right, especially during the Cold War; and these individuals and groups invariably harbored much anxiety, but there is little evidence that it was due primarily to status concerns. Theories of pathology notwithstanding, the "great fear" of communism, which seized a considerable number of Americans during the first two decades of the Cold War, sprang from largely legitimate apprehensions. But the paranoid language of that age, reflecting fears of conspiracy similar to those voiced during the American Revolution, inflated tensions to such an extent that the "politics of unreason" (e.g., McCarthyism) often prevailed, especially in the conservative decade following World War II.

In regard to this study, Hofstadter's paranoid style thesis can be applied effectively in examinations of conspiracy theorists such as members of the John Birch Society (JBS). A self-proclaimed anticommunist bulwark that flourished in southern California, the JBS and other radical right groups can be viewed through the lens of social pathology to a certain extent. To view the vast lot of California conservatives of the era in this way, however, blurs the distinct differences between the fire-eaters of the far right and the pragmatic conservatives, and sheds little light on the other members of the movement who fall within this ideological spectrum.

This study focuses mainly on pivotal elections from 1958 through 1966 and on southern California, specifically Los Angeles and Orange counties, because those two counties have long been strongholds of Republican conservatism, particularly during the period of interest here. Prior to the late 1950s there was no true conservative movement in southern California or elsewhere, but by 1957 a movement had begun to take distinct shape as GOP conservatives vociferously challenged the moderate "Modern Repub-
licanism” of President Dwight Eisenhower. This created a split in the party that climaxed with the clash between the Goldwaterites and the Republican “establishment” in 1964.

As noted earlier, liberals (and those further to the left) for most of the 1960s—and beyond in numerous cases—equated Republican conservatism with “Goldwaterism” and extremism, with little or no differentiation. Therefore the conservative propensity of many southern California Republicans, who supported Goldwater en masse in his victory in the 1964 state presidential primary, combined with the high-profile endeavors of the region’s ultraconservative groups to bolster the popular image of the “Southland” as a bastion of extremist activity. To a fair extent, appearances reflected reality, for the JBS and other ultraconservative groups were firmly entrenched in Los Angeles and Orange counties. Most of the region’s conservatives, however, did not belong to any far-right organizations, but they usually shared these groups’ “pro-American” views, which stood in adamant and uncompromising opposition to communism, and to the government activism (i.e., “statism”) that grew out of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal of the 1930s. This unyielding animus toward communism and the “liberal welfare state” brought about fierce devotion to conservative candidates and causes.

The enthusiasm southern California conservatives displayed for their candidates and causes in political campaigns worked both for and against them. It worked for them when it came to organizing volunteers and raising money. The legions of right-wing activists that volunteered to campaign and raise funds for conservative candidates were driven by the exigencies revealed in the often apocalyptic admonitions of those political aspirants. Under the rubric of “freedom versus tyranny,” these candidates, particularly from 1958 through 1966, ardently contended that voters had to choose whether to maintain the repressive liberal state or to save the free enterprise system, indeed, American freedom itself. In the effort to instill a sense of mission in their supporters, conservatives seeking public office usually took uncompromising and relatively extreme positions on prominent issues. These stands almost always led to electoral defeat, unless the race was for a local or representative office in a conservative district. Many conservatives, therefore, came to realize—or knew all along—that their candidates had to change their foreboding and uncompromising rhetoric in order to have realistic chances of winning major electoral offices such as the governorship and possibly the presidency. After Goldwater’s defeat, a slow retreat from ideological purity ensued, at least on a rhetorical level, in an attempt to shed the extremist image. This led the California Right to back a like-minded but polished orator for governor in 1966, the handsome and congenial actor
Ronald Reagan. Aided further by a weak incumbent opponent and by a propitious shift to the right in public opinion, Reagan won because the extremist label that had been the bane of the California conservative movement since its inception in 1958, failed to adhere to his campaign.8

Though lacking a true movement until the late 1950s, conservative Republicans in California after World War II did not lack individual targets for their attacks on "socialistic" government policies. These attacks were usually aimed at Democrats, but, beginning in the latter half of the 1940s, a significant number of conservatives regarded Republican governor Earl Warren as an apostate due to his "liberal" views and policies. Warren's Republican adversaries, however, could not muster enough support for any right-wing candidate to oust the popular governor, nor could they persuade him to change his "nonpartisan" politics. Yet these conservatives did find a winning right-wing candidate in Richard Nixon in his 1950 Senate race against Democratic congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas. That electoral year proved favorable to fierce anticommunist candidates like Nixon, who, in good part, espoused the antistatist and isolationist views of the "Old Guard" conservatives of the East and Midwest.9 Nixon's campaign and the efforts to oust Warren can be seen as portents of the actual conservative movement to come, but are not entirely reflective of the distinctly Western variety of populist antistatism that began to take shape in the late 1950s and became full-fledged in the 1960s.10

The right-wing movement in the Golden State began in earnest in 1958 with the gubernatorial campaign of William F. Knowland, the Republican minority leader in the U.S. Senate. Though he ostensibly entered the race with considerable stature due to his high-profile years in Washington, Knowland's candidacy alarmed liberal and moderate California Republicans due to his "extreme views," especially on labor issues. Further alienating party liberals and moderates, Knowland challenged and, in effect, ousted the incumbent, Republican Goodwin Knight. During the campaign, Knight caustically and publicly declared that the senator's political views were rooted in antiquated nineteenth-century ideas. Exploiting this Republican rift, Knowland's Democratic opponent, State Attorney General Edmund G. "Pat" Brown, effectively depicted the senator as the point man for the forces of Republican "reaction." Knowland's crushing loss to Brown clearly stemmed from his image as the insurgent torchbearer of a reactionary movement that militated against the pragmatic and progressive Republicanism that leaders of the party in California had long espoused.

Despite Knowland's thrashing at the polls, he did bring the state's Republican conservatives together for their first real postwar electoral crusade, and he established "freedom versus tyranny" as the operative metaphor of
the right-wing movement that continued after his campaign. Representative of the shift from the broadly unifying use of the word “freedom” during World War II and the early Cold War, the term as employed by California conservatives essentially became one of protest—an impending trend on both the right and the left in the often incendiary battle to define and defend personal rights and liberties.

By the early 1960s the movement had gained considerable strength, and some avowed JBS members were elected to Congress. Nevertheless, for conservative candidates with higher electoral goals, the extremist label became an albatross that precluded the achievement of anything beyond the level of qualified successes. Such was the case for State Assemblyman Joe Shell, who openly defended the JBS in the early 1960s but did not become a member. Garnering one-third of the vote against his famous opponent, former vice president Nixon, Shell scored a moral but not an electoral victory in the 1962 Republican gubernatorial primary. Bedeviled by Shell’s opposition, even the antiextremist Nixon could not escape the vexations of the extremism dilemma. Nixon’s primary victory proved pyrrhic, as his assaults on the far right alienated enough conservatives to significantly contribute to his loss in November.

On the other hand, despite his controversial refusal to denounce his extremist supporters, Barry Goldwater did triumph over New York governor Nelson Rockefeller in the pivotal California presidential primary. That victory was an ephemeral success, however; for en route to a landslide win in the general election, President Lyndon Johnson and his campaign strategists effectively portrayed Goldwater as a reactionary cowboy, especially in regard to foreign affairs—someone “who shot first and asked questions later.”

Out of the nadir of the Goldwater debacle, Ronald Reagan began to assume the leadership of the California Right. As the 1966 governor’s race approached, he seemed to be the right candidate at the right time—a “god-damned electable person,” as one “citizen advisor” put it. In his campaign Reagan adroitly tapped the voters’ growing disillusionment with “big government” and myriad welfare programs. (This message did not apply to the sacred cow of Social Security.) Reagan’s argument had wide appeal in 1966 due in large part to the growing belief that Johnson’s “War on Poverty” was a lost cause. Mounting crime and disorder in impoverished black inner city areas, which alarmed and angered many whites, provided evidence of this apparent failure, which Reagan ably exploited. He also capitalized on middle-class resentment of the nascent counterculture’s “immorality” and the “un-American” protests on college campuses against the escalating Vietnam War. Given the rightward shift in public sentiment, to many Californians Reagan represented the voice of reason rather than the forces of reaction, despite
his opponent's exhaustive efforts to depict him as a beacon of the latter.

Reagan's political success came not only from his well-timed message but from his actor-honed ability to deliver it. With a breezy and disarming charm, he chastised critics of the "American way of life" and stirred disaffection toward the "encroaching" welfare state, which increasingly threatened the self-reliant virtues that buttressed that way of life. Between the late 1950s and his gubernatorial candidacy, almost all of Reagan's political speeches were smooth variations on that theme.

The relative popularity of New Deal and other federal welfare programs notwithstanding, support for such programs had long been tenuous, and not just among conservatives. As historian James Patterson has stated, the predominant attitude of the middle class toward welfare has been "that many, if not most, of the destitute are undeserving; that large numbers of poor people exist in an intergenerational 'culture of poverty.'"16 Perhaps nothing struck a more resonant chord in conservatives—indeed, in many Americans—than the belief in individual responsibility for one's place in society. Americans holding this view were not necessarily social Darwinists. Nevertheless, as Hofstadter asserted more than fifty years ago, "the very idea [of welfare] affronts the traditions of a great many men and women who were raised, if not on the specific tenets of social Darwinism, at least upon the moral imperatives it expressed."17 Thus nineteenth-century notions of "rugged individualism" and the "self-made man" continued to shape the American ethos in the twentieth century. For southern California conservatives in particular, the faith in rugged individualism served as the supreme expression of freedom from the state, and that freedom, they believed, needed to be fervently defended by conservative politicians.

In claiming that he would champion freedom by following the "will of the people," Reagan created a powerful populist image. Steering clear of the sanctification of unbridled capitalism that in some ways had cast the "rugged" Goldwater as an economic royalist, Reagan also avoided the bludgeoning rhetorical style that had typified the attacks of McCarthy and to a lesser extent, Goldwater. Despite the fact that his campaign was financed by a "circle of millionaires," Reagan overcame this potential problem for his populist image by fulminating against "elite" liberal politicians, intellectuals and bureaucrats—the architects and advocates of Johnson's Great Society—who sought to aid an ungrateful and undeserving minority constituency. In so doing he defined elitism—that is, power—in cultural rather than economic terms and helped trigger the culture wars that have pervaded American politics since the late 1960s.

Lamenting the recent proliferation of groups and individuals who claim to represent "the people," historian T. J. Jackson Lears has described the conserva-
tive populist slant on elitism (that Reagan intoned so well) as “pseudo-populism.” In the latter, hard-working “bankers and real estate developers [are identified] with the salt of the earth.” One can take issue with the applicability (and pejorative implications) of Lears’s “pseudo” label given that the salt-of-the-earth populists of the late nineteenth century, like Reagan populists later, were grassroots groups against the Eastern politicians and other power brokers who controlled the political process in the nation’s capital. His delineation of “populisms” is valid, however, to the extent that it characterizes the critical change in conservatism after Goldwater’s defeat.

Leading the change toward a more effective conservative populism, Reagan all but dispensed with unabashed exhortations of the free market in favor of invidious societal distinctions; he implicitly praised the working class and entrepreneurs alike (property-owning “producers”), as well as law-abiding citizens, while inveighing against welfare recipients, privileged academics and bureaucrats (parasitic “non-producers”) and those who violated the law and “moral decency.” Similar descriptions had been used by Alabama governor George Wallace, an avowed segregationist who proved especially popular in the South and with white blue collar voters in parts of the Midwest, but Wallace’s raw rhetoric and support of working-class liberalism of the New Deal ilk offended many conservatives. Still, his assault on “pointy-headed intellectuals” resonated with the right, along with his strident attacks on the civil rights movement and urban unrest, in which he made “law and order” a legitimating phrase for racist positions.

A crucial catalyst in America’s right turn in the 1960s, the exploitation of the “white backlash” by Reagan and others played a critical role in the triumph of conservatism in California. Indeed, given that the race card played so well for Reagan on the hustings with numerous different, yet craftily intertwined, issues—crime and welfare, to name but two—the race factor became a driving force in the Reagan campaign. Bringing his campaign to full throttle, he linked the race factor with campus unrest and thereby nurtured the initial bloc of “Reagan Democrats.” In doing so he helped place a cornerstone in the foundation of the conservative movement, because the social conservatism of these California Democrats and others like them around the country would prove instrumental in advancing the agenda and candidates of the American Right after 1966.

By the time of Goldwater’s presidential campaign, if not before, the California Right had become the biggest cog in the national conservative movement. The latter’s think-tank, however, was on the opposite coast, in the patrician and predominantly liberal environs of New York City. Urbane yet sardonic, the Yale-educated William F. Buckley Jr. had by the early 1960s become the movement’s premier intellectual and mouthpiece. Buck-
ley founded the New York-based conservative periodical *National Review* in 1955, with the intention of bringing conservatives of different stripes together to battle liberalism. Though the periodical served as a forum for different views, Buckley and most of his colleagues moved away from Old Guard isolationism due to the pervasive nature of the communist threat. In his vitriolic attacks on liberalism, Buckley did not aim solely at Democrats, for he made clear at the time of his magazine’s inception that “I intend . . . to read Dwight Eisenhower out of the conservative movement.” While many conservatives shared Buckley’s displeasure with Eisenhower’s policies, fiscal and otherwise, few chose to attack the popular president as explicitly and personally as he did. The California conservative movement was in part a reaction against Eisenhower’s Modern Republicanism, but this opposition generally manifested itself in less strident forms, such as contrary stands on specific policies and issues.

Indicative of the shared opposition to certain Eisenhower policies, Eastern conservatives harbored the same fervent anticommunist and anti-statist beliefs as their Western counterparts. Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Haynes Johnson ignored this common bond when he claimed in a best-selling book that the Buckleyites and California conservatives did not prove to be “philosophical allies.” Johnson went on to attribute contextually disparaging characteristics to the latter that applied essentially as much to the former. The differences between the Buckleyites and Western conservatives were not on the rudimentary level of bedrock philosophy, but rather in disparate notions about electoral politics and Eastern patrician elitism.

Like Buckley, a fair number of the conservatives in the movement’s Eastern intellectual vanguard came from well-to-do families and went to Ivy League schools or other elite institutions. (A few, such as Otto von Hapsburg, were even of European noble lineage.) With occasionally grating arrogance, the prevailing view among this cadre was that too much democracy, such as the populist and highly participatory variety practiced and celebrated in the West (e.g., the initiative and the referendum), would threaten the nation through the ascendancy of uneducated reason in the voting process. In this vein, the Easterners saw themselves as an enlightened aristocracy destined to platonically lead and edify the hoi polloi.

Westerners had long possessed an anti-Eastern and antiintellectual strain that had grown primarily out of the resentment over the West’s economic and bureaucratic dependence on the East. Increasingly salient in postwar Western conservatism, anti-Eastern sentiment became particularly pronounced during the Goldwater campaign, in no small part due to the senator’s image as a “Man of the West.” This image put into play the powerful myths of the rugged individualism of the Old West, which in turn
fostered disdain not only for the Big Government of Eastern liberals—both Democratic and Republican—but for the East as a whole. In this contempt there could not help but be something less than affinity for the erudite posture of Buckley and his associates.

It is not coincidental or surprising that of the four major conservative presidential candidates of the 1960s, three hailed from the West, and one from the South. The East above the Mason-Dixon Line could hardly match the emergent “Sun Belt” (the South and Southwest) as a strong conservative base. And no locale could match the organized right-wing activism found in southern California in the 1960s. Numerous ideas have been put forth as to why the region became so hospitable to conservatism. An attempt to settle this debate will not be made in this study, for that is not its purpose. Nevertheless, it seems that a number of reasonable conclusions can be drawn from some of the theories and speculation on this matter.

Consideration of the conservative tilt of southern California politics must start with Carey McWilliams’s classic work of 1946, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land*. Though not focusing on politics, McWilliams, a leading liberal social critic, clearly saw the Southland’s longstanding conservative outlook as deriving from the continuous immigration of “commonplace” people to the region from the American heartland (the Mideast and especially the Midwest). Coming in droves throughout the first half of the twentieth century, many of these largely Protestant and middle-class immigrants possessed in their westering impulse a “nostalgia . . . for an America that no longer exists.” McWilliams’s observations clearly suggest that many of these immigrant southern Californians were predisposed to conservative perspectives and that the steady stream of immigration that continued from the heartland and the South after World War II nurtured a conservative political culture.

This explanation for the region’s right-wing activism became part of a larger theoretical matrix on the effects of population growth. It coupled with the hypothesis that rapid postwar growth led to an atomistic and anxiety-ridden existence amid the urban sprawl of the Southland, which manifested in right-wing resistance to ideas and groups alien to the white middle class. The rapid growth theory has been cogently challenged, however, in its application to California. In an extensive statistical study, political scientists Fred Greenstein and Raymond Wolfinger concluded that “conservatism [in California] does not appear to be associated with massive population growth.” Yet they did suggest that the conservative politics of Southlanders, as well as the predominantly liberal inclinations of San Francisco Bay area inhabitants, “may be a result of the different backgrounds of residents of the two areas.” It appears, then, that McWilliams’s observations provide at
least a partial explanation for the differences in the state's regional voting behavior.

In the concluding essay of an important book on California politics, political scientist Michael Rogin offered another theory on the roots of southern California conservatism. He incorporated an anthropological angle in stating that right-wing Southlanders had been motivated by threatening "cultural symbols," such as "Communists, saloons, Negroes and pornography." For many southern Californians, Rogin deduced, the American dream became an exaggerated fixation. Consequently, "alien ideas [there] are peculiarly threatening . . . since they challenge the organizing principles of the symbolic [bourgeois] world and its very definition of reality." This produced a pattern of right-wing "hallucinatory politics." While Rogin's psychohistorical analysis doubtless applied to certain Southland ultraconservatives, he made no differentiation between these individuals and those right-wingers with more pragmatic and reasonable politics. Rogin's hypothesis, therefore, suffers from the rather facile implication that the region's conservative demonology created a monolithic phalanx of right-wing extremists. He nonetheless made a valuable contribution toward the understanding that symbols did much to animate the conservative movement.

Of all the "alien ideas," nothing proved more harrowing or stirred more activism among Southland conservatives than the perceptions of the "communist peril." In her study of the grassroots right in postwar Orange County, historian Lisa McGirr found that "the discourse of anticommunism," buttressed by a "pro-defense" milieu, entrepreneurial individualism and conservative churches, "created a fertile climate for right-wing growth." Surely a concern of many Americans, the acute fear of communism in the Southland was due in part to the economic dependence on the large defense contracts awarded to regional industries during World War II and on into the Cold War. To keep those contracts large and numerous the Cold War had to have a hot edge, at least rhetorically. Defense contractor alliances with the military helped in this regard. Formal organizations such as the Air Force Association and the Navy League became prominent in the Southland and had considerable influence in Congress. They warned of the need to "fight for, if necessary, the elimination of communism from the world scene." Culminating in anticommunist efforts like "Project Alert" in the early 1960s, these military-industrial organizations, along with increasingly conspicuous ultraconservative groups, used piercing admonitions in seeking support for "total mobilization for total war."

Beginning in earnest during the early years of the Cold War, the greater Los Angeles area became the hub for that imminent massive mobilization. Though the defense industry provided an economic boon, many Angelenos
early on saw potentially dire consequences as well. At the outset of the Korean War in 1950, for example, the mayor of Los Angeles warned that the city, “now a much more important industrial center and far more likely enemy target, is again facing the probability of being virtually on the front line.” Shortly thereafter the city council created a Civil Defense and Disaster Corps, which the council hoped would be largely funded by the federal government. The city’s leaders, as Roger Lotchin has stated in *Fortress California*, possessed contradictory impulses in their actions regarding the city’s status as a defense center.

At the very time that the fragmented metropolis fought for more civil defense funds and for spacing out its industries to avoid total destruction in the event of an atomic attack, it also strove for more defense contracts. On the one hand, the metropolitan leaders moved to make the city less vulnerable, while on the other they steadily labored to make it more vulnerable.

This paradox of vulnerability contributed significantly to the wave of alarmist rhetoric that brought a heightened element of insecurity to the Southland. Indeed, for many conservatives the region became the “front line.”

To maintain southern California as the main armory of the “arsenal of democracy,” of course, required huge expenditures by the federal government. It is ironic that in a region where the competitive free enterprise system stood as something sacred, defense contracts were mostly products of negotiation rather than competition. The Southland’s political representatives and business leaders displayed great sensitivity to canceled or diminished defense contracts and resultant layoffs, citing the detriment to the region’s economy, as well as to the nation’s preparedness for war. Apparently forgotten in the appeals for “help” in such situations was the fact that national defense was intended to protect Americans from enemies abroad, and not to uphold their middle-class way of life or to ensure the economic vitality of any given locale. Nevertheless, the welfare aspects of this “metropolitan-military complex,” as Lotchin has called it (in a variation on Eisenhower’s “military-industrial complex” admonition), got buried beneath the patriotic fervor and effort to perpetuate “freedom” through “Americanism” and the latter’s emblematic entrepreneurial society.

Of course, the strongest defenders of the metropolitan-military complex and the unencumbered entrepreneurial society—that is, the advocates of limited government (outside of myriad defense needs) and unrestrained capitalism—formed the backbone of the conservative movement in California’s
electoral politics. Though the ultraconservatives occasionally alienated the temperate right-wingers (and vice versa), they forged a formidable movement and eventually found the right candidates to achieve the significant electoral victories they had long sought. Led penultimately by Barry Goldwater and then by Ronald Reagan, this movement helped turn public opinion rightward in California and the rest of the nation, creating a conservative era that arguably still prevails.
TRIUMPH OF THE RIGHT
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California became a state in 1850 on the heels of the great gold rush that filled the Sierra Nevada Mountains and foothills with prospectors determined to find the Mother Lode. Numerous others migrated to the state at mid-century and after in pursuit of the American Dream in the salubrious environs of the Golden State. Though California was blessed with a hospitable climate and an abundance of natural resources, federal aid would prove indispensable in making the state a thriving entity by providing many jobs and various subsidies for hydroelectric power and other water projects, timber harvesting, transportation, and ranching. State government facilitated this growth as well, but in a different fashion. After the Civil War, party politics in California came to be dominated by the “machine” politics of the railroad interests. Replete with the corruption and laissez-faire policies associated with the Gilded Age, California government would remain under the control of these powerful railroad companies (particularly the Southern Pacific) until reformers led by Republican governor Hiram Johnson broke their grip during the Progressive Era in the early twentieth century.\footnote{1}

In addition to greatly diminishing the influence of the railroads’ political operatives in state government, the “nonpartisan” Johnson and his fellow reformers made changes of major importance in California’s electoral process between 1911 and 1917. These changes included the authorization of the initiative and referendum, the recall and women’s suffrage. Cross-filing in primary elections, in which candidates could run on all party ballots and win office with a majority of the overall vote, arguably proved to be the most significant of Johnson’s reforms. Until its abolition in 1959, cross-filing played a significant role in keeping Republican governors in Sacramento but at the same time helped continue the state’s nonpartisan political trend through the de-emphasis of party affiliation. The nonpartisanship of the cross filing era tended to be of the moderate yet progressive and pragmatic style that typified Johnson’s governance.\footnote{2}

Progressive politics persisted in California in the 1920s despite the conservative inclinations of the state’s Republican governors,\footnote{3} but the im-
poverished misery brought about by the Great Depression the following
decade led to a serious challenge to this moderate political pattern. The most
significant effort the far left would ever mount for a high state office, Upton
Sinclair’s campaign for governor in 1934, alarmed Republicans and Demo­
crats alike. A onetime socialist, Sinclair stunned many Democrats in Califor­
nia and across the nation by winning the party’s gubernatorial primary.
Running on an “End Poverty in California” (EPIC) platform, Sinclair faced
vicious Republican attacks and lacked strong support even from his own
party due to his “radicalism.” In addition to the backing generated by their
invective, California Republicans garnered support by acquiescing to numer­
ous New Deal public aid measures, thus stealing much of Sinclair’s potential
thunder and ensuring his defeat by Frank Merriam. Run by the “full-service”
management team of Clem Whitaker and Leone Baxter, the Merriam cam­
paign utilized innovative mass-media techniques and served as the prototype
for later campaigns in California and the rest of the nation. That campaign
also cemented a small but powerful right-wing coalition that supported con­
servative candidates into the 1950s. Though Democrat Culbert
Olson won
the governorship in 1938, California politics maintained a bumpy but moder­
ate course as the nation entered World War II and the California economy
began its long-term boom with lucrative defense contracts.

Seeking to recapture the governor’s office for the GOP, the moderately
conservative Republican Earl Warren challenged Olson’s reelection bid in
1942. While serving as the state attorney general during the Olson years,
Warren had openly feuded with the governor on numerous issues, including
wartime civil defense policy. Deciding finally to run for governor himself,
Warren declared, “I just don’t intend to run a nonpartisan campaign. I intend
to conduct a nonpartisan administration.” Still, Warren attacked Olson’s
“radicalism” mainly due to the governor’s pardon of Thomas Mooney, a
militant labor figure who served twenty-two years in prison after being con­
victed of murder on questionable evidence. Depicting Mooney as an “assas­
sin,” Warren maintained that the governor pardoned Mooney and other
“communist radicals” to win union votes but that such transparent actions
were “an insult to the intelligence of organized labor.” Olson countered this
assault by depicting Warren as a “reactionary” who represented the “aristoc­
racy of wealth,” but to no avail. Warren won the election handily and then
pledged, as he had during the campaign, to work diligently with the Roose­
velt administration in the nation’s war effort. California’s role in that effort
not only entrenched defense industries in the state’s economy; it also pro­
vided the pragmatic Warren with an extraordinarily broad base of support.

He had proved adroit at winning broad backing during his years as
district attorney of Alameda County, a position he held from 1925 to 1938,
before becoming attorney general. Amassing strong support by taking on organized crime, Warren also won over many blue collar workers in the county’s numerous labor union locals through his reputation for being firm but fair. Moreover, he and his associate Ed Shattuck founded the California Republican Assembly (CRA) in 1934, after the party had lost many members and electoral contests to the Democrats. (The depression and the New Deal created a seismic shift in voter registration in California, giving roughly a 3-to-2 advantage to the Democrats, which the party held through the period of interest in this study.) The CRA became a powerful entity that helped organize effective Republican campaigns and shaped a new progressive image for the party despite the resistance of laissez-faire conservatives. Though the organization clearly provided a much needed boost to the party’s electoral prospects, it also developed into Warren’s political machine. Warren and the CRA formed a symbiotic relationship and charted a middle-of-the-road political course for the state GOP and California government.

That course was apparent in Warren’s first term, especially in his effort to prepare the state for the potentially turbulent transition from the wartime economy to peacetime production. Addressing a nationwide radio audience in 1944 on the obligations owed to returning veterans, Warren maintained that families should be “assured the chance to make a decent income” and find adequate and “decent” housing. He also stressed the need for good schools, altruistic community organizations, and for “health services in the economic range for all.” To facilitate the latter, Warren aimed to establish a comprehensive health insurance system, financed equally by contributions from employers and employees, like Social Security. Probably the most controversial legislative proposal he ever made as governor, Warren’s plan incurred the wrath of the powerful California Medical Association and the Republican right, as he repeatedly—and ultimately unsuccessfully—attempted to institute “socialized medicine” in California.

Shortly after the war’s end Warren expressed his concerns about “Republican Party policy” to Herbert Brownell Jr., chairman of the Republican National Committee. In addition to a public health care initiative, Warren contended that the party should “have a definite program on Social Security . . . , [on] the conservation of our natural resources, and an anti-monopoly program.” “Unfortunately,” he lamented, “we are being held up to the public as the party that opposes legislation in all these fields.” Believing that the GOP had taken its oppositional role to an ill-advised extreme, Warren declared, “[w]e must have an affirmative program which we offer to the public for the solution of our basic problems.” He clearly recognized what Republican conservatives did not: having endured the depression and the war with the considerable aid of government programs, the public by and
large did not want another postwar "return to normalcy" with laissez-faire policies reminiscent of the 1920s; nor would voters long embrace a party seemingly intent on making the politics of negativity its most distinguishing characteristic.

In anticipation of Warren's reelection bid, disgruntled conservative naysayers in the legislature and in the state's Republican Party hierarchy in late 1945 coalesced behind Earl Lee Kelly for governor. A prominent San Francisco investment banker who had served as the state director of public works under governors James Rolph and Frank Merriam, Kelly attacked Warren for having policies "closely akin to those of the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] Political Action Committee and all the radical riff raff elements in California." He insinuated that the governor was a "fellow traveler" abetting the communist effort to create a "regimented society" through the constrictive grip of a "master state." Warren's complicity in this iniquitous scheme could be seen in the "shameful spectacle" of his attempts to "out-deal the New Dealers in Washington. . . ." "We need men who will fight for the right," he declared, and "give the conservative people of this state the leadership they are demanding . . . [which] we have a sacred obligation to provide. . . ." The religiosity of his commitment to the right reflected the crusading impulse that later sparked the conservative movement in California.

Kelly's fervid attempt to link Warren with the CIO-PAC and communist activities resembled the Republican assaults on Franklin Roosevelt in the 1944 presidential campaign. During that campaign the Republican presidential candidate, New York governor Thomas Dewey, charged that Roosevelt had pardoned the convicted "draft dodger" and "perjurer" Earl Browder, the leading communist in America, "in time to organize the campaign for his [Roosevelt's] fourth term." He claimed that Browder and the CIO-PAC chief Sidney Hillman had "taken over" the "great Democratic Party," paving the way for a full-fledged New Deal "corporate state."12 Ironically, Warren had turned down Dewey's offer to be his running mate and subsequently refused to deliver the "canned" version of this Dewey diatribe against Roosevelt in his own speeches around the country in support of Dewey and other Republican candidates.13 Similar to the negligible impact of Kelly's attack on Warren's "radicalism," Dewey's barbs barely dented Roosevelt's war-tested armor as FDR marched to his final commanding electoral victory.

Though Warren in 1946 had hardly attained the stature of the venerable (and now deceased) Roosevelt, the governor's opponents soon realized he would be about as hard to beat. Kelly apparently did not have problems raising funds for his campaign, but he had trouble finding much support
within the party or from the state’s prominent newspapers. In early 1946, officials at the Los Angeles Times, along with key Republican leaders, pressured Kelly to withdraw from the race. Even some prominent conservatives believed that winning the election with Warren was more important than persisting in the attempt to make a statement about “fundamental principles” with a sure loser such as the ultraconservative Kelly. As a result, Kelly dropped out of the race and the party’s factions came together behind the governor.

With the challenge from the Republican Old Guard behind him, Warren touted his tempered progressivism and especially his stewardship during the war when he formally announced his reelection bid in March 1946. He emphasized that he had assumed office “during the darkest days of the war” and noted “(t)here was no assurance that we ourselves would not be bombed and pressed for the defense of our homes.” A portent of the “front line” mentality that later contributed to the proliferation of Southland anti-communist groups, Warren contended that “California’s aircraft, ship-building and chemical industries, [and] its vital military installations . . . placed it in the most perilous position of all the States. . . .” Though Californians never had to “meet actual disaster” on the home front, he noted that they and the state were thoroughly prepared to do so. In short, Warren reminded voters that he had guided the state through the treacherous waters of the “darkest days” and it had emerged not only unscathed but, due to his leadership and the emerging metropolitan-military complex, stronger economically than ever.

California Democrats therefore did not have an easy task in finding a candidate to challenge the formidable incumbent and to fit the rightward drift of postwar politics. Due to FDR’s coattails, Democratic candidates had fared well in the 1944 election in California and elsewhere, but the palpable progressive spirit that had long pervaded the party and generated wide support withered in good part after Roosevelt’s death in April 1945. Having reconciled their differences with capitalism by the war’s end, most reform-minded liberals nevertheless believed that government could once again tackle challenges on the domestic front with an emphasis on creating a full-employment economy and on the maintenance of New Deal social welfare and insurance programs.

The strongest backer of the “Roosevelt legacy” in California, organized labor joined with Democratic Party officials in persuading State Attorney General Robert Kenny to run for governor against the “unbeatable” Warren. A true New Deal liberal, the witty Kenny had been a Los Angeles judge well known for his devotion to the preservation of civil liberties—even for communist “radicals”—before being elected to the State Senate in 1938 and
as attorney general in 1942. Drawing upon a friendship that started in the late 1920s, Warren had sought and received Kenny’s endorsement for his attorney general candidacy in 1938, even though Kenny was serving as the treasurer for Culbert Olsen’s gubernatorial campaign at the time. In turn, Warren did nothing to help Wallace Ware, Kenny’s Republican opponent in the 1942 attorney general’s race, and a number of Warren’s deputies backed Kenny. Contrary to the feuding that had typified the relationship between Warren and Olson, Attorney General Kenny and Governor Warren worked well together, though Kenny opposed Warren’s active role in maintaining wartime internment camps for Japanese Americans. Conservative Republican assemblyman Thomas Werdel, among others, believed that Kenny played an important role in turning Warren away from “traditional Republicanism.”

That Warren had indeed co-opted the general idea and practice of government activism into Republican politics in California did much to diminish Kenny’s gubernatorial aspirations and the Democratic Party overall. Kenny had been the only Democrat to win statewide office in 1942, and as the party’s “sole survivor” he came under intense pressure to run and ultimately felt obligated to do so. Though it was “hopeless,” one party official recalled, “we had to have a candidate and we couldn’t get anyone else as good.” To the limited extent that the California Democratic Party existed outside of its nearly three million registered voters, it was torn by intense factionalism. The party’s pro-business conservatives, such as oilman Ed Pauley, battled against ultraliberals like Kenny and Congressman Ellis Patterson. This internal strife prevented the Democrats from forming a strong party organization, despite FDR’s success in carrying the state four times.

His wit and political savvy notwithstanding, Kenny faced the formidable challenge of trying to beat a popular incumbent without a united party, a solid campaign organization, or a compelling message. Moving further to the left in the campaign’s final months, Kenny made the rather untenable claim that Warren represented the “reactionary forces” opposed to “every ideal that Franklin D. Roosevelt ever stood for.” While this proclamation rallied members of the pro-Kenny CIO, the more conservative American Federation of Labor (AFL) endorsed Warren due to the strong influence of the Federation’s Brotherhood of Teamsters. Publicly the Teamsters opposed Kenny because of his alleged communist affiliations, but several heated jurisdictional disputes between the AFL and the CIO may have been factors in the Federation’s endorsement decision as well. Not surprisingly, the Warren camp promoted perceptions that Kenny carried the banner of the radical left, claiming that he defended communist organizations on the pretext that “[o]ur main enemy today is still Fascism.” Kyle Palmer of the Los Angeles Times leveled similar accusations, linking
Kenny and the Democratic Party to “leftists, pinkoes, and outright Commu-
nists,” and later predicted that “Warren can polish off Kenny in the pri-
maries if his advisors conduct their campaign wisely and aggressively.”

Proving Palmer correct, Warren defeated Kenny in the primary and in
doing so foreshadowed the dim Democratic prospects in the general election
in California and the rest of the country. In its effort to halt, if not turn back,
liberal reforms, the Republican Party in 1946 asked American voters: “Had
Enough?” The resulting repudiation of liberals such as Kenny proved re-
sounding, as he lost to Warren by more than 60,000 votes among Demo-
crats. Seeking his party’s nomination for the U.S. Senate, Ellis Patterson
lost to the moderate Democrat Will Rogers Jr. in a bitter primary fight that
further split the party. In the general election, the Republicans claimed
another liberal casualty when a young World War II veteran by the name of
Richard Nixon defeated congressman Jerry Voorhis, a prominent and ardent
New Dealer. The moderate Rogers fared no better, losing big to William
Knowland, whom Warren had appointed to the Senate in 1945 upon the
death of the venerable incumbent, Hiram Johnson. The publisher of the
*Oakland Tribune* and a GOP heavyweight, Knowland’s father Joseph had
been instrumental in Warren’s political success. The governor chose to
return the favor by granting William the political office that his father had
run for, unsuccessfully, in 1914.

As an immensely popular two-term governor of one of the nation’s larg-
est and fastest growing states, Warren assumed a luminous position in the
Republican firmament, which allowed him to seriously pursue the 1948
Republican presidential nomination. The speculation that he would run
began immediately after he won his second term. He was, however, ham-
pered by his image as a regional candidate, and his professed nonpartis-
anship raised doubts about his ability to win enough support among steadfast
Republicans to garner the nomination. Though he began to downplay his
nonpartisanship, party members were upset when he took on the state’s oil
industry in 1947 by pressing for a gas tax to generate much-needed highway
and road construction funds. In pushing legislation to institute the tax, he
not only went against his party’s aversion to taxes, but against a powerful
industry that had generally aligned itself with GOP concerns and poured
money into its campaigns, including Warren’s. He eventually won the gas
tax battle, but that did nothing to diminish his nonpartisan or liberal image
among his Republican critics.

In an attempt to define his political philosophy, Warren published a brief
article in the *New York Times Magazine* in April 1948. Perhaps reflecting
his great interest in history, Warren defined liberalism in humanistic terms,
evoking the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century: “This [lib-
eral] belief and movement, born of faith in mankind and in the dignity of the human soul... found their finest expression... in our Western civilization.” Though he defended the institutions and rights “that are all part and parcel of the liberal tradition,” he lamented that liberalism had become “the disguise of communists and communist sympathizers...” He stated, however, that the term conservative “has also been distorted” because “[m]any people style themselves conservative when they are in fact reactionaries opposed to every effort... to solve the problems of the day.” Warren expressed his preference for dividing “people into three groups—reactionary, progressive and radical,” and noted, “I particularly like the term ‘progressive,’ not necessarily as a party label, but as a conception.” Having identified his political label, he maintained that “[t]he progressive has faith in democracy” and “freedom... and to this end he is willing to subordinate his private interest to the common good.”

Warren’s decision to so literally embrace the progressive image reflected his oft-touted honesty and, indeed, the essence of his ideology. But the way in which he described his politics may not have served him well with GOP loyalists. Even though he did not necessarily care for the “progressive” party label, his frequent and favorable use of the term ran the risk of bringing unwanted associations with the far-left Progressive Party presidential candidate of 1948, Henry Wallace. Vice president during Roosevelt’s third term, Wallace alienated many liberals and outraged other Americans after the war with his sympathetic attitude toward the Soviet Union and his ideas on redistributing wealth by changing the “swollen profit structure.”

Warren was hardly seeking a rapprochement with the Soviets or to challenge American capitalism, but his utilitarian willingness to “subordinate his private interest to the common good” was not likely to appeal to conservatives, whom he had essentially dismissed as obdurate obstacles to reform. Warren ultimately made an argument for the politics of the “vital center,” much like that of postwar liberals dedicated to defending the progressive reforms of the New Deal from attacks by the reactionary right and the radical left.

Warren’s presidential candidacy received strong support from prominent Republicans in California, but his politics and regional image made him a compromise candidate in the event of a deadlocked convention as opposed to a front-runner like Dewey, the eventual nominee. Dewey turned back a number of challengers, most notably the conservative senator from Ohio known as “Mr. Republican,” Robert Taft. Numerous conservatives at the convention ended up supporting Dewey because he was perceived as a winner who supported the conservative party platform. Moreover, despite his centrist leanings, Dewey had ingratiated himself to Republican right-
wingers by vehemently attacking Roosevelt’s “communist” connections in the 1944 campaign—something Warren had refused to do. Warren had also refused Dewey’s offer to be his running mate that year, but when the same request came in 1948, he reluctantly agreed to join the ticket.\(^{30}\)

Warren later told journalist I.F. Stone that he had accepted Dewey’s offer mainly to use his position to champion “all the things I fought for all my life” and to counter the “influence [that] would be exerted from Wall Street” in a Dewey administration.\(^{31}\) On the hustings, however, Warren could not veer from the restrictive, Dewey-directed script. He was advised to refrain from voicing his views on “socialized medicine” and to present his political career on a “business basis.”\(^{32}\) Never a dynamic speaker, Warren plodded through the campaign, bereft of the forthright manner and independence that had been his greatest political assets.

Dewey and Warren headed into the general election campaign as overwhelming favorites to beat President Harry Truman and running mate Alben Barkley. But Truman’s now-legendary “give-'em-hell” campaign in the last weeks of a whistle-stop whirlwind, combined with Dewey’s smug overconfidence, led to the greatest political upset in American history. The Republican ticket lost even in California, where Dewey’s callousness toward critical water issues proved especially unpopular. Two days after the election, Warren, more relieved than humiliated, declared, “[i]t feels as if a hundred-pound sack had been taken off my back.”\(^{33}\)

As Warren eased back into his gubernatorial duties in early 1949, State Senator Jack Tenney began preparing for another term of hearings for the joint fact-finding committee on un-American activities, which he chaired. Formed in 1941, the committee grew out of an investigation headed by Tenney in the previous year that looked into allegations of communist influence in the Olson administration’s state relief program. From 1941 through 1948 (with a lull during the war) the committee queried and “exposed” many Californians suspected of being communists or fellow-travelers. By 1947, if not before, the committee operated from the assumption that a worldwide communist conspiracy, targeting California due to its strategic industries and location, sought ultimately to establish a Soviet dictatorship in America.\(^{34}\) As the Cold War escalated, this belief did not in and of itself necessarily prove highly controversial, but the committee’s inquisitional methods did. The standard procedure of Tenney and his cohorts, the San Francisco Chronicle maintained, “is to call a witness, ask him questions calculated to produce evidence that he is a Communist or fellow-traveler . . . and then chop him off from further answers.” Adamantly defending the committee’s purpose and methods, Tenney later stated that he had gauged “the committee’s effectiveness in exposing the Kremlin’s stooges by the
amount of profane and lying abuse heaped upon it by the Communist press."

By 1949 Tenney and his committee faced mounting opposition from prominent and respectable groups outside of organized labor, one of Tenney’s favorite targets. Opposed to the committee’s methods and to its legislative proposals for a series of loyalty oaths, the senator’s critics in the legislature and elsewhere became incensed when the ultraconservative Ed Gibbons, whom Tenney had hired to write the committee’s 1949 report, impugned a number of well-known state Democrats in his anticommunist newsletter, *Alert*. Seeking to topple Tenney from his position as chief inquisitor, Assemblyman Sam Yorty, a more tempered red-baiter who had served with Tenney in the investigation of the state relief program, led the successful effort to kill Tenney’s surviving antisubversive bills in June. Shortly thereafter the Senate Rules Committee in effect forced Tenney to resign as chair of the Un-American Activities Committee, bringing his tenure to an end. Writing for the *Nation*, Carey McWilliams contended that Tenney’s repudiation came about “because the powers that be have discovered that red-baiting caters to a constantly shrinking political market.” Joe McCarthy, the quintessential red-baiter, would of course soon disprove this assertion.

Though Tenney faded as a force in the legislature, the issue of loyalty oaths, which he had strongly backed, became increasingly contentious, particularly with regard to oaths for faculty at University of California (UC) campuses. The Tenney Committee in January 1949 had introduced a bill allowing the legislature, instead of the university’s board of regents, to evaluate the loyalty of UC employees. The regents had instituted a noncommunist employment policy in 1940 and reconfirmed it in 1949, but this policy did not involve oaths. Subsequently, UC president Robert Sproul instructed the university’s comptroller to draft a loyalty oath to head off Tenney’s stricter stipulations and to avoid potential problems with the legislature’s approval of the university’s budget. The proposal ran into staunch opposition from faculty, and Sproul soon withdrew his support for the oath. This led to a battle between Sproul and several conservative regents, in which Warren sided with the UC president.

A Berkeley graduate and friend of Sproul, Warren entered the fray in early 1950 at the behest of a UC economics professor and oath opponent who had been an advisor to Warren in his 1948 presidential campaign. Regent John Francis Neylan, a San Francisco attorney and one-time Republican liberal reappointed to the board by Warren in 1944, led the fight for the oath in February 1950. He engineered the passage of a resolution requiring a signed oath from all university employees. Voicing his opposition
to the resolution shortly after its passage, Warren made a formal statement in late March, declaring, "I don't believe that the faculty at the University of California is Communist; I don't believe that it is soft on Communism, and neither am I." After much debate, the regents, with the governor's approval, eventually passed a compromise resolution that made the oath requirement less exacting and allowed nonsigners a full hearing to make their case for not signing. Nevertheless, in August the board voted, with Warren dissenting, to dismiss thirty-one individuals who had refused to sign the compromise pledge, disregarding the favorable reports on these individuals from the university committee that had reviewed their cases.

Seeking to resolve the loyalty oath dispute, Warren requested in September that the legislature require all state employees to sign an oath pledging that they did not support or belong to "any party or organization . . . that now advocates the overthrow of the Government of the United States or the State of California." Five days later the legislature passed the Levering Act, which established the oath requirement, and Warren signed the bill in early October. Running for an unprecedented third term as governor in 1950, Warren no doubt dropped his opposition to loyalty oaths because McCarthy and heightened Cold War tensions had made attacks on communism more strident and politically vital than ever. His dislike of the Levering Act, however, became clear when, as chief justice of the Supreme Court, he assented in the decision to invalidate state loyalty oaths in 1967. Recalling the loyalty oath matter in his memoirs, Warren was particularly critical of Neylan and fellow regent Mario Giannini, the president of the Bank of America. The two men "carried their [anticommunist] hysteria to such an extent that they deprived the university of badly needed dormitories . . . on the ground that the concept of dormitories was socialistic." "They let McCarthyism dominate their lives," he maintained, "and endeavored to impose it on others." In July 1950, a Life magazine headline proclaimed, "A Trend Is Running Toward an Enlightened Conservatism," but in reality the trend was heading in the opposite direction due primarily to the rise of McCarthy. World and domestic events set the stage for McCarthy and others seeking to exploit the growing anxiety over the "red menace." In 1949 the Soviet Union detonated an atom bomb, Nationalist China fell to communist forces led by Mao Zedong, and postwar spy scandals at home and abroad created a "contagion of fear" in America. In this apprehensive political climate, Republican conservatives prevailed over the party's Dewey wing in adopting "Liberty against Socialism" as the GOP slogan for the 1950 congressional campaign. That campaign targeted the "socialistic" policies of the Truman administration and drew upon McCarthy's repeated charge that communists
occupied critical positions in the federal government. McCarthy's fusillades made red-baiting an effective tactic for Republicans—and some Democrats—on the hustings, a tactic well suited to politicians like Richard Nixon.

Running for Congress in southern California's twelfth district, Nixon began his political career as a red-baiter in 1946 when he declared that his opponent, Congressman Jerry Voorhis, was controlled by the "communist-dominated" CIO-PAC and had received the group's endorsement. In fact, the CIO-PAC did not endorse Voorhis in 1946. Furthermore, among New Dealers, he was the least favored liberal in California's congressional delegation due largely to his service on the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC, but known as the Dies Committee when Voorhis served), his sponsorship of anticommunist legislation and criticism of Soviet expansionism in Eastern Europe. But every attempt by Voorhis to counter Nixon's incessant charges fell flat due to a combination of Nixon's craftiness and underhanded tactics, Voorhis's mistakes on the campaign trail, and the salience of the anticommunist and PAC issues.

Nixon handily defeated Voorhis and went on to become a national figure when he led the effort to prove that Alger Hiss, the liberal head of the prestigious Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, had been a spy for the Soviet Union in the 1930s. A State Department official and Roosevelt associate during the New Deal, Hiss adamantly denied the allegations. The charges initially came from the repentant ex-communist Whittaker Chambers in testimony before the HUAC. Hiss subsequently sued Chambers for libel, but Hiss's denial did not convince Nixon, a HUAC member, who offered his services to Chambers as an attorney and became committed to proving Hiss guilty in court. In a case that took many twists and turns, in January 1950, after an earlier hung jury, a second jury found Hiss guilty of perjury after reviewing evidence that appeared to substantiate Chambers's allegations. The highly publicized case divided conservatives and liberals as much, if not more, than the debate over government policy. Gloatimg immediately after the Hiss conviction, Nixon maintained that there had been a "determined and deliberate effort on the part of certain high officials in two administrations to keep the public from knowing the facts" of the case. Several days later he reiterated his determination to thwart the red "Master Plot" that the Hiss case had exposed.

His next target in this battle would be Democratic congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas, a former actress who challenged Nixon in 1950 for the Senate seat being vacated by Democrat Sheridan Downey. Like Voorhis, Douglas had a liberal image at which Nixon, with the help of strategist Murray Chotiner, took sharp aim. Casting Douglas in a new role as the "pink lady" ("pink right down to her underpants"), the Nixon camp circu-
lated a "Pink Sheet" that linked her congressional voting record to that of "the notorious Communist party-liner, Congressman Vito Marcantonio of New York." (Marcantonio was a member of the left-wing American Labor Party.) Distorting the voting records of both Douglas and Nixon, the Pink Sheet proclaimed that Nixon "has voted exactly opposite to the Douglas-Marcantonio Axis."\(^48\) Harnessing invaluable support from newspaper baron William Randolph Hearst and from the *Los Angeles Times* and Kyle Palmer, Nixon rode roughshod over Douglas, who ill-advisedly chose not to respond directly to the Nixon smear. As a result, the Pink Sheet would be widely accepted as fact.\(^49\)

The message in the Pink Sheet was a variation on a recurrent foreboding theme in postwar conservatism: the impending collapse of American freedom could only be turned back by virtuous voters in the ballot booth. In this vein, the chairman of the Republican Central Committee of Los Angeles County advised members that the "County may well be a proving ground to determine whether or not all of America will be able to stem the 'statist' tide which varies in color from misguided pink to Marxist red." Even the most conservative of the state's Democratic candidates, he contended, "are committed to Truman's socialistic policies." Writing in *Alert*, Ed Gibbons declared that the major Democratic candidates in the state "have records of collaboration with and appeasement of the Communists and their noisy fellow-travelers." Still smarting from the Tenney Committee's abrupt demise, he maintained that Warren was the "key factor in this entire election," but "[h]e must be kicked, shoved or led off the mugwump position he has taken on the issue of Communism . . . and Communist treason at home."\(^50\)

Mired in the loyalty oath matter and jostled by dissension within the state GOP, Warren faced potential opposition to his quest for a third term from Lieutenant Governor Goodwin Knight, who favored the regents' oath proposal. In early 1949, 125 prominent Southland conservatives, shocked by the defeat of the Dewey–Warren ticket, formed a dissident group called "Partisan Republicans," and derided the governor as "wishy-washy and namby-pamby."\(^51\) The Knight for Governor Committee grew out of this disenchantment. Soliciting support for Knight from fellow Republicans, the committee's chairman, without directly naming Warren, claimed that "liberal socialistic candidates have been losing popularity throughout the world." Given the decline of the left and the "return to popularity of Herbert Hoover," Knight provided "the only possibility of a Republican victory in 1950. . . ."\(^52\)

Knight, who had the backing of the Hearst newspapers, clearly wanted to be governor and appealed to conservatives by noting that he never had supported Warren's "compulsory health insurance." Increasingly annoyed
by Knight’s challenge, Warren confounded the lieutenant governor’s efforts by insisting that “he [personally] has always . . . expressed his loyalty to my administration.”53 But Warren in fact viewed Knight as a conservative stalwart opposed to progressivism, as revealed in his memoirs: “I might not have run for a third term had it not been for the intransigence of the lieutenant governor.” Knight’s criticism of Warren’s administrative skills and programs led the governor to believe that Knight would not carry out his postwar plans for the state. The slim chance that Knight had of toppling Warren essentially vanished when the governor turned back an effort by Artie Samish, a notorious Sacramento lobbyist, to dismantle the state Crime Commission in fall 1949. In defeating the imperious and powerful Samish, Warren showed he was still the most formidable political figure in the state.54

Seeking to pose a serious challenge to Warren this time around, the California Democratic Party pinned its hopes on James (“Jimmy”) Roosevelt, FDR’s eldest son, who had moved to California in 1938. After serving as an officer in the Marines during the war, he became the chairman of the state party in 1946 and a national party committeeman in 1948, when he led an unsuccessful effort to draft General Dwight Eisenhower for the Democratic presidential nomination. Party conservatives in particular viewed Roosevelt as a liberal Eastern “carpetbagger” who had used his name and FDR-like voice to take over the party and position himself for the gubernatorial nomination. Dismissing such criticism, Robert Brownell, a writer for Frontier, a liberal periodical based in Los Angeles, noted, “the [Democratic] old liners who have called the turns for years . . . are out and the new official Party potentates are the band of liberal leaders who have been aiming at control for years.”55

The electoral prospects of these new potentates, however, did not prove promising, especially for Roosevelt, who narrowly defeated Warren among Democratic voters in the June primary. Warren, on the other hand, received almost all of the Republican votes. Though the Republican right had become increasingly alienated by Warren’s “liberalism,” they “had no place to go but Warren,” one prominent Democrat recalled. “They might swear at him and damn him,” but they could never vote for anyone named Roosevelt. Indeed, as Gibbons declared, “we will not agree with those who will refuse to support Warren against James Roosevelt,” who was backed by a “motley crew of opportunists, flaming liberals, [and] Kremlin Kutups. . . .”56 Warren’s reelection to an unprecedented third term seemed assured.

Nevertheless, the road to the general election in November did have some bumps, mainly due to the governor’s differences with organized labor. He declined to veto a “Hot Cargo” bill—which denied unions the
right to refuse to handle goods produced by strikebreakers—and opposed jurisdictional strikes. Warren tried to mollify labor leaders by voicing objections to a number of provisions in the controversial 1947 Taft–Hartley Act, particularly the requirement that union members take a loyalty oath, and the elimination of federal protection of the “closed shop.” Taft–Hartley allowed individual states to decide whether union membership would be mandatory in a unionized, closed shop workplace, or optional (in an “open shop”) by virtue of a “right-to-work” law. Warren’s opposition to the idea of right-to-work laws did not prove sufficient to win the formal backing of organized labor, which instead endorsed Roosevelt and provided him with campaign funds and a plane for touring the state. Though Roosevelt won the formal support of labor’s political campaign committees, he did not command the labor vote. In addition to their generally favorable opinion of Warren, many union members resented Roosevelt’s role in the effort to oust Truman in 1948, which worked to Warren’s reelection benefit. Truman, who had a rocky relationship with labor early in his presidency, vetoed the Taft–Hartley Act in 1947. Ultimately overridden, his veto still won him widespread union support.

Despite the tensions of the red scare and the attendant tactical chicanery of Nixon and others, Warren did not engage in red-baiting during his campaign. Moreover, he publicly criticized the “blanket accusations against groups and individuals” made by McCarthy without proper evidence. Warren’s staff did possess information fromHUAC’s “Rankin Report” on Roosevelt supporters with “Communist connections,” but Warren himself never used this information to assail his opponent. He did not have to, of course, given the frequent attacks on Roosevelt’s “connections” and “socialistic” views from conservative Republicans. Always strident and often shrill, these attacks nonetheless appeared tame alongside those of the notorious racist and superpatriot Gerald L.K. Smith, who came to Los Angeles in early November to lead several “Stop Roosevelt” rallies. Schooling his followers on the “treacherous and treasonable background of the Roosevelt dynasty,” Smith exposed “their Jewish family tree” and discussed “[w]hat . . . the departure of large numbers of Jews indicator[s] concerning the safety of this city.” The Los Angeles Times deplored Smith’s history of “intolerance and hate,” and Warren made clear he did not welcome Smith’s visit or support.

Throughout his campaign Roosevelt made the usual Democratic charge that Warren was actually a conservative posing as a liberal who played into the hands of greedy and selfish interests in California and on Wall Street. In so doing Roosevelt followed in the campaign footsteps of Kenny and, ultimately, suffered the same electoral fate as well. In what proved to be a
strong Republican year nationwide, Warren defeated Roosevelt by more than a million votes. In the state’s other major race, Nixon beat Douglas by almost 700,000 votes, but during the campaign Douglas tagged Nixon with a name that would stick: “Tricky Dick.” Though ill-inclined toward name-calling, Warren resented Nixon’s attacks on Douglas and the fact that so many anti-Warren Republicans found a haven in the Nixon camp. Indeed, Nixon’s victory as a champion of conservative Republicanism made him Warren’s chief rival in the battle for the control of the state GOP.

Similar to the aftermath of his reelection in 1946, Warren was once again considered a force in the race for his party’s 1952 presidential nomination, but not necessarily a truly viable candidate. Dewey informed his inner circle in 1951 that he would not seek a third nomination. Joining a growing number of influential Republicans, he got behind the incipient yet unofficial presidential campaign of World War II hero Dwight (“Ike”) Eisenhower, a political neophyte who began to reveal his Republican inclinations with a relatively centrist sensibility and appeal. Warren again appeared to be a compromise candidate if delegates at the Republican Convention became deadlocked—this time, over the choice between Eisenhower and Taft. Warren would at the very least be a major powerbroker if he controlled the large California delegation, which appeared all but certain given the likelihood that neither Taft nor Eisenhower would challenge him in the California primary.

In the midst of the Korean War in 1951, Warren informed the legislature that he would not propose any new taxes given the demands of the legislative “war session,” and for the first time since 1944 he did not propose a health insurance program. Warren’s earlier health insurance initiatives had been defeated through public relations efforts led by the firm of Whitaker and Baxter, which had run Warren’s 1942 campaign, and by powerful lobbyists for the California Medical Association. Whitaker and Baxter’s success in undermining the governor’s health plans led the American Medical Association (AMA) to enlist the firm’s services in 1949 in its $3.5 million fight against the Truman administration’s proposal for a national health insurance system. Claiming that the “real objective” of the advocates of “socialized medicine . . . is to gain control over all fields of human endeavor,” the AMA sank the Truman plan with red-baiting attacks.

Despite such powerful opposition, Warren’s efforts to promote “compulsory health insurance” did not abate. After the AMA invited Taft to speak in California in late 1951, Warren wrote the senator and complained that “the [AMA] wants you to speak in California for, among other reasons, the purpose of discrediting me on the health question.” Warren called the AMA’s attacks on him “vicious” and declared that his plan for “prepaid
medical care . . . is in no sense socialized medicine. . . ." In May 1952, he explained "Why I'm Fighting for My Health Plan" in an article with that title in Look magazine. Warren, whose daughter Nina had contracted polio in 1950, declared that he was seeking "safeguards" to protect "decent, hard-working families" from the potential financial ruin brought about by catastrophic illness. Perhaps with Taft in mind, one month earlier, in the conservative periodical the American Mercury, he had responded to Republican assaults on his "socialized medicine" program by bemoaning those in his party "who would like to turn the clock back if they could." On a broader note, Warren chastised the federal government for not giving more responsibilities to state and local governments; yet, "I don't know of any essential program that has been initiated by the Federal Government in recent years that I would repeal" as president.65

Spurred by Warren's longstanding "heretical" views, organized opposition to his prospective presidential bid began in November 1951. Gathering in Los Angeles for a dinner meeting, 400 conservative Republicans discussed strategy to block Warren's control of the state's Republican National Convention delegation in 1952. Jack Tenney delivered the keynote speech, during which he hailed McCarthy as "a modern Paul Revere," praised General Douglas MacArthur and promoted the general's presidential candidacy. Extremely conservative in his political beliefs, the maverick MacArthur had been dismissed from his command of American forces in Korea by Truman in April, an unpopular decision that made the defiant general the toast of every town upon his return to the states. Though MacArthur's campaign prospects and active pursuit of the presidency proved marginal at best, his devoted followers urged fellow Republicans to help them forge a draft movement. A MacArthur victory, a "Draft MacArthur" flyer proclaimed, would be "so convincing and so clean and so dynamic that every true American will know the redemption of our nation is at hand."66

The anti-Warren faction backed Bakersfield congressman Thomas Werdel in the California presidential primary. Touted as the candidate of the "Free Republican Delegation," Werdel was the governor's only opponent. The congressman's supporters had tried to persuade a number of prominent conservatives—including MacArthur—to challenge Warren in the primary, but to no avail. Werdel promised to "release the members of this delegation after the June 3 primary . . . to vote for any legitimate candidate, capable of supporting a real Republican Platform." Reflecting the opinion of his supporters, Werdel charged that Warren was not a legitimate presidential candidate, but rather sought to control California's seventy convention votes "in a deal for personal gain—an appointment to the Supreme Court or a Cabinet
post." Countering Werdel’s allegations, Warren maintained he had made no deals with any other candidates and would release his delegates if it appeared he could not win the nomination.67

Among the prominent Werdel backers were Tenney, John Francis Neylan, actor Adolphe Menjou, San Diego banker C. Arnholt Smith, and independent oilman William Keck.68 Responding to a reporter’s inquiry, Warren stated that he believed that independent oil interests “are pouring a lot of money” into the Werdel campaign: “I mean Bill Keck and his messenger boy, Jack Smith” (C. Arnholt’s brother). Enraged by the governor’s statement, Smith, in an open letter, gave a biting retort: “My associates and I ceased to support you when you . . . sought to gouge the California taxpayers . . . by your attempt to raise the state gasoline tax by an additional three cents per gallon in 1947.” Vilifying Warren for everything from his opposition to the regents’ loyalty oath proposal to his “socialized medicine” initiatives, Smith thundered, “I will resist your effort to force . . . Republican voters to accept the Hitler-Stalin choice you offer them of voting ‘ja’ or not at all in the coming primary.”69

The freedom-versus-tyranny rhetoric of the Werdel camp in a sense presaged the theme of later conservative campaigns in California, but it was used primarily against Warren and his “dictatorial” campaign tactics, not against the “tyranny” of “big government.” Werdel campaign literature encouraged Republicans to “Free Your GOP” and assured voters that his delegation was “NO MAN’S Captive!” The “real issue,” of course, “is real Republicanism versus Warren’s Trumanism,” but Werdel brochures emphatically proclaimed: “VOTE WERDEL JUNE THREE, AND FREE THE REAL G.O.P.”70 Of significant note, the principal Werdel backers were not, at least early on, among the major supporters of Goldwater’s 1964 presidential campaign or Reagan’s subsequent gubernatorial bid. Of Werdel’s seventy delegates and a handful of other noteworthy backers, only C. Arnholt Smith held a prominent position in the 1964 California Goldwater Campaign; and no one in the Werdel camp could be found among the initial forty-two fundraising “Friends of Ronald Reagan” in 1965 or the dozen-or-so members of his gubernatorial “Kitchen Cabinet.”71 It is reasonable to assume, however, that most, if not all, of the surviving Werdel backers supported Goldwater and Reagan.

Touting Taft and cool to Eisenhower, Werdel’s troops created a rather ugly spectacle for Warren and the Republican Party in the primary. Even though Warren won by almost a two-to-one margin, the results indicated a decline in his popularity. Werdel won in Orange County and did well throughout southern California where he focused his amply financed campaign. Though the primary results did not bode well for Warren, Werdel
also suffered, as he would have the dubious distinction of being the only Republican congressional incumbent in California to lose his seat in the November election. Not finished with politics, Werdel ran in 1956 as the vice presidential candidate for the segregationist States’ Rights Party. Jack Tenney, a vociferous Werdel delegate and Warren critic, went on to accept the 1952 vice presidential nomination of Gerald L.K. Smith’s Christian Nationalist Party.

In July, Warren and his state delegation headed by private train to the Republican Convention in Chicago with palpable exuberance given the indications that Taft and Eisenhower could well be deadlocked after the first ballot. By the time the train arrived in Chicago, however, Nixon, in what has been dubbed the “great train robbery,” had managed to swing the California delegation, in effect, behind Eisenhower. Boarding the train in Denver, the senator met surreptitiously with many of the delegates. He convinced most of them to cast critical votes for a “fair-play” amendment on the convention floor which would eliminate Taft’s control of disputed Southern delegates and assure Ike’s nomination on the first ballot. Enraged but unable to effectively counter Nixon’s machinations, Warren saw his last chance to win the presidency evaporate with Eisenhower’s subsequent nomination. Along with stunned Taft supporters, Warren then had to witness the selection of Nixon as Eisenhower’s running mate, given that Ike and his inner circle deemed the senator the best man to balance the ticket, both geographically and ideologically. His own vice-presidential aspirations dashed, Bill Knowland had remained a loyal Warren delegate throughout the fair-play maneuvers. When he received a request from Murray Chotiner and Nixon to formally nominate Nixon from the convention podium—which he later dutifully did—he replied, “I have to nominate that dirty son of a bitch?”

The ill will among Republicans notwithstanding, the Democrats faced a daunting task in taking on Eisenhower. Truman, burdened by the Korean War and scandal in his administration, did not choose to seek reelection. The Democrats eventually pinned their hopes on the liberal reformer Adlai Stevenson, governor of Illinois. The Stevenson campaign depicted Eisenhower as a political newcomer whose actions as president would be orchestrated by “reactionaries” like McCarthy, Taft, and Nixon. Too many Americans, however, could not resist the combination of Eisenhower’s easygoing charm—reflected in the ubiquity of “I Like Ike” buttons and stickers—and his heroic military background as the architect of the D-Day invasion and victory in Europe. In addition, Republicans targeted Democrats through an effective campaign “formula” for victory: $K_1$ (one part Korea), $C_2$ (Communism and Corruption). The only significant problem for
the Eisenhower–Nixon ticket came in September when the press reported
the existence of a "secret fund," established by California businessmen, that
Nixon used to live in a style "far beyond his salary."75 Nixon responded to
this charge in a nationally televised speech in which he provided conflicting
information about the fund, but generated a groundswell of support with an
account of his humble life-style and the acquisition of his family's cocker
spaniel, Checkers. Though Nixon survived the ordeal through the "Check­
ers" speech, his relationship with Eisenhower suffered.76

Defeating Stevenson in a landslide in November, Eisenhower ushered in a
new era for the country and for the resurgent Republican Party. In accor­
dance with his campaign pledge of "peace with honor," the president brought
the Korean War to a tolerable negotiated end in July 1953. On the home
front, the avuncular Ike presided over rapid industrial and suburban growth,
particularly in California. In this increasingly affluent yet rather conformist
American society, nonconformists, with few exceptions, were relegated to
the margins of popular culture and public discourse. Frequently photo­
graphed on a golf course, Eisenhower appeared to be more of a caretaker
than a leader, which clearly fit the public mood.77 In keeping with the cen­
trist "consensus" of postwar politics, he chose to stay in the "middle of the
road" politically, much to the chagrin of conservative Republican stalwarts.

Eisenhower in fact despised the Old Guard conservatives, which was one
of the reasons he admired Earl Warren. After meeting with Warren at the
Republican Convention, Eisenhower had told reporters that he and the gover­
nor were "not going to get dragged back by a lot of old reactionaries. . . ."
Impressed by Warren's professional competence and integrity, Eisenhower
soon decided that he would make an excellent Supreme Court justice. The
president got the opportunity to place Warren on the Court after Chief Justice
Fred M. Vinson died in September 1953. Shortly before Vinson's death
Warren had announced he would not seek a fourth gubernatorial term, with
the expectation that he would be appointed to the Court upon the first va­
cancy. Commenting on the governor's philosophy and qualifications, Eisen­
hower told his brother Milton that as a "liberal-conservative," Warren
"represents the kind of political, economic, and social thinking that I believe
we need on the Supreme Court." In January 1954, Eisenhower nominated
Warren to replace Vinson as chief justice. Though the nomination met resis­
tance from conservatives, the senate confirmed Warren in March, thus bring­
ing one California era to a close, and beginning another for the High Court.78

Warren had resigned as governor on October 4, which allowed the gre­
garious Goodwin Knight to rise to the governorship after his long and
anxious wait in the wings. Knight first entered the Republican spotlight in
1934 when he delivered a fiery denunciation of Upton Sinclair at the GOP
state convention. Rewarding Knight for his invective, Frank Merriam appointed him to the superior court bench in Los Angeles in 1935, where he served for eleven years and received much publicity as the “mender of broken hearts” due to the number of Hollywood stars who came before him with their marital woes. Deciding to run for lieutenant governor in 1946, Knight won in a landslide and soon became a Warren antagonist, once dismissing the governor as “nothing but a New Dealer.” At the height of the debate over loyalty oaths at UC, Knight, in addition to opposing Warren on the oath issue, attacked Truman’s secretary of state, Dean Acheson, as an appeaser who “kowtowed to communism and plotted the dismissal of General MacArthur.” With Knight’s ascent to the governorship, the California Right appeared to have secured power in Sacramento.

The new governor, however, faced an election in 1954 and did not want to alienate the liberal and moderate factions of Warren’s diverse voting coalition. Hoping to win a cross-filing victory in the June primary, he made clear that he did “not believe in repressive legislation against either management or labor,” declared his opposition to a right-to-work law, and raised the minimum unemployment insurance payment rate. Consequently, Knight won the endorsement of the AFL. Among other factors, the AFL’s leaders noted that as a judge, he had never issued an injunction against unions, “despite the fact that employer powers in southern California were ... constantly getting injunctions to deny our unions their basic rights. . . .”

Mindful of the need to hold his conservative support, the governor also appealed to management, fervent anticommunists, and voters in the expanding metropolitan-military complex. He maintained that “[w]e should be eternally grateful” for free enterprise, which “has enabled us to create the sinews of defense which have halted all who would have trespassed upon our shores.” He excoriated the most dreaded of these potential trespassers, the “brutal bureaucrats” of communist regimes, “who would dictate our every move.” Urging unity, Knight declared, “let those of us here in California, a western bastion in the path of this terrible threat, do our part to turn back this doctrine of a godless group of tyrants.”

Struggling to find a candidate to take on Knight, a natural campaigner, the Democrats settled on Richard Graves, the executive director of the League of California Cities. Not only had Graves never held political office, he had been a registered Republican until late 1953. More prominent Democrats, such as Attorney General Pat Brown, who would win reelection in 1954, did not believe the time was right to challenge the incumbent governor. Hobbled by his seemingly eleventh-hour party switch and his political inexperience, Graves nonetheless won the support of the CIO and a small dissident group within the AFL, but generally did not excite Democrats.
Indeed, some "progressive" Democrats backed Knight through campaign groups and billboard ads. Facilitating such efforts, the governor followed in Warren's nonpartisan footsteps with a widely run campaign ad shortly before the primary, which maintained: "The cornerstone of Democratic Government is not the Party—but the Man."

Though Graves narrowly beat Knight among Democratic voters in the primary, the governor commanded the Republican vote by a ten-to-one margin, which all but assured a Knight victory in November. Thus, the ensuing campaign proved lackluster, with Graves during one stretch directing his campaign from a hospital bed due to an illness. The biggest question was whether Knight, after winning in November, could move out of Warren's imposing shadow. Winning 55 percent of the vote in the general election, Knight got his chance to chart his own course for California politics and the state Republican Party. He would, however, essentially seek to maintain the centrist policies of predecessor, while claiming them as his own.

Though Knight won his electoral contest handily, 1954 did not prove to be a good year for the Republicans, who were running without Eisenhower's coattails. Contributing to the shift in the party's electoral fortunes, McCarthy's anticommunist inquisition came, appropriately enough, to an ignominious end after the increasingly reckless senator charged that communists had infiltrated the Army. Even conservatives who had generally supported McCarthy understood that he had gone too far and could not prevent him from being censured by the Senate in December 1954. McCarthy's downfall and repudiation were victories for Republican moderates and liberals, but his long reign had tainted the party and torn it asunder. "We have the spectacle of cannibalism holding forth," McCarthy supporter Barry Goldwater declared. "We find the Republican Party busily chewing on itself."

With the Republican right in disarray, Eisenhower in 1955 made a major effort to reshape the GOP in his own image and at the same time mend factional fences. Speaking to the forty-eight state Republican Party chairmen at a breakfast meeting in September, the president addressed the question of GOP philosophy and party labels: "I, myself, have sometimes used such phrases as moderate progressive and dynamic conservative, because we want to be known ... [as] the party of progress." He concluded, however, "I don't believe you can sloganize the kind of honest philosophy that the Republican Party is trying to promote..." Nevertheless, two months later the Republican National Committee (RNC) circulated a description of "The Eisenhower Conservative," who sought to conserve, by government action if necessary, the forces "to which this country owes its phenomenal material growth," including the "market mechanism."
Intent on relentlessly antagonizing Eisenhower and his brand of conservatism through the new periodical, *National Review*, chief editor William F. Buckley Jr. convinced Bill Knowland to contribute an article for the magazine’s first issue, which came out in November 1955. In the article, the senator lambasted the administration for negotiating with the Soviet Union. Buckley and fellow editors Willi Schlamm and James Burnham also urged Knowland to pursue the presidency in 1956, as it appeared that the president would not seek reelection due a heart attack he had suffered in September. Despite this encouragement, the *National Review* never endorsed Knowland for the presidency because Eisenhower eventually decided to run again, which ruled out the senator’s candidacy, and because there was skepticism about Knowland’s intellect and electability. Describing middle-of-the-road politics as “intellectually . . . and morally repugnant,” Buckley did relent somewhat in his criticism of Eisenhower by the time of the 1956 election. Indeed, compared to the program of the Democrats, he proclaimed that “the program of the Republicans, which is essentially one of measured socialism, looks wonderfully appealing to the conservative.” Yet he stopped well short of a solid endorsement of the president. Instead of “I Like Ike,” he maintained, “I prefer Ike.”

While there were concerns about the president’s fitness for another term in office, once he made the decision to run again, his reelection was almost a foregone conclusion. Amid the celebration of Ike and “the spirit of Bob Taft” (who had died in 1953), Knight declared at the Republican National Convention in San Francisco that Republicans would leave the city “marching arm in arm.” Knowland, Nixon, and Knight, however, elbowed for opportune meetings and glad-handing at the convention to help bolster their future political prospects. Just prior to the convention, Nixon had survived a weak effort to oust him from the ticket, as conservatives rallied to his support. The conservatives also unified behind Eisenhower at the convention, hoping to capitalize once again on his coattails. Furthermore, though they understood the GOP was no longer the party of Taft, Eisenhower was hardly a government activist like Truman or Roosevelt; and his uncomfortable attitude toward the nascent civil rights movement—a movement many conservatives castigated as “radical” in the course of defending the segregated South—placated the right-wing ranks. Yet, as one reporter noted, “[t]he stillness [among conservatives] at San Francisco was less that of an enemy vanquished or even cowed than of one patiently biding its time.”

In a repeat of the 1952 presidential campaign, Stevenson challenged Eisenhower and went down to defeat in another landslide. The president’s margin of victory proved even greater than in the previous election, but the Republicans did not fare well overall, particularly in congressional contests.
In addition, the unity that had prevailed at the Republican Convention dissipated during the succeeding months as conservatives became increasingly marginalized by the president’s “Modern Republicanism.” Drawing upon descriptions of the “Eisenhower conservative,” and from a 1956 book by an assistant secretary of labor, Arthur Larson, Modern Republicanism became the centrist slogan for the GOP “establishment” in the latter half of the Age of Eisenhower. Though intended as a big-tent party philosophy, Modern Republicanism ultimately led to a revolt within the ranks, with the conservatives fighting to regain control of the party’s image and agenda. California soon became the main arena for this battle.
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