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Nelson Rockefeller, Racial Politics, and the Undoing of Moderate Republicanism

By

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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“Nelson Rockefeller, Racial Politics, and the Undoing of Moderate Republicanism”

examines shifts in the political terrain of the 1960s as related to social issues such as civil rights, crime, and welfare. The political career of Nelson Rockefeller, four-term Governor of New York (1958-1973), three-time candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, and iconic twentieth century moderate Republican, serves as a lens for understanding many moderate and liberal politicians’ struggle to navigate racial politics before and after the passage of the Civil and Voting Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965.

Rockefeller’s transition from racially liberal advocate for the end of Jim Crow to early adopter of punitive drug laws that disproportionately affected racial minorities provides insight into the difficulty faced by liberals, both Republican and Democratic, when race became central to the political debates of the 1960s. This work reveals that liberal support for racial parity fractured and further entrenched inequality when the nation’s focus shifted from equality under the law to the more complex and intractable issues of equality in economic opportunity, housing, schooling, and criminal justice. “Nelson Rockefeller, Racial Politics, and the Undoing of Moderate Republicanism” examines shifts in popular opinion alongside the actions of politicians and political activists to provide a new perspective on the passage of legislation and implementation of social policies. Charting Rockefeller’s political prospects through the reactions of his constituents also creates

opportunities to understand the eclipse of the moderate Republican tradition without focusing on the rise of conservative Republican icons of the 1960s. This study relies upon varied sources such as the public and private papers of Nelson Rockefeller, constituent letters, documents produced by the Republican National Committee, popular periodicals, polling data, public hearings, oral histories, and visual artifacts to create a work that takes into account people from all castes and classes regardless of party affiliation who felt the effects of Rockefeller's political activism.

Dedication

For my family,
Winston, Ana, and Hope Barrett

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Introduction

It was the spring of 1968, and Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller was back on the campaign trail. The routine was a familiar one for the three-term governor of New York, who, since his entrance into electoral politics in 1958, had run for political office either in-state or nationally six times, or every other year for a little over ten years. Rockefeller launched his third bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 1968 despite the general consensus that the prize would be Richard Nixon's once again. Nevertheless, his ambition, confidence in his record, and belief that the nation needed a moderate Republican president with a liberal race record made it impossible for Rockefeller to feel satisfied as governor. Race relations in the nation remained tense after Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4; over a hundred cities burned as members of the African American community rioted in the streets to express their anger and frustration in response to his murder and the persistent inequality in America. Rockefeller believed that he was the man who could return peace to American cities and that voters would be drawn to him in this period of unrest, if he could convince the Republican Party to nominate him. Rockefeller's campaign centered on a call for justice and racial peace in America that included a proposal for federal spending in the nation's cities to reverse a

pattern of disinvestment that led to what he called an “incongruous society” of the affluent and the afflicted.¹

On May 23, 1968, in the middle of the campaign, Rockefeller made an appearance at Spelman College, the nation’s first historically black institution of higher education for women, located in Atlanta, Georgia. The governor, who was associated with progressive government and civil rights advocacy, was not the most popular man among many white audiences in the South. When Rockefeller was first sworn in as the Governor of New York State on January 1, 1959, he placed his hand on his great grandmother Laura Spelman Rockefeller’s bible and began a career in public office where he became a vocal supporter of the civil rights movement and the passage of federal legislation to end the system of Jim Crow in the South, which he saw as a natural position as a member of the Party of Lincoln. Making a campaign stop at Spelman seemed like an obvious choice to find a receptive audience, particularly because Rockefeller’s family had long-established ties to the institution that was named in honor of John D. Rockefeller Sr.’s wife Laura Spelman Rockefeller. The Rockefeller family had donated millions to educate African Americans in the South, but its first investment in this field was to Spelman—a gift to the institution when it struggled to remain open in 1884. Rockefeller told the audience that in 1931, his grandfather had said, “Of all of the investments that we have made as a family, Spelman stands among the best.”²

Rockefeller’s speech, delivered in Sisters Chapel, reiterated the main points of his domestic platform, which called for major federal and private capital—\$150 billion over

¹ “The Making of a Just America,” April 18, 1968, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson A. Rockefeller, folder 2303, box 58, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

² “Spelman College,” RAC, NAR, folder 2345, box 60, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

ten years—to be invested in the nation’s cities to combat injustice. Such an investment, he said, would fulfill the legacy of King. Before the governor concluded his speech, however, a young woman in the audience interrupted Rockefeller accusing him of “killing” black people in South Africa. Other hecklers told him to get off the campus. But Rockefeller finished his speech and opened up the floor for questions. An audience member then mentioned that Chase Manhattan Bank invested money in South Africa. While Rockefeller did not deny this point, he explained that he was not the director of the bank. This did not appease those who objected to his appearance; in fact, someone pointed out that his brother David was the director of Chase Manhattan Bank, which meant Rockefeller money was supporting a genocidal regime. Although some Rockefeller supporters in the audience tried to shout down the protesters, it was clear that Rockefeller’s connection to African Americans was not without tension, and had possibly deteriorated in recent years despite his generally liberal stands on racial equality. By taking a closer look at Rockefeller’s deep-rooted, but complicated ties to the Atlanta college it is possible to gain greater perspective on his progressivism and public life.

It was no accident that there were no longer any immediate ties between Rockefeller and corporations that functioned under South Africa’s Apartheid regime; years before Rockefeller had decided to disinvest from such ventures to avoid the type of criticism he faced at Spelman. Rockefeller was raised in a family practiced in the art of public relations. Critics of inequality in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era considered the Rockefeller family and the company that made it wealthy, Standard Oil Company, the epitome of what was wrong with unfettered wealth. As a result, descendants of John D.

Rockefeller learned to carefully manage their investments, political interests, and philanthropic efforts that were sometimes at cross-purposes.³

In 1938, a thirty-year-old Nelson Rockefeller became the president and chief executive officer of the Rockefeller Center, Inc., a feat that required more business acumen and sheer will than nepotism, particularly because his father did not want a family member to hold the position. By 1957, Nelson was no longer president, but he remained chairman and was personally involved in the enterprise along with his four brothers. Nelson's role within the Center provided a direct link to South Africa when it invested in the Minerals Engineering Company, a Colorado business with a subsidiary in the African nation.⁴ Rockefeller officially ended his chairmanship in 1958, but he remained involved in the management of the Center. In 1960, Oscar M. Ruebhausen, Rockefeller's counselor and friend, informed the now governor of New York that it might be best to disinvest in the company. Ruebhausen explained that when the initial investment was made, they were all aware of the "public relations risk;" however, it had become a greater concern because of Nelson's entrance into public life and the "the political and human problems of South Africa." Ruebhausen explained that the

³ Nelson Rockefeller Speech at Spelman College, May 23, 1968, NAR, RAC, Folder 2344, Box, 60, Series 33, Speeches; and Excerpts from Nelson Rockefeller Speech at Spelman College, May 23, 1968, NAR, RAC, Folder 1718, Box 76, Series 25, Press Office.

⁴ At this time, South Africa—a commonwealth of the United Kingdom until 1961—was led by the National Party, which had instituted apartheid, a system of institutionalized segregation that denied the rights of the black majority. Rockefeller Center, Inc., High Speed Steel Alloys, Ltd., of England, and Minerals Engineering Co, undertook the joint venture. "Three Concerns Plan to Build South African Vanadium Mill," *Wall Street Journal*, May 29, 1957, 8. The plant built in Witbank, South Africa mined vanadium, a soft and ductile metal used in high-speed tools and heat-treated engineering components. The Rockefellers and their counsel agreed to the \$1,000,000 investment partially because the land for the mining was, according to the Native Commissioner in Pretoria, leased to the company by the Bakwena tribe. The lease was easily approved by the South African government, which sought employment for the "natives." Letter from Oscar M. Ruebhausen to Louise A. Boyer, December 3, 1956, RAC, NAR, Folder 2231, Box 220, Series Projects. Eventually, the Colorado company ran into financial trouble and was acquired by the Anglo American Corporation, which renamed the venture Transvaal Vanadium Company Limited.

investment created a “needless risk” and “should be disposed of as soon as practicable.” Nelson Rockefeller agreed that it would be best to disinvest. Ordinarily, however, Ruebhausen noted he “would prefer to keep the investment and use it affirmatively to do something directly about housing, health services and the like for the native population.”⁵ Ruebhausen’s interest in devising a philanthropic effort on behalf of the Rockefeller’s coincided with the family’s commitment to domestic and international humanitarian efforts. The family’s initial investment in the “public relations risk,” however, reveals the complications and contradictions inherent to a family of extreme wealth that had for decades put itself in the business of philanthropy while ferociously protecting the bottom-line of its multi-national corporation.⁶

The Rockefeller Foundation, established in 1913 by John D. Rockefeller, Sr. to “promote well-being of humanity around the world,” bestowed its first grant to the American Red Cross to purchase the land for its headquarters in Washington, D.C. This philanthropic impulse was an outgrowth of the devout Baptist tradition of tithing and giving that Senior, as those close to the family referred to him, had practiced for decades. Although Senior was never concerned with the rehabilitation of his family’s reputation—history would prove his critics wrong—his son, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. intended for the

⁵ Memorandum from Oscar M. Ruebhausen to Nelson Rockefeller, May 25, 1960, RAC, NAR, Folder 2231, Box 220, Series Projects. A memorandum to Rockefeller in 1961 reported that the Rockefeller Center still owned 487,681 shares in Transvaal Vanadium Holdings, Limited worth \$1,416,518. Robert H. Strange, the Rockefeller representative who attended the directors’ meeting that year, reported to Nelson that in comparison to other mining companies in South Africa Transvaal paid higher wages and provided homes that were the most attractive of comparable housing and the food was ample and well-balanced. Memorandum from Oscar M. Ruebhausen to Nelson Rockefeller, May 25, 1960, RAC, NAR, Folder 2231, Box 220, Series Projects; and Memorandum from Robert H. Strange to Nelson Rockefeller, June 1, 1961, RAC, NAR, Folder 2231, Box 220, Series Projects.

⁶ It is unclear based on archival data; however, if the Rockefeller Center, Inc. was still invested in Transvaal in 1968. The letter from Strange to Rockefeller sent in 1961 is the last reference to the company in the Rockefeller papers. Letter from Robert H. Strange to Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller, June 1, 1961, RAC, NAR, folder 2231, box 220, Projects, RG 4.

family's philanthropy to rehabilitate the Rockefeller name.⁷ By the final decades of the nineteenth century, Senior faced steady criticism from muckrakers, the wider public, and eventually federal prosecutors for the aggressive and under-cutting business tactics that made the Standard Oil monopoly possible. The *New York World* called the family business "the most cruel, impudent, pitiless, and grasping monopoly that ever fastened upon a country."⁸ While criticism of the Standard Oil founder mushroomed, the frigid and unapologetic Rockefeller turned giving into a family enterprise. He encouraged his entire family to judge the merits of the various applications they received and follow his example of taking great interest in the progress made by those he granted aid.⁹

Meanwhile, skeptics criticized the Rockefeller grants and donations made before and after the founding of the Rockefeller Foundation and argued that they were primarily a means for spreading the family's influence.¹⁰

⁷ The year after the foundation was started John D. Rockefeller, Jr. hired Ivy Lee, who is considered the founder of modern public relations, to help the family improve its image after the Ludlow Massacre, when the Colorado National Guard and Colorado Fuel & Iron Company attacked striking miners and their families killing two women and eleven children. Ron Chernow, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.* (New York: Random House, 1998), xix-xxi; Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *The Rockefellers: An American Dynasty* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1976), 59-65; and Cary Reich, *The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller: Worlds to Conquer, 1908-1958* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).

⁸ Grant Segall, *John D. Rockefeller: Anointed with Oil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 60. American Federation of Labor President Samuel Gompers' disapproval could be summed up in his acerbic retort: "The one thing that the world could gracefully accept from Mr. Rockefeller now would be the establishment of a great endowment of research and education to help other people see in time how they can keep from being like him. Collier and Horowitz, *The Rockefellers*, 64.

⁹ Chernow, *Titan*, 237-242.

¹⁰ The foundation went on to subsidize efforts that spanned North and South America, Asia, and Africa to combat disease, hunger, illiteracy, and a myriad of efforts that stamped the family's influence and world-view on the globe. The "difficult art of giving," as Senior's advisor Frederick Taylor Gates called it, resulted in a patchwork of mixed outcomes, including programs to eradicate malaria, hookworm, and yellow fever, among other diseases, but perhaps most notoriously funded racial research in accordance with Nazi ideology in the 1930s. The Rockefeller Foundation funded the research of Eugen Fischer. Gretchen Schafft, *From Racism to Genocide: Anthropology in the Third Reich* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Thomas Teo and Laura Ball, "Gretchen E. Schafft. From Racism to Genocide: Anthropology in the Third Reich," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 42 (Fall 2006): 413-414.

It was undeniable that Senior's grandson, the three-time presidential candidate, had long and venerated ties to the college and its goal of advancing black well-being. But the missionary tradition that Spelman represented was not without conflict for the African Americans it educated. White Christian missionary women, Sophia B. Packard and Harriet Giles, who were raised and educated in northeastern female seminaries, had founded the institution that became Spelman College in 1881. After observing the difficulties faced by African American women in the post-emancipation South, Packard and Giles sought to teach black women to become productive American citizens, domestic workers, and educators in their own right. Their project was fueled by their missionary zeal and the paternalistic belief that former slaves and their descendants needed to be rescued—an idea shared by many white northerners who were sympathetic to the needs of the newly freed.¹¹ John D. Rockefeller, Sr., who took a great interest in the education of African Americans, shared Packard and Giles's Baptist heritage and interest in educating black women. He began the regular practice of donating to the women's institution in 1889—the first check was for \$100—and in 1897 provided the majority of the funds needed to purchase additional land for the institution and as a result the school was renamed in honor of Senior's wife, Laura.¹² Laura Spelman's father, Harvey Buel Spelman, who organized several churches, served in Ohio's state legislature, helped found the public school system of Akron, and with his wife made his home a stop on the Underground Railroad, instilled in his daughters an interest in the advancement of

¹¹ Yolanda L. Watson and Sheila T. Gregory, *Daring to Educate: The Legacy of the Early Spelman College Presidents* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, Inc., 2005), 4-7.

¹² Florence Matilda Read, *The Story of Spelman College* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 179-180.

African Americans.¹³ In 1900, the Rockefeller's pledged to build four buildings on the newly expanded campus; the fourth structure, the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Fine Arts Building, was completed in 1964. Nelson Rockefeller's political roots in abolitionism extended beyond the Spelmans; his grandfather also opposed slavery and joined the early Republican Party primarily because of its opposition to slavery and support of free enterprise. In fact, Senior's first vote had been cast for Abraham Lincoln, the first Republican president.

The Republican Party, also known as the Party of Lincoln, was founded between 1854 and 1856 to oppose the pro-slavery Democratic Party and advance its commitment to free labor, land, and men, but it did not take an activist stance on the abolition of slavery. Free and enslaved African Americans could better align their interests with this new party than those before it, but early Republicans that set out to contain rather than terminate slavery disappointed those who wanted an immediate end to the institution. Due to political necessity and the blatant racism within the southern Democratic Party, the vast majority of African Americans remained loyal to the Republican Party until the 1930s. African Americans who could vote, voted Republican, but their aims were as likely to be opposed to than aligned with those of a political party that at its founding comprised a mix of ideological, moral, sectional, and economic opposition to enslaved labor and what Eric Foner calls "the distaste of the majority of northerners for the Negro and the widespread hostility toward abolitionists."¹⁴ By 1877, the Party of Lincoln, under the leadership of Rutherford B. Hayes, assured the end of Reconstruction by promising

¹³ Read, *Story of Spelman College*, 175-176.

¹⁴ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 1-10.

the South federal subsidies, the appointment of a southerner as Postmaster General, and the removal of federal troops from Louisiana and South Carolina in exchange for southern Democrats accepting Hayes as president after the contested election of 1876. The Compromise of 1877 allowed Redeemers to institutionalize violations of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which allowed for the denial of African Americans' rights of citizenship, and reasserted white social control through disfranchisement and unprosecuted violence in the South.¹⁵

Nelson Rockefeller stood on the campus of Spelman College as the amalgamation of his family's commitments to capitalism, philanthropy, abolitionism, and Republicanism. In addition to his paternal ties to the party, his namesake and maternal grandfather Nelson W. Aldrich was the influential Republican Senator from Rhode Island, who served in Congress for thirty years (1881-1911) as an advocate for high tariffs, the gold standard, and fiscal policies that allowed the free rein of trusts like Standard Oil Company.¹⁶ Nelson Rockefeller spoke as the governor of a liberal state where he had forwarded numerous racially liberal policies, although implementation was not always consistent. While Rockefeller's record of racial liberalism had garnered the governor an unusual amount of support from African Americans for a Republican, race

¹⁵ John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 207-210, 211-219; Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage, 1999); C. Vann Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction*, 2nd ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956); C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3rd rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

¹⁶ When John D. Rockefeller Jr. married Aldrich's daughter Abigail "Abby" Greene Aldrich, the muckraking journalist David Graham Phillips wrote, "Thus, the chief exploiter of the American people is closely allied by marriage with the chief schemer in the service of their exploiters." Phillips' gives the impression that the marriage was arranged, but the advantageous marriage was the result of a four-year courtship. Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 5-6.

relations in America, even for Rockefeller, had become as complicated and tangled as the history that brought him to the Spelman campus in 1968.

Nelson Rockefeller vs. the Republican Party

Despite Rockefeller's Republican pedigree, his relationship to the party was never easy. He often faced mistrust and even contempt from his peers. As governor, he was a moderate Republican. However, Republicans often dismissed him as a liberal who was too comfortable with big government and the taxes needed to sustain it. Rockefeller spoke of government's obligation to protect the economically and socially vulnerable; to provide a baseline for education, health care, and public assistance that enabled all citizens to thrive in twentieth century America; and to create a business-friendly environment that would generate the revenue necessary to make this system work. To meet the demands of a progressive government, he taxed individuals rather than businesses—his method for encouraging economic growth—and preferred to raise needed income with sales and income taxes along with the issuance of publicly funded state bonds. Though he was a Cold War hawk, he was a centrist hawk believing that America must rely on diplomacy and aid to foreign nations as much as military supremacy to defeat Communism. Rockefeller, like many moderate and liberal Republicans, offered rhetorical support for racial equality, but went further by championing racially liberal policies and programs to codify the aims of the civil rights movement both locally and federally. Before he entered electoral politics, Rockefeller served as an adviser in the administrations of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Dwight D. Eisenhower, and he earned a reputation for boundless enthusiasm, a disregard for protocol that upset senior advisers, and a custom of hiring huge personal staffs to aid

him in his attempt to turn any appointment, no matter how inconsequential, into a prominent position. Observers often thought that Rockefeller would be a more natural fit in the Democratic Party since he was somewhat of an outsider in the Eisenhower Administration, yet owing to family ties he felt an affinity to the Republican Party. When asked by a fellow New York Republican about his political affiliation, he explained,

There was one point, down there [in Washington], I didn't know which way I'd go. And I said if I became a Democrat, I'd probably have to spend a lot of energy holding back people in the Democratic Party from engaging in certain programs or activities. Whereas, I think I can spend my energy more effectively in the Republican Party by leading and drawing them in the right direction and toward some of the programs and policies that I believe in.¹⁷

Despite Rockefeller's Republican pedigree many Republicans would reject him, either because of his presumption that he could lead the party as he desired, his wealth, his calls for progressive government, or his demands that the party preserve its identity as the Party of Lincoln.

Rockefeller struggled to gain support from Republicans, particularly those outside of the Northeast who resented the influence the Eastern Establishment wing of the party enjoyed over the national party. The descendant of the Rockefellers and Aldriches epitomized the wealth of the Northeast that Midwestern Republicans, for example, believed had been used to unfairly dominate the Republican Party. Furthermore, his presence exacerbated the long-standing cultural differences in the Republican Party, which was divided between the farming and small business communities at the center of the party in the Midwest and the banking interests that dominated the party in the Northeast. In addition to his wealth and influence, Rockefeller's support from unions in

¹⁷ Joseph H. Boyd, Jr. and Charles R. Holcomb, *Oreos & Dubonnet: Remembering Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 34.

New York City and the expansion of welfare while he was in office, were also cited as reasons that Rockefeller was unsuitable.

There was also the issue of Rockefeller's independence; he was accustomed to doing things his own way. When he took trips to the Midwest to court delegates and party officials he would emphasize the more conservative aspects of his views to stress his Republican credentials, but he was not as ideologically conservative or partisan as many party members preferred. Early in his political career, for example, Rockefeller alienated numerous Republicans when he hired the journalist and former Eisenhower speechwriter Emmet Hughes to help set the tone of his bid for the 1960 presidential nomination. Hughes had angered party leaders in 1959 when he published a book that was critical of Eisenhower's foreign policy. Nevertheless, Rockefeller remained close to Hughes and retained his services again in 1968 when he sought the Republican presidential nomination.¹⁸ Hughes, who considered himself a descendant of New Deal Democrats, described their relationship as being founded in a mutual desire to move the Republican Party in a more progressive direction and toward "more enlightened ends" than it had pursued throughout the New Deal era.¹⁹

Rockefeller's reputation as an advocate of civil rights also hurt him with some factions of the Republican Party. During his campaigns for the 1960 and 1964 Republican presidential nomination Rockefeller publicly demanded the party strengthen its commitment to civil rights or forfeit its tradition of advancing equal rights as

¹⁸ Emmet John Hughes, *America the Vincible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959).

¹⁹ Hughes explained that during his career as a political journalist he made the professional decision not to register with either party, but upon leaving journalism in 1969, he registered as a Democrat. Hearing Transcript, Emmet John Hughes Testimony during the Senate Hearings on the Rockefeller Nomination, 11/18/1974, folder "Senate Hearings Transcript," box 97, Edward Hutchinson Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library.

established by Abraham Lincoln. During the 1968 campaign, William Pfeiffer, Rockefeller's adviser and campaign manager, tried to get a politician from Chicago to support the governor's candidacy. Pfeiffer recalled, "[I] told him we would help him in his campaign and, of course, he turned it down and said he could never be for Nelson Rockefeller because... he ha[d] successfully moved all the niggers from the South up North."²⁰ By 1968, Rockefeller's racial liberalism had become a liability for the governor, the most egregious feature of his Eastern Establishment liberalism. According to Rockefeller's executive secretary Alton Marshall, his unsuccessful bid against Goldwater four years before had cemented his negative reputation. "Whatever Barry Goldwater was symbolically to [delegates], Nelson Rockefeller was somewhere 180 degrees from that give or take a few degrees. He irritated them as a symbol. I do not think he irritated them as an individual."²¹

Rockefeller sought the governorship of New York with the goal of becoming president. New York Governors Martin Van Buren, Grover Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, and Franklin Roosevelt all went on to become President of the United States, with Van Buren and Theodore Roosevelt attaining the office of vice president first. Thirteen New York governors have won their party's nomination for president, but lost the general election, including Thomas Dewey in 1944 and 1948, a moderate Republican. Rockefeller did not achieve his ultimate goal, but he dominated New York's political scene from 1959 until 1973. He left office after fifteen years, making him the second longest serving governor of the state behind George Clinton, New York's first governor.

²⁰ Hugh Morrow Interview with William Pfeiffer, April 5, 1980, RAC, NAR, folder 44, box 3, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

²¹ Hugh Morrow Interview with Alton Marshall, October 11, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 26, box 2, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

Rockefeller also remained a force in his national party and as a result was appointed Gerald Ford's vice president in 1974 in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal. Years after Rockefeller left public life in 1976, his staff still pondered with regret why he was unable to translate his success in New York to the national scene.

This work does not set out to answer the question of when Rockefeller had the best chance to be elected president; nor does it seek to say definitively whether it was timing, his outsider status among Republicans, the changing primary system, divorce and remarriage, nor arrogance that cost him the nomination. All played a role. Rockefeller was a gifted campaigner before crowds and fared well in opinion polls, but he had little traction with Republican delegates who tended to be more conservative. Conservatives had grown tired of capitulating to the more liberal wing of their party, particularly when it did not guarantee victories, and began to demand presidential nominees who were further to the right and more resistant to government expansion and New Deal Era policies. Rockefeller's staff believed his greatest liability was that despite his three attempts to win the nomination Rockefeller did not understand what Nixon knew. The man on the street did not win you the nomination; the delegates did. While the influence of delegates declined after 1968—George McGovern, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan were all the primary voters' choices—Rockefeller's poor relationship with delegates was a major obstacle. Rockefeller campaign manager Jack Wells, who had worked for both Dewey and Nixon before joining Rockefeller, noted that while Dewey lacked Rockefeller's charisma, Dewey had the organization that Rockefeller lacked. Wells also noted that because the Republican Party in Dewey's era was more centralized, his staff

only needed to contact one or two key people per state to gain its delegates' support, but the state parties were more decentralized in Rockefeller's time.²²

There are too many factors to explain with any certainty why Dewey had beaten Ohio Senator Robert Taft, a well-respected conservative, while Rockefeller lost to Goldwater, a conservative who was further right than the majority of the party and somewhat of an outsider himself.²³ In any case, this work takes Rockefeller and his policies seriously, whether he was running for office or governing his state, examining him in light of policy debates of the day, the agenda of the Republican Party, the demands of voters across the nation, and the interests of a socially and economically diverse cross-section of Americans. The picture that emerges offers insight into the near-demise of racially liberal Republicanism. Moderate Republicans won the Republican presidential nomination with Wendell Willkie in 1940, Dewey in 1944 and 1948, and with Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956, if you categorize him as a moderate, but it was a much more difficult feat in Rockefeller's era. Moderates like Rockefeller, who despite being known as vote-getters firmly within the mainstream of American politics and an important part of the Republican coalition, lost their place within the Republican Party and the voting base that had elected them in the past.

A Political Study

"Nelson Rockefeller, Racial Politics, and the Undoing of Moderate Republicanism" is a political study that traces Rockefeller's fifteen-year governorship

²² Hugh Morrow Interview of Jack Wells, August 14-15, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 23, box 2, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

²³ James Carberry of the Wall Street Journal was said to have joked that the difference between Dewey and Rockefeller was that "Dewey didn't look like a liberal." Hugh Morrow Interview of Harry O'Donnell, August 9, 1980, RAC, NAR, folder 36, box 3, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

and bids for the Republican Party presidential nomination in 1960, 1964, and 1968 as means for examining changes in American politics as related to civil rights, race, welfare, and crime. This work provides insight into the racially liberal moderate Republicanism epitomized by Rockefeller and explores the choices he made when the nation debated civil rights in America in the 1960s. This civil rights history can be divided into two parts: first, when the nation focused on the fight for enhanced federal legislation to achieve legal and political equality in America and, second, the longer struggle for black equality characterized by efforts to achieve equality in economic opportunity, access to housing and schooling, and treatment from the criminal justice system. Examining the nation's focus on civil rights in two parts reveals that the passage of federal civil rights legislation to provide equality under the law is a major turning point in civil rights history, rather than its culmination. Therefore, this work looks at Rockefeller's stance on civil rights in two parts as well, with his bid for the 1964 Republican presidential nomination and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 serving as a decisive moment in his career and support for the civil rights movement.

Early in his career, Rockefeller sought to lead his party as an advocate for civil rights, even positioning himself to the left of John F. Kennedy. His first confrontation with the party led to the authorship of a civil rights plank for the 1960 Republican Party Platform that ensured Republicans would continue their tradition of offering support for racial equality and keep pace with liberal Democrats. Rockefeller, however, would never again enjoy such a victory as his party shifted to the right on race issues. Since its inception, the Republican Party had an inconsistent record as the defender of African Americans' rights. At the height of the civil rights movement, racially progressive

Republicans wished to use the party's early history—the heyday of Lincoln and the abolitionists—as a guide for its future in relation to African American freedom. They often called on the memory of Lincoln during their attempts to strengthen federal civil rights legislation and to scold Democrats for not doing more to advance equality in the early 1960s, but they rarely mentioned that their own party was also divided on the issue. In 1963, Rockefeller broke with this pattern and drew attention to what he believed were efforts among Republicans to adopt a more conservative position on civil rights, particularly in the South and West, in an effort to attract disenchanted racially conservative Democrats. Most of his fellow moderates, however, chose to remain silent on the issue or accuse him of exaggeration. Moderates chose not to rally around the issue of civil rights in favor of partisan unity at the moment that the majority of the nation seemed more ready than any other time in history to pass new federal laws that were strong enough to be enforced and had the potential to set a new standard for legal equality in America.

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 became a watershed in the history of moderate Republicanism and this work on Rockefeller. Shortly after Lyndon Johnson signed the new civil rights act into law, Republicans went to San Francisco for the Republican National Convention and nominated Barry Goldwater for president. The Arizona senator was one of a small minority of Republicans in Congress who voted against the law. Moderates and many Republicans closer to the center of the party resigned themselves to Goldwater's nomination and adopted a civil rights plank that did not skew too far from the planks of the past, but at the same time did not claim the passage of the new legislation as a

Republican victory when numerous Republicans had spent years working toward the goal. Instead of embracing its ties to Lincoln as Rockefeller had hoped, his party slunk away from that legacy, as it had in the past, and consequently, further away from racially liberal moderate Republicanism. Rockefeller's failure to recapture for his party the label of the Party of Lincoln was an important turning point—not only in Rockefeller's own career, but also in the history of the Republican Party and in the course of party politics more generally.

Rockefeller had faced everything from apathy to opposition from members of his own party when he called for legislation ensuring equality under the law that would end the Jim Crow system of the South. That reluctance and resistance only increased after 1965, further alienating him from his party. As the civil rights movement turned its attention more fully to issues of economic inequality, de facto segregation in housing and schooling in the North, and unequal access to opportunity, the act of supporting civil rights became more complicated in the region. Many northerners who had supported the civil rights movement and its aims in the South became weary of what additional changes would be required (of them) to desegregate an urban school, for example, whose population was determined by a segregated neighborhood and forces that were far more subtle and deep-rooted than any firebrand blocking a school entrance. This difference, the change between defeating overt segregationists who pledged to continue segregation forever and instituting busing to integrate a school to move the nation closer to equality beyond the letter of the law was a new test for Rockefeller that he met by maintaining the status quo rather than remain a leading advocate for this new stage within the civil rights movement. Rockefeller's struggle to navigate these issues was not unique; as a result, his

responses to these issues can provide insight into the challenges faced by many moderate and liberal politicians in his era who were unsure of how best to respond to the evolving race question in America. This work looks at specific policy issues related to policing, crime, illegal narcotics use, and welfare reform, all controversial issues that were increasingly racialized in the latter half of the 1960s, to examine Rockefeller's response to the issue of achieving civil rights after 1965.

This work shows how the rightward movement of the GOP—and indeed, of the electorate—on race and racially inflected issues throughout the 1960s eventually led Rockefeller to abandon his principled liberalism as well. By examining Rockefeller's actions as candidate and governor, along with his advocacy of policies related to narcotics and welfare reform, it is possible to understand how a politician known first as an advocate for racial equality and civil rights became the progenitor of regressive policies that disproportionately affected African Americans, Latinos, and the poor. As the struggle for racial equality became more complicated and divisive in the North, it would be increasingly difficult for a moderate Republican to fuse together the multi-racial, multi-interest constituency that had ensured victories in the past. Rockefeller did not immediately resign himself to racially conservative policies after 1965, during his campaign for president in 1968, for example, he again presented the case for racially liberal moderate Republicanism, but he received little support from Republicans. This study makes it possible to trace Rockefeller's rightward shift as he learned that moderate Republicanism that advocated racial liberalism could no longer win votes as the New Deal consensus strained and cracked under the pressure of the social and economic upheaval of the 1960s. Ultimately, Rockefeller's consistent support of civil rights

legislation in his early years as governor alienated him from fellow Republicans. In response, Rockefeller was not only less likely to take a stand in support of civil rights after 1968; he shifted to the right on controversial issues linked to race in his last years in office and blamed budget deficits and rising crime rates for forcing him in this new direction. The governor insisted that he was unchanged, but the Rockefeller of 1970 was at times unrecognizable from the Rockefeller of 1960.

The first two chapters of this work focus on the earliest years of Rockefeller's career in electoral politics when he earned the Republican nomination for governor in 1958 and went on to defeat incumbent W. Averell Harriman. Rockefeller's impressive victory garnered him attention nationwide as a rising star in politics, which he hoped would give him the momentum to receive the Republican nomination for president in 1960. In this period, Rockefeller began the practice he would continue throughout his career of commissioning surveys and opinion polls to understand the social and economic climate of the electorate. The data collected by Samuel Lubell provides an opportunity to examine New York State in the late 1950s and the changes it experienced due to population shifts and growing racial antagonism in New York City. Chapters three and four examine Rockefeller's campaign for the 1964 Republican presidential nomination. The first half of the campaign draws attention to the methods Rockefeller used to shift to the right in an attempt to appease the conservative majority of the Republican Party. Once Rockefeller's polling numbers began to decline he adopted a new tone and challenged the party's rightward shift in the field of equality and civil rights. While early in his campaign Rockefeller championed more conservative economic and foreign policies, he maintained resolute support for civil rights. At the height of national attention

to the civil rights movement, Rockefeller hoped that by championing civil rights he could help maintain his party's identity as the Party of Lincoln and earn himself the nomination. This decision earned Rockefeller the antipathy of his party, which he struggled to contain the rest of his political career.

The final two chapters examine Rockefeller's gradual rightward shift in relation to race and racially inflected issues by focusing on his involvement in the generation of narcotics and welfare policy. The epilogue discusses the Rockefeller Drug Laws of 1973, which imposed a minimum of fifteen years to life in prison and a maximum of 25 years to life for selling two or more ounces (57 grams) of heroin, morphine, opium, cocaine, or cannabis, and flooded New York's prisons with non-violent drug offenders. These drug laws have drawn a great deal of attention in recent years, but they are best understood as part of a broader conservative shift in Rockefeller's governance in relation to social issues that strained race relations in New York. In 1970, for example, Rockefeller advocated that welfare recipients' benefits should be cut in half and that they could regain them by working for the state. The children of families on welfare, he explained, could sweep the streets to earn their family's benefits, while learning the value of hard work that their parents could not teach them. This work provides needed perspective on the Rockefeller Drug Laws in relation to the broader policy debates during the latter half of the 1960s and 1970s and Rockefeller's governorship overall.

A man of Nelson Rockefeller's stature and prominence attracted many biographers, particularly while he was in office when people were most interested in why a man from one of the richest families in America would commit himself so doggedly to seeking political office. While these works make important contributions, they tend to be

conventional biographies. The early works in this category focus on Rockefeller alone and devote little time to understanding the broader political and social contexts in which he functioned. The most meticulous account of Rockefeller's early career before electoral politics, however, is financial journalist and author Cary Reich's *The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller: Worlds to Conquer, 1908-1958*. The most recent work on Rockefeller by historians such as *Missionary Capitalist: Nelson Rockefeller in Venezuela* by Darlene Rivas has focused on his involvement in South America whether as an appointed government official or through his family's holdings and philanthropic activities in the region. Unlike these earlier works, this historical account presents a distinctly political focus on Rockefeller, one that is the first by a historian to rely upon his gubernatorial and personal papers to trace his activities in New York and national politics. Rather than dwelling on the personal attributes and idiosyncrasies of a man who undoubtedly led a dynamic and contradictory personal life, this work focuses on Rockefeller's career as it is his career that serves as a lens to examine broader issues that affected New York State and the nation. This work puts Rockefeller in conversation with a diverse group of voters, political allies, and opponents at all levels to create a work that reinterprets the traditional top down political history by incorporating the concerns of social history.²⁴

²⁴ Frank Gervasi, *The Real Rockefeller: The Story of the Rise, Decline and Resurgence of the Presidential Aspirations of Nelson Rockefeller* (New York: Atheneum, 1964); Michael Kramer and Sam Roberts, "I Never Wanted to be Vice-President of Anything!" *An Investigative Biography of Nelson Rockefeller* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); Robert H. Connery and Gerald Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York: Executive Power in the White House* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979); Joseph E. Persico, *The Imperial Rockefeller: A Biography of Nelson A. Rockefeller* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); James E. Underwood and William J. Daniel, *Governor Rockefeller in New York: The Apex of Pragmatic Liberalism in the United States* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982); Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*; and Darlene Rivas, *Missionary Capitalist: Nelson Rockefeller in Venezuela* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

This examination of moderate Republicanism engages with studies of the Republican Party and the ascendancy of conservatism in this era. Historians have produced a myriad of nuanced local, regional, and national studies on conservatism in the past thirty years. Attention has been paid to the rise of Goldwater and his supporters, the evangelical right and its growing influence in national politics, neo-conservatives and the intellectual debates surrounding conservatism, and the activism of conservative business leaders and interests. Where Rockefeller appears in these works, he is almost always the enemy whom conservatives tried to silence, but he has not been examined closely in an effort to comprehend the moderate Republicanism conservatives railed against. As a result, moderate Republicans appear to be static; rarely are they actors who had to navigate the newly conservative party. This political study seeks to fill these gaps and is part of a much smaller literature on moderate Republicanism.²⁵

When the research for this project was begun there was but a single monograph on moderate Republicans, political scientist Nicol C. Rae's *The Decline and Fall of the Liberal Republicans: From 1952 to the Present*. Rae begins by discussing the prominence of liberal Republicans in presidential politics during and after the New Deal

²⁵ William A. Rusher, *The Rise of the Right* (New York: William Morrow, 1984); Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Rebecca E. Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Catherine E. Rymph, *Republican Women: Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage through the New Right* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Shane Hamilton, *Trucking Country: The Road to America's Wal-Mart Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Lawrence Richards, *Union-free America: Workers and Antiunion Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008); and Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009).

and provides important insights into the failure of moderate Republicans' to unite in an effort to oppose the rising prominence of conservative politicians. Alternatively, this work considers the impact of the policies forwarded by Rockefeller and the reactions of his constituents who looked to him to protect their interests. In 2012, Geoffrey Kabaservice published *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, from Eisenhower to the Tea Party*, which looks at liberal Republicans in more recent decades, an important addition to the literature, but Rockefeller is not the central character in his story.²⁶

Finally, this work's examination of Rockefeller's use of controversial policy issues to help him navigate a rightward shift in the New York electorate and growing opposition to the civil rights movement positions this work among literature examining the role of race and other social issues on the conservatism of the 1960s. A discussion of the political value of welfare reform for Rockefeller builds upon work such as Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall's *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics*, which explores how political conservatism exploits certain policy issues.²⁷ This work also participates in the debates about political shifts in the 1960s and the significance of issues such as law and order, resistance to integration, and

²⁶ Nicol C. Rae, *The Decline and Fall of the Liberal Republicans, From 1952 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) and Geoffrey Kabaservice, *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, from Eisenhower to the Tea Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁷ Marisa Chappell, *The War on Welfare: Family, Poverty, and Politics in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1991); Ange-Marie Hancock, *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen* (New York: New York: New York University Press, 2004); Felicia Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights: Politics and Poverty in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2007); Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement Without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Premilla Nadesen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2005); and Ellen Reese, *Backlash Against Welfare Mothers: Past and Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

backlash politics that are discussed in Thomas Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* and Michael W. Flamm's *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s*. Rockefeller's initial focus on rising crime to gain the support of Black and white voters alike also shows how central the issue of crime was to diverse constituents before it became increasingly divisive.²⁸ The discussion of welfare reform amidst the welfare rights movement also provides an opportunity to participate in the scholarly debates about the civil rights movement in the North and demonstrates how a liberal politician began to oppose the efforts of the civil rights movement when it threatened to jeopardize his political base.²⁹

Numerous histories of the Republican Party that outline its conservative turn at mid-century cannot help but mention Nelson Rockefeller, if only to point out that moderate and liberal Republicans rapidly became an anathema to the newly conservative party. The party that nominated Goldwater in 1964, and ushered Ronald Reagan into the White House in 1980, always contained a conservative majority, but before 1964, it was more tolerant of diverse political ideologies within its ranks. Despite straddling both eras, Rockefeller hoped to remain a leader within the Republican Party. While his traditional constituency looked elsewhere for leadership, Rockefeller's efforts to remain a national

²⁸ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010); Dan Baum, *Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996); Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), and Vesla Weaver, "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy," *Studies in American Political Development* 21:2 (Fall 2007): 230-265.

²⁹ Kenneth D. Durr, *Behind the Backlash: White Working-Class Politics in Baltimore, 1940-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against Liberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

leader in a rightward-moving party illuminate the dilemmas of moderate Republicanism in a time of social turmoil.

Chapter One

Putting Republicans on Notice: The 1958 Campaign for the New York Republican Gubernatorial Nomination

In the spring of 1958, the press began to speculate whether Nelson Rockefeller would run for governor of New York. Rockefeller was a newcomer to electoral politics. Although a Republican, he first began working in government as a member of the Roosevelt Administration in the summer of 1940. Since that time, he had served as a special assistant to presidents Truman and Eisenhower. His time in Washington D.C. reinforced his interest in public life, but bureaucratic positions failed to provide the autonomy and decision-making power he sought. In early March, *Washington Post* columnist Marquis Childs explained that while Rockefeller worked for the Eisenhower Administration he had “made a discovery that profoundly impressed him: If you want to influence the course of government in the direction in which you believe it should go, then you cannot come in and out as an amateur, however earnest and well-intentioned you may be. You have to earn your way by election to office in order to exert influence

and power.”¹ Rockefeller resigned from his position in the Eisenhower Administration on December 31, 1955, and began exploring electoral politics. He had no interest in becoming a legislator; instead, he set his sights on the governorship of New York, a prominent position that could give him a platform for influencing the nation and launching a run for the presidency.

The Rockefeller name had loomed large in American society for decades, but the family eschewed public life, particularly the kind of spotlight demanded by a run for political office. Rockefellers preferred influence obtained through business and philanthropy. By the 1950s, John D. Rockefeller Jr. and his five sons had their offices on the 56th floor of the RCA building in Rockefeller Center, managing an empire that spanned business, banking, philanthropy, and culture. *Fortune* magazine estimated Nelson Rockefeller’s individual wealth at \$100,000,000. The Rockefeller family had long been a key financial supporter of the Republican Party. Now, Nelson Rockefeller was committed to investing his great wealth and desire to influence national politics to go from contributor to candidate.

To achieve his goal, Rockefeller needed to convince Republican Party professionals and delegates in New York that he was a viable and deserving candidate. The task would be difficult, first because of his inexperience in electoral politics, and second because, even then, his politics were on the outer edge of mainstream Republican thought. Rockefeller had developed a reputation for advocating the use of government to meet the changing needs of Americans, whom he believed required a more powerful state working for them—ideas that, while more common within the Republican Party of the

¹ Marquis Childs, “Why Rockefeller May Seek Office,” *Washington Post*, March 3, 1958, A12.

1950s than that of today, were still out of step with most GOP voters. Various referred to as an Eisenhower Republican, a Modern Republican, a Moderate Republican, a Liberal Republican, and a New Deal Republican, Rockefeller was a polarizing figure in a party whose members were striving to determine its mission and identity in the final years of the 1950s. While some Republicans considered him an outsider, Rockefeller believed that there was a place for him within the party and he could gain acceptance despite being a moderate. Undeterred, Rockefeller set out to win the Republican gubernatorial nomination. Tracing Rockefeller's campaign for the gubernatorial nomination reveals Rockefeller's politics, but it also provides insight into a state Republican Party that had a liberal reputation nationally, but that was in fact split; conservatives and moderates were sharply divided on how to express Republican principles and ideals in a way that appealed to voters who had accepted New Deal liberalism.

Ultimately, Rockefeller's bid was aided by the fact that New York's Republican Party lacked a star candidate with statewide appeal in a state where Democrats outnumbered Republicans. In 1958, party leaders decided to wager on Rockefeller, although his politics were left of mainstream Republicanism, because they thought they had little chance of defeating Democratic incumbent W. Averell Harriman otherwise. Their hope was that Rockefeller could build the cross-party coalition necessary to pose a serious threat in a state where they were in the minority. It was fortuitous for Rockefeller, who was happy to invest his energy and substantial resources toward gaining the nomination. When Rockefeller set out on the campaign trail the nation was experiencing its worst recession since the Great Depression and many Americans still associated the Republican Party with lean years. Rockefeller proved himself to be an attractive

candidate in a period when the nation was experiencing its worst recession since the Great Depression and many Americans still associated the Republican Party with lean years. He attracted voters with his charisma, ties to a family known for its business acumen, and pledges to bolster the economy and subsequently improve the state's ability to deliver services to its residents.

This chapter argues that while the Republican Party in this era was a diverse organization that encompassed a variety of political ideologies, Rockefeller's key challenge was—and would remain—to prove he was not too far left of the party's mainstream. Rockefeller's success in 1958 was largely due to a pragmatic willingness among party leaders to overlook their doubts for a chance at victory. But the perception that embracing Rockefeller was somehow a rejection of Republican principles would be a challenge that he would battle his entire political career. Despite misgivings within his own party, Rockefeller was confident that his politics and his faith in an activist government were in line with the needs and desires of the majority of New Yorkers. Even as he pursued the GOP nomination, he sought ways to reach out to voters of all political orientations, including those who leaned Democratic. Rockefeller's interest in understanding and appealing to New Yorkers, urban and rural, black and white, Republican and Democrat, and likewise proving that he understood the state's political terrain provides an opportunity to examine social as well as political trends in New York of the 1950s.

National First, Local Second

Rockefeller first began working in a Republican Administration in January 1955, but soon learned that his progressive political views put him at odds with the conservative

wing of his party. During Eisenhower's first term in office, Rockefeller served as a Special Assistant to the President for Foreign Affairs. Eisenhower requested that Rockefeller generate progressive strategies to revitalize the United States' political, economic, and cultural relations abroad, but Rockefeller had no power of his own—although he hired a personal staff of twenty-seven and sat in on meetings of the Cabinet and the National Security Council, among other high level groups. In a speech Eisenhower gave on April 16, 1953, he stated that the United States needed to wage “total war, not upon any human enemy, but upon the brute forces of poverty and need.” Rockefeller and Eisenhower were in agreement that foreign aid could help ward off the spread of Communism, but their approach to foreign policy and Cold War politics upset the more conservative Old Guard Republicans, such as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and Undersecretary Herbert Hoover Jr., who both preferred protective tariffs instead of free trade, balanced budgets, and legalism. While he was committed to Eisenhower's stated mission to “serv[e] the needs, rather than the fears of the world,” Rockefeller made little progress against Dulles and Hoover.² Regardless, Rockefeller remained a staunch advocate of increasing aid to underdeveloped nations in the hope of insulating them from the influence of the Soviet Union. Dulles and Hoover resented Rockefeller's proposals and outside interference that went against their traditional approach to foreign policy. Rockefeller also faced opposition from Treasury Secretary George M. Humphrey in response to the cost of his proposals. While Rockefeller did find some success during his time as special assistant, he resigned after a year, frustrated by an appointment with little authority. He also confirmed his reputation, for irritating

² Gervasi, *Real Rockefeller*, 170-172.

colleagues with his enthusiasm and disregard for formal channels of power. Stepping down, however, gave Rockefeller the opportunity to sponsor his own study of America and its policies—the type of work he had wanted to see done in the Eisenhower Administration.

Upon returning to New York, Rockefeller decided to take the helm of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, a philanthropic organization that he and his brothers had founded in 1940. He would use its resources to assemble a group of experts from various backgrounds to evaluate the state of the nation domestically and internationally. The endeavor, which cost \$500,000, produced six reports outlining the major problems and opportunities that the nation would face in the next ten to fifteen years. Overseen by Henry Kissinger, then a professor at Harvard University, the project brought together numerous leading experts in a wide range of fields. Rockefeller enlisted the participation of over a hundred people, including figures such as Adolf A. Berle, Jr., Columbia University law professor and former member of President Roosevelt's administration; Margaret Hickey, *Ladies' Home Journal's* public affairs editor; Henry R. Luce, editor-in-chief of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines; Charles H. Percy, President of Bell and Howell Company; and Dean Rusk, president of the Rockefeller Foundation and former State Department official.³ The study had the lofty objective of clarifying the nation's purpose and goals so that it could meet the challenges it would face in the near future. The Special Studies Panel's intention was to devise a plan so the nation could meet what it identified as the ultimate challenge, Communism. Its first report on military defense spending, released in early 1958, attracted much more attention than a typical non-

³ Dean Rusk would soon go on to become the Secretary of State to John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson from 1961 to 1969.

governmental think-tank report. The reports were ultimately published in one volume entitled, *Prospect for America: The Rockefeller Panel Reports*, in 1961. While the reports were grounded in an international focus on Communism, the participants argued that to seek peace and justice throughout the world it was necessary to “strengthen the conditions of freedom at home.”⁴ Thus the report was intended to embrace diversity and encourage a respect for the rights of others. “Within America, prosperous and technically at peace, the problems multiply: the slow progress in solving racial tension, the continuing question of economic growth and stability, the complex agricultural problem, the deterioration of our cities, the financial difficulties of transportation, the need for more schools, more teachers, and improved quality in education.”⁵

Prospect for America provides a blueprint for understanding Rockefeller’s worldview and the ideas that influenced his understanding of the proper role of government in Americans’ lives in the late 1950s. In the field of domestic policies, the report stated that the nation needed a 5 percent rate of economic growth and proposed the government achieve this goal by encouraging initiative and enterprise; reforming the tax system to reinforce growth; reducing tariffs; eliminating restrictive practices on labor and management; and providing urban redevelopment for schools, roads, hospitals, and water supply systems.⁶ It encouraged maximizing personal development by curbing discrimination against racial minorities, women, the poor, and older workers so the nation could benefit from their under-utilized resources. There was a call for greater investment

⁴ Rockefeller Brothers Fund, *Prospect for America: The Rockefeller Panel Reports* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), xxi.

⁵ Rockefeller Brothers Fund, *Prospect for America*, xxiii-xxiv.

⁶ Rockefeller Brothers Fund, *Prospect for America*, 328-332.

in education at all levels so that individuals could reach their highest potential.⁷ Finally, the reports' writers espoused great faith in democracy and its ability to enable the world's citizens to realize the full extent of their "intelligence, talent, and vitality."⁸ These themes remained a constant in Rockefeller's rhetoric when he entered politics and guided many of his proposals for New York and the nation.

Major newspapers reported the findings of the Rockefeller Panel Reports, and Rockefeller increased the exposure by discussing the findings on television shows such as *Meet the Press* and *Today*.

Mike Wallace: Mr. Rockefeller, you are a Republican. You may be running for Governor in New York State this year. Wouldn't you say that the Rockefeller Reports—particularly the one on our domestic economy and foreign policy—are extremely 'liberal' from the Republican point of view?

Nelson Rockefeller: In what sense?

Mike Wallace: Well, you advocate more and more government economic action—both at home and abroad in foreign aid programs. Now, isn't this at sharp variance with the traditions of the Republican Party?

Nelson Rockefeller: The way you put it, the answer would be yes. But as we see it and as we put it, I would say the answer is no.⁹

In part, the panel garnered attention because of the distinguished contributors involved. The press also made much of Rockefeller's differences with the Eisenhower Administration. The divide was clearest, for example, when one report reinforced fears of a "missile gap" and inspired front-page headlines that the Soviet Union would lead the arms race in less than two years if the administration did not increase defense spending.

⁷ Rockefeller Brothers Fund, *Prospect for America*, 380-385.

⁸ Rockefeller Brothers Fund, *Prospect for America*, 465.

⁹ Mike Wallace is referring to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund reports that Nelson oversaw, he supervised the gathering of numerous experts on economic and foreign policy to produce an extensive study of America as it approached its bicentennial. J.P. McFadden, "The Royal Road to Albany: When a Rockefeller Needs a Friend," *National Review*, August 2, 1958, 107.

In the meantime, another report called for government intervention to counteract the effects of the depression, which could be interpreted as a criticism of Eisenhower's economic policies. The media's attention to these differences raised the profile of the reports more than Rockefeller could have hoped.¹⁰

Rockefeller may have been something of an unknown in local New York politics, but the Rockefeller Panel Reports introduced him to his home state and the nation as a man interested in public policy and governance. While Rockefeller was preparing for his campaign for the Republican nomination, the Rockefeller Panel released its first reports. By the time newspapers began reporting Rockefeller's aspiration to become governor in March, the first report on international security and the military had become public two months before. The second report on economic and social issues in America followed on April 21, 1958. Rockefeller stepped down as chairman of the project in May to focus his attention on his run for office. The release of the reports remained in the public sphere the summer of 1958, with two reports coming out in June of 1958, just weeks before Rockefeller officially announced his entrance into the race for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. While Rockefeller was preparing to run for New York's highest office, national interests were not far from his mind.

A Rockefeller on the Campaign Trail

The road that led to Rockefeller announcing his campaign was a long one. He took numerous steps, largely outside public view, that illustrate the contortions necessary for him, a relatively unknown figure in state politics, to earn the New York State

¹⁰ While the press focused on the calls for increased defense spending, President Eisenhower was more interested in the reports' call for a reorganization of the Pentagon and an increase in cooperation between the branches of the armed forces.

Republican Party gubernatorial nomination. While Rockefeller's entrance into electoral politics would include a great number of public appearances to raise his profile in the state, the most important aspect in New York were the private meetings with delegates and party leaders. The New York Republican Party chose its nominee, not by primary, but through a competition to win the support of party delegates who would choose the nominee at the state convention. For a chance at winning, Rockefeller would need a lot of introductions.

In 1930, soon after graduating cum laude with a degree in economics from Dartmouth College, Rockefeller had married Mary Todhunter Clark, and upon return from a nine-month trip around the world with his bride, he began working for his father, Junior, who ran numerous family ventures from his offices in the Standard Oil Building at 26 Broadway in Manhattan.¹¹ Rockefeller went on to hold appointed positions in state government, first as a member of the Westchester County Board of Health from 1933 to 1953 and as chairman of the Temporary State Commission on the Convention in 1957. The latter position was more high profile and overtly political—Rockefeller headed a bipartisan effort to simplify the state convention—which involved presiding over hearings across the state. His chairmanship generated some press in the spring of 1957, but still Rockefeller remained relatively unknown in state affairs; moreover, his work in Washington gave some the impression that he was out of step with the Republican Party.

A year before Rockefeller entered the gubernatorial race he presided over the hearings for New York's state convention with the approval of Harriman. Every twenty

¹¹ Although the trip was a gift from his parents, his father was not pleased when Nelson called upon Standard Oil officials to serve as travel agents, scheduling secretaries, and lackeys—the bills for such extravagance were forwarded to the family office in New York. Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 82-85.

years, as mandated by state law, New York voters were given the opportunity to vote on whether the state should hold a convention to revise the state constitution. To prepare for a possible convention, the state legislature created a temporary commission. First recommending that Rockefeller hold this position was L. Judson Morhouse, a former state assemblyman and the New York State Republican party chairman, who had become party chairman in 1954, when he was selected by outgoing Governor Thomas E. Dewey.¹² Morhouse had not been Dewey's first choice for chairman, but after his initial appointee stepped down Dewey chose Morhouse, who was unaligned with various factions within the state party.¹³ His influence in the party was immediately diminished, however, because the Republican ticket lost that year, even though Morhouse had played no role in organizing it.

Morhouse first met Rockefeller after the 1956 presidential election. As state chair, Morhouse invited Rockefeller and several other wealthy Republicans to a meeting to discuss paying off the campaign debt. The two ended up having a half-hour conversation after the meeting where Morhouse learned of Rockefeller's interest in entering politics and began to consider Rockefeller's potential as a political candidate. The following summer, Morhouse tested Rockefeller's potential by recommending his appointment to the special commission to revise the state constitution (which, ultimately, did not lead to a convention).¹⁴ Morhouse also persuaded Rockefeller to give a speech at a state women's Republican club meeting. The topic, a discussion of the Eisenhower

¹² "Leader of the Young Guard G.O.P.: Lyman Judson Morhouse," *New York Times*, August 25, 1958, 14.

¹³ Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 668-669.

¹⁴ The bipartisan effort to explore the need for revision to the state constitution was most significant because it allowed the opportunity for reapportionment of the state's voting districts. The possibility of a convention was a contentious issue, which Democrats supported because they hoped to regain power they lost to Republicans during the 1937 convention. Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 674.

Administrations' budgetary problems, would have posed a challenge for an experienced speaker, but Rockefeller, a novice at public speeches, struggled on the humid summer day.¹⁵ Morhouse's hopes began to deflate as what he later described as the "terrible" speech began with an unfortunate and jarring start due to technical difficulties that amplified Rockefeller's first words to a deafening volume. The feedback startled Rockefeller so much he dropped his microphone and asked loudly, "Was that me?"¹⁶ Unfortunately, the dropped microphone was the highlight of the speech, which otherwise lacked any inflection. Morhouse found some relief, however, when Rockefeller spoke afterward to individual audience members and his gregarious, affable side came through. Many onlookers described Rockefeller as a man who clearly loved meeting new people and engaging them in conversation. There might be hope yet.

Traditionally, a state party chair remains neutral in a campaign while helping to organize the party's ticket. However, in the months before the general election, Morhouse made it clear that he was in Rockefeller's corner. A number of Morhouse's actions drew complaints from another Republican gubernatorial candidate, Leonard W. Hall, a former U.S. Congressman from Long Island who had also served as the Republican National Chairman in the mid-1950s. Hall had not yet announced his campaign, but he had begun touring the state criticizing Harriman's record and felt that Morhouse had unfairly nominated his own candidate long before the convention. There were also two other unannounced candidates: U.S. Attorney Paul W. Williams and State Senate Majority Leader Walter J. Mahoney from Buffalo. Both were working behind the scenes in the

¹⁵ Gervasi, *Real Rockefeller*, 208.

¹⁶ Stewart Alsop, *Nixon & Rockefeller: A Double Portrait* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1960), 107.

hopes of amassing delegate votes without canvassing the state like Hall. Morhouse's strategy was to release statewide sampling poll results from the fall of 1957 that revealed it was a bad year for Republicans. Moreover, the polls revealed that although there was no Republican front-runner for governor, Rockefeller was the best-known potential candidate. Morhouse promptly took this information to local leaders trying to convince all concerned that a Rockefeller-led ticket was the party's best option. Morhouse defended his actions saying that he hoped only to help the party choose the candidate with the best chance of beating Harriman, whoever that person may be. "By engineering the selection of Nelson A. Rockefeller as this year's candidate, in the face of strong early opposition from powerful groups within the party," the *New York Times* reported in August 1958, "[Morhouse] demonstrated his graduation from the amateur to the professional class in politics."¹⁷ Morhouse continued circulating polls until the press began to report his activities in the spring. Angered by Morhouse's activities, Hall complained that the polls naming Rockefeller the front-runner were fabricated.¹⁸

Rockefeller did not leave all the work to Morhouse. He cultivated relationships with influential state Republicans who were amenable to his political ambitions. Perhaps his most significant connection occurred when he and State Assemblyman Malcolm Wilson of Yonkers were both scheduled to speak at a \$100-a-plate Westchester County Republican Dinner. Herb Gerlach, Westchester County's GOP chairman, invited Wilson to meet with him and Rockefeller in his office in White Plains a few days later. At 43, Wilson, was a veteran from Westchester with nearly twenty years in the state assembly.

¹⁷ "Leader of the Young Guard G.O.P.: Lyman Judson Morhouse," *New York Times*, August 25, 1958, 14.

¹⁸ Suspicions rose because Morhouse remained secretive about the origins of the polls, as a result, little was known about the methods used to collect the data, the size of the sample, and subsequently their bias.

He first won election in 1938, at age 24, and built a reputation as a conservative with many close ties to upstate Republicans. He was known as a “conservative’s conservative,” who was a stickler for rules in the legislature and a successful record of getting bills passed.¹⁹ Rockefeller and Wilson had met casually a few times, but this encounter would link their political fortunes.

In Gerlach’s office, Wilson learned of Rockefeller’s aspirations to get the Republican nomination. First, Gerlach made sure that Wilson was not himself interested in running for Governor. Wilson assured him that he was not, and upon hearing that Rockefeller was not too far left of his own politics, expressed his hope that the political newcomer would get support from Westchester Republicans. Wilson also said that he knew how Rockefeller could be nominated. A few months later, in April, Rockefeller met with Wilson alone and asked him what he thought was the best way to win the gubernatorial nomination. Wilson explained that Rockefeller needed the support of upstate conservatives; while Rockefeller could win the nomination without them, he would not stand a chance in the general election without their active support.²⁰ The plan then would be to introduce Rockefeller to as many local Republicans and delegates in upstate New York as possible rather than try to get the endorsements of county chairmen first. He would need to win over upstate delegates one by one. Wilson explained that the other gubernatorial candidates had been focusing their energies on party leadership. He

¹⁹ Kramer and Roberts, *Investigative Biography of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 198.

²⁰ Despite Wilson’s assurance, it was particularly important for anyone who wanted the nomination to focus on Upstate support. The delegates for each county were determined by the previous gubernatorial vote. The Republican vote in the counties in New York City fell sharply in 1954 in comparison to 1950, which gave upstate counties the advantage proportionately. During the 1958 campaign there would be 799 upstate delegates, including Westchester and Long Island, versus 371 in the city. In 1954 the split was 761 to 513. The Republican nominee would need 586 delegates to win the nomination. James Desmond, “GOP Contenders Rate Upstate as Crucial to Governor Quest,” *Sunday News*, June 29, 1958.

also told Rockefeller that he should downplay his wealth and prove his Republican credentials by saying he was simply hoping to introduce himself to local Republicans. Rockefeller asked if Wilson might consider showing him around the state.

Malcolm Wilson and Nelson Rockefeller touring upstate New York in the former's Buick was an unlikely pairing. Wilson recalled later telling Rockefeller that he would not be able to work with him unless he had a better understanding of Rockefeller's ideological background. "I observed that, in terms of labels," recalled Wilson,

I would be called a conservative and he would be called a liberal and that I couldn't in good conscience undertake to sponsor him unless I knew more about his views on things. As our discussion proceeded, it became very evident to me that he was then what he always remained—namely an economic conservative and a human rights liberal, a combination for which the press had no label.²¹

In another interview Wilson explained it this way: "He convinced me that he wasn't the flaming liberal people had said."²²

An element of timing may have encouraged the relationship between Wilson and Rockefeller. When Wilson sat down with Rockefeller, he was in a difficult position in terms of his political career. It was true that Wilson had no plans to run for governor in 1958, but he aspired to run in the future. His plan had always been to become majority leader or speaker and eventually use that as a platform for launching a run for governor. The previous year Wilson had thought he was about to get his chance to become majority leader when all but three Republicans in the Assembly signed a petition supporting him for the job. Instead, Speaker Oswald Heck appointed Joseph Carlino of Nassau County,

²¹ Hugh Morrow Interview of Malcolm Wilson, October 10, 1979, Rockefeller Center, NAR, folder 24, box 2, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

²² Kramer and Roberts, *Investigative Biography of Nelson Rockefeller*, 198

six years Wilson's junior. Frustrated by the lost opportunity Wilson was more open to aiding Rockefeller, as "he had nothing to lose."²³

With their purposefully low-key plan in place, Wilson and Rockefeller set out on an unpublicized tour of upstate New York to introduce the political hopeful to more traditionally conservative Republican voters and delegates. Wilson remembered that time fondly, recalling, "No baggage carriers, no sycophants, no PR men, nothing but us. And I paid for it personally. Not a farthing of Nelson Rockefeller's was used. When I had accumulated a debt I'd forward a statement to Herb Gerlach and I'd be reimbursed."²⁴ The tour also provided an opportunity for Rockefeller to put his charm to work and give many Republicans who only knew of his family a chance to meet the millionaire. The visits were generally successful and when Rockefeller would announce his entrance into the race, he had ninety-four delegates backing him from Westchester and Putnam counties—as well as the Canadian border counties of St. Lawrence and Franklin.²⁵ Rockefeller reinforced his focus on upstate New York throughout his campaign for the Republican nomination.

While Rockefeller was meeting and greeting, Morhouse continued to encourage Republican leaders to support Rockefeller. On June 5, 1958, he invited several Republican leaders who attended a party dinner to a private meeting the following day. He went beyond his usual tactics and told the twelve leaders that he would step down as state chair if they did not choose Rockefeller.²⁶ Morhouse's support was significant—and brazen—but there were additional factors to sway the Republicans who were reluctant to

²³ Kramer and Roberts, *Investigative Biography of Nelson Rockefeller*, 198.

²⁴ Kramer and Roberts, *Investigative Biography of Nelson Rockefeller*, 198.

²⁵ James Desmond, "Nelson Rockefeller Accepts 'Challenge' to Run for Gov.," *Daily News*, July 1, 1958.

²⁶ Gervasi, *Real Rockefeller*, 212.

accept Rockefeller. “Old-line party bigwigs,” according to biographer Frank Gervasi, “took the attitude that it might be best to allow Rockefeller to ‘run for the exercise,’ go down to defeat, and clear the way for a ‘more regular Republican’ four years later.”²⁷

Party leaders also knew that a Rockefeller campaign would be well-funded and that held great appeal to a party that had been low on cash for years. State party professionals were becoming accustomed to the idea of a Rockefeller nomination; what seemed laughable to party leaders four years before when they were searching for a candidate to take Dewey’s place now seemed fathomable. Few thought that he had a chance against Harriman, but before that challenge, Rockefeller needed to take on the “more regular Republicans” who also wanted the nomination in 1958.

New York as Rockefeller Found It

In the fall of 1957, before Morhouse began his campaigning and before Rockefeller committed himself to entering electoral politics, Rockefeller commissioned a private detailed survey of New York State to decide if he should run. From the outset, Rockefeller was concerned with gauging the needs and desires of New York voters regardless of party affiliation; he knew that to defeat Harriman, he had to create the broadest voting base possible, similar to that of Harriman’s Republican predecessor as governor, Dewey. The survey’s purpose was not only to aid Rockefeller in deciding whether he should run but also to help him shape his campaign if he did. The resulting 119-page report contained a wealth of data about New York’s political terrain in the late 1950s and the worldview of the New Yorkers surveyed.

²⁷ Gervasi, *Real Rockefeller*, 214.

To conduct the study, Rockefeller turned to the well-known political analyst and sometime Columbia University lecturer Samuel Lubell. Rockefeller had previously retained Lubell as a writer on his personal thirty-one person staff that he assembled—and paid with his own money—when he served as Chairman of the International Development Advisory Board under Truman in 1950.²⁸ Lubell approached Rockefeller's assistant Frank Jamieson in 1956 about a study of New York State, he proposed a survey that went beyond ascertaining public opinion on candidates and issues to understand “what lies behind those opinions and how they were interwoven with more enduring relationships such as partisan feeling, changes in social and economic standing, ethnic background, [and] migration to new areas of residence.”²⁹ Rockefeller accepted this proposal and commissioned Lubell, at a cost of \$15,000, to examine political trends.³⁰ Lubell and his staff conducted in-person interviews in fifty-six election districts: seven upstate cities, four farm counties, fifteen suburban communities in Nassau and Westchester counties, and twenty-seven election districts in the five New York City boroughs.³¹ While much of the report focused on public attitudes toward Harriman and the prospects for a Republican candidate, the report also provided detailed findings on a diverse state rapidly undergoing social and economic change, offering some sobering conclusions for Rockefeller.

²⁸ Truman appointed Rockefeller Chairman of the International Development Advisory Board in 1950. The Board was intended to offer advice for the implementation of Truman's Point Four foreign policy initiative to provide economic aid to developing nations as a means to prevent the spread of communism. Point Four had sparked controversy in Washington among Democrats and Republicans because of the cost and as a result its budget was reduced. When Truman first proposed Point Four, Robert Taft, for example, criticized the program as a “global WPA” and an “international boondoggle.” Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 445-449, 452-454.

²⁹ Samuel Lubell to Frank Jamieson, August 8, 1956, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

³⁰ Lubell completed similar public opinion studies the previous year in Michigan and California for a series in the *Saturday Evening Post*.

³¹ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

At the time, the nation was in the middle of its third and worst economic downturn in the postwar period. Signs of a recession had become apparent in the spring of 1957 and by November, it was deemed a serious downturn.³² In response to the downtrend, Eisenhower's Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Raymond Saulnier recommended easier credit, but in August, the Federal Reserve Board tightened it. Congressional Democrats proposed increasing spending to stimulate the economy but Eisenhower rejected many of the proposals or approved them reluctantly. Only in late 1957, when Lubell was completing his survey, did Eisenhower take his first action related to the recession, he released funds for housing that had been approved by Congress as part of an omnibus housing bill.³³ In January 1958, Eisenhower stated that he had no plans to ask Congress for further action. Eisenhower's response to the recession was customary for economically conservative Republicans, who preferred to let the economy go through fluctuations with as little interference as possible. The president and William McChesney Martin, Jr., Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, emphasized the dangers of inflation and their concern for balancing the budget rather than easing Americans' hardships caused by the recession.³⁴ Particularly during an economic downturn, this conservative approach to economic policy was not popular among many

³² Economist Michael French notes that between 1948 and 1973 the national income averaged a 3.7 percent per annum increase. While the recession of 1957-1958 was the worst in the postwar period, similar to the other recessions in this period (1948-1949, 1953-1954, 1960-1961, and 1970) when the nation's growth rate decreased, but national output and income remained steady. Michael French, *US Economic History Since 1945* (NY: Manchester University Press, 1997), 39.

³³ On December 23, 1957, Eisenhower "unfroze" \$177,000,000 in housing funds that Congress had approved in an omnibus housing bill that he had criticized because it was more money than he had requested. The money went to the Federal National Mortgage Association for increased mortgage support for military housing, buying mortgages of builder co-ops, and urban renewal slum clearance. "President Frees Fund for Housing to Spur Economy," *New York Times*, December 24, 1957, 1.

³⁴ Richard W. Gable, "The Politics and Economics of the 1957-1958 Recession," *The Western Political Quarterly*, 12:2 (June 1959): 557-559.

voters who expected the government to intervene; this strategy also posed particular dangers for the Republican Party, which was still associated with the Great Depression.

The Lubell survey illustrated how Eisenhower's response to the downturn could tap into longstanding negative perceptions of the Republican Party. He found that New Yorkers were more concerned about national, rather than local issues, and the national issue that most concerned respondents was the economy. The main grievances of one-time Eisenhower supporters, who said they regretted voting for the president, were economic in nature including unemployment, increased prices, and failure to reduce taxes. Lubell reported that "where unemployment has developed it has been followed by a relatively quick turn toward the Democrats." A Nassau County truck driver who had voted for Eisenhower twice explained, "The Republicans are cutting down too much. All they think of is holding onto money. We should spend money."³⁵ Conversely, a 49-year-old mechanic from the same county associated the Democratic Party with providing jobs; "The Democrats always saw we had work. I'm going down to the county building to see if [the Republicans will] give me a job. If they don't I'm turning Democratic."³⁶ There was a sense that Republicans were not doing enough to help residents withstand the recession. Lubell explained how this could hurt Rockefeller's chances: "What seems clear is that any downturn in the economy hurts the Republicans as a party and strengthens Harriman's chances. However, it does not follow that an economic upturn between now and November 1958 would weaken Harriman."³⁷ In fact, if the economy did improve by the November election, Lubell said, voters would then likely vote for

³⁵ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

³⁶ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4

³⁷ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

incumbents. Maintaining a conservative approach to the economy would make the 1958 mid-term elections particularly difficult on Republican candidates.

The recession aside, Lubell's report also took into account economic and racial changes in New York since the end of World War II. New York, perhaps more than any other state, excluding California, benefited from postwar growth and affluence. In the 1950s, it was the most populous state in the nation—a position it would maintain until 1964, when California overtook it—with an unsurpassed influence over national politics. To outsiders, the boroughs of New York City dominated New York's reputation, but more than half of the state's land was devoted to farming in a state divided into what was commonly known as "upstate" and "downstate." Much of the state was rural, and a booming suburban population radiated from New York City into Long Island and Westchester County. The economy still flourished due to defense industries and innovative industrial firms such as IBM and Eastman Kodak, which helped the state provide the highest incomes in the nation. The lean years of the Great Depression were far from the reality of the 1950s, but New Yorkers began to realize that their state was not impervious to a national recession, job loss due to companies relocating to southern states, or conflict brought on by demographic change as the decade ended.

One of the most noticeable changes in the 1950s was the exodus of many white urban dwellers who left New York's biggest cities throughout the decade in favor of newly accessible suburbs. Builders such as William J. Levitt made this possible in Long Island, for example, when he employed non-union labor to transform onion and potato fields into communities of racially segregated low-cost housing beginning in 1947. Levittown, which ultimately consisted of 17,447 modest modular homes, provided

affordable houses with the aid of Federal Housing Administration-insured mortgages that made suburbia available for as little as a \$100 down-payment. This enabled whites to become first-time homeowners while denying nonwhites the same opportunity in the name of protecting property values.³⁸ Residents of new suburbs began to complain about the lack of services and poor roads in their towns and quickly came to resent what they felt was the misuse of their state tax dollars on the cities they had left behind. The result was a protracted struggle led by suburbanites to use zoning laws and the strengthening of county governments to divert tax dollars and resources to burgeoning suburbs.

Although New York's cities experienced rapid change due to suburbanization in the 1950s, they had been in transition for an extended period. The racial makeup of New York City and other urban areas such as Buffalo and Syracuse had undergone significant transformations due to the Great Migration that resulted in an influx of African Americans. While the African American community had doubled, for example, to 413,000 or 3.3 percent of the state population between 1920 and 1930, the vast majority lived in Harlem due to the allure of the nation's largest black community and housing segregation that gave them few other options. Conflict was never far away, as blacks significantly increased their populations in boroughs such as the Bronx and Brooklyn. By the 1950s, however, the most striking demographic change in New York's communities was the growth of the Puerto Rican population, which poured into Brooklyn, Queens, and the Westchester suburb of Mt. Vernon. Cities rapidly changed as whites, leaving behind blacks and Puerto Ricans, fled for the suburbs. Municipal administrators hoped to slow

³⁸ Kenneth T. Jackson found that by 1960 not one of Levittown's 82,000 residents were African American. Milton Klein, ed., *The Empire State: A History of New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 634.

this transformation—often to the detriment of minorities and the impoverished—by attempting to lure suburbanites back to cities and away from their whitewashed enclaves with urban renewal and highway projects.³⁹

In his report, Lubell found that the most often-cited problem in New York City related to the migration of Puerto Ricans. Whites throughout the boroughs complained, without prompting, about this issue more than any other. Estimates in the Lubell study revealed that approximately 34,000 Puerto Ricans entered New York City every year. While Manhattan had the largest concentration of Puerto Ricans with a community that had expanded from 138,000 in 1950 to 240,000 by the end of 1956, other boroughs' populations doubled in the same period. For example, as the community of 61,924 Puerto Ricans in the Bronx in 1950 expanded to 130,000, similar increases took place in Brooklyn from 40,299 in 1950 to 105,000 at the culmination of 1956. Such vast increases were bound to intensify racial tensions.⁴⁰ Many whites from New York expressed their dismay over the transformation of their neighborhoods by attributing problems caused by overcrowding and housing discrimination to characteristics fundamental to the migrants. One woman declared: "It's terrible the way the Puerto Ricans are moving in. We have them all around us. They live like cattle so many in a room."⁴¹ Lubell, who had recently conducted surveys in New Jersey, noted similar hostility there as well. For example, a man in Hoboken stated, "They're worse than Negroes... They wreck the city, wherever

³⁹ Klein, *The Empire State*.

⁴⁰ The number of Blacks in the Bronx and Brooklyn jumped from 312,000 to 545,000 in the same period.

⁴¹ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

they move.”⁴² Those whites surveyed wanted something to be done to stop the influx of Puerto Ricans.

This issue became especially fraught with discord when it came to the construction and maintenance of low-cost public housing in cities heavily populated by blacks and Puerto Ricans. The more recent influx of Puerto Ricans made them an easy target and respondents to Lubell’s survey exhibited this on numerous occasions. When whites discussed the issue of building low-cost public housing, their first complaint was an opposition to spending, but second was an antagonism toward Puerto Ricans. One respondent, a mechanic, and former military serviceman from Albany explained, “When I came out of the service I thought low cost housing was a good thing. There were lots of fellows who couldn’t afford to buy a home and who needed a place to live. But we don’t need that now.”⁴³ This mechanic’s sentiment reflected an important trend. As whites’ economic standing improved, their support for low-income public housing declined, especially when they felt it only helped people unlike themselves. The report noted that “Both in New York City and in Westchester criticisms were also voiced of ‘spending the state’s money to keep Puerto Ricans on relief’ or ‘too much money is going into these housing projects for Puerto Ricans.’” Some whites surveyed in New York City said they preferred to spend more on housing rather than take advantage of government housing because it was “bi-racial in administration.”⁴⁴ Lubell spoke to a man who said he would have liked to move because of the Puerto Ricans who had come into his neighborhood, but he could not find another apartment less than \$90 a month. He went on to say, “When

⁴² Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

⁴³ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

⁴⁴ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

I asked if he had tried a housing project, he replied, ‘They’re too much like a prison. Besides they mix the races.’”⁴⁵

People surveyed in several election districts in Brooklyn, Queens, and Mt. Vernon attributed the growing problem of juvenile delinquency to Puerto Ricans as well. While concerns about rising prices, taxes, and inadequate roads out-ranked juvenile delinquency, Puerto Ricans, and low-income housing, issues most associated with race continued to evoke the angriest responses as people’s fear of neighborhood change and increased competition for limited resources rose. The racial tension Lubell uncovered reveals that many white New Yorkers who observed their communities change resented the newcomers and government spending that they felt was unfairly given to blacks and Puerto Ricans, whom they associated with rising crime, overcrowding, and neighborhood deterioration. The animosity that many whites felt toward poor racial minorities persisted, although in the background, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Eventually, this latent anger fueled white protests to federal programs related to civil rights in the late 1960s, particularly in the fields of housing and school integration, which threatened the racial dynamic of neighborhoods. This was not a significant issue for racially liberal politicians like Rockefeller who ran on the state and national level in the late 1950s, but within ten years it threatened the New Deal consensus that such politicians relied on to win office.

Observing neighborhood change and the subsequent anger it caused led Lubell to consider the broader political implications. A white police officer from Sunset Park, Brooklyn, for example, blamed liberals for these changes, exclaiming, “Those so-called liberals who are always worrying about Negroes and Spics. Why don’t they think of

⁴⁵ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

white people? I'll work with Negroes but I won't live in the same house with them."⁴⁶

While Lubell was unsure how Rockefeller could take advantage of this issue politically because people did not blame one party or political figure, he explained that the feelings attached to it were "so intense and bitter" that "figuratively one might describe the problem as a load of explosives which currently lies buried deep in frustration but which if it were ever touched off could change the whole political landscape in the city."⁴⁷ Most concern centered on housing and the integration of communities, but there was also tension over the possibility that new migrants would begin to take jobs from whites.

Local and national issues sometimes converged when respondents expressed their opinions on race relations in America and the changing racial makeup of their communities. Three-fourths of non-Negroes surveyed by Lubell supported Eisenhower's decision to send National Guard troops to desegregate Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.⁴⁸ For some, however, anger over the growing minority population in the city made them sympathetic to white southerners' attempts to maintain the status quo in their communities. Lubell found that nearly every person he approached in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, for example—a community that was experiencing a huge influx of Puerto Rican migrants—said that Eisenhower moved too quickly on Little Rock. He explained that across the country whites "show[ed] a high hostility to all types of proposals for expanded recognition of the civil rights of Negroes."⁴⁹ His interpretation was that these respondents projected their resentment over minorities moving into their

⁴⁶ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

⁴⁷ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

⁴⁸ On September 24, 1957, Eisenhower ordered 1,200 troops to protect nine African American students who were attempting to desegregate the high school. The Little Rock Nine, as they were called, were trying to enroll in the school that had remained segregated in defiance of the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka ruling that found segregation of schools unconstitutional.

⁴⁹ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

communities onto national trends regarding racial problems. “I used to be against segregation,” proclaimed a 63-year-old laborer, “but I’m for it now because Negroes are coming into the neighborhood causing crime and robberies.”⁵⁰ Similarly, a tailor complained, “Eisenhower should have left things to the state. The Negroes are trying to go too fast. That whole mess down South is just stirred up by Northern agitators.”⁵¹ Statements such as these revealed that white support of desegregation commonly faltered when it affected their lives personally; furthermore, the respondent’s emphatic association between the presence of blacks and crime revealed that Puerto Ricans were not the only minority population considered a menace. When it came to Little Rock, Lubell found that the initial support for Eisenhower had declined, but overall, the political impact of Little Rock was small in New York. Northerners’ voting behaviors, Lubell concluded, were subject to change when the racial makeup of local communities changed.

While whites’ anxieties over the rising minority presence in cities permeated the report, the more immediate message for Rockefeller was that most New Yorkers were satisfied with Harriman’s performance. Harriman’s reputation was bolstered by a general contentment over the state’s overall condition. Lubell reported that “many people, even when pressed, cannot volunteer a single state issue that troubles them. For example, in one Staten Island election district I went into, not one of the families talked with could bring forward anything that they felt was an ‘important state issue.’” Some people in upstate New York did complain about Harriman’s wealth or his status as a “city man,” but his popularity had grown there due to his extensive travel through the state as

⁵⁰ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

⁵¹ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

governor. When people did express concern over the loss of industry and juvenile delinquency, for example, they believed that neither Harriman nor any politician could reverse those trends. While it was difficult for many to name any of the governor's accomplishments, they were for the most part satisfied and willing to reelect him. As one respondent explained it succinctly, "Harriman hasn't done anything good. But he hasn't done anything bad either. We might as well stick with him."⁵² Lubell noted that this atmosphere of a "mildly pleasing blur," reflected an opportunity for the right political opponent to exploit.⁵³

While no group surveyed revealed a strong revulsion toward the governor, the superficiality of this support could become Harriman's downfall if a candidate took advantage of this weakness. The problem noted in the report was that there was no Republican candidate strong enough to lure people away from Harriman; the few candidates who might run were local figures who were relatively unknown outside of their voting district. A poll commissioned by Rockefeller by Joe Bachelder found that in March 1958, Harriman would beat Rockefeller if the election were held that day by a margin of 44 percent to 35 percent. While Rockefeller trailed Harriman, his numbers were similar to the other two Republicans—Herbert Brownell, Jr., the former United States Attorney General and U.S. Senator Jacob Javits—with the best chance of competing with Harriman.⁵⁴ The poll found that Harriman would defeat Jacob Javits 42

⁵² Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

⁵³ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

⁵⁴ Brownell, who had worked in campaign management, had returned to private practice in New York after he resigned as Eisenhower's attorney general in 1957. Rockefeller's 1964 campaign manager Jack Wells thought that Brownell would have been a better choice to run Rockefeller's campaign in 1964, but he had no interest in leaving a lucrative practice. Wells also approached Len Hall to serve as Rockefeller's manager because he had more national contacts, but Hall declined, although Hall said it was not because he

to 34 percent and Brownell 48 percent to 32 percent. New York politicians such as Hall and Mahoney, who had expressed interest in running trailed behind.⁵⁵ Republicans in New York, like their counterparts throughout the country, could not rely on Eisenhower's popularity to aid their campaigns—the president's standing had always been tied in large part to his record as a general and his non-partisan posture—and if the economy continued to slacken, their local prospects would continue to deteriorate. At the outset, Republican professionals preferred a party regular such as Hall, despite his limited popularity; however, over time, and with the help of State Chairman Morhouse working on Rockefeller's behalf, the newcomer looked more like a viable candidate.

Although the economic downturn was a major problem for the Republican Party in 1958, Lubell identified a group that continued to turn to the Republican Party as their personal success grew during the postwar period. Lubell found a trend among young whites in white-collar jobs to reject their family's history of voting Democratic. Despite coming from staunchly Democratic families, these young voters wanted to support the party that they perceived as better for business. This development—coupled with whites' migration to suburbs—made those new communities strongholds for the Republican Party. The report revealed that while cities were becoming tougher territory for the Republican Party, young white-collar workers were voting Republican. It was often difficult to find issues that equally concerned citizens across the state, but careful probing revealed important trends that spoke volumes about tensions underneath New York's façade of postwar economic and social tranquility. There could be great hope for a

had a personal issue with the governor. Hugh Morrow Interview with Jack Wells, RAC, NAR, August 14-15, 1979, folder 23, box 2, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

⁵⁵ Memorandum from Francis A. Jamieson to Nelson Rockefeller, April 3, 1958, RAC, NAR, Folder 678, Box 62, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

candidate such as Rockefeller if he could find the means to bridge the divide between cities and suburbs, whites and nonwhites.

Lubell surveyed ninety-three black New Yorkers in nine election districts and found positive sentiment toward the Republican Party nationally and Rockefeller locally. The survey takers found that some blacks were very cognizant of conservative southern Democrats' domination of Congress. Subsequently, some of those surveyed were willing to vote against a Democratic candidate for U.S. Congress in New York if that meant weakening the national Democratic Party and its racial conservatives. Lubell noted, "Some Negroes have also come to think of their party preference in terms of the struggle to control Congress."⁵⁶ "As one Queens Negro expressed it, 'Every time you knock a Democrat up North, you weaken him in the South.'⁵⁷ Overall, those surveyed said they felt the Republican Party was more responsive to the black community's needs regarding civil rights, while the Democratic Party benefitted them economically. The political analyst explained, "The Republicans have made considerable headway in convincing Negroes that the GOP is the better party on civil rights. Among the Negroes interviewed the GOP is chosen as the better party by a five-to-two ratio."⁵⁸ Blacks in New York may have also associated the Republican Party with advances in civil rights because former Governor Dewey, a Republican, was responsible for making New York the first state in the nation to pass a law banning discrimination in employment on the basis of race,

⁵⁶ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

⁵⁷ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

⁵⁸ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

religion, or creed.⁵⁹ Lubell also found that “the better income Negro neighborhoods show a higher proportion of people who voted for Eisenhower than do the lower income districts.”⁶⁰ Lubell believed that this could provide a boost for Rockefeller if he chose to run, although blacks tended to review Harriman positively. The governor was praised for his “race record,” sympathy toward blacks, and history of appointing blacks to state jobs.⁶¹ The survey found that many would vote for Harriman again, but it was also apparent that there was room for a Republican to make strides in the state because of blacks’ conflicted relationship with the national Democratic Party.

There was a possibility that Rockefeller could harness African Americans’ anger toward southern Democrats, particularly because those surveyed tended to view him in a positive light. Several respondents called Rockefeller a friend of the Negro, particularly because of his family’s philanthropy and his previous association with the Roosevelt Administration. In the interest of exploring the evolving relationship between the Blacks surveyed and the Republican Party, Lubell asked how they felt about Richard Nixon succeeding Eisenhower in 1960. He separated the answers into three categories: “Democrats” were those who had voted for Roosevelt each time followed by Truman and Stevenson, “Republicans” were those who had voted for Dewey and Eisenhower for president, and “Shifters” were those who had voted for Democrats except in 1952 and 1956, when they voted for Eisenhower. The Republicans supported Nixon over possible Democratic candidates twelve to one, Democrats five to three, and Shifters seven to four.

⁵⁹ Thomas Dewey signed the 1945 Ives-Quinn Anti-Discrimination Bill, which forbade bias in employment in New York. United States Senator from New York Irving Ives, who co-sponsored the bill, was also a Republican. Klein, *The Empire State*, 626.

⁶⁰ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

⁶¹ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

Lubell found that “Lumping all the voting backgrounds together, among 64 Negroes who responded with a definite preference for 1960, Nixon ran about two to one over all the Democrats named.”⁶² He went on to say,

However these survey figures are analyzed, they point to the fact that the potential for a sizable Republican gain among Negroes exists. The almost unchallenged attachment to the Democratic Party that prevailed though the Truman Administration has been cracked. A deep division of opinion among Negroes has appeared and their vote can no longer be taken for granted.⁶³

Lubell expressed uncertainty, however, regarding whether Republicans would be able to take advantage of this weakening tie between blacks and the Democratic Party. He believed that developments on the economic and racial fronts in the nation would determine the outcome along with the skill shown by Republican political strategists.

These survey responses highlight important realities about how some African Americans’ viewed the Democratic Party and their reasons for voting for Democrats. Loyal to the Party of Lincoln, since the Civil War era, blacks were one of the last ethnic groups to begin voting Democratic during the Great Depression. While African Americans remained loyal to the Republican Party in 1932, by 1936, they moved resolutely into the Democratic column, with three-quarters voting for President Roosevelt. Although they did become the group most committed to the party, their initial attraction to the party was not due to the New Deal’s commitment to civil rights. Roosevelt permitted New Deal legislation to have a negligible impact on civil rights to appease southern Democrats whose votes he needed. Historian Nancy Weiss argues that “despite the willingness of the Roosevelt administration to make some symbolic racial gestures, the race issue never became part of the New Deal agenda. It was Franklin

⁶² Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

⁶³ Commissioned Survey by Samuel Lubell, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 477, box 47, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

Roosevelt's ability to provide jobs, not his embrace of civil rights, that made him a hero to black Americans."⁶⁴ Lubell's findings support the premise that while blacks were committed to the Democratic Party it was foremost because of the economic benefits. Truman's work to help advance civil rights pleased many blacks, but they never discounted the presence of southern Democrats and their influence over the party.⁶⁵ The timing of the survey may have also affected people's answers because many of the blacks surveyed by Lubell were happy with Eisenhower's actions at Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas.⁶⁶ The positive responses in this case may have also reflected local realities and the progressive records of New York Republicans such as Dewey and Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia. This positive view of the Republican Party may seem contradictory in some ways, yet it speaks to the complicated relationship between African American voters and political parties. The survey findings are a reflection of a period when both national parties were ideologically and regionally diverse enough that black voters had difficult decisions to make when considering local and national politics.

The survey of African Americans identified a great concern over housing and housing segregation, the other side of the issue that caused consternation among urban whites. When asked to identify the issues that most concerned them, blacks cited housing

⁶⁴ Nancy Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), xvi.

⁶⁵ In 1946, during his State of the Union Address Truman called for the establishment of a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission, which was first established by an executive order from Roosevelt in 1941. Truman signed three executive orders between 1948 and 1951 that desegregated the armed services, made it illegal to discriminate against applicants for civil service positions based on race, and established the Committee on Government Contract Compliance that was supposed to ensure defense contractors could not discriminate because of race.

⁶⁶ While blacks, who were most supportive of the Democratic Party said Eisenhower moved too slowly, others said that it was best that the president had waited first so it would appear that he had no other option and was forced to send in troops. A few of those interviewed said that sending in troops was dangerous because it would make southerners hate Negroes more.

followed by taxes, roads, and school discrimination. The report noted that housing discrimination was the issue that created the most tension between blacks and whites, and it was more important to blacks than school and job discrimination. Lubell believed this concern over where they lived reflected the economic advancement of blacks who now made enough money to desire new housing. He supported this hypothesis by stating that fifteen to twenty years earlier blacks were most concerned about employment and access to industries traditionally closed to them. At the same time, however, he explained that blacks of all incomes expressed concern about housing discrimination and the difficulties they faced finding adequate housing. Moreover, the continued deterioration of the segregated housing blacks had to inhabit might have fueled their increased concern.

Overall, respondents gave Rockefeller the most favorable reactions in comparison to the other Republicans presented as potential gubernatorial candidates.⁶⁷ However, he also received twice as many unfavorable reactions. His notoriety remained a double-edged sword. The negative responses to Rockefeller as a candidate pivoted on his wealth. While some people thought he would be a good candidate because of his wealth, whether because he would not be beholden to anyone or that he would be able to manage money, others looked at him and expressed doubt. The naysayers wondered if he would be able to relate to the poor or understand the problems faced by the working person. Lubell warned Rockefeller to be cautious about testing his strength too soon. Should he fail to draw initial support, the pollster warned, party leaders would quickly abandon his candidacy.

⁶⁷ The second most popular Republican was John Roosevelt, the youngest son of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt, who had joined the Republican Party in 1947, ranked high among those surveyed but seemingly because of his connection to his father rather than approval of his politics. The sixth and youngest child of Franklin Roosevelt—according to Eleanor Roosevelt—may have changed his political affiliation to appease his future father-in-law who was a Republican banker from Boston. Ultimately, he never ran for elected office and remained largely out of the spotlight, but he was a strident supporter of Eisenhower and later Nixon when he ran for president in 1960.

Instead, he urged Rockefeller to avoid announcing his interest in a run until he could disprove the perception that he was too inexperienced to be governor. Remaining elusive could even improve Rockefeller's chances for the Republican nomination. Lubell concluded that Rockefeller should wait and run in 1962 with the hope that he would face an opponent other than Harriman, with whom he shared numerous similarities. A race between Rockefeller and Harriman would immediately become a race between millionaires and if there were little to differentiate the two, Lubell argued, voters would choose the experienced incumbent.

Lubell's report seemed to influence Rockefeller's eventual strategy in several ways. He would indeed focus on his experience in Washington as a presidential adviser. He would wait until long after reporters and onlookers announced his interest in the governorship to declare his candidacy. Rockefeller also portrayed himself as a figure new enough to state politics to remain untainted by machine politics, while hurling the same accusations at Harriman that disgruntled Republicans mentioned to the survey-takers.

The political survey produced for Rockefeller revealed a difficult but not impossible situation for the political newcomer. If the economy had been stronger or if there had been other Republicans with statewide recognition and appeal, Rockefeller might have found it difficult or impossible to earn the Republican nomination for governor in his first foray into electoral politics. Ironically, Rockefeller stood to benefit from the lack of star power in the New York Republican Party and the "mildly pleasing blur" that left state voters vaguely supportive of their governor, while unsure of his precise accomplishments. The first half of 1958 was a whirlwind of coy denials of a campaign, followed by tours across the state to introduce himself to state Republicans.

Ultimately, Rockefeller ran a campaign designed to convince New Yorkers that they wanted and needed change despite their previous complacency and relative uninterest in Harriman and state politics.

From Rockefeller Center

On June 30, 1958, after months of speculation, Rockefeller stood at a podium on the 56th floor of the RCA building in Rockefeller Center and entered the race for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. In a speech where he cited the state's economic decline as the impetus for his decision to seek the nomination, Rockefeller argued that the state needed a "new approach" to government. The current administration, he stated, suffered from complacency, and hid from the state's downturn rather than work to counteract the state's loss of its traditional pre-eminence as the nation's leader in "social and economic growth." A Republican governor and legislature would work together to provide "progressive, imaginative leadership." For the moment, this was Rockefeller's brand of partisan politics—a non-ideological critique of Harriman followed by the promise to provide new and better government. Rockefeller's statement was purposefully amorphous and spoke more to his business acumen than his Republican credentials, but he made it clear that he did not plan to cut back on the state's social programs to reverse the state's "economic erosion."⁶⁸ If the state's leadership refused to face the impending crisis, he warned, the residents' aspirations would go unfulfilled. He sought to help New Yorkers achieve their aspirations of "strengthening family ties," providing adequate schools for the youngest generations, and addressing problems such as juvenile

⁶⁸ Nelson A. Rockefeller Candidacy Announcement, RAC, NAR, folder 1397, box 133, Activities, RG 4.

delinquency, organized crime, and obsolete roads.⁶⁹ Rockefeller's speech made promises designed to please the average voter of any political background and focused on the same concerns Lubell identified in his survey, excluding taxes. State Republicans, however, were likely to be more concerned than Democrats about how this politician planned to achieve his lofty goals, but, his desire to earn the Republican nomination gave them the opportunity to vet the newcomer.⁷⁰

Soon after Rockefeller announced his entrance into the race, he reinforced his intention to reach out to the state's rural Republican strongholds by leaving Manhattan and resuming his upstate tour. He travelled first to rural Columbia County to meet with local Republicans. This ensured that when the morning newspapers reported Rockefeller's statement, they also stated that he received support from rural Republicans far removed from city life. His visit garnered him merely six delegate votes, a fraction of the 586 votes that he would need to receive the nomination, but Rockefeller demonstrated that he wanted backing from statewide Republicans and that he was prepared to leave New York City to get it.

Four hours after Rockefeller made his statement, Hall, who had announced his bid for the Republican nomination earlier in the month on June 3, 1958, challenged his new rival to a debate. He hoped to expose Rockefeller as a liberal, too far left of mainstream Republican thought. Hall, after months of canvassing the state, had announced his bid for the Republican nomination earlier in the month on June 3, 1958. "Welcome to the political arena," Hall's telegram stated, "I think it's fine you have decided to get into the

⁶⁹ Nelson A. Rockefeller Candidacy Announcement, RAC, NAR, folder 1397, box 133, Activities, RG 4.

⁷⁰ Statement by Nelson A. Rockefeller, RAC, NAR, folder 1397, box 133, Activities, RG 4.

race.”⁷¹ With the niceties covered, Hall called for what he described as Lincoln-Douglass style debates across the state to “stimulate public interest generally in the future of the great Empire State and thereby result in a larger turnout of voters on Election Day.”⁷² What did Hall want to debate? First and foremost, “the principles of the Republican party,” followed by “the issues upon which the campaign for Governor [would] be fought...and the type of campaign the Republican party must run if it [was] to win.”⁷³

From the moment Rockefeller declared his candidacy, it was clear that he could be a formidable candidate against Hall. Although he may not have had widespread popularity in New York State, Hall was a major figure within the national Republican Party. Many Republicans credited him with Eisenhower’s reelection in 1956, when he immediately began Eisenhower’s campaign after the president’s heart attack in 1955. What Hall may have lacked in broad appeal, he made up for in Republican credentials. He had also received Eisenhower’s informal endorsement a year and a half before Rockefeller announced his decision to run. Rockefeller’s initial response to reporters’ inquiries about Hall’s challenge was to say he thought discussion was healthy, but he needed to see Hall’s telegram himself before he gave a formal response. Hall never got his wish.

Hall’s initial attempt to challenge Rockefeller on the principles of the party was a telling statement about Rockefeller’s outside status in relation to the New York Republican Party. His hope was to exploit Rockefeller’s reputation as a New Dealer,

⁷¹ Charles N. Quinn, “Rockefeller Challenged to a Debate by Hall,” *New York Herald Tribune*, July 1, 1958.

⁷² Charles N. Quinn, “Rockefeller Challenged to a Debate by Hall,” *New York Herald Tribune*, July 1, 1958.

⁷³ “Rockefeller Enters Race for Governor: Attacks Rule by Harriman,” *New York World Telegram and Sun*, June 30, 1958, 1.

which had been reinforced by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund Special Studies Project. Hall also hoped to show by his previous experience Rockefeller was not a staunch Republican. Hall hoped to remind people that the Democratic members of the bipartisan Temporary State Commission on the Constitutional Convention, for example, had approved Rockefeller as chair the year before because they saw him as a neutral figure removed from Republican Party politics. Rockefeller had put himself in a difficult position. He began the pre-nomination stage of his campaign trying to demonstrate his potential strength as a cross-party vote-getter, while a sound strategy for the general election, made him vulnerable to Hall's charges that he did not meet Republican standards. The Rockefellers' longtime financial support of the Westchester County Republican Party could have easily won Rockefeller the nomination for the U.S. Congressional seat from Westchester, but the nomination for state governor was a stretch. Many state Republicans were leery of Rockefeller's desire to become active in party politics because of his liberal reputation and financial independence. Although he was relatively unknown by rank-and-file Republicans outside of Long Island, Hall was the safer choice because of his relationship with Eisenhower and reputation as a moderate Republican.

Among Republicans across the nation, the New York State Republican Party had a liberal reputation, but this image was a distortion of the local reality. New York Republicans were associated with the Eastern Establishment wing of the party that had ushered Dewey into the Republican presidential nomination in 1944 and 1948.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Thomas E. Dewey, New York's 47th governor served three terms from 1943 through 1954. Considered the leader of the liberal wing of the Republican Party, Dewey was an advocate for Northeastern business interests and supported a powerful activist government. While in office he increased state aid to education, created the state university system, and raised state employee salaries at the same time he cut taxes and the

Conservatives across the nation who would have much preferred to nominate Ohio Senator Robert Taft were still resentful about Dewey's nomination. The Republican Party had long experienced division within its ranks between more moderate to liberal members, who accepted the large activist government dictated by Roosevelt's New Deal, and Midwestern and Western conservatives such as Taft, who called for small government and isolationist policies. Despite the state party's reputation, New York Republicans were similarly divided between a conservative wing that was most often elected by rural upstate communities, and a moderate or liberal wing from downstate, which was affiliated with New York City.⁷⁵ The reality was that the state party was dominated by fiscally and socially conservative Republicans, who, for the most part, frowned upon giving Rockefeller the nomination. A newspaper article describing Rockefeller's candidacy noted, "Actually, the fact that Nelson Rockefeller will get serious consideration is probably a confession that the party is somewhat hard up and thinks Governor Harriman is a formidable opponent."⁷⁶

"Real" Republican Opposition

As the campaign for the Republican gubernatorial nomination took shape, the divisions present in the state party came to the forefront. The field of potential candidates for the nomination reveals the diversity within the state Republican Party. Rockefeller could not escape accusations that he was not a true Republican. While Rockefeller was not the only candidate with moderate tendencies, he was an outsider, which made him a

state's debt. Dewey also supported the passage of the New York State Anti-Discrimination Act in 1945. This was the state's first law prohibiting job discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin.

⁷⁵ More recently, there was a growing conservative Republican community in the suburbs of New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County. This group usually consisted of whites whose families had long-identified with the Democratic Party, but broke with tradition as their economic standing improved.

⁷⁶ "Nelson Rockefeller Candidacy Welcome," *Albany Knickerbocker News*, July 2, 1958.

target. By the time Rockefeller formally declared his candidacy, Hall had the support of delegates from four counties totaling 163 of the necessary 586 to win the nomination. Hall, the eight-term congressman from Oyster Bay and former Chairman of the Republican National Committee was not a traditional conservative. He broke with fellow Republicans in Congress, for example, to support the draft extension, lend-lease, and the Marshall Plan.⁷⁷ Hall, however, was a party loyalist and his association with Eisenhower improved his credentials, although Eisenhower also had his critics among conservative Republicans. There were also two unannounced candidates: U.S. Attorney Paul W. Williams had the endorsement of Manhattan Republicans totaling eighty-one delegates and Senate Majority Leader Mahoney, who was in the lead with 178 delegates from eleven counties.⁷⁸ Mahoney's plan was to declare his candidacy in August, but in the meantime, he quietly courted the support of as many counties as possible. Mahoney's ability to amass the most delegate votes without canvassing the state like Hall or Rockefeller and his plan to announce whether he would run or not days before the nominating convention demonstrated his stature in the party. Taking a closer look at Mahoney's possible candidacy and his political ideology helps to reveal one strain of conservatism within the New York State Republican Party.

Mahoney first won election to the State Senate in 1936 at age 28. By the time he became Senate Majority Leader in 1954 he had earned a reputation for representing the right wing of the Republican Party. He was known for criticizing the Liberal Party and being a friend of big business and New York's utility companies. Mahoney also thwarted the legislature's attempts to impose a new rate formula intended to cut the profits of the

⁷⁷ Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 705.

⁷⁸ James Desmond, "Nelson Rockefeller Accepts 'Challenge' to Run for Gov.," *Daily News*, July 1, 1958.

New York Telephone Company. For these reasons, Arthur Massolo of the *New York Post* claimed that few believed Mahoney, who often angered New York City voters, could be a serious candidate for the Republican gubernatorial nomination.⁷⁹ Massolo's observation acknowledged that the state's most conservative Republicans lacked influence among voters outside of their home counties in upstate New York because their rigid conservatism that was often openly pro-business alienated the majority of state voters. Mahoney's statewide reputation among voters had no impact on his influence within the state senate; however, he was a powerful majority leader who received loyal support from Republican state legislators. He was also known for successfully taking on state governors, namely Dewey. The majority leader's stature among legislators meant that many of them supported his bid for governor, regardless of his chances.

For the past two years, Mahoney had been the chief sponsor of a legislative bill that demanded a one-year residency requirement for anyone seeking to collect welfare—a bill that played upon and encouraged the impression that the state's welfare program attracted undesirables.⁸⁰ For example, Republican State Senator John H. Cooke, complained that the current law, which allowed state newcomers to receive welfare, made New York “a dumping ground for ne’er-do-wells.”⁸¹ But Republicans were divided on Mahoney's proposal. The opposition was led by Republican Assembly Speaker, Oswald D. Heck, a moderate Republican who had joined Dewey in calling for anti-discrimination

⁷⁹ Arthur Massolo, “In the Backrooms,” *New York Post*, July 6, 1958.

⁸⁰ Mahoney complained about his home county's increasing expenditure on welfare. Erie County spent \$23 million in 1958 and that amount was expected to increase to \$25 million the next year.

⁸¹ Warren Weaver, Jr., “State G.O.P. Split Over Relief Curb,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1958, 28.

in employment and opposed Republicans' anti-labor legislation.⁸² Mahoney's Relief Residency Bill passed the state senate in 1957 and 1958, but died in assembly committee and in 1958, was twice defeated on the floor, once because of Heck's personal appeal. But it would again become an issue at the Republican nomination convention in August.

In a *Daily News* article entitled "Rockefeller's Creampuff Bid is a Bust: Hall," it was reported on July 14, that Hall accused his key opponent of running a popularity contest rather than a campaign on the issues. He complained that Rockefeller was attempting to "tiptoe" into the nomination by using fabricated polls overstating his advantage.⁸³ Hall continued to hope that Rockefeller would feel impelled to answer his challenge to a debate. He went as far as to say that Rockefeller had not "expressed an opinion on anything" and that he had not demonstrated that he could present a strong case against Harriman.⁸⁴ Rockefeller replied by saying that he would not participate in mudslinging a fellow Republican. Hall, an experienced politician, was hoping that he could protect his chance to earn the nomination if he could prove to more conservative New York Republicans that Rockefeller was too liberal and that he, Hall, was the better, more moderate choice. Hall accused Rockefeller of being a "silent candidate who ha[d] been kept under glass," and went on to say that a "creampuff campaign" could not defeat

⁸² Bruce W. Dearstyne, "No Gridlock in Oswald Heck's New York," *Times Union*, October 22, 2001, <http://www.timesunion.com/opinion/article/No-gridlock-in-Oswald-Heck-s-New-York-2231890.php>, accessed on February 5, 2013.

⁸³ Journalist and editor Stewart Alsop, who at the time was a columnist for the *Saturday Evening Post* wrote a book in 1960 entitled *Nixon and Rockefeller: A Double Portrait*, claimed that the polls that Morhouse used were "purely political in purpose and effect" and funded by Rockefeller to "persuade the upstate leaders not to commit themselves prematurely." Rockefeller biographer Cary Reich states that there is no evidence of this to be true. While Hall believed the Morhouse polls were fabricated, I have not found conclusive proof linking Rockefeller to these polls. Morhouse, like Rockefeller, was a student of the opinion poll and an advocate for their use in winning elections since 1954. "Hall Steps Up Drive to Check Rockefeller," *New York Post*, July 14, 1958; Alsop, *Nixon & Rockefeller*, 108; and Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 698.

⁸⁴ "Rockefeller's Creampuff Bid is a Bust: Hall," *Daily News*, July 28, 1958.

Governor Harriman.”⁸⁵ There was truth to Hall’s accusations, Rockefeller was saying as little as possible about Republican ideals and focusing on his experience in Washington and ability to beat Governor Harriman. Rockefeller was not doing anything radically different from other declared opponents; however, his charisma and ability to relate to people, while tapping into the prestige and rarefied air of the Rockefeller name, gave him a distinct advantage.

Rockefeller’s tours of upstate New York had more to do with photo ops with livestock and county fair princesses than debates about Republican credentials. For example, when attending the Broome County Fair in early August, after impressing onlookers with his familiarity with cattle, he was asked to respond to complaints from Republicans in the area that he was a “left-winger and a member of the so-called ‘Eisenhower wing’ of the party,” he responded, “I think labels are bad. I’ve been a lifelong Republican. I’ve devoted myself to strengthening the Republican Party so that the party can better serve the interest of the people.”⁸⁶ Rockefeller was honing his skills at evasion when it came to discussing his place within the Republican Party. He made similar proclamations that would go unchallenged at one small town and county fair after another. Hall and other more conservative Republicans were frustrated, but they were not yet willing to bow out without further attempts to discredit Rockefeller.

Around the same time that Hall criticized Rockefeller for an issueless campaign, the *National Review* published an article arguing that Rockefeller was attempting to hide the fact that he was not a “genuine” Republican. The influential conservative publication

⁸⁵ “Rockefeller’s Creampuff Bid is a Bust: Hall,” *Daily News*, July 28, 1958.

⁸⁶ Woodie Fitchette, “Candidate Makes Friends, Draws Applause from Crowd,” *Binghamton Press Writer*, August 2, 1958.

founded by William F. Buckley, Jr. in New York City in 1955, criticized Rockefeller in an article entitled, “The Royal Road to Albany: When a Rockefeller Needs a Friend.” The article associated Rockefeller with as many un-Republican figures as possible from Franklin D. Roosevelt; unnamed “liberal journalists,” Ogden Reid; the publisher of the *New York Herald Tribune*; John Young, a publicist for Adam Clayton Powell Jr.; and his Democratic opponent Averell Harriman. The article, for example, claimed that Harriman originally nominated Rockefeller, referring to an off-hand comment the governor had made in the spring of 1957 that New York Republicans should nominate Rockefeller to run against him. For the sake of this article, this was supposed to be in stark contrast to Hall, who received an endorsement from President Eisenhower, although the *National Review* and its readership were no admirers of Eisenhower and his moderate politics. The article’s author, J.P. McFadden, forwarded Hall’s theory that Rockefeller was leading an issueless campaign to disguise the fact that he was not a true Republican. McFadden wrote, “His campaign has consisted entirely of his publicized reports, grandiose claims of delegate support, the emission of pleasantries—and the circularization of Mr. Morhouse’s poll proving that Rockefeller is a well-known name.”⁸⁷ In practical terms, the *National Review* was arguing that it was important to consider Rockefeller’s political views, particularly if the candidate seemed to avoid discussion of topics that might reveal that he was out of step with the typical Republican voter. To demonstrate this point the article included excerpts from articles and interviews with Rockefeller where he did discuss his thoughts about the Republican Party. A *New York Post* journalist asked Rockefeller why he was a Republican despite serving under two Democratic Presidents and having the

⁸⁷ J.P. McFadden, “The Royal Road to Albany: When a Rockefeller Needs a Friend,” *National Review*, August 2, 1958, 107.

reputation of being “a distinct New Deal type.” Rockefeller replied that he was “born Republican” and that Republicans “have more competence organizationally and administratively.” The *National Review* writer responded, “Nowhere does Rockefeller speak up for Republican principles of the free, non-statist society. His position seems to be that Republicans can do a superior job of implementing a Democratic philosophy of government.” The result then, the writer surmised, would be a “polite contest” between Harriman and Rockefeller, “men of virtually identical political faiths.”⁸⁸ The article in *National Review* revealed that while Rockefeller’s personality and charisma could quiet the concerns of local Republican voters he met, there were also important detractors within the party. Some hoped that he might still be vulnerable if they could demonstrate that Rockefeller’s perception of what it meant to be a Republican did not match that of the majority.

The Last Man Standing

There was little that naysayers could do to counteract Rockefeller’s popular appeal to average voters, who seemed satisfied to meet rather than vet the candidate. The Yonkers newspaper *The Herald Statesman* reported, “A warm smile, a firm handshake and the obvious fact that Rockefeller is greatly enjoying his first political campaign and the opportunity to meet and talk with people is credited with a large part of the success his drive has attained.” It went on to say that with the assistance of his political coach Wilson, Rockefeller had astounded “old pros” in upstate New York with his ability to win over delegates, county leaders, and average Republican voters. Many onlookers seemed impressed, perhaps because of low expectations, that Rockefeller was “down to

⁸⁸ McFadden, “The Royal Road to Albany,” 105.

earth,” a “nice guy,” “pretty sharp,” and “impressive.” Wilson explained, “people are most impressed by his handshake and the way he looks straight in the eye.” It is doubtful that Rockefeller’s opponents earned similar praise by shaking hands, but the first time candidate seemed to earn a great advantage with a charm that would leave people exclaiming, “You’d never know he’s a millionaire.”⁸⁹

Surprisingly, one of the biggest challenges the Rockefeller staff faced did not come from an opponent, but from Rockefeller himself. Demonstrating that there might be merit in the criticism that his wealth put him out of touch with the average voter, Rockefeller resolved not to let his entrance into public life impede too much on his personal one. The day after Rockefeller announced he was running for office, James Desmond of the *Daily News* reported that he planned to campaign for six to eight weeks and then vacation for two at his family estate in Maine.⁹⁰ As the *World Telegram and Sun*, reported later in the summer, “Mr. Rockefeller’s decision to leave campaign cares behind and head for his Seal Harbor, Me., home nearly floored his inner circle.” This article went on to say that after a great deal of effort, Rockefeller’s advisers convinced him that experienced opponents such as Hall and Mahoney would use his absence to their advantage. They also told him that it would be much more difficult to attack Harriman as a part-time candidate, if he too was a part-time candidate. The compromise was a four-day excursion to his vacation home in Seal Harbor, Maine.⁹¹

Despite the vacation gaffe and general political inexperience, Rockefeller’s campaign continued to thrive largely due to the force of his own personality, the

⁸⁹ “Nelson Rockefeller Enjoying His First Campaign,” *The Herald Statesman*, July 23, 1958.

⁹⁰ James Desmond, “Nelson Rockefeller Accepts ‘Challenge’ to Run for Gov.” *Daily News*, July 1, 1958.

⁹¹ “Heard Round City Hall: Game of Politics Being Taught to Rockefeller,” *World Telegram and Sun*, August 1, 1958.

assistance of Wilson, and the poor prospects for the Republican Party during the 1958 elections. With the convention two weeks away, Hall continued to insist that the Republican Party needed a “two-fisted hard-hitting” campaigner and that Rockefeller would be nothing more than a “graceful loser.” Rockefeller, who continued to avoid Hall’s challenges, focused only on Harriman and pledged to conduct a “fighting campaign” if nominated.⁹² To prove his point, Rockefeller reiterated many of the ideas from his original candidacy announcement, arguing that Harriman had squandered the budget surplus, while concealing the state’s economic decline. At this point, the Republican field still included Rockefeller, Hall, Paul Williams, and Mahoney, the latter, who had planned to wait until days before the convention to make a final decision about running, instead, entered the race on July 18, 1958, a decision intended as a measure to forestall the loss of delegate votes that had been pledged to him.⁹³ The rumor was that Mahoney never intended to enter the race, but instead hoped to gain control of as many delegate votes as possible so he could influence who would receive the nomination at the convention. Williams resigned as the United States Attorney General for the Southern District of New York earlier in the month so he could run for the Republican nomination. On August 16, a week and a half before the convention, the press reported that Rockefeller held the lead for delegates with 348, followed by Mahoney with 255, Hall with 163, and Williams with zero.⁹⁴

⁹² “Pledge is Given by Rockefeller,” *New York Times*, August 12, 1958, 23.

⁹³ The day before he made the announcement two counties that had offered some of the earliest support for Mahoney, Oneida and Madison Counties, pledged their support for Rockefeller.

⁹⁴ Earlier in the year, Manhattan’s County Chairman Thomas J. Curran announced that the county’s 81 votes would go to Williams if he decided to run. By the time he had stepped down as attorney general, making himself available to run, there were reports that the county’s delegates would shift to Rockefeller’s column. Two days after Williams announced that he was in the race he released Manhattan’s delegates on July 12, 1958. The delegates were then pledged to Rockefeller.

The following day, Hall surprised his supporters and withdrew from the race, explaining that because he had always been a realist in politics, he felt he could not win. Hall's delegate count had stagnated once Rockefeller entered the race. Hall failed to arouse excitement among voters. That was not necessarily a problem, since he had well-established relationships with party professionals in the state; however, the leaders he had expected to support him were drifting into Rockefeller's column. Hall had hoped for a floor fight at the convention, but with less than half of the votes commanded by Rockefeller, Hall decided he had little chance. Money may have played an important role, Rockefeller biographer Cary Reich explains. "Rockefeller did not buy his first gubernatorial nomination. But the awesome weight of his fortune—particularly going into a contest against another megamillionaire, Harriman—acted as decisively as he did."⁹⁵ Once the field narrowed, delegates rushed to support Rockefeller, leaving him ten votes short of the required 586. Mahoney stepped down on August 20, just five days before the convention, citing the importance of unity within the party. Then Williams stepped down the following day leaving Rockefeller the unopposed Republican gubernatorial nominee. Rockefeller had defied the expectations of numerous political analysts. In June, *The New York Mirror* glibly pointed out that Hall had forgotten more politics than Rockefeller had ever known.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Rockefeller proved to be a formidable opponent.

The state party's lack of leaders with strong voter appeal and its diminished position due to the weak economy improved his chances. When asked about

⁹⁵ Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 718.

⁹⁶ Fulton Lewis, Jr. "Capital Report: Rockefeller-Long Shot for Governor," *New York Mirror*, June 23, 1958.

Rockefeller's nomination, Hall mused, "There's magic in that name. I figured it would be just the opposite, that I'd go in and shake a woman's hand and that'd be that. Rockefeller did the same thing, and the women jumped for joy. I guess I didn't have that political sex appeal."⁹⁷ Hall, who may have entered the race overly confident, learned that Republican voters were open to a new face that promised change and prosperity despite few details. In a time when New Yorkers were still accustomed to postwar affluence, they were attracted to politicians who promised the prosperity they expected. A weak national economy may be the fault of the presidential administration, but voters wanted their local leaders to harness the power of the state economy to make them impervious to national downturns. And regardless of his inexperience, the popular view was that no one would understand prosperity better than a Rockefeller.

Many Republicans were willing to give Rockefeller the nomination because they doubted any Republican could beat Harriman, but questions would remain regarding his political loyalties and the ramifications if he did win and took command of the state party. A more candid opinion of Rockefeller in this period emerged outside the state. *The Berkshire Eagle*, based in Pittsfield, MA, near the New York border, printed a column by "Professor-at-Large" George C. Connelly entitled: "New York's Upstate Republicans Find Nelson Rockefeller Hard to Swallow." Connelly wrote, "During a recent visit to my native haunts upstate, I found bitter disappointment that neither Len Hall nor Senate Majority Leader Walter Mahoney of Buffalo had the political courage to stand pat against a political newcomer like Nelson Rockefeller." He went on to say that many upstaters were concerned about Rockefeller's liberalism, particularly since the Rockefeller

⁹⁷ "Rocky in Rochester," *Time*, September 8, 1958.

Brothers Fund produced the “give-away” reports that were “radical,” suspect, and possibly “pink,” i.e. socialist. Connelly concluded, “Upstaters want to keep their party a conservative party, distinguishable from the liberal Democrats, and I respect them for it and think less of Len Hall and Sen. Walter Mahoney for their cheap but profitable jump on the Rockefeller bandwagon.” Connelly also offered his opinion of “New Dealer Republicans”:

If there are liberals or New Dealers secluded within the ranks of the Republicans, I should think they would exhibit enough candor and courage to step out and become independents or Democrats. Surely they should not run for office on the Republican ticket and expect conservative Republicans of Syracuse, Ithaca, Homer, Pompey, Marcellus, Ovid, Ilion and Tully to drive in to the polls and elect them.⁹⁸

As it turned out, Connelly was one of many who doubted the Republican; Rockefeller would spend his entire political career facing those who questioned why he was a Republican in the first place.

Despite some inherent uncertainty about Rockefeller’s politics, on the evening of August 25, 1958, the New York State Republicans convened in Rochester to announce he was their gubernatorial nominee. The Republicans had much to prove; the party that had lost the governorship in 1954, and was now nominating a first-time candidate. A sense of doubt lingered in the convention hall, as to whether he could unseat Harriman. This uncertainty gave the pomp and circumstance of the state convention, so extravagant it resembled a presidential nominating convention, a dutiful air. The 1,500 hats and noisemakers, along with the placards, ticker tape, and 5,000 balloons suspended sixty feet above the crowd waiting for release, did little to excite the 10,000-member audience as it

⁹⁸ George C. Connelly, “New York’s Upstate Republicans Find Nelson Rockefeller Hard to Swallow,” *The Berkshire Eagle*, August 25, 1958.

filed into the War Memorial Hall.⁹⁹ Yet, Rockefeller showed great confidence the first evening of the convention as he delivered his acceptance speech. He gave the political pros in attendance a moment of relief when he captivated his audience immediately with the charisma and vibrancy that his speeches sometimes lacked. Rockefeller radiated an infectious confidence; perhaps, the Republicans had a chance after all.

Rockefeller's speech emphasized the Republican legacy in New York that most closely represented his own ideology, the progressive record of Dewey, who had retired from politics four years before: "There are at least four undeniable reasons why we are going to win: The first is the unique record of leadership and achievement of a great governor—Thomas E. Dewey. A record made in partnership with the great Republican legislature led by Walter J. Mahoney and Oswald D. Heck."¹⁰⁰ He most likely hoped that he could reconcile the differences within the party, as Dewey had, and gain support for his progressive program. The Republican Party, he declared, held a deep concern for people, as shown by Dewey's accomplishments: "The nation's first anti-discrimination law, the tripling of State aid for education, the protection of five million workers with sickness disability benefits," and the "planning and building of the State Thruway." Rockefeller wanted to pick up where Dewey had left off and reminded his audience that Dewey accomplished all those goals while "building reserves, paying off debt, and reducing taxes."¹⁰¹ This was Rockefeller's message: to offer the people progressive leadership with the aid of a powerful centralized government, while keeping with

⁹⁹ "Rockefeller Hailed In Colorful Uproar By G.O.P. Delegates," *New York Times*, August 26, 1958, 20.

¹⁰⁰ Nelson A. Rockefeller Nomination Acceptance Speech, RAC, NAR, folder 1402, box 133, Activities, RG 4.

¹⁰¹ Nelson A. Rockefeller Nomination Acceptance Speech, RAC, NAR, folder 1402, box 133, Activities, RG 4.

conservatives' demand for low taxes and debt. He could satisfy liberals and the majority of his own party if he could fulfill his promises, while maintaining a semblance of fiscal responsibility without raising taxes. Rockefeller assumed an extremely difficult task, particularly because the booming economy that Dewey had enjoyed was now slackening. It was also impossible to know if Rockefeller could assemble a political organization strong enough to get support for his agenda as his predecessor had. Rockefeller's acceptance speech was formulaic in many ways, including appropriate nods to his former opponents, critical statements about Harriman's "vacuous" administration, and a laundry list of promises intended to unite the state of New York, yet it also stated where he stood ideologically.

Rockefeller's acceptance speech featured several of the planks of the Republican platform, which received unanimous approval earlier that day. Regarding jobs, Rockefeller pledged, "To create a climate for more job opportunities by taking the steps which will stop the flight of industry from New York, encourage the expansion of existing industry, business and agriculture and aggressively attract new business to this great Empire State." In relation to health and welfare, Rockefeller pledged, "To recapture the momentum of past progress in the fields of health and welfare for our children our aged, our workers, and for all of us." The most partisan plank he forwarded was, "To restore financial soundness, prudence, efficiency, economy and business-like management to our government."¹⁰² The platform avoided the most divisive issues within the state party, while declaring its support of Eisenhower, enforcement of civil rights, expansion of higher education, pollution abatement, urban renewal, improvement of the

¹⁰² Nelson A. Rockefeller Nomination Acceptance Speech, RAC, NAR, folder 1402, box 133, Activities, RG 4.

state's roadways, and the protection of labor's right to collective bargaining. If this progressive program angered the most conservative of the party, they could take small comfort in the platform's assurance that "the fulfillment of [these] objectives depends upon increased economic growth within our state."¹⁰³ In the end, this platform did not ask conservatives for concessions they had not made before, but there had been an effort to incorporate one of conservatives most polarizing proposals into the document.

The press revealed that before the platform was approved there had been disagreement on the party's stance on a controversial piece of welfare policy. Several of Mahoney's associates testified before the platform committee calling for the inclusion of an endorsement of the residency requirement. This discussion troubled Rockefeller. The *New York Times* credited the Republican nominee's "persuasive influence" over the convention for ensuring that the platform would not include a plank calling for a one-year residency requirement.¹⁰⁴ Rockefeller and his staff had been able to remove the plank from the final platform, but not without some effort. A residency requirement would have stood out as the most controversial of platform planks in a document that was largely affirmative. With Rockefeller's guidance, the platform avoided any mention of welfare residency requirements or welfare at all, other than a call to examine Social Welfare Laws related to the registration and reporting of veterans and non-profit organizations. It is unclear if conservatives believed their demand of adding a residency requirement to the platform would ever happen, but perhaps it was their small effort to show that they were still committed to their own principles despite Rockefeller's nomination. In comparison,

¹⁰³ Republican State Platform, 1958, RAC, NAR, folder 394, box 39, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

¹⁰⁴ "Chiefs Bow to Rockefeller on One-Year Residence Proviso for Recipients," *New York Times*, August 26, 1958, 21.

four years before, the most controversial planks in the Republican platform called for a reversal of Dewey's long-standing opposition to non-profit groups holding bingo nights and an effort to "eliminate financially irresponsible motorists from the highway."¹⁰⁵ Despite some disagreement, the 1958 Republican State Platform was one of moderation that resembled the record of Dewey.

The disagreement over residency requirements revealed that Rockefeller would still need to perform a balancing act if he wanted to take the helm of the state party. The difficult election year expected for Republicans across the nation and in New York may have given him a unique opportunity to win the nomination, but his own moderate politics and liberal reputation meant he was not a perfect fit. Warren Weaver of the *New York Times* reported: "The problem faced by Mr. Rockefeller is even more touchy because his chief political sponsor and upstate guide, Assemblyman Malcolm Wilson of Yonkers, has been one of the chief advocates of a residency requirement for relief."¹⁰⁶ While many Republicans feared his liberalism, many New York liberals feared that Rockefeller would betray his own politics if he linked himself with people like Wilson.

In his address, Rockefeller accused the Harriman Administration of poor leadership and being beholden to the Democratic machine, typical fodder for any Republican convention speech, but with the Democratic convention taking place in Buffalo, NY, the very same night as the Republican convention, these talking points might appear to have real merit. Harriman gave a solid speech that defended his record in office while challenging Republican claims that the New York economy was faltering due to his inaction. He discussed the proposals and efforts he led that the Republican

¹⁰⁵ Warren Weaver, Jr., "G.O.P. Platform Mirrors Dewey," *New York Times*, September 23, 1954, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Warren Weaver, Jr., "State G.O.P. Split Over Relief Curb," *New York Times*, August 20, 1958, 28.

legislature prevented from becoming law and argued that regardless of Rockefeller's promises, the Republican Party was led by the conservative Old Guard that did not work to protect the masses. "No matter who is nominated at Rochester," explained Harriman, "our real opponents are the Republican reactionaries. Candidates may come and candidates may go, but the Old Guard goes on forever."¹⁰⁷

Unfortunately for Harriman, the Democratic convention's most memorable event was not his acceptance speech, but a public struggle between the New York Democratic Party's traditional machine bosses such as Tammany Hall's Carmine De Sapio and its reformers led by figures like Eleanor Roosevelt to determine the U.S. senatorial nominee.¹⁰⁸ Harriman had tried to avoid the fight between the party bosses and reformers, but he had told the *New York Times* during an interview that Tom Finletter, the reformers' preferred candidate, was his first choice. Ultimately, when the convention nominated Manhattan District Attorney Frank Hogan—with the aid of delegates controlled by the party bosses—Harriman's leadership of the state party appeared second to De Sapio. Although Hogan was not a weak candidate, his nomination encouraged criticism among reformers that De Sapio, rather than Harriman, was the true leader of the state party. Rockefeller and the Republicans took advantage of this episode, saying that Harriman's unwillingness to oppose De Sapio was proof that Harriman was weak on everything from corruption and crime to the economy.¹⁰⁹ The jockeying between the

¹⁰⁷ "Excerpts from Harriman's Acceptance Speech," *New York Times*, August 26, 1958.

¹⁰⁸ The reformers opposed De Sapio's influence and, in turn, his nominee for senator Manhattan District Attorney Frank Hogan because they feared party bosses made the party susceptible to corruption. Instead, the liberals supported their own nominee Tom Finletter, who was known for previous roles as chief of the Marshall Plan Office in London and as a foreign policy advisor to Adlai Stevenson in 1952 and 1956.

¹⁰⁹ Harriman received assistance from De Sapio when he sought the Democratic nomination over Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. in 1954. Rudy Abramson, *Spanning the Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman, 1891-1986* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992), 504-510.

reformers and party bosses provided Republicans with a campaign issue that left a lasting impression on a race that would be largely a popularity contest.

Conclusion

With the party nominations taking shape days before the conventions, the *New York Mirror* printed a humor piece commenting on the race, which it called the “most open choice between multimillionaires the poor voters ever had.”¹¹⁰ The dialogue was between a husband and wife who debated the virtues of Rockefeller and Harriman. “‘I’m for Harriman,’ the wife said. ‘As a boy he had to peddle polo ponies and shine Rolls-Royces.’ ‘That’s nothing. My man is Rockefeller,’ he argued. ‘He began life with only two butlers, refused to be depressed down to this last four country-estates and had to patch his own society ball masquerade costumes.’”¹¹¹ New York papers were quick to call the race between Rockefeller and Harriman the “Millionaires Sweepstakes.” While the *Mirror* article appeared to be light-hearted, it reflected the serious perception that there was little difference between the two candidates. Indeed, Harriman and Rockefeller had a great deal in common as the son of a railroad baron and the grandson of an oil magnate. Both men had entered politics as aides in the Roosevelt administration, aspired to the top office in the nation, and had considered themselves friends. The similarities between the Republican and Democratic nominees reflected a level of general consensus in New York politics. Conservatives in the rightwing of the Republican Party voiced complaints, but they were a distinct minority. In general, both parties had made peace with New Deal liberalism and the participation of enlightened business leadership in politics. Both candidates appeared to agree on social issues, which is a good

¹¹⁰ H. I. Phillips, “Hi There!,” *New York Mirror*, August 22, 1958.

¹¹¹ Phillips, “Hi There!”

representation of the seeming accord in New York. The Lubell survey reveals the state was not free of discord, but the social issues that did affect people on a personal level were yet to surface in state politics.

Rockefeller's foray into politics was—so far—a great success. His careful preparation had worked in his favor and at times seemed unnecessary, as a wink and a handshake appeared to cure much of the mistrust felt by some Republican voters. The intensive research Rockefeller commissioned on the state of New York politics had helped him to decide whether he should run, but equally important, it had prepared him for a general election where he would need to build a diverse coalition of voters from all political backgrounds to win. Rockefeller's greatest strength would always be his ability to attract voters regardless of party affiliation. The sense that he blurred party lines, however, made him vulnerable to attacks from conservatives who would question his Republican credentials the rest of his public life. Rockefeller could succeed in this period despite ideological attacks because many Republicans were still unsure how the party's conservative traditions could and should be adapted to the era of postwar big government. Conservative Republicans would remain set against Rockefeller's candidacy in 1958, but they were accustomed to the party sacrificing political philosophy for a chance at victory. Any Republican in the governor's office would provide a windfall in terms of patronage and political appointments and Republicans would be able to boast control of the Legislature as well. New Yorkers of all backgrounds wanted a leader who could protect their economic and social preeminence in the nation and Rockefeller appeared capable of managing the job. The 1958-midterm elections would be disappointing for the Republican Party as a whole, but as for Rockefeller, 1958 would turn out to be his year.

Chapter Two

The Promise and Appeal of Rockefeller Republicanism, 1958-1960

Nelson Rockefeller's earliest years in office as governor were dramatic. They were filled with highs and lows that reveal the vitality as well as the limitations of moderate Republicanism during the final years of Eisenhower's Administration. Eisenhower advocated "Modern Republicanism," a moderate form of Republicanism, which was internationalist in orientation and embracing of New and Fair Deal programs domestically. Rockefeller agreed with the basic tenets of Modern Republicanism, although he thought the president's administration was too influenced by party conservatives and not sweeping enough in its vision. He believed that the Republican Party needed to embrace internationalism and the postwar activist state if it hoped to remain relevant in twentieth century America.

This chapter begins in 1958 with Rockefeller's seemingly easy win over Averell Harriman, who many thought was certain to win a second term in office, and ends with Rockefeller successfully exerting pressure on the Republican Party to redraft its party platform to meet what he felt were the needs of modern America in 1960. Between these victories, he faced a Republican-led legislative revolt against his first budget proposal in

New York and failed to convince the national Republican Party that he should be its presidential nominee. Part one of this chapter begins with an examination of New York State when Rockefeller won his first gubernatorial election, a period in Rockefeller's career that serves as an opportunity to understand how the governor's moderate Republicanism placed him outside the mainstream of the New York Republican Party despite its liberal reputation within the national Republican Party. While Rockefeller's entrance into electoral politics was not without some difficulties, he proved himself to be an active governor who used his influence to usher his relatively liberal agenda through a Republican-led legislature despite numerous objections by fellow party members. Part two broadens in scope to explore the new governor's unconventional attempt to win the Republican presidential nomination and then his active participation in designing the Republican Party platform. Rockefeller's foray into national politics reveals a difficult political terrain for a talented newcomer who attempted to navigate opposition from party conservatives, while forwarding policies that set him apart from Eisenhower. For example, Rockefeller argued that the government needed to increase spending for education and other domestic programs and close what he believed was a missile gap with the Soviet Union.

An examination of Rockefeller's expression of moderate Republicanism in his earliest, and in some measure, most ambitious years as an elected official, reveals the progressive politics of a staunch Republican Cold War centrist known for his appeal to independent and Democratic voters. Rockefeller's first year as governor was a great success. He proved himself a dynamic politician who changed the political terrain in New York. While Rockefeller often seemed perfectly suited for public office, his first forays

into national politics were problematic. He sought to be the Republican standard-bearer while opposing the status quo whether that be with his politics or his attempt to unseat Nixon as the 1960 presidential nominee. Rockefeller presented himself as the public conscience of the party, which drew additional ire from party conservatives who did not believe he had earned such a position and questioned his Republican credentials. Indeed Rockefeller faced constant scrutiny from many sectors of the national Republican Party, yet he owed his ultimate success in the battle to revise the 1960 Republican Party platform to a general uncertainty among Republicans who were anxious to retain the White House. The party was especially concerned after a Democratic sweep during the midterm elections of 1958 that removed numerous Republicans from office. Ultimately, Rockefeller's efforts to redirect the Republican Party outraged many Republicans who believed the millionaire was motivated by personal gain. Rockefeller's success, particularly in the field of civil rights where he pushed the party to maintain its traditional support of the African American freedom struggle, was possible because Republican leaders were uncertain about the party's direction at the start of the 1960s. As a result, the charismatic moderate Republican would be able to exert impressive influence over the Republican Party, a role that he spent the rest of his career trying to recapture.

Part I

Amidst a Democratic Landslide

Rockefeller has been the life of the party this fall, but he is desperately hoping the voters won't remember which party.¹

Mary McGrory, *Washington Star*, 1958

¹ Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 757-758.

Rockefeller faced two difficult challenges in his campaign for governor in 1958: disassociate himself from the Republican Party, in a difficult campaign year and distinguish himself from Harriman. He achieved the first by rarely mentioning his party while campaigning. Numerous radio and television advertisements, billboards, and pamphlets made no mention of the Republican Party, in favor of slogans such as “Rockefeller Gets Things Done” and “Put Some Go in Government With Rockefeller.”² When the press asked for Rockefeller’s reaction to Eisenhower calling Democrats “political radicals” or saying unions needed “fumigating,” he did not contradict the president but remarked, “I wouldn’t put it quite that way.”³ While Eisenhower’s approval ratings remained above 50 percent in the months leading up to the elections, his fellow Republicans seeking office across the nation were not as fortunate.⁴ A September 1958, Gallup poll found that 67 percent of voters said that regardless of how they planned to vote, they expected Democrats to retain control of Congress in November.⁵ Voters across the nation expressed dissatisfaction with Republicans, particularly conservatives, who were associated with the recession and the party’s anti-labor theme that focused on “right-to-work” laws, which labor unions used successfully as a means to rally opposition

² Alan L. Otten, “Rockefeller’s Rise,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 30, 1958, 1.

³ Otten, “Rockefeller’s Rise,” 1.

⁴ Gallup Poll (AIPO), Sep, 1958. Retrieved Feb-9-2013 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html Roper Commercial Survey, Oct, 1958. Retrieved Feb-9-2013 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html Gallup Poll (AIPO), Nov, 1958. Retrieved Feb-9-2013 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

⁵ Gallup Poll (AIPO), Sep, 1958. Retrieved Feb-9-2013 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html

in key states.⁶ Rockefeller's progressive politics put him more in line with Harriman than with upstate Republicans or even Eisenhower. Rockefeller continued to blame New York's economic slowdown on Harriman's mismanagement of the state economy, but he made no promises to cut taxes or reduce spending on social programs that he supported as much as Harriman. "Mr. Rockefeller, just like Mr. Harriman," wrote the *Wall Street Journal*,

promises to continue State government regulation of rents, to espouse a liberal civil rights program and to broaden the state's welfare services. Like Mr. Harriman, he also refuses to hold out any great hope of major economies in government or of lower taxes for the people. This is no slogging, head-on battle between conservative and liberal political philosophies.⁷

It was essential that Rockefeller attract some of the independents and the Democrats who voted for Harriman in 1954. Rather than run on the Eisenhower record, Rockefeller accused his opponent of being beholden to the Tammany Machine, failing to keep industry in the state, and falling short of his campaign promises. It was Rockefeller's plan to show the state's voters that he brought, if not ideas, then a new enthusiasm that set him apart from all others in the political field, Democrats and Republicans alike.

To the dismay of some who longed for an election determined by the issues and to the delight of others who strained for an opportunity to shake a Rockefeller's hand, the 1958 gubernatorial race became an opportunity for New Yorkers to trade one millionaire for the next. An editorial in the *Washington Post* expressed concern that both Harriman and Rockefeller had failed the state's voters by conducting campaigns reliant upon glad-handing and personal appeals rather than focusing on state issues. "Blintzing the issues,"

⁶ Lewis L. Gould, *Grand Old Party: A History of the Republicans* (New York: Random House, 2003), 342-343.

⁷ "Strange Political Islands," *Wall Street Journal*, October 31, 1958, 8.

as the *Post* characterized it, was necessary for millionaire candidates to establish a common link with voters. However, eating blintzes, gefilte fish, pizza, and any number of ethnic delicacies for the cameras did not replace the candidates challenging each other on important policy issues. Both candidates were at fault, declared the *Post*: “Governor Harriman, for example, has been talking as if he were running for President (perhaps he has his dates confused) rather than for a second term as Governor.” Rockefeller in comparison was said to give speeches that were designed to offend “neither millionaires nor milkmen.” The article continued, “If Governor Harriman and Mr. Rockefeller would sink their teeth into legitimate issues with the zest they have displayed in sampling the gastronomic specialties of the sidewalks of New York, they undoubtedly would help voters to make a decision.”⁸ The voters, perhaps confident in New York’s standing in the late 1950s, did not insist that the candidates wage an aggressive campaign on state issues. Harriman did not point to New Yorkers’ general satisfaction as proof of his sound leadership; instead, he allowed Rockefeller to rely on his personality and flush campaign coffers to sway the campaign. While both had significant personal wealth, Harriman did not spend his or his family’s money as generously on the campaign as Rockefeller. Harriman sought to beat Rockefeller by linking him to the Eisenhower administration, but this strategy did little to dissuade voters who were willing to vote for the newcomer who had toiled hard to disassociate himself from the current administration. As a result Harriman’s campaign appeared to be on the defensive while Rockefeller was in his element.

⁸ “Blintzing the Issues,” *Washington Post*, October 26, 1958, E4.

Harriman was a good campaigner and he had made sure to interact with constituents throughout his term in office, but one of Rockefeller's greatest assets was his open and engaging personality paired with his natural affinity for tireless campaigning. When he began his tour of upstate New York during the summer, Rockefeller's ability to win support from Republican voters translated to more diverse audiences. On October 24, 1958, Rockefeller had one of his most exciting campaign appearances at a rally organized by the Citizens for Rockefeller-Keating Committee for Rockefeller and Kenneth Keating, the Republican nominee for U.S. Senator, where 3,000 Puerto Rican residents gathered in Spanish Harlem to listen to the candidate.⁹ Rockefeller, who spoke fluent Spanish, discarded his prepared notes and launched into a twenty-minute ad-lib talk to a riveted audience. The crowd chanted "Viva Rockefeller," and a sign held in the crowd depicted him as a toreador, with the message, "He kills the bull—Tammany Hall."¹⁰ Rockefeller told the audience that the state "desperately need[ed] to develop a housing policy to assure decent homes for all its people." Furthermore, he reiterated previous statements calling for improved low-income housing, maintenance of rent controls, a continuation of the 15-cent subway fare, and no residence requirement for relief eligibility. The problem, according to Rockefeller, was not that Harriman's administration had not recognized these needs or pledged to address them, but, rather, that it failed to implement a comprehensive housing policy. Rockefeller's main critique was not that Harriman wanted the government to do too much; on the contrary, Rockefeller argued, Harriman had not ensured that the state economy was strong enough or the state administration efficient

⁹ Kenneth Keating was a fellow moderate Republican who was nominated for U.S. Senator from New York. At the time of the campaign, he was the Congressman from New York's 38th District representing Wayne and Monroe Counties near Lake Ontario in upstate New York.

¹⁰ Milton Bracker, "Rockefeller a Hit in Spanish Speech," *New York Times*, October 25, 1958, 13.

enough to support the measures Harriman supported. The Harriman Administration, according to Rockefeller, had dragged “its feet on existing state housing programs. Only twelve state-aided projects have been completed since [Harriman] took office. The last limited-dividend projects for middle-income families were completed way back in 1955. None is being constructed now.”¹¹ Some people in the largely Puerto Rican audience would have already associated the Rockefeller name with the development of housing. Rockefeller’s International Basic Economy Corporation had built 1,600 homes in a development in Las Lomas, Puerto Rico. Once the speech was over Rockefeller jumped into the audience to greet people and was swept up into the crowd riding high on people’s shoulders. He disappeared at one point, to the consternation of his staff—one remarked, “We’re losing the candidate. He’ll break a leg”—but he reemerged again still smiling as if he was having the time of his life.¹² Harriman campaigned as vigorously as Rockefeller, but he gave the impression that his interactions with constituents were the result of study and necessity rather than a natural affinity. Regardless of any criticism Rockefeller might garner because of his personality-driven campaign, no one could deny that he seemed born for the campaign trail.

Rockefeller and his staff dared leave nothing to chance; he was unafraid to commit a great deal of his and his family’s resources to win the governorship. Drew Pearson of the *Washington Post* reported that Rockefeller spent \$60,000 a day on television ads, which were still something of a novelty in the late 1950s. Full-page advertisements were placed in newspapers to list the twelve phone numbers one could call to get Nelson’s transcribed answers to certain questions. However, Pearson noted that

¹¹ “Rockefeller Hoisted Up On Shoulders of Crowd,” *New York Herald Tribune*, October 25, 1958.

¹² Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 752.

it would be difficult to know how much was truly spent on campaign expenses like setting up fifty-four Rockefeller headquarters in department stores to pass out campaign literature to shoppers. Pearson, among others, acknowledged that the Rockefeller family's decades-long campaign to burnish its reputation through philanthropic works also benefited Nelson. The family had left an indelible mark on New York City's landscape. "It's not merely political money that has helped Rockefeller," wrote Pearson.

It has been money spent wisely and for the public welfare over a long period of time. There's the United Nations Building, paid for by the Rockefellers. And the Lincoln Square project for the new Metropolitan Opera House, the Philharmonic Orchestra, Fordham University, and the Ballet Theater to which the Rockefellers are contributing generously.¹³

In the previous twenty years, the General Education Board division of the Rockefeller Foundation, was estimated to give \$50 million to black education, particularly in the South. When the Rockefeller family's long reach drew some criticism in comparison to Harriman's, Rockefeller defended his family's contributions by asking, "Has anyone heard of a Harriman Foundation?"¹⁴

As the election came to a close, Rockefeller's chances improved, but it remained unclear if he was gaining ground because voters really expected that he could change New York. The *New York Times* conducted a survey of the entire state and concluded that voters had decided to "give a young guy a chance" because "it's not likely to make much difference anyway."¹⁵ At the end of the conventions in August, Harriman had a commanding 60 to 40 percent lead over Rockefeller, but by mid-October that lead

¹³ Drew Pearson, "Hard to Defeat Billion and Smile," *Washington Post*, November 1, 1958, B15.

¹⁴ Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 741.

¹⁵ Leo Egan, "Survey of State Sees Rockefeller and Hogan Ahead," *New York Times*, October 26, 1958.

dwindled and people were unsure who might win the race.¹⁶ The *Times* identified varying reasons why people who once voted for Harriman were now considering Rockefeller. Those from the right of the political spectrum complained that Harriman was paying too close attention to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Voters in the middle complained that Harriman showed weakness when he did not get his senate choice nominated in favor of Carmine De Sapio's choice, and finally people on the left of the spectrum reported a hope that if Rockefeller won he might block Nixon's nomination in 1960. Some Rockefeller supporters stated in interviews that they hoped he would cut taxes—a promise he resisted his entire campaign—while others hoped he would quicken the pace of highway construction. According to the *Times*, the most important factor swaying voters, was indeed personalities, while many failed to identify what issues the candidates advocated.¹⁷

On November 4, 1958, at 9:00 P.M., two hours after polls closed, it was clear that Rockefeller would be the victor. At 11:30 P.M., Rockefeller stood in front of an audience of 3,000 supporters at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City announcing his victory over Harriman. The governor-elect told the audience that it was a “wonderful moment” he accepted with a “deep sense of humility” and an “appreciation of the responsibilities involved.”¹⁸ It was not an average win. Rockefeller had bested Harriman by 557,000 votes—the second-biggest victory margin in a New York gubernatorial election—and

¹⁶ Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 747.

¹⁷ Leo Egan, “Issues as Voters See Them,” *New York Times*, October 26, 1958, E5.

¹⁸ “Rockefeller Tells Victory Party He Has ‘Deep Sense of Humility,’” *New York Times*, November 5, 1958, 30.

with 5,678,666 votes cast, the election surpassed the previous records.¹⁹ His campaign was also the most expensive for statewide office in New York. The official totals stated that Rockefeller spent close to \$1.8 million, while Harriman spent \$1.1 million.²⁰ Rockefeller's win was also notable because of the inroads he made with union members, Jews, African Americans, and Puerto Ricans. While Harriman garnered more votes from these groups, Rockefeller attracted significant minority support in New York City. "Mr. Rockefeller," the *Times* reported, "is the second Republican candidate for Governor since the advent of the New Deal to make such substantial inroads into the Negro Democratic vote." In contrast to Dewey, who in 1942 carried some black voting districts when he advocated a state fair employment practices law, Rockefeller conducted an enthusiastic and aggressive campaign that took him to all sixty-two of the state's counties.²¹

Rockefeller's run for governor blurred party lines. One Democratic politician commented that Rockefeller sounded like a Democrat and was running on a Democratic platform.²² Rockefeller successfully ran as a politician removed from the traditions of the Republican Party, a smart strategy in a tough Republican election cycle. As one journalist wrote, Rockefeller was a "Republican oasis in a desert of defeat," but his victory was not a vote of confidence for his vision of moderate or liberal Republicanism, at least in any clearly defined manner.²³ Rather, Rockefeller convinced the majority of the electorate that he was capable, enthusiastic, and resolute in his desire to hold high office. His

¹⁹ The previous record of \$5,473,048 was set in 1950 when Thomas Dewey defeated Walter A. Lynch. Leo Egan, "Upheaval Looms in State Politics," *New York Times*, November 6, 1958, 1.

²⁰ Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 766.

²¹ Laymond Robinson, "Minorities Moved in G.O.P. Direction," *New York Times*, November 6, 1958, 27.

²² James Desmond, *Nelson Rockefeller: A Political Biography* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1964), 186.

²³ Desmond, *Nelson Rockefeller*, 193.

strategy worked well in the general election, but mainstream Republicans would soon demand more if he wanted to earn their lasting approval.

Rockefeller's victory drew attention across the country amid a Democratic landslide, which was regarded as a repudiation of the Eisenhower Administration. The day after the election, Eisenhower fielded questions from the press about the possibility that Rockefeller would succeed him in two years. "For a long time leading politicians, notably those in your party, have considered Mr. Nixon as the front runner for the Republican nomination for President in 1960," stated Edward Morgan of American Broadcasting Company. "Now comes along another new Republican face in the person of Mr. Rockefeller as a possible challenger. As things stand now, do you consider Mr. Rockefeller a little bit too much on the radical or the spending side, or would you look with equal favor on either man as the standard bearer in 1960?"²⁴ Rather than refute the notion that Rockefeller was too radical to serve as the party standard bearer, Eisenhower explained that time in office reveals what every man believes. While Rockefeller's political fortunes appeared to flourish overnight, pundits wondered if he were Republican enough for the party. The question from Morgan was particularly important because in the months leading up to the election Eisenhower argued that the key issue for voters was whether to choose "left -wing government or sensible government, spendthrift government or responsible government."²⁵ It was unclear whether Rockefeller won because he was so far left of the Republican mainstream that voters did not associate him with their disapproval of the Eisenhower Administration's economic policies or because

²⁴ "Transcript of the President's News Conference on Domestic and Foreign Matters," *New York Times*, November 6, 1958, 18.

²⁵ "Transcript of the President's News Conference on Domestic and Foreign Matters," *New York Times*, November 6, 1958, 18.

he personified a version of the “Modern Republicanism” that the president often advocated. Eisenhower, however, offered little information to clarify this point during the press conference. Furthermore, he seemed hesitant to defend modern Republicanism. When a reporter asked him if the widespread Democratic victories would discourage his attempts to mold the party along the lines of modern Republicanism, Eisenhower assured the reporter that he remained strongly committed, but he offered a vague definition of it rather than a resolute defense. He stated that modern Republicanism was a “Republican party that is ready to meet modern problems in accordance with the basic principles or traditional principles of the party” and that minor setbacks would not dissuade him.²⁶ One of the most notable elements of Rockefeller’s campaign had been his ability to convince New Yorkers that a vote for him was a vote for Rockefeller, not the Republican Party. The result had been a dramatic success. While Rockefeller’s victory may not have been an obvious success for moderate or modern Republicanism, there were a few successes for moderate Republicans, which indicated that this minority within the party might improve the party’s overall electoral success in the future.

In the November 17, issue of *Life Magazine*, an editorial entitled, “The G.O.P. Wasn’t Pushed—It Jumped,” called Rockefeller’s victory proof that the Republican Party needed a new kind of candidate to win elections. The publication explained that the Republican Party could no longer rely on “dull candidates and no leadership” to win elections. Henry Luce, who was the publisher of *Life*, was himself a moderate Republican and an avid supporter of Rockefeller and his publications reflected that position. The editorial posited that the Republican Party had a difficult election year because it needed

²⁶ “Transcript of the President’s News Conference on Domestic and Foreign Matters,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1958, 18.

to update its leadership and approach to governing. The electorate supported Rockefeller, according to *Life*, because voters appreciated what the “Republicans generally refused to provide: lively, hard-working candidates, a positive approach to politics, and an active national political leadership.”²⁷ The losers in 1958 were Old Guard Republicans such as Ohio Senator John W. Bricker and Nevada Senator George W. Malone, who belonged to the “mortician’s wing of the G.O.P.”²⁸ According to *Life*, their focus on aggressive foreign policy and an ever-vigilant crusade against socialism in the Democratic Party was no longer enough to sway voters. By contrast, Rockefeller in New York, Mark Hatfield in Oregon, Gerald Ford in Michigan, and Hugh Scott in Pennsylvania had won because they were appealing and enthusiastic moderate Republicans.

The *Life* editorial expressed the opinion of many observers who felt the Republican Party was fractured and, consequently, incapable of competing effectively against the Democratic Party. According to the editorial, Eisenhower first hoped to “remake the party in his own image” when he was first elected, but little had been done to achieve this goal. With the exception of Nixon, the party leadership had not worked to replace the “Old Guard stereotype with a new image of a national party pledged both to private enterprise and the public welfare.” The 1958 success of moderate Republicans encouraged discussions that the party needed to embrace these leaders if it hoped to win elections in the future. The names mentioned in this article, excluding Ford, were regularly mentioned as possible presidential candidates throughout the 1960s.

²⁷ “The G.O.P. Wasn’t Pushed—It Jumped: Rockefeller’s Win is a Last Warning Against Dull Candidates and No Leadership,” *Life Magazine*, November 17, 1958.

²⁸ Other Old Guard senators who were defeated include: Frank A. Barrett of Wyoming and Chapman Revercomb and John D. Hoblitzell both of West Virginia. Russell Baker, “Senate Vote Hits G.O.P. Right Wing,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1958, 24; and “The G.O.P. Wasn’t Pushed—It Jumped: Rockefeller’s Win is a Last Warning Against Dull Candidates and No Leadership,” *Life Magazine*, November 17, 1958.

One name that was not mentioned, however, was that of Barry Goldwater, who also experienced an impressive reelection as U.S. Senator from Arizona. He had defeated former Senator Ernest McFarland by 35,000 votes, a margin five times more than when he had first unseated McFarland, the Democratic incumbent, in 1952. While the press paid much attention to Rockefeller's victory in New York and speculated whether he could be the presidential nominee in 1960, Goldwater, who ran on a platform that opposed socialism in government and growth of union power, also proved to be an attractive candidate who drew enthusiastic bipartisan support from voters. At the age of 49, Goldwater, who was known for his conservative views, was a year younger than Rockefeller and considered a rising star. Goldwater was at the forefront of a wave of GOP success in Arizona, where a Republican was elected governor along with the reelection of two Republican congressmen.²⁹ The Goldwater-McFarland election was determined along ideological lines rather than party lines, with one-third of the state's nominal Democrats joining most of the Republicans in a straight-ticket vote.³⁰ Although Goldwater's win was considered an exception, Goldwater would become increasingly important in the party as the most prominent Republican leader who opposed the calls to modernize the Republican Party.

Goldwater aside, the voters were not swayed by Republican campaigns that focused on attacking labor and communism.³¹ Chalmers M. Roberts of the *Washington Post* wrote that the weak economy seemed to be the main factor driving voters' support of Democrats. For example, conservative mainstay U.S. Senator from Ohio John W.

²⁹ Gladwin Hill, "Goldwater Wins in Arizona Race," *New York Times*, November 5, 1958, 20.

³⁰ The state election drew 267,881 Democrats and 117,047 Republicans. Gladwin Hill, "Goldwater Wins in Arizona Race," *New York Times*, November 5, 1958, 20.

³¹ Chalmers M. Roberts, "Voters Respond," *Washington Post*, November 7, 1958, A17.

Bricker was defeated when he sought his third-term in office with a campaign that centered on his support of “right-to-work” laws.³² Meanwhile, William F. Knowland, U.S. Senator from California lost the race for governor of California against Democrat Edmund G. Brown in a contest particularly noted for a divisive Republican primary fight that split the state party and for Knowland’s fervent support for a “right-to-work” law and a ban on closed union shops.³³ Roscoe Drummond of the *Washington Post* wrote, “Wherever the Republicans won, it was almost invariably the Republican liberals—the Eisenhower Republicans, the ‘modern’ Republicans—who withstood and in New York turned back the Democratic avalanche. The sensational triumph of Governor-elect Nelson Rockefeller is the most vivid example.”³⁴

“To Generate a New Era of Progress”³⁵

On January 1, 1959, Rockefeller became the forty-ninth governor of New York. With a sweeping and grand inaugural address that reflected on the Cold War, the Western Hemisphere, and the might of the atom bomb, Rockefeller spoke, not simply to New Yorkers, but to “citizens of America and of the free world” and expressed concern over Communism, totalitarianism, and a world divided between “those who believe in the essential equality of peoples of all nations and races and creeds—and those whose only

³² John W. Bricker was a conservative in the tradition of fellow Ohioan Robert Taft.

³³ William F. Knowland was not necessarily known for his conservatism earlier in his career; however, he was a strong supporter of the “China Lobby,” which advocated the support of the National regime of Chiang Kai-shek in opposition to the Chinese communists. His conservative views on foreign policy also led him to threaten to resign his seat in Senate so he could stump the nation in opposition to China being allowed to join the United Nations when he believed the Eisenhower administration was reconsidering its opposition. “William F. Knowland is Apparent Suicide; Ex-Senator was 65,” *New York Times*, February 24, 1974, 1.

³⁴ Roscoe Drummond, “Meaning of the Election,” *Washington Post*, November 8, 1958, A9.

³⁵ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 53rd Governor (Albany, 1959), 17.

creed is their own ruthless race for power.”³⁶ The governor introduced himself as a grand thinker who aspired to use New York as a platform to introduce his vision of how the United States should set an example for the world. It was essential for New York to be a leader in the nation economically, Rockefeller explained, but perhaps more importantly to fulfill the nation’s duty to guarantee equality for its citizens. A major theme in the address was that the United States could not be a leader of the free world unless it protected the freedom of its own citizens. “We can serve—and save—freedom elsewhere only as we practice it in our own lives. We cannot speak of the equality of men and nations unless we hold high the banner of social equality in our own communities.”³⁷ The majority of the address was global in focus and the press took notice. Roscoe Drummond said the address “could as well have been delivered from the steps of the Capitol in Washington as from the steps of the Capitol in Albany.”³⁸ Arthur Krock pointed out that “not until the twenty-ninth paragraph of his inaugural address at Albany did he mention ‘New York.’”³⁹

When Rockefeller did turn the focus of his address to his home state, he discussed an expansive program that called for initiatives in numerous fields. “We must speed our economic growth,” stated Rockefeller, while addressing transportation problems, developing natural resources, and reorganizing governmental processes. “We must put the state’s fiscal house in order,” he continued, while improving and expanding social and health insurance, enhancing programs for the aged, and increasing the amount of

³⁶ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 53rd Governor (Albany, 1959), 11.

³⁷ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 53rd Governor (Albany, 1959), 12.

³⁸ Roscoe Drummond, “Rockefeller’s Address,” *Washington Post*, January 3, 1959, A7.

³⁹ Arthur Krock, “In the Nation: The Projection of the Event at Albany,” *New York Times*, January 6, 1959, 32.

intellectual and cultural facilities in New York.⁴⁰ Rockefeller concluded his remarks with what would become a common refrain throughout his political career, although his agenda could fairly be described as liberal, he avoided the term. He explained that rather than try to find a political label to define his approach to governance, he hoped the public would unite behind him in an effort to meet the needs of society. “We shall be conservative—for we know the measureless value that is our heritage, to save and cherish and to enrich, we shall be liberal—for we are vastly more interested in the opportunities of tomorrow than the problems of yesterday,” and “we shall be progressive—for the opportunities and the challenges are of such size and scope that we can never halt and say: our labor is done.”⁴¹

Rockefeller broke with many traditions during his inauguration: He forewent a morning coat and striped trousers in favor of a blue business suit, at a cost \$40,000, he paid for his own inaugural ball, which featured Cab Calloway and the New York City Ballet, and most notably, he gave a speech that removed any doubt that he saw the governorship as his vehicle to the White House. Unlike Harriman, Grover Cleveland, Al Smith, and Theodore Roosevelt before him whose addresses had all kept to New York issues, Rockefeller made no attempt to quiet talk of his fitness to be a national candidate, Even Franklin Roosevelt made no mention of national or international issues during his second inaugural address in 1931, in favor of a discussion about the breakdown of local government in New York.⁴² While the governorship of New York was considered a launching pad for presidential nominees and presidents, tradition dictated that governors

⁴⁰ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 53rd Governor (Albany, 1959), 13.

⁴¹ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 53rd Governor (Albany, 1959), 14.

⁴² Arthur Krock, “In the Nation: The Projection of the Event at Albany,” *New York Times*, January 6, 1959, 32.

would deflect speculation and cite their own inaugural address as proof that their focus was not on national politics. While it was a calculated risk for Rockefeller to break with tradition, in January 1959, the results were largely positive. Perhaps, the *Times*'s Arthur Krock observed, candid interest in national trends was what the day called for, in a time when the entire nation was in peril because of the Cold War. The Albany, NY, *Knickerbocker News* published an editorial praising Rockefeller's emphasis on how one state could play a major role in the struggle to defeat Communism: "We found it difficult to listen to Governor Rockefeller's inaugural address without thinking of another state and another governor—Faubus of Arkansas. And from that starting point one's mind wandered quickly to distant lands and to the known reaction of peoples of many and varied racial strains to what happened—and still continues to happen—in Little Rock."⁴³ Rockefeller had long expressed an interest in national and international affairs, first as a presidential adviser, and most recently when he spearheaded the Rockefeller Brothers Fund reports. Now free from the demands of the campaign and before the legislative session, he seized the opportunity to present a far-reaching statement that revealed the philosophical concerns that drew him to public life.

On January 7, 1959, Rockefeller presented a progressive program to the members of the legislature that focused on four major themes: attending to state fiscal affairs, expanding the state economy, improving individual and family life, and streamlining state administration. As Rockefeller stated, "There lies before us a joint mission of the highest calling. That mission is to achieve a resurgence of human progress in New York State based on accelerated economic growth. The ultimate purpose of our effort is to

⁴³ "Rockefeller Does Well to Stress State's Role in Freedom Battle," *Albany Knickerbocker News*, January 2, 1959.

insure the opportunity for each individual to attain his fullest potential and achieve the maximum development of his own capacities.”⁴⁴ Rockefeller identified several fields that the state needed to make a priority including enlarging forest preserves, creating an agency to coordinate atomic energy development, continuing to supplement local school districts with state funding, and extending unemployment benefits. To make this possible the state would need to attract business and encourage growth in the state, but most immediately, the state needed to address the “serious condition” of its deteriorating finances. In the past four years, he explained, state expenditures increased 46 percent while revenues increased 35 percent. Deficits were avoided by using bond funds and drawing from the Capital Construction Fund of the State, but this pattern needed to be halted. The governor’s ambitious plans could only be met if “hard decisions” were made to avoid “fiscal disaster.”⁴⁵ Equal to the state’s serious financial situation were what Rockefeller identified as critical problems in the transportation system and an immediate need for more investment in education.

A *New York Times* editorial opined that Rockefeller “tacitly criticized members of his own party in the Legislature, as well as the Democrats.”⁴⁶ The message blamed the state’s problems on Harriman’s leadership and said that without the institution of any major new programs the state would amass a \$230 million deficit in the next fiscal year.⁴⁷ During his campaign Rockefeller had often accused Harriman of mismanaging the state’s finances by spending more than the state could afford without ever mentioning that the sitting governor had often unsuccessfully asked the Republican-controlled legislature to

⁴⁴ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 53rd Governor (Albany, 1959), 17.

⁴⁵ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 53rd Governor (Albany, 1959), 18.

⁴⁶ “The Rockefeller Message,” *New York Times*, January 8, 1959, 28.

⁴⁷ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 53rd Governor (Albany, 1959), 19.

increase revenue. In fact, Rockefeller had never made any mention of New York City's financial problems. Wagner had already stated that the city needed \$145,000,000 to balance the budget and would need state aid or increased taxing powers or both. In the past, Harriman offered support for the city's appeals for more aid, while Dewey had often used the legislative message as an opportunity to criticize financial waste in New York City. Unlike his predecessors, Rockefeller had said nothing about the city except to praise the proposal for the Lincoln Square project and to express his desire to increase business at the Port of New York. The legislature would have to wait for the specifics of Rockefeller's plan to increase state revenue, but talk of the politically unpopular prospect of raising taxes was already swirling around Albany spurring the creation of informal alliances of legislators hoping to block a tax increase.

Before Rockefeller presented his budget to the legislature on February 1, he made an unprecedented call upon the legislature for an early vote to pass an increase in the gas tax to help meet the state's financial needs. If approved, the tax on gas would rise from 4 to 6 cents per gallon and from 6 to 9 cents for diesel and was expected to generate \$60 million. Rockefeller won his first victory and signed the bill on January 21, with the quip, "If my grandfather could only see me now!"⁴⁸ This episode was an introduction to the battle lines that would be drawn throughout the session. Harriman had unsuccessfully attempted to get a 1-cent increase passed the year before, but Senate Republicans voted privately 31 to 3 to reject the tax increase, thus killing the issue. Now when faced with a similar appeal from a Republican governor, the Democrats voted against the new tax increase. Despite this Democratic opposition, however, a majority of Republicans now in

⁴⁸ Hugh Morrow Interview of Joseph Murphy, August 11, 1980, RAC, NAR, folder 16, box 2, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

support of a gas tax increase were able to get the law passed in both houses by a vote of 32 to 26 in the Senate and 87 to 62 in the Assembly.⁴⁹ Ten years before, Dewey had been defeated on a similar issue by a revolt organized by Republican conservatives led by Senator Walter Mahoney. With Rockefeller as governor, Mahoney switched his position and ran interference for Rockefeller, clearing the way for the vote. The Democrats defended their partisan vote by saying they were protecting the taxpayers' interests and wanted more budgetary facts before they made a decision. Even though Rockefeller's campaign and subsequent program were similar to previous Democratic programs, the Democrats were nonetheless prepared to oppose the governor whenever possible, particularly because Rockefeller had blamed Harriman for the state's fiscal problems. At the same time, Republicans were willing to come to Rockefeller's aid when they had previously obstructed Harriman, but Rockefeller would face significant protest from both sides of the line when he proposed the first budget in New York history that would surpass \$2,000,000,000.

Rockefeller stood in front of the state legislature in Albany on February 2, and asked for approval of both the state's largest budget and tax increase in history. This was necessary, he explained, because the vast majority of the proposed expenditures were "the direct results of laws enacted and administrative decisions made months and years ago."⁵⁰ Rockefeller presented himself and his proposed budget, perhaps not as a person who was fiscally conservative, but in line with fiscal realism. The goal was to return the state to a pay-as-you-go policy on capital construction as soon as possible and to rely less on bond financing and more on efficiency and economy. The record \$2,041,000,000

⁴⁹ "Responsibility at Albany," *New York Times*, January 21, 1959, 30.

⁵⁰ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 53rd Governor (Albany, 1959), 33.

budget, which exceeded the previous year's budget by \$240 million, called for a tax increase of \$277 million, the majority of which would be collected from increasing the personal income tax and instituting an automatic withholding system to prevent non-payment. The two largest increases in the budget were for education—nearly a third of the budget was allocated for state aid to local school districts—and new highway construction. Rockefeller asked the joint session of the senate and assembly for a truce on partisan politics. It was unusual for the governor to read the budget message personally, typically a clerk would read the message to the two houses separately. Rockefeller was taking express responsibility for the historic budget and its approval, while trying to disassociate himself from its size and the inevitable protests to follow. He stated that 80 percent of the expenditures were mandatory or obligatory, and required by laws passed before he had entered office. The legislature, it was reported, received the proposal “in glum silence.”⁵¹ That evening, Rockefeller took his appeal to the television airwaves telling New Yorkers that it was more important to address the critical fiscal situation than to place blame.⁵² The partisan lines were already clearly drawn. For example, Democrats in the legislature joined by union leaders had already complained that Rockefeller's fiscal program would “soak the poor.” Meanwhile, Republicans were less vocal, but no more pleased. The displeasure with the budget was indeed non-partisan.

“Like small boys faced with a giant spoonful of nasty medicine,” wrote *Times* journalist Warren Weaver, Jr., the Republican legislators sat in stony silence preparing

⁵¹ Leo Egan, “Rockefeller, Asking Record Tax, Challenges Foes to Trim Budget,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1959, 1.

⁵² “The State Budget,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1959, 30.

themselves for the personal battles they would wage to get Rockefeller's budget passed.⁵³ The *Times* printed reports a few weeks before stating that Rockefeller's popularity after the November election had persuaded many Republicans that they would have to support "liberal" aspects of the legislative program that in the past they opposed when suggested by Harriman. The quick passage of the gas tax increase and Rockefeller's general popularity were credited as the reason why Republicans would now "approve enlargements of social welfare and civil rights programs that they rejected when recommended by a Democratic Governor."⁵⁴ Republicans might support Rockefeller's proposals, but many appeared reticent and concerned about their reelection chances when angry letters from constituents flooded their offices. Partisan support would require a good deal of negotiating.

New Yorkers expressed heavy opposition to Rockefeller's proposed budget and tax increase. While state legislators were not surprised that the vast majority of letters they received in reference to Rockefeller's budget plan were critical, the sheer volume and the threats of political reprisals did cause special concern. A common sentiment expressed by housewives was, "I couldn't run my household the way you're running the state; my expenses can't be any bigger than my income."⁵⁵ Conservative estimates were that more than 100,000 letters arrived in legislators' offices in the two weeks after the budget message. While many letter writers called for a reduction in state spending, few made specific recommendations for cuts.⁵⁶ The number of letter writers who complained that Rockefeller did not understand the value of a dollar to low and middle income

⁵³ Warren Weaver, Jr., "G.O.P. Grumbles Over Fiscal Plan," *New York Times*, February 3, 1959, 1.

⁵⁴ Leo Egan, "Rockefeller's Votes Now Aid His Program," *New York Times*, January 11, 1959, E4.

⁵⁵ Warren Weaver, Jr., "Tax Mail Ignores Rockefeller Plea," *New York Times*, February 15, 1959, 1.

⁵⁶ Weaver, "Tax Mail Ignores Rockefeller Plea," 1.

families suggested that Rockefeller's attempts to disassociate himself from increased state spending was only marginally successful. Rockefeller claimed that of the 843 letters sent to him in reference to his program, two expressed support, and, with his trademark humor added, he planned to frame them.⁵⁷

Three weeks after Rockefeller's budget became public, he again went on television to make a personal appeal for support on February 19. If Rockefeller was in search of a sounding board to assess the effectiveness of his television message he received it the following day when he attended the National Outdoor Exposition at the Coliseum in Manhattan. Cheers mixed with boos filled the air as Rockefeller entered the auditorium alongside Connecticut Governor Abraham Ribicoff, a Democrat, and several other leaders from Eastern states. When Rockefeller took to the podium to offer brief remarks at an event where audiences assembled to watch log-rolling exhibitions, canoe-jousting, and chimpanzee acts, he could not be heard over the boos elicited from the audience of 5,000 people. Amid false starts, attempts to quiet the crowd by waving his arms, and requests to "let me talk first, please," Rockefeller explained that he was only trying to welcome the Governor of Connecticut.⁵⁸ Rockefeller remained upbeat; when asked about the episode, he said, "I think this is perfectly natural. Who's going to dance in the streets when they have to pay more taxes?" Rockefeller maintained a good face and received warm personal greetings as he toured the exhibits. When he initially left the stage after the episode a bathing suit-clad young model, "Miss New York Outdoor Exposition" tried to soothe the governor with a kiss. Later she explained, "I just had to do

⁵⁷ "Mr. Rockefeller's Program," *The Commonweal*, February 20, 1959.

⁵⁸ Douglas Dales, "Coliseum Crowd Boos Rockefeller Over Tax Policies," *New York Times*, February 21, 1959, 1.

it. I felt so sorry for him after that reception. He didn't deserve it."⁵⁹ Although Rockefeller was never able to finish his remarks, crowds of people in the corridors reached for handshakes and asked him for photographs. If this event was indicative of the state's mood, the prospect of rising taxes and budgets were upsetting to many, but the magnitude of Rockefeller's popularity was still considerable.

About half of the upstate newspapers printed editorials criticizing the plan while the other half, including the *Times*, praised the governor for his courage. The *Wall Street Journal* printed an editorial that did not criticize the governor explicitly, but questioned the wisdom of increasing taxes and looking for new sources of revenue rather than seeking ways to reduce spending. Rockefeller could advocate raising taxes as a solution in 1959, but he should not—or could not—continue that approach forever. Rockefeller intended to lead a responsive state government that could meet the changing needs of New Yorkers, but it came at a cost that his fellow Republicans were wary to pay.

In the face of protracted opposition, Rockefeller took it upon himself to use his influence to get his budget approved with minimal cuts. Although the Senate, with the leadership of Majority Leader Mahoney, did not pose a problem, by late February it was clear that there were not enough votes supporting the proposed budget to get it passed in the assembly. All fifty-six Democrats united in their refusal to support the budget bill; with eighteen Republicans against it, Rockefeller lacked the necessary majority. The most vocal and adamant opposition to Rockefeller's budget hailed from upstate New York: five Republican assemblymen from Onondaga County (Syracuse, NY), five from Erie County (Buffalo, NY), and four from Monroe County (Rochester, NY). Rockefeller

⁵⁹ Dales, "Coliseum Crowd Boos Rockefeller Over Tax Policies," 1.

spent early March in conference with Republican legislative leaders trying to work out a compromise. On March 11, 1959, the state senate and assembly voted to increase the income tax by a vote of 31 to 25 and 78 to 70. The final budget came in at \$2,000,577,797.⁶⁰ The Republican rebels, as they were called, who led the revolt against Rockefeller did obtain some important concessions, including the elimination of a tax credit proposed by the governor, the Building Codes Commission, and some construction projects at state universities. And Mahoney, who had served as a major factor in assuring state senators' support of Rockefeller's budget, gained his own personal victory. A quarter of the budget reduction was achieved by cutting \$10 million from the \$15 million Rockefeller had promised New York City in new state aid.⁶¹

"Governor Rockefeller has won a spectacular fiscal victory" that "showed a refreshing willingness on his part to exercise executive leadership," wrote the *Washington Post* in its editorial supporting Rockefeller's budget victory.⁶² Roscoe Drummond of the *Washington Post* was also impressed, saying that Rockefeller had proven that he was a "conservative party leader who does not intend to neglect the public and social welfare services of the government." Rockefeller was conservative, Drummond wrote, because he did what Harriman and the Republican-majority legislature could not do by moving from "borrow-as-you-go" policy to "pay-as-you-go."⁶³ The *New York Times* also supported Rockefeller's leadership and congratulated his success, but took note of the growing opposition in America to increased taxes and the political

⁶⁰ Leo Egan, "Governor Wins Tax Fight; Revolt in G.O.P. Collapses After a Compromise Fails," *New York Times*, March 10, 1959, 1.

⁶¹ Walter MacDonald, "Wagner Gets Usual Aid—Rockefeller 'Meant Well,'" *World Telegram & Sun*, March 26, 1959.

⁶² "Taxes Rockefeller," *Washington Post*, March 13, 1959, A18.

⁶³ Roscoe Drummond, "Test of Rockefeller," *Washington Post*, March 16, 1959, A11.

danger in suggesting their necessity. In Washington, few members of Congress spoke seriously about raising taxes to balance the budget, and even modest increases in the gasoline tax to balance the federal highway construction account were shunned. The *Times* wrote that despite a general demand for services, people had an illogical aversion to paying for them; as a result the government would need to “shape its course accordingly.”⁶⁴ Despite opposition in the state legislature, Rockefeller survived his tax increase relatively unscathed and proved himself a formidable force in New York politics.

At the end of his first year in office, as a means to evaluate the political terrain in New York, Rockefeller commissioned a private survey, which found that the governor had reoriented the state’s political dynamics; while the upstate-downstate dynamic would continue to be challenging for Rockefeller as it had been for many governors before him, Rockefeller had nonetheless put himself in an unusually advantageous position: “The net of the history of the past year has been that Rockefeller has reshaped the political line-up of the state so thoroughly that professional politicians of either party are being forced gradually into a more non-partisan approach to important state matters.”⁶⁵ The partisan appeals of party leaders are beginning to sound increasingly half-hearted and routine.”⁶⁶ Rockefeller’s presence as governor had destabilized traditional politics in the state, with Republicans placed in the uncomfortable position of opposing a fellow Republican governor’s methods for raising state income and his decisions to spend it. Meanwhile,

⁶⁴ “Resistance to Taxes,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1959, 22.

⁶⁵ The study found that that 35 percent of the electorate, regardless of party affiliation, said that lowering taxes was their most important concern. Voters in New York City were more interested in the state improving housing, providing slum clearance, and reducing juvenile delinquency, while Upstate voters deferred everything to a perceived need to cut taxes.

⁶⁶ 1960 Public Opinion Poll, RAC, NAR, folder 683, box 62, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

Democrats also found themselves in a difficult position as they tended to support the “spending elements” of the Rockefeller program; Democrats had to be cautious about expressing approval to appear “traditional enough to oppose tax increases.” The destabilization was not all in Rockefeller’s favor. Twenty years after this episode, which he called a “very bitter, bitter battle,” New York State Tax Commissioner Joseph Murphy expressed the belief that the seeds of the Conservative Party of New York were laid during the fight over taxes during Rockefeller’s first year in office. Murphy recalled that the outrage over taxes became so great in his hometown of Syracuse that the state police recommended he and his family vacate their house for a few days due to the threats that he received. He concluded: “I think sometime, some political scientist, or political historian is going to trace the development of the conservative party to that very incident.”⁶⁷ Rockefeller’s reputation as a “non-partisan leader” increased his appeal to Democrats and independents, but resulted in a weakening of his basic support among traditional Republican voters.⁶⁸ In a matter of months, Rockefeller experienced important legislative victories in New York, while appearing to reshape the political scene to suit him. With this success behind him Rockefeller looked to the national Republican Party to see if he could create a space for himself and get Republican professionals to fall in line as they had in New York. Rockefeller hoped to make the most of his rising political fortunes, but would soon learn that his victories in New York would not translate into a national takeover.

⁶⁷ Hugh Morrow Interview of Joseph Murphy, August 11, 1980, RAC, NAR, folder 16, box 2, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

⁶⁸ 1960 Public Opinion Poll, RAC, NAR, folder 683, box 62, J.1 Politics, RG 4.

Part II

The Promise and Appeal of Rockefeller

After Rockefeller was elected in November, he became an instant presidential contender. A Gallup poll placed him second only to Nixon with six possible choices, though both men trailed Kennedy in test heats.⁶⁹ By June, however, Nixon's numbers remained steady while Rockefeller's fell considerably, likely a result of the tax controversy.⁷⁰ *U.S. News & World Report* wrote that Rockefeller's potential candidacy was in question because conservatives were "startled by his spending" and taxpayers were indignant. The article included a cartoon from the *Indianapolis Star* that referred to Rockefeller's tax plan as "The Lead Balloon!" that grounded his "aerial route to the White House."⁷¹ In its April 28, cover story, *Look* magazine reported that Nixon took advantage of Rockefeller's troubles with his budget to emphasize his own commitment to balanced budgets.⁷² While public opinion was important, it would not determine a nominee without the approval of Republican Party professionals. A poll of Republican county chairmen published in *Look* in mid-April found that three out of four favored Nixon, while one out of four supported Rockefeller. Rockefeller had proven himself to be

⁶⁹ When Rockefeller and Nixon were compared alone, Rockefeller led the Vice President 45 to 40 percent. Gallup Poll (AIPO), Nov, 1958. Retrieved Dec-12-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

⁷⁰ Despite his decline in the polls, Rockefeller remained the second most popular choice behind Nixon. Gallup Poll (AIPO), May, 1959. Retrieved Dec-19-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

⁷¹ "Problem: How to Make Friends While Raising Taxes," *U.S. News & World Report*, March 9, 1959, 72.

⁷² *Look* reported, the "Vice-President chose the exact moment of Rockefeller's financial travail to let it be known that Nixon is no big spender, but a budget balancer...Nixon is emphasizing the conservative side of his political character at the moment when Rockefeller is making a reputation as a big spender and taxpayer." Richard L. Wilson, "Can Rockefeller Knock Off Nixon?," *Look*, April 28, 1959, 22.

a persuasive and charismatic candidate, but Nixon was a “known entity” that the party’s right wing was willing to support.

On July 19, 1959, Rockefeller was the featured guest on NBC’s *Meet the Press* as part of a series of interviews with American governors. The interview began with a discussion of New York’s budget and state politics, but eventually focused on national politics and Rockefeller’s opinion of various Eisenhower administration policies. The show’s producer and moderator, Lawrence Spivak, asked Rockefeller if Eisenhower’s popularity along with his own was the result of personal appeal rather than policies since the public was generally disapproving of the Republican Party. Rockefeller said that he owed his election to people’s interest in politics and approval of his sound policies and programs. He emphasized his connection to “fundamental Republican policies,” but *St. Louis Post Dispatch* journalist Marquis Childs, a panelist, asked several questions about the Rockefeller Brothers Fund Report and its differences with the Eisenhower Administration on federal spending for school construction, national security, and civil defense. Rockefeller did his best to deflect the questions. Childs noted that Congress had recommended increases in spending on missile programs that were similar to the levels recommended in the reports, but avoided discussing the Administration’s stance.⁷³ After the interview, Childs wrote a personal letter to Rockefeller stating that he wished Rockefeller had been “a little more frank about the failure of the administration to come up to the goals set in the excellent reports put out by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.”⁷⁴ Rockefeller found himself in a difficult position: he did not want to appear to be critical

⁷³ Rockefeller Archive Center Film Collection, Nelson A. Rockefeller Films, “Meet the Press,” July 19, 1959.

⁷⁴ New York State Archive, Central Subject and Correspondence Files, 1959-1973, Reel 17, Subject File 1959-1962, Radio, TV, and Motion Pictures.

of Eisenhower, exacerbating the perception that he was an oppositional figure in the Republican Party, yet the findings of the reports were in fact contrary to the Eisenhower Program. Nixon was never as popular as Eisenhower, but if the vice president ran on Eisenhower's record, it would be difficult for Rockefeller to oppose him without appearing to alienate himself from the president.

Overall, Rockefeller had made such a good impression on *Meet the Press* that he received many letters asking him to consider seriously a nomination bid. A Republican voter from Hollywood, California, for example, wrote the governor to say he was inspired by his remarks and hoped that he would decide to run. Another man from Monroe, Louisiana, told the governor that he had little confidence in Nixon, Stevenson, or any other Democrat and that he believed the nation needed Rockefeller as it did Lincoln a century before. Ruth M. Hamilton, "an Ike Democrat," as she called herself, from Longwood, Florida, implored Rockefeller to run reaffirming his appeal to Independents and Democrats.⁷⁵ Hamilton wrote: "There can be no doubt that millions of thinking Americans who listened to you today on MEET THE PRESS are in accord with my hopes----that you will consider being a candidate for the presidency in 1960."⁷⁶ In the final months of 1959 Rockefeller began a tour across the country that was a presidential campaign in everything but name.

In the fall of 1959, Rockefeller prepared to canvass the nation, he assured skeptical reporters, rather implausibly, that his planned trips to the West Coast and

⁷⁵ New York State Archive, Central Subject and Correspondence Files, 1959-1973, Reel 17, Subject File 1959-1962, Radio, TV, and Motion Pictures.

⁷⁶ New York State Archive, Central Subject and Correspondence Files, 1959-1973, Reel 17, Subject File 1959-1962, Radio, TV, and Motion Pictures.

Midwest were “part of the normal activities of a Governor of any State in the Union.”⁷⁷

Without announcing his candidacy, he hired a massive personal staff to organize his foray into national politics, which included a speechwriting division, press office, research division, and team of advertising executives to manage his image. He was especially concerned to highlight his advantages over Nixon, who was the presumed front runner. The journalist Stewart Alsop wrote a dual campaign biography of the leading Republican candidates entitled *Nixon and Rockefeller: A Double Portrait*, in which Alsop pointed out many similarities between the two men: “There are in fact no sharp ideological differences between Rockefeller and Nixon, as there were between Dewey and Taft and Eisenhower and Taft. When Rockefeller worked in Washington for the first Eisenhower administration, he often found an ally in Nixon on such issues as foreign aid.”⁷⁸ To Alsop, the major distinction was a “difference of style and background and approach to politics,” a political “regular” versus a “seeming political amateur with an air of being above partisanship.”⁷⁹ While the similarities between Rockefeller and Nixon might help the newcomer because party conservatives thought both men were too liberal, Nixon had a multi-year head-start in the task of convincing mainstream Republicans that he was an acceptable choice.

Although Rockefeller considered Nixon an ally when he had served as an assistant to Eisenhower, the 1958 gubernatorial race set the two on parallel tracks that, as their careers progressed, threatened to collide on numerous occasions. With few allies in the Eisenhower administration, Rockefeller found in Nixon someone who shared the

⁷⁷ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers* (1959), p. 998.

⁷⁸ Alsop, *Nixon & Rockefeller*, 9.

⁷⁹ Alsop, *Nixon & Rockefeller*, 9.

political view that the United States needed to adopt aggressive and financially demanding political, psychological, military, and economic countermeasures to fight the Communist threat referred to as “Red Colonialism.”⁸⁰ Nixon expressed early support of Rockefeller as a potential challenger to Harriman in January 1958, and, without prompting, Nixon traveled to New York on his national tour, stumping for Republican candidates in October. While Rockefeller did not want to insult Nixon, he also had been running a campaign that disassociated him from the Eisenhower administration. Nixon presented another special problem for Rockefeller since the liberals Nixon was courting still considered the vice-president the Red-baiting member of the House Un-American Activities Committee who had accused former state department official Alger Hiss of being a Soviet spy for Nixon’s own political gain. Rockefeller tried to politely avoid Nixon during his visit, but eventually met with Nixon for breakfast to fend off accusations from the press that he had snubbed the vice-president.⁸¹ Once Rockefeller was elected as governor, he came to be seen as Nixon’s greatest competitor for the Republican nomination; thus, became increasingly important for the two men to differentiate themselves from each other. Still, their views on governance and the future of Republicanism were very similar. As a congressman, Nixon was perhaps best known for his support of the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 that outlawed “closed shops” that required union membership and allowed for the monitoring of labor unions and his anti-communism, most notably related to the Alger Hiss case. In the Senate, Nixon voted in

⁸⁰ Nixon gave Rockefeller enthusiastic praise when Rockefeller appointed anti-Soviet ex-congressman Charles Kersten from Wisconsin to his staff to offer advice on psychological warfare. Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 624.

⁸¹ Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 706, 757-758.

favor of civil rights and voted against price controls and other monetary restrictions.⁸² As vice-president, Nixon not only helped shepherd the Civil Rights Act of 1957, albeit weakened in the senate, he also encouraged Eisenhower to sign it. In fact, although Nixon had a consistent record of supporting civil rights, he did not earn a record as a strong advocate for civil rights among supporters who were as concerned with implementation as they were favorable laws. As vice-president, Nixon tried to shed his image as a member of the McCarthy right and associate himself with Eisenhower's modern Republicanism, subsequently making him no hero for the party's conservatives. While Rockefeller and Nixon shared anti-communist views, Nixon's work on HUAC, support of conservative labor policies, and advocacy for civil rights compromises put Nixon right of Rockefeller on the political spectrum.

Rockefeller's first major test during his survey of the nation took place in Chicago where he quickly learned that party conservatives would not be won over easily. The day after Rockefeller arrived in Chicago Rockefeller told reporters that he had grown weary of them asking about his plans for candidacy. If Rockefeller's patience had grown thin, it would not have been helped by the less-than-welcoming treatment he received when his plane landed, since most Chicago Republican leaders were loyal to Nixon. The Cook County Republican organization, of which Chicago was part, organized a reception for the governor, but failed to assemble a committee to greet him at the airport, thus leaving him to find his own way to the event.⁸³ Francis X. Connell, the Cook County Republican chairman, had stated more than once that 90 percent of the Illinois county chairmen were

⁸² Conrad Black, *The Invincible Quest: The Life of Richard Milhous Nixon* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007), 178.

⁸³ Desmond, *Nelson Rockefeller*, 220.

in support of Nixon receiving the nomination. Even though crowds received Rockefeller with great enthusiasm in most instances, party regulars were unmoved by his charisma and ability to attract independents and disaffected Democrats.

Despite Rockefeller's disappointing reception from conservative leaders on his national tour, he proved himself popular among rank-and-file voters. During a speech he gave at the University of Oregon, Rockefeller discussed an issue that would remain an important guiding principle for his approach to politics: keeping the nation competitive with the Soviet Union. For Rockefeller, that meant supporting government programs and initiatives that many Republicans complained were the result of an overgrown federal government. Rockefeller quoted the Cold War analyst and author of America's containment policy, George F. Kennan. Kennan had developed a critique that the United States would in time lag behind the Soviet Union. Kennan argued that the nation would lose the Cold War because it lacked a "developed sense of national purpose," and was falling into disarray because of a fixation on personal comfort, a dearth of public services, a chaotic transportation system, disintegrating urban areas, declining public education, and tenacious discipline needed to keep industry going without strikes. It was an argument that resonated with many Americans' fears that the nation lagged behind the Soviet Union in technology and military power after the Soviets launched Sputnik 1, the first artificial Earth satellite. Rockefeller shared Kennan's sense of urgency and believed the nation faced new and unique challenges that could not be met without a progressive and responsive government to address those deficiencies.⁸⁴ Although predominantly populated by undergraduates, the audience included middle-aged, middle-class couples,

⁸⁴ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers* (1959), 1185.

who ventured out to hear the governor early on a Saturday morning and responded enthusiastically.⁸⁵ Rockefeller also had an important ally in attendance, Mark Hatfield, the moderate Republican governor of Oregon, who worked to give all of Rockefeller's appearances during his visit maximum exposure. While Hatfield helped make Rockefeller's Oregon stop the most successful leg of the trip, the state Republican Party made no effort to provide Rockefeller with a forum to meet the Republican rank-and-file. Despite the fact that Oregon was not "Nixon country" like Chicago, party leaders nonetheless kept their distance from Rockefeller.⁸⁶

Rockefeller was at his best when he gave inspirational speeches with a grand sweep. This talent often served him well, but if he wanted to emphasize the differences between himself and Nixon—beyond style—he would need to openly publicize his opposition to policies supported by Nixon and the current Republican administration. As Kramer and Roberts noted, "cloaked in Eisenhower's record, Nixon would be vulnerable to Rockefeller only if the governor could succeed in repudiating the most popular Republican president of modern times, not in a general election, which would be difficult enough, but within the president's own party."⁸⁷ Rockefeller was in a precarious position; he did object to some Eisenhower policies, particularly in relation to national security, but it was important not to appear critical of the present administration. As a result, he was careful to praise Eisenhower, rather than criticize the administration. Rockefeller, as a member of the Eastern Establishment wing of the Republican Party, which had supported the nomination of Eisenhower, found himself with little room to maneuver.

⁸⁵ Desmond, *Nelson Rockefeller*, 228.

⁸⁶ Desmond, *Nelson Rockefeller*, 229-230.

⁸⁷ Kramer and Roberts, *Investigative Biography of Nelson Rockefeller*, 224.

With party professionals and major Republican donors backing Nixon, there was little that Rockefeller could do to gain the nomination.

On December 26, 1959, Rockefeller surprised the press by announcing the termination of his unannounced candidacy. The abrupt end to his campaign was surprising because it called attention to his attempts to win the nomination, despite his previous assurances that he was focused on governing New York, and it drew attention to his defeat when he could have just returned to his usual routine as governor. Rockefeller explained,

These trips have made it clear to me, as I believe they have to others, that the great majority of those who will control the Republican Convention stand opposed to any contest for the nomination. Therefore any quest of the nomination on my part would entail a massive struggle—in primary elections throughout the nation—demanding so greatly of my time and energy that it would make impossible the fulfillment of my obligations as Governor of New York.

Rockefeller said he would support the Republican nominees in 1960, but his statement fell far short of offering support of Nixon and implied that the nomination had long ago been decided in backroom dealings. He also declared that his decision was “definite and final,” but he would reenter the race six months later.⁸⁸ Rockefeller’s statement upset many Republicans who thought the governor was being a poor loser, and his insistence that he would not consider accepting the nomination for the vice presidency only aggravated this sentiment. Many people believed that Rockefeller’s refusal was presumptuous and selfish, particularly those who believed that Rockefeller could draw popular appeal to a ticket led by Nixon.

The statement released by Rockefeller’s staff the day after Christmas inspired a great deal of speculation because of its timing and Rockefeller’s position in the

⁸⁸ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers* (1959), 1028-1029.

Republican Party as the only figure thought to pose any threat to Nixon's nomination. Reporters at first thought they were being summoned to hear Rockefeller announce his official candidacy. Rockefeller later revealed that he and his advisers had discussed the possibility of pulling out for weeks. In time, however, Rockefeller would regret this decision. In an interview a few years later, the former Eisenhower speechwriter Emmet Hughes, who had penned Rockefeller's withdrawal statement, told journalist and Rockefeller biographer James Desmond that it was a "political mistake of the first magnitude."⁸⁹ Rockefeller had expressed concern at the time that he did not want to be a party wrecker and that he feared that a difficult primary season would take him away from the state when his tax program could be in jeopardy. When Desmond reminded Rockefeller that other governors were able to campaign successfully while in office, Rockefeller agreed that he may have been mistaken, but he faced an unfamiliar situation at the time and thought he was making the best decision. In a 1979 interview, former Rockefeller adviser George L. Hinman stated that a lack of support in New Hampshire in December was what finally convinced Rockefeller and his team that victory was impossible. Hinman explained: "The team we had gotten together in New Hampshire, the first primary state, with great difficulty because nobody wanted to surface there for Nelson, they came down, these were people who had been in Dartmouth with Nelson and were close to him, said they wanted out, they couldn't hack it, that Nixon had it too thoroughly sewn up." The group consisted of a "small group of moderates outside the mainstream of the party."⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Desmond, *Nelson Rockefeller*, 245.

⁹⁰ Hugh Morrow Interview of George L. Hinman, October 10, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 10, box 1, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

A Political Party on the Fence

While Rockefeller's attempts to win support for the presidential nomination won over few Republican power brokers, he did draw attention to an important question asked in numerous sectors of the Republican Party. The question was what did the Republican Party stand for after eight years of Eisenhower? The president's advocacy of what he called "modern Republicanism," aggravated discord within the party. Conservative Republicans felt their party had been adrift since they compromised their Republican heritage for a chance at victory with the nomination of Eisenhower in 1952. Similar concerns loomed since the 1930s. However, this nervousness escalated after the midterm elections of 1958 when Republicans lost 13 seats in the Senate and 48 seats in the House, leaving Republicans with the lowest number of congressional representatives since 1937. Republicans feared that Democrats would sweep the 1960 elections. The seeming inability of Eisenhower's popularity to transfer to the rest of his party left many doubting that his modern Republicanism would increase the party's popularity despite its acceptance of the New and Fair Deals.

Uncertainty and confusion filled the Republican Party as it faced the end of Eisenhower's second term. Some Republicans feared that Eisenhower won despite his party and the dismal returns after the 1958 elections seemed to validate these concerns. In the first few days of January 1959, when Rockefeller was enjoying the honeymoon period after his inauguration, Eisenhower spearheaded an initiative to improve the Republican Party's standing in preparation for the 1960 presidential election. With the president's approval, Republican Chairman Meade Alcorn announced on February 25, 1959, the creation of a forty-four-member committee that would "draft a long-range statement of

party policy and objectives.”⁹¹ The Committee for Program and Progress, led by Charles H. Percy, the president of Bell & Howell Corporation and future Senator of Illinois, brought together a varied group of participants. The majority of the members were private citizens selected to represent the diversity within the party, including grade schoolteachers, union members, and lawyers. With the intention of charting the party’s path as the nation approached its bicentennial, Percy explained: “We will be looking backwards (to see what’s been wrong) and analyzing the present, but really thinking in terms of the future.”⁹² The very formation of the Committee for Program and Progress emphasized the stark line of demarcation between the more liberal and conservative wings of the party. Goldwater, for example, believed the party should not be reformed by moderates. He argued that any long-range plan needed to be based on “the tried and true principles” of balanced budgets and opposition to socialism in government.⁹³

The final report produced by Percy’s committee and published by Doubleday attempted to produce compromise within the party. *Decisions for a Better America*, repeatedly professed the Republican Party’s respect for the “individual American,” while it justified a “central government vigilantly alert to the needs of the people and strong enough to defend the people.”⁹⁴ *Decisions for a Better America* called for increased federal spending in education—if at least to win the technology race against the Soviet Union—protection for workers from job loss created by automation in industry, and equal rights for all citizens regardless of race, religion, or nation of origin. Most

⁹¹ W. H. Lawrence, “Republicans Pick 44-Member Group to Draft a Credo,” *New York Times*, February 26, 1959, 1.

⁹² Robert C. Albright, “GOP Program Blessed by Ike,” *Washington Post*, March 14, 1959, A6.

⁹³ “G.O.P. Told to Stick to Taft Principles,” *New York Times*, March 12, 1959, 28.

⁹⁴ Republican Committee on Program and Progress, *Decisions for a Better America* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1960), 19.

immediately, the report called for reduced taxes and a more equitable tax distribution. The writers of the report sought a mix of balanced budgets with an activist government.

Once Rockefeller halted his campaign, news about the race for the White House was dominated by the Democratic primaries, rather than the Republicans' internal struggles. Some Republicans feared that with Nixon's candidacy uncontested the Democrats would outshine the Republicans, but by the spring, Republicans were suddenly thrust back onto the front-page with unflattering headlines. On May 10, 1960, the Democratic Party's primary fight was at its height when John Kennedy defeated Hubert Humphrey in West Virginia, proving that he could win a close race in a heavily Protestant state. A tearful Humphrey gave a concession speech that day ending his candidacy, but even this major milestone in the Democratic Party was eclipsed by an embarrassing foreign policy scandal that unfolded in the days before the primary. On May 1, the Soviet Union shot down a United States U-2 spy plane over mid-Russia, which resulted in the capture of American pilot Francis Gary Powers. Eisenhower originally denied that the U.S. sent spy planes into Soviet airspace, but was soon forced to admit he lied. The international controversy led to the quick dissolution of the long awaited Paris Summit Conference that began on May 16, between Eisenhower and Nikita Khrushchev. The following week Rockefeller released a statement calling for a "national reexamination" of the policies that led to the decision to agree to the summit and the use of espionage. It was the first time in five months that Rockefeller was to discuss national or international affairs publicly. Soon after his statement, Rockefeller made himself available for a draft resulting in a last minute challenge to Nixon's leadership and expected nomination.

Rockefeller had spent the first months of 1960 seeing to the passage of his second budget and trying to prevent conservative New York Republican delegates from rushing to endorse Nixon. In early May, for example, Rockefeller prevented a public disaffection of upstate delegates who wanted to endorse Nixon, despite rules dictating that they were to remain uncommitted before the June primary. This rejection of Rockefeller's leadership in his home state would have been embarrassing nationally and was prevented only by State Chairman Morhouse suggesting to the delegates that the governor might now make himself available for a draft. On May 23, Rockefeller released a statement calling for politicians to abandon traditional partisan politics and look for solutions to the failure of the Summit Conference in Paris. He called for a national debate that acknowledged what he called three essential facts. First, Khrushchev's aggressive response to Eisenhower at the Peace Summit—he called the president a liar and a hypocrite—was proof that the nation should not seek to negotiate or reduce tensions with the Soviet Union. Second, Soviet conduct after the U-2 incident did not negate the need to examine the “purpose and prudence” of America's actions. Third, the ramifications of recent events would affect not only the US, but also its allies who would face increased Soviet pressure.⁹⁵ Rockefeller's statement was dramatic and a striking critique of the Administration, which was struggling to address its errors. Rockefeller told those around him that he did not expect thanks, but he thought the nation was facing an urgent crisis making it necessary for him to say something. Rather than start a debate, Rockefeller's statement drew sharp criticism from rank-and-file Republicans many of whom believed the governor was sacrificing the party for his personal gain. Nixon, however, chose not to

⁹⁵ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers* (1960), 1029-1031.

engage with Rockefeller. In response, the governor continued what became a monologue with the release of a statement that claimed Nixon had failed to lead the party and that to fill this void, Rockefeller would produce what amounted to a party platform of his own, which he argued would provide the direction the party lacked.

Before the Republican Platform Committee could meet to draft the party's statement in anticipation of the nomination of Nixon, Rockefeller interrupted. "We cannot, as a nation, or as a party, proceed—nor should anyone presume to ask us to proceed—to march to meet the future with a banner aloft whose only emblem is a question mark."⁹⁶ With this proclamation, Rockefeller took on the entire Republican Party on June 8, 1960. He made sure to laud the Eisenhower administration, but expressed doubt that party leaders could continue in this example without making changes to be prepared for the next decade. The implication was that Nixon was a poor presidential nominee. "The path of great leadership does not lie along the top of a fence," Rockefeller proclaimed: "It climbs heights. It speaks truths. The people want and need one thing above all others: A leadership of clear purpose, candidly proclaimed."⁹⁷ Rockefeller hoped to convince Republicans that they could not win with a leader who did not present a bold statement of purpose for the future. The previous year, Rockefeller earned the Republican nomination for governor of New York by encouraging the idea that he was the only Republican who could beat Harriman. Rockefeller sought to replicate this strategy by waging a campaign against the 1960 Republican platform, arguing that his purpose was to arm his party for the future; all the while he also hoped to

⁹⁶ "From Nelson Rockefeller: The Blast that Rocked the Republican Party," *U.S. News & World Report*, June 20, 1960, 95.

⁹⁷ "Statement by Governor Rockefeller," June 8, 1960, RAC, NAR, folder 184, box 3, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

demonstrate that he would be a more dynamic leader and presidential nominee than Nixon.

Rockefeller made an issue of the Republican platform and suggested that it was unclear what Nixon stood for, but at the same time, he knew there was little that distinguished his own views from Nixon's. When Rockefeller first toyed with the idea of running, he tried to differentiate himself from the Vice President by proving he was a more vigorous crusader against Communism. This was also Rockefeller's method for proving his conservatism similar, ironically, to Nixon's strategy to do the same. While Rockefeller's statement identified civil rights as the most critical domestic policy issue of the day, the vast majority of Rockefeller's announcement dealt with foreign policy and national security. Rockefeller said he was not targeting the current administration, but his recommendations were founded on the premise that the nation's "position in the world [was] dramatically weaker today than fifteen years ago, at the end of World War II."⁹⁸ As a result he called for a \$3.5 billion increase in defense spending. Despite Rockefeller's apparent desire to encourage a debate over platforms and issues, he also desired to present himself as the more engaging and daring candidate against Nixon whose reputation was as a party man who lacked his own convictions.

The backlash to Rockefeller's actions was great indeed. Secretary of State Charles F. Carpenter told *Newsweek*: "Governor Rockefeller's gratuitous attack...is typical of the pseudo-Republican. His self-nomination as the Messiah...reads as if it had been written by Adlai Stevenson."⁹⁹ Numerous Republicans compared Rockefeller to a spoiled child who was unwilling to play on a team unless he could be captain or Adlai Stevenson,

⁹⁸ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers* (1960), 1046.

⁹⁹ "The Rockefeller Challenge: Nixon and November," *Newsweek*, June 20, 1960, 31.

who had announced that he would not campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1960, but would accept a draft. The assessments were numerous and few flattered Rockefeller. Rockefeller's advisor Hinman stated that Rockefeller believed he was acting in the best interests of the country: "He was sincere and he was courageous, but unfortunately high principle is a long ways from the practical politics that a Republican national Convention requires." When reflecting on Rockefeller's reentry into the 1960 race, another longtime Rockefeller aide, Hugh Morrow, agreed that Rockefeller was acting out of principle, yet Morrow also suggested that the governor's identity as a Rockefeller may have led him to believe he could get away with anything, for example, his decision to openly confront Nixon.¹⁰⁰ When Rockefeller had spent time in Washington as an adviser, he had earned a reputation for breaking procedure and going over people's heads to get his views across when he believed he was right. The 1960 campaign may have been another example—albeit, a far more public one—of Rockefeller's independence.

Nominating Nixon

A month after Rockefeller "blasted" the Republican Party, the Republican Platform Committee convened in Chicago to pen the 1960 platform. The platform committee consisted of 103 members chosen by party regulars and state committee chairs and tended to represent the more conservative wing of the Party, in the tradition of Senator Taft. To counter the conservatism of the committee members, Charles Percy who had led the Committee for Program and Progress was appointed chair of the platform committee. In another effort to introduce more moderate ideas into the hearings and

¹⁰⁰ Hugh Morrow Interview of George L. Hinman, October 10, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 10, box 1, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

convention, Nixon also sent each delegate a copy of the report produced by Percy's Program and Progress Committee.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, the work of the Committee for Program and Progress helped set the stage for the contentious disagreements regarding the 1960 Republican platform. Percy presided over private meetings with a few platform writers and the staffers of Nixon and Rockefeller. It became clear that this small group largely favored Rockefeller's proposals. On July 12, Rockefeller aide, Roswell Perkins reported to Rockefeller that Percy admired Rockefeller and his recent statements, while Nixon's people, he reported, were less receptive but still largely accepting of Rockefeller's positions on defense and civil rights, provided they were watered down.¹⁰² It would seem, after these meetings that there would be little contention over the platform; in fact Percy told the *New York Times* that he predicted "absolute harmony" on the civil rights plan, while Melvin Laird of Wisconsin, the vice chairman of the platform group said that the Democratic Party took the "mild route" on civil rights. Laird also said that the Republican civil rights plank would be stronger because it would recite the party's record that reflected its traditional commitment to civil rights.¹⁰³ This consensus began to fail, however, when it came time for the entire platform committee to convene for public hearings that revealed a more conservative political orientation.

The day before the hearings began, there were signs that civil rights plank would not be as uncontroversial as signs first indicated. Jack L. Middleton of Virginia, a member of the platform committee, who would serve as the chairman of the Goldwater presidential drive in 1964, told the *Washington Post* that the party would assume a more

¹⁰¹ Austin C. Wehrwein, "G.O.P. Foresees Rights Harmony," *New York Times*, July 13, 1960, 22.

¹⁰² Roswell B. Perkins to Nelson A. Rockefeller, July 12, 1960, RAC, NAR, folder 211, box 4, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

¹⁰³ Austin C. Wehrwein, "G.O.P. Foresees Rights Harmony," *New York Times*, July 13, 1960, 22.

moderate civil rights position than the Democrats. Another Virginia committeeman and vice chairman of the state's delegates, A. Linwood Holton said that while he knew that Nixon had "dropped the word" that he wanted a moderate civil rights plank, he believed the national party wanted a civil rights plank that was more moderate than the Democrats and equal to the Republican plank from 1956, one that accepted the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, but emphasized—and subsequently legitimized—attempts to slow the process, pronouncing:

We concur in the conclusion of the Supreme Court that its decision directing school desegregation should be accomplished with 'all deliberate speed' locally through Federal District Courts. The implementation order of the Supreme Court recognizes the complex and acutely emotional problems created by its decision in certain areas of our country where racial patterns have been developed in accordance with prior and longstanding decisions of the same tribunal.¹⁰⁴

The *Post*, in 1960, referred to this statement as an attempt to appease southern delegates.¹⁰⁵ Offering support of desegregation without any guarantees of implementation was a standard practice by both parties when they did not want to alienate southern segregationists. The issue of implementation remained significant in 1960, the Democrats' civil rights plank passed the week before required that school districts be required to file integration plans "providing for at least first-step compliance by 1963, the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation" and a call for federal action to end discrimination in voting, housing, transportation, and employment.¹⁰⁶ Plans for first steps was not a guarantee of expedited change, but it was considered a significant step for the Democratic Party that garnered praise from civil rights activists and inspired a minority

¹⁰⁴ "Virginians Predict Milder GOP Plank on Civil Rights," *Washington Post*, July 19, 1960, B2. Donald Bruce Johnson and Kirk H. Porter, compilers, *National Party Platforms, 1840-1972* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 554.

¹⁰⁵ "Virginians Predict Milder GOP Plank on Civil Rights," *Washington Post*, July 19, 1960, B2.

¹⁰⁶ Johnson and Porter, *National Party Platforms*, 599.

report from southern delegates who opposed the plank.¹⁰⁷ Moderate leaders in the party, including Percy, Nixon, and Rockefeller may have expected a Republican civil rights plank that mirrored their views, but the party was not united on the issue.

Initially, the hearings revealed some points of agreement between Rockefeller and Goldwater on foreign policy, who both spoke on the first day of hearings on July 19, but their testimony revealed diverging opinions on domestic policy. In particular, Rockefeller argued that the U.S. must ensure the civil rights of all its citizens or risk making a mockery of its stated purpose of spreading freedom throughout the world.¹⁰⁸ But, the committee members gave Rockefeller a lackluster welcome; as one reporter noted, “The group applauded politely but there was a definite coolness in the air.”¹⁰⁹ Goldwater encountered a much more receptive audience. The senator explained that he was greatly concerned with the Republican Party’s management of domestic policy. Goldwater explained that while traveling the nation as the Chairman of the Senatorial Campaign Committee, he met Republicans across the nation who were fearful that the party would lose its identity because of what he called, “spend-and-spend, elect-and-elect architects of the New Deal and the Fair Deal.”¹¹⁰ The mood of the hearings revealed both the popularity of Goldwater and an undercurrent of support for turning away from moderate Republicanism.

Once the assemblage broke into sub-committees the following day, it became clear that many committee members were open to creating a platform with a conservative

¹⁰⁷ William M. Blair, “Firm Rights Plank Offered by Nixon,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1960, 1.

¹⁰⁸ This was the only reference Rockefeller made to civil rights when he testified before the committee.

¹⁰⁹ “GOP Cool to Rocky Aims,” *New York Mirror*, July 19, 1960.

¹¹⁰ Republican National Committee News Release, “Statement of the United States Senator Barry Goldwater before the Republican platform Committee”, Sheraton-Blackstone Hotel, Chicago, July 19, 1960.

message. Arthur Massolo of the *New York Post* reported that five of the fifteen-member civil rights sub-committee were from the South and they argued for the adoption of moderation in the civil rights plank to attract southerners disaffected by the Democratic Party's "militant" platform. The committee was under the supervision of New York State Assembly Speaker Joseph Carlino, who supported a strong plank that reflected Rockefeller's views, but the committee was dominated by supporters of Nixon's civil rights plank. Massolo reported that southerners calls for a moderate plank were gaining traction among northerners, including even Percy, who described the Democratic plank as "unrealistic."¹¹¹ The Democrats' "militant" civil rights plank called for an assurance of equal access to voting booths, schoolrooms, jobs, housing, and public facilities for all Americans and pledged to use the power provided by the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 to secure the right to vote for all Americans. Carlino predicted that the final Republican civil rights plank would represent the views of Nixon, and as a result would be more moderate than Rockefeller hoped. He said that depending on the final draft there was a possibility of a minority report with a stronger civil rights plank.¹¹² Carlino made the distinction between Nixon and Rockefeller appear great here, which contradicted the earlier reports that said their views on civil rights varied only by small degrees.

On July 21, Nixon had Deputy Attorney General Lawrence E. Walsh deliver a proposed civil rights plank that the vice-president had drafted with the assistance of both Walsh and Attorney General William P. Rogers. The *New York Times* reported that the platform plank was "strong and temperate," one that recommended "actions beyond the steps taken by President Eisenhower's Administration to guarantee equal rights for

¹¹¹ Arthur Massolo, "Carlino Sees Rocky Defeat on Rights," *New York Post*, July, 20, 1960.

¹¹² Johnson and Porter, *National Party Platforms*, 599.

Negroes and other minority groups in schools, jobs, housing and in other fields.”¹¹³

Nixon’s proposal did not reflect the “moderation” that southern delegates had requested, when during the subcommittee hearings on civil rights, representatives from a ten-state conference of southern and southwestern states had appealed to the committee to compose a plank that would provide “a breathing spell.” James T. Adams of Louisiana, for example, had expressed the opinion that the Eisenhower administration’s record had already provided “sufficient actions” in the field of civil rights.¹¹⁴

As the final version of the Republican platform took shape, Rockefeller was unhappy because he said it did not express the sense of urgency he felt appropriate at this moment in the Cold War. Percy hoped to placate the governor by allowing him and his staff to write the preamble and conclusion of the platform. Rockefeller declined this offer and rumor spread that there could be a floor fight during the convention. While Rockefeller considered the possibilities of a fight on the convention floor, the ninety-six delegates from New York threatened to revolt and endorse Nixon. Despite the general lack of backing for Rockefeller from within his party, Nixon remained concerned about giving the appearance of disunity during the convention. Without the knowledge of his staff, Nixon decided to meet Rockefeller in New York with the purpose of coming to an agreement to avoid a floor fight.¹¹⁵

The result of the subsequent marathon meeting between Nixon and Rockefeller was a fourteen-point compact, equally focused on foreign and domestic policy. The “Compact of Fifth Avenue,” as it soon became known, was indeed a major milestone for

¹¹³ William M. Blair, “Firm Rights Plank Offered by Nixon,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1960, 1.

¹¹⁴ Blair, “Firm Rights Plank Offered by Nixon,” 1.

¹¹⁵ Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1960* (New York: Harper Perennial Political Classics, 2009), 198.

the Republican Party. Nixon was able to find middle ground between Rockefeller's desire to add aggressively to the nation's missile power and Eisenhower's assurances that there was no missile gap. For example, the key on this issue was to state that the party was willing to increase national defense spending "as necessary." In most cases, the compact and platform were largely the same, except for the addition of an occasional adverb or modifier. The major difference between the compact and the previous draft of the platform lay within the civil rights plank. Nixon agreed to Rockefeller's demand for a more liberal approach to civil rights.

Ultimately, the civil rights plank in the "Compact of Fifth Avenue" appeared to be "all Rockefeller." Although Nixon approved it, the platform committee and other Republicans balked. As framed, the civil rights position stated:

Our program for civil rights must assure aggressive action to remove the remaining vestiges of segregation or discrimination in all areas of national life—voting and housing, schools and jobs. It will express support for the objectives of the sit-in demonstrators and will commend the action of those businessmen who have abandoned the practice of refusing to serve food at their lunch counters to their Negro customers and will urge all others to follow their example.¹¹⁶

The result of the unexpected summit, which Rockefeller emphasized had taken place in his home at Nixon's request, was a firestorm within the Republican Party. While some Republicans and pundits alike believed that Nixon made a smart decision to avoid a possible floor fight, others interpreted his decision as surrender. Goldwater was one of the most vocal critics, arguing that Nixon had betrayed the party by conceding to liberals and ultimately "[selling out] on nearly every point that once separated the Vice President and the Governor." Goldwater pledged to wage a floor fight if Nixon decided to ignore the previous work of the platform committee in favor of the platform changes offered by

¹¹⁶ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers* (1960), 1169.

Rockefeller, who he referred to as “a spokesman for the ultra-liberals.”¹¹⁷ With the convention about to begin in a couple of days, a great deal of negotiations would need to occur for the party to present itself as a unified front on the convention floor.

Nixon’s decision to work with Rockefeller appeared to be a great victory for the governor, further establishing him as the leader of the party’s liberal wing; however, it did not endear Rockefeller (or Nixon) to the Republican majority. On July 24, the day before the convention, Rockefeller attended a NAACP rally in Liberty Baptist Church in the South Side of Chicago, where he assured the audience that he would fight for them on the convention floor. He expressed admiration for the aims of the recent lunch counter demonstrations. Andrew Tully of the *World Telegram & Sun* noted that the audience cheered when Roy Wilkins, Executive Director of the NAACP, introduced Rockefeller, who Tully said gave the Republican party’s civil rights plank “a backbone.” Tully took special note of Rockefeller’s rapport with the audience: “Over and above all this was the curious quality in this Eastern aristocrat of making himself at home with the folks. In the manner of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Nelson Rockefeller was in immediate touch with his audience.”¹¹⁸

Unfortunately for Rockefeller, the reception that he received the following evening on the floor of the convention was far cooler than that at Liberty Baptist. Mary McGrory wrote that as soon as Rockefeller entered the floor to join the delegates from New York, “there was a stir, followed by a chill” and a “curt” call to order for the convention floor. “The convention police immediately moved into the area [where

¹¹⁷ Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 85.

¹¹⁸ Andrew Tully, “Rockefeller Woos, Wins NAACP with Fervent Civil Rights Plea,” *World Telegram & Sun*, July 25, 1960.

Rockefeller sat],” she wrote, “sealing it off as if it were a source of contamination or rebellion or both.” Guards surrounded Rockefeller during a demonstration of Goldwater supporters who carried signs that read, “Goldwater for President.” McGrory found that Rockefeller, rather than Nixon, received all the blame for the civil rights plank and was said not to be a Republican. Alternatively, a Nixon supporter from New Hampshire assured the reporter that Nixon was “really not that liberal;” when McGrory reminded him that Nixon had declared that he would insist on a strong civil rights plank, another delegate assured her, “Oh, he’s just saying that.”¹¹⁹

While Rockefeller was dealing with the ramifications of his victory at the convention, Nixon was working behind the scenes with angry platform committee members. In an all-night session, efforts to pass a strong civil rights plank—one that endorsed sit-in demonstrations and pledged the use of all government powers to end discrimination—were defeated in two separate votes. The *World Telegram & Sun* reported that non-Southern conservatives also expressed strong opposition to an element of the plank banning job discrimination in federally regulated industries. The platform committee likewise rejected other elements of the planks formulated by Nixon and Rockefeller.¹²⁰ Despite fears that there would be great discord at the convention, the final draft of the platform was approved without incident. This final draft included a civil rights plank that was modified to meet some of the demands of the platform committee. The introduction praised the efforts of the “party of Abraham Lincoln” since its inception to defend equality, and enumerated numerous efforts on behalf of the Eisenhower

¹¹⁹ Mary McGrory, “Cool of the Evening,” *New York Post*, July 26, 1960.

¹²⁰ Jack Steele, “Platform Unit Revolt Bars Nixon-Rockefeller Accord,” *World Telegram & Sun*, July 25, 1960.

Administration to achieve these goals. While it did not include explicit support of the sit-in demonstrations, it stated that “we reaffirm the constitutional right to peaceable assembly to protest discrimination by private business establishments.” The party also praised businessmen who had abandoned discriminatory practices. The plank concluded by stating that civil rights was a national issue, and, therefore “the Federal Government should take the initiative in promoting inter-group conferences among those who, in their communities, are earnestly seeking solutions of the complex problems of desegregation.”¹²¹ When asked for his evaluation of the final civil rights plank, Rockefeller praised its “strong, and specific declaration in support of equal opportunity, human dignity and the supreme worth of the individual,” but said he was personally disappointed that it did not include a strong “moral position” on sit-in demonstrations.¹²² Ultimately, Rockefeller’s activism aided in the creation of a civil rights plank that was almost identical to the Democratic plank, except on small points regarding implementation. The two major political parties were also in accord because the process of designing their civil rights plank resulted in protracted battles between liberals and conservatives, resulting in precarious commitments to civil rights.

The 1960 Republican National Convention concluded without any further controversies. Nixon and Henry Cabot Lodge received the nomination for president and vice president on the first ballot. There was a great deal of talk about the party’s commitment to respecting the individual. Speakers often professed that the party

¹²¹ Republican Party and Lloyd L. Harkins, *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Twenty-Seventh Republican National Convention Resulting in the Nomination of Richard M. Nixon, of California, for President, and the Nomination of Henry Cabot Lodge, of Massachusetts, for Vice President* (Washington: Republican National Committee, 1960), 254-256.

¹²² “Rocky Gives His OK to Civil Rights Plank,” *New York Journal American*, July 27, 1960.

maintained its original opposition to slavery; now, however, their obligation was to fight the Soviet Union, which very much threatened to enslave the entire free world. The party's liberal and right wings were represented at the convention, although unequally. The right, epitomized by Goldwater, made its mark when his supporters nominated the senator for president. As Goldwater released the delegates pledged to him, he issued a strong statement calling for conservatives to take the party back. In the final nomination roll call, Goldwater received 10 delegate votes from Louisiana, leaving Nixon with the remaining 1,331. Rockefeller also took to the podium, but only to introduce Nixon, not to enlist his fellow moderates. During his speech seconding the nomination of Nixon, Senator Jacob Javits praised Rockefeller's efforts on behalf of civil rights, but Rockefeller's time in the spotlight had ended when he convened with Nixon the previous weekend.

Nixon lost the 1960 presidential election to Kennedy in the closest presidential election of the century—with only one percentage point and 118,000 popular votes separating him from the victor. There are numerous theories as to why Eisenhower's vice president could not defeat the comparatively inexperienced Kennedy, including Nixon's over-confidence in regard to televised debates and Eisenhower's often-anemic support. Conservatives would blame Nixon's loss on Rockefeller, who failed, in their estimation, to deliver New York after persuading Nixon to adopt a platform that did not adhere to conservative principles. In the months after the election, Rockefeller retreated to New York and tried to avoid the disapproval from many within the national Republican Party. Regardless, he maintained his reputation as a charismatic vote-getter, thus making him an influential member of the Republican Party. In the days before the 1960 convention, one

journalist described Rockefeller's far-reaching appeal this way: "He is a millionaire whom labor and the poor want to see in the White House, an aristocrat whom the lowly Negroes want, a Republican whom the liberals want, a man of action whom the intellectuals want, a man who asks for an increase in the arms program yet whom the peace internationalists want."¹²³ Despite Rockefeller's inability to overtake Nixon, Kennedy agreed. In the spring of 1960 *Time Magazine* wrote,

President Kennedy guesses that his 1964 opponent will be New York's Governor Nelson Rockefeller, whom he regards as the 'toughest' Republican to beat. The Kennedy forces have abandoned any hopes of heading off Rockefeller by beating him when he runs for re-election in New York next year, because New York Democratic politics are in an unholy mess.¹²⁴

It appeared that the major obstacle blocking Rockefeller's path to challenging Kennedy and possibly becoming president was his own party.

Conclusion

Rockefeller's earliest years in office were filled with great promise, voters seemed enamored, pundits often praised, and Republican leaders across the nation immediately took notice. His budgetary battles within his own state party revealed that he was often in opposition to New York Republicans, but he proved to be an influential and persuasive leader who was willing to sacrifice time and effort to see his program come to fruition. The Rockefeller who entered office was a politician who believed in the transformative power of well-run government and believed progress was the objective of the day. While Rockefeller entered office when New York was suffering the effects of a national recession, the state's economy would soon strengthen and make it possible for him to use the increased revenue produced by his tax increase to begin fulfilling the ambitious goals

¹²³ Max Lerner, "The Loner," *New York Post*, July 25, 1960.

¹²⁴ "Capital Notes," *Time*, March 10, 1961.

he had laid out during his first inaugural address. The largesse of a moderate Republican would not be as easily maintained in a later period when resources came at even more of a premium, when the cost of social welfare programs skyrocketed, and a growing number of voters clamored for tax cuts, while simultaneously demanding their quality of life remain the same. For now, however, Rockefeller could manage New York politics; it was national politics that caused the greatest difficulty. The New York governorship was supposed to provide his stepping-stone to the presidency, but it would be difficult for Rockefeller to lead a Republican Party that while accustomed to his brand of politics, was unsure if it should continue to seek the middle path.

In a 1964 campaign biography of Rockefeller authored by James Desmond, the author concluded that the governor conducted a

virtuoso performance. Powered only by ideas, he became in that period a force in his party that the regulars would have to deal with. He won no delegates in that assault; he never got within striking distance of the nomination; but he stood forth as the leader of a whole army of independent Republicans who cared nothing for the machinery of politics but whose votes would be desperately needed in the populous, internationally oriented states of the industrial Northeast.¹²⁵

Desmond's conclusion was overly optimistic. While Rockefeller could claim a major personal victory, the political gain was negligible among mainstream Republican leaders who did not appear concerned when the Party of Lincoln was writing a civil rights plank intended to appease southerner apologists for segregation. Rockefeller ensured that the Republican Party would maintain its connection to the African American political struggle, but his efforts garnered him limited support within the party. Once Nixon lost the presidential race to Kennedy, many would blame Rockefeller. For all of his activism in relation to the platform, ultimately, he did not—or could not—deliver New York State

¹²⁵ Desmond, *Nelson Rockefeller*, 266.

to Nixon, confirming the doubts of detractors who had viewed him as looking to advance himself rather than the party.

Conservatives had complained about the direction of the Republican Party for over two decades. In 1960, Rockefeller's threat of a floor fight and the common perception that moderate Republicanism had more cross party voter appeal than conservatism overshadowed the entreaties of the conservative wing of the party. There were signs in 1960, however, that the liberal wing of the Republican Party lacked the vibrancy of its conservative counterpart. The fervent, vocal support of Goldwater at the convention was a testament to the lively minority. Nixon sought Rockefeller's approval not only to avoid conflict, but also because this was still an era when the voting power of the industrial North loomed large. There was a sense that a politician seeking national office should be careful not to alienate the groups traditionally associated with the New Deal coalition, and Rockefeller, as governor of New York, was seen as a key leader of this demographic. Nevertheless, as the summer of 1960 waned few Republicans publicly supported Rockefeller's actions. Thus, when Rockefeller announced the "Compact of Fifth Avenue," there was not a defined constituency within the Republican Party ready to celebrate, for this was solely Rockefeller's victory rather than a shared moderate and liberal Republican victory.

Chapter Three

“The Republican Party is the Ship, All Else is the Sea”: The Party of Lincoln in 1963

Rockefeller, a year and a half before the 1964 Republican National Convention, was an active, although unannounced, candidate for the presidential nomination. With Nixon having lost in 1960, and Goldwater widely presumed to be too far from the mainstream, Rockefeller began 1963 as the presumed presidential nominee. As the frontrunner, Rockefeller not only called for unity within the Republican Party, he also tacked right on economic and foreign policy to differentiate himself from President Kennedy. Notably, however, on civil rights, Rockefeller maintained a liberal stance to the left of many in his own party and of the president. He called for his party to maintain its ties to the African American community and its struggle for equal rights. But this stance—as much as developments in his personal life—cost him his lead in the spring. After months of people discounting any possibility of a conservative winning the nomination, the governor’s declining prospects translated into a sudden rise in Barry Goldwater’s prospects.

Rockefeller and Goldwater were generally at opposite ends of the political spectrum, and civil rights was the main point of difference. Goldwater saw little need for new legislation, believing the current laws to be adequate and that Congress could not legislate morality. Conversely, Rockefeller thought the federal government had a “deep moral and constitutional responsibility” to guarantee equal rights for all Americans with a comprehensive civil rights bill.¹ While Rockefeller considered southern opposition to desegregation an untenable fringe position, Goldwater was careful not to alienate racial conservatives by publicly praising the integrity of states’ rights and property rights. Goldwater’s candidacy gained momentum due to conservative opposition to the civil rights movement and a desire among racial conservatives to prevent the passage of new legislation. Support of civil rights and the desegregation of the Jim Crow South was a common position within both parties in the early 1960s, but Republicans, like Democrats, often feared the political fallout for pushing too hard for the passage of civil rights legislation. Goldwater’s own opposition to federal civil rights legislation put him outside the mainstream, but Rockefeller was the candidate forced to search for ways to prove his Republican credentials. If the party nominated Rockefeller it would be impossible to embrace southern segregationists who were willing to break their ties with the Democratic Party in search of a party that would be willing to slow the undoing of the Jim Crow South. While Rockefeller was certain that he was on the right side of this issue, a growing faction of his party hoped to benefit from racial conservatism.

Civil rights was the most controversial and polarizing issue in 1963. In 1959, and 1960, Kennedy had pledged to make civil rights one of his first priorities if elected, and

¹ Jack Bell, “Views on Issues Told By Gov. Rockefeller and Sen. Goldwater,” *Washington Post*, October 21, 1963, A1.

both major parties' platforms supported equal rights. Soon after Kennedy's inauguration, however, it became apparent that the nation would be slow to meet the demands of civil rights activists for desegregated schools, public spaces, and other measures. Knowing that Southern Democrats would likely block it, Kennedy avoided introducing civil rights legislation until the summer of 1963.

In this absence of federal action, Rockefeller continued to take up the issue. But his stand on civil rights alienated him from his party, and ultimately cost him the nomination. By examining the broader political terrain in this period and the extent of the backlash to civil rights in the South, it becomes clear why Rockefeller's support of equality could bring about his downfall. In the summer of 1963, Kennedy told the nation that it had a moral obligation to end discrimination and inequality in America. He faced deadlock in Congress, complaints from whites across the country who said African Americans' demands were too severe, and looming dread that there would be a race war in the South. Kennedy feared the political danger tied to making an assertive demand for comprehensive civil rights legislation in America, meanwhile Rockefeller seemed fearless. Rockefeller was determined to keep the Republican Party in step with what he considered to be the national consensus for the end of segregation, but he underestimated the allure of southern votes to a divided Republican Party. Although numerous Republicans were shocked when Rockefeller confronted the radical right, he refrained from revealing that the efforts to attract votes in the South by rejecting the civil rights movement extended far beyond a coterie of Goldwater supporters.

This chapter argues that Rockefeller's decision to maintain a liberal stance on civil rights legislation, despite moving to the right on other issues, was the undoing of his

candidacy for the nomination. Emphasis on the significance of civil rights in this period challenges a common assumption that Rockefeller failed to win over the Republican Party because of a controversial remarriage to a divorcee that upset conservative sensibilities. Rockefeller's vulnerability in the party, caused by a liberal stance on civil rights legislation in particular, along with a reputation for being too far to the left to be the Republican standard bearer, meant that the nomination would remain forever beyond Rockefeller's grasp. As the 1960s progressed, Rockefeller would move to the right on racial issues as well. However, in the early 1960s, when the struggle for racial equality centered on the southern question of ending Jim Crow or strengthening anti-discrimination laws in his own state, Rockefeller was an enthusiastic supporter.

What Goes Unsaid

It was in the heat of a Republican campaign some years after the Civil War when Frederick Douglass, who had been appointed by President Hayes as U.S. Marshall of the District of Columbia and by President Harrison as Minister to Haiti, said to an audience of Negroes, 'The Republican Party is the ship; all else is the sea.'²

Elmer A. Carter, Chairman of the State Commission Against Discrimination in New York shared this piece of history with Hugh Morrow, Rockefeller's chief speech writer, in January 1963.³ He suggested that Morrow incorporate Douglass's famous quotation in the governor's speech scheduled for February 12, 1963, at the New York County Republican Committee Lincoln Day Dinner. In commemoration of Lincoln and

² Memorandum from Elmer A. Carter to Hugh Morrow, January 24, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 902, box 19, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

³ Elmer Anderson Carter was one of the original members of the State Commission Against Discrimination (SCAD) named by Dewey at its inception in 1945. By 1953, Carter, a commissioner from the New York Fair Employment Practices Commission, was the first African American nominated by the Republican Party to run as a Republican candidate for Manhattan Borough president. At the time, the executive committee of the New York County Republican Committee passed a special resolution to select the Harvard educated civic leader because he was a non-enrolled Republican. Rockefeller appointed him the Chairman of SCAD in 1959.

the origins of the Republican Party, the speech would provide the perfect opportunity for Rockefeller to reemphasize his conviction that the Republican Party would maintain its commitment to liberty and equality as the Party of Lincoln. “Once before,” wrote Carter, “the Governor stated in a speech that no temporary political advantage would prompt him or lead him to abandon the historic principles of civil rights which the Republican Party had enunciated in 1860, and I believe that on this occasion he might reiterate that statement.”⁴ This was an important issue for Carter, an African American Republican, who believed the Republican Party was turning away from its tradition of advancing civil rights. Carter’s concern that his party was dissociating itself from civil rights was not merely caused by a fear that Republican voters were becoming resentful of the insistent demands for social change made by participants of the civil rights movement, although there were newspaper reports to that effect. Rather, Carter had received word from a fellow black Republican that the rising popularity of the party in the South—a trend many Republican leaders heralded as a positive development for the GOP—was the direct result of segregationists usurping the party.

The midterm elections of November 1962 brought the Republican Party successes in the South that it had not experienced since Reconstruction. Republicans won elections for local offices, seats in state legislatures, and U.S. congressional seats. The Republican Party gained House seats in Florida, Texas, Tennessee, and North Carolina, and demonstrated great strength in a city such as Dallas, Texas, where Republicans won all six House seats from the Dallas district. Hedrick Smith of the *New York Times*, wrote that “many victorious Republicans ran on platforms of economic conservatism, with subtle

⁴ Memorandum from Elmer A. Carter to Hugh Morrow, January 24, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 902, box 19, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

undertones of segregationism.”⁵ While some Republican leaders rejoiced, Smith pointed out that Republicans only experienced “pocket strength” rather than statewide gains in the South, oftentimes the result of “former Democrats, businessmen and transplanted Northerners [voting] against the liberal racial and economic policies of the national Democratic party in House and Senate elections.”⁶ Chairman of the Republican National Committee’s Operation Dixie was so encouraged by the results in Tennessee that he declared that party gains below the Mason-Dixon Line had “shattered for all time the so-called Democratic Solid South.”⁷ The Republican National Committee (RNC) organized “Operation Dixie” in 1957 to take advantage of Eisenhower’s popularity among southern white voters and expand the party’s influence south of the Mason-Dixon Line. By the 1962 election cycle, the RNC’s efforts garnered historic successes in the South, as white southerners’ anger mounted in reaction to Kennedy’s support for civil rights.⁸ While this *Times* article linked southern Republican advances to a backlash against the national Democratic Party’s liberal policies and successful use of “subtle segregationism,” Carter received a report that attributed Republican advances in the South more explicitly to white segregationist interests.

Carter received a firsthand account of the Republican Party’s gains in the South from George W. Lee of Memphis, Tennessee, a lifelong African American Republican and Grand Commissioner of Education in the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World. Lee shared with Carter a copy of a letter he had sent to

⁵ Hedrick Smith, “G.O.P. in South Sees Hope for ’64 in Vote Gains,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1962, 39.

⁶ Smith, “G.O.P. in South Sees Hope for ’64 in Vote Gains,” 39.

⁷ Smith, “G.O.P. in South Sees Hope for ’64 in Vote Gains,” 39.

⁸ Gould, *Grand Old Party*, 338, 356.

Congressman Robert A. Taft, Jr.—he had also forwarded the letter to Rockefeller—and requested that Carter ask Rockefeller to respond. Lee wrote, “We are fighting a last ditch battle in the South against great odds, and unless we get support from northern interest, the Republican Party will be taken over lock, stock, and barrel by the Klu Kluxers, the John Birchers and other extreme rightwing reactionaries.”⁹ Lee sent the letter to the congressman in response to a statement Taft had made warning the Republican Party not to compromise itself in an attempt to woo the South. He explained that these gains were the result of “right wing radicals” in the Democratic Party joining the Republican Party in an attempt to create an all-white party in the South that could counter the growing liberalism in the Democratic Party. Their motto, he said, was that “the Negro vote is lost and nothing will change them from their Democratic Allegiance.” Lee refuted this statement noting that Republican governors in New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Ohio had demonstrated that moderate “middle of the road” Republicanism appealed to African American voters. He went on:

The kind of campaign now being conducted in the South under the banner of the Republican Party for so-called purpose of building a two-party system in the South and sponsoring elections of candidates has given Republicans, who embrace the true principles of the Party, a great deal of concern. The leaders of Operation Dixie are not conducting their organizational efforts by advocating principles of the GOP platform or the progressive republicanism advocated by the Eisenhower administration.¹⁰

Lee explained that allowing Democrats turned Republicans to transform the Republican Party into the “first major all white political party” would be a mistake and that the Republican Party could find success in 1964, if not in the South, in the industrial North,

⁹ Letter from George W. Lee to Robert A. Taft Jr., December 8, 1962, RAC, NAR, folder 902, box 19, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

¹⁰ Letter from George W. Lee to Robert A. Taft Jr., December 8, 1962, RAC, NAR, folder 902, box 19, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

with Rockefeller as the standard bearer. Lee hoped that with Rockefeller at its helm, the Republican Party would reject the strategy of seeking gains in the South by accepting segregationists. Although Rockefeller had challenged his party on civil rights before, it was unclear whether, even as the frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination, he could dissuade his party from its new course.

On February 12, 1963, Rockefeller spoke at two gatherings commemorating Lincoln's birthday. The first was a \$100-a-plate black-tie fundraiser organized by the New York County Republican Committee featuring Assembly Speaker Carlino and Senators Javits and Keating. The second was a larger \$25-a-plate fundraiser held by the Kings County Republican Committee where Massachusetts Attorney General Edward W. Brooke gave a speech. Brooke was the nation's first African American to be elected state attorney general. Rockefeller touted the Republican Party's foundation in a "deep-rooted belief in and concern for equality and human dignity" and enumerated the civil rights laws passed in New York under a Republican governor, Thomas E. Dewey and a Republican-controlled legislature. He also mentioned the passage of anti-discrimination laws during his own administration related to private housing, commercial space, and job training.¹¹ Rockefeller went on to criticize Kennedy's reliance on "high publicity" administrative actions such as his intervention in James Meredith's attempt to desegregate the University of Mississippi instead of the introduction of new legislation. He noted that Kennedy had refused to back Democratic-sponsored legislation that addressed inequality, despite his pledge he made at the 1960 Democratic National

¹¹ In 1961, the New York legislature passed a law prohibiting discrimination in private housing and commercial spaces and a law banning discrimination in apprentice training and other job training and retraining programs in 1962.

Convention to be a champion for civil rights upon entering the White House. Democrats Senator Joseph S. Clark of Pennsylvania and Representative Emanuel Celler of Brooklyn introduced six bills that met these pledges but, Rockefeller asked, “What happened to it?” “The very next day, the White House let it be known (through Pierre Salinger) that ‘these are not administration-backed bills’ and the president ‘does not consider it necessary at this time to enact civil rights legislation.’”¹² In late 1960 and early 1961, Republican Senators Javits and Keating had also introduced civil rights bills that the Democratic-controlled sessions let languish. Rockefeller concluded that despite Kennedy’s pledges, 2 to 1 Democratic control of Congressional Committees, and Democratic majorities of 3 to 2 in the House and 2 to 1 in the Senate, the Democrats continued to be divided over civil rights.¹³ Meanwhile, the president, in response to the attorney general, “had...named at least four Federal judges in the South who were known at the time of their appointments for their segregationist views.”¹⁴ These appointees were then able to delay or dismiss desegregation cases at their discretion, while the Senate Committee on the Judiciary headed by Democratic Senator Eastland of Mississippi held up the nomination of Thurgood Marshall for months. Ultimately, Rockefeller’s campaign speech was an

¹² The words in parentheses were marked in this way by Rockefeller because he chose to omit them when he gave the speech aloud.

¹³ Excerpts of Remarks by Nelson Rockefeller, February 12, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 902, box 19, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

¹⁴ The four unnamed “segregationist” judges according to a memorandum sent from Hugh Morrow to Rockefeller were Middle District of Georgia Judge J. Robert Elliott, Eastern District of Louisiana Judge Frank B. Ellis, Southern District of Mississippi Judge Sidney C. Mize, and United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit Judge Benjamin F. Cameron of Mississippi. These judges were referred to as segregationists because of public statements they had made. While Kennedy nominated Elliott and Ellis, Franklin Roosevelt nominated Mize and Eisenhower nominated Cameron. This error reveals that both parties had inconsistent records on race relations. It is worth noting that Kennedy did nominate other judges who fit this label such as William H. Cox who served on the U.S. District Court, Southern District of Mississippi. RAC, NAR, folder 902, box 19, 33 Speeches, RG 15; and “Courts: Those Kennedy Judges,” *Time*, November 6, 1964.

effective critique of Kennedy's civil rights record that derided the president's administration, while highlighting the Republican Party's support of civil rights. What is perhaps most revealing about Rockefeller's Lincoln Day observance, however, was the speech he did not give.

The day before Rockefeller was scheduled to give his Lincoln Day Speech, speechwriter Hugh Morrow sent an addition to the text of the speech that developed further the case against the Kennedy Administration, but also alluded to the Republican Party's uncertain future in relation to civil rights. Morrow wrote the governor: "Here is a nine-minute insert in your basic political speech which you could either use as an opener or hold...George Hinman has heard the latter part of this speech on the telephone and heartily approves—I have plowed some new ground re the South and felt his policy clearance was essential."¹⁵ This alternate version asserted that in 1960 the Democratic Party was seeking Negro votes, but now sought to placate southerners who dominated Congressional committees. The Republican Party however, "was, is, and must remain the party of Abraham Lincoln." The revised speech acknowledged that there were Republicans who wanted to "compromise on these principles" and the party's traditional commitment to civil rights.¹⁶ Incorporating a quotation from a speech that Herbert Hoover had given at the 1952 Republican National Convention—a quotation that George Lee of Memphis included in his letter to Congressman Taft—the speech offered a warning to the Republican Party: "The Whig Party temporized, compromised upon the

¹⁵ George Hinman served as one of Rockefeller's chief political advisers throughout his time as governor and vice president. He was also a Republican national committeeman who helped Rockefeller during his Republican presidential nomination campaigns. Hugh Morrow to Nelson Rockefeller, February 11, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 902, box 19, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

¹⁶ Hugh Morrow to Nelson Rockefeller, February 11, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 902, box 19, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

issues of freedom for the Negro. That party disappeared, it deserved to disappear. Shall the Republican Party receive or deserve any better fate if it compromises upon the issue of freedom for all men?" However, Hoover's reference to the Whigs was not to warn Republicans about failure to protect the rights of African Americans, but to warn Republicans not to ignore the threat of Communism in favor of isolationism.¹⁷ The revised speech that Morrow gave Rockefeller likewise used the quotation as a warning: failing to protect African Americans' rights could mean the Republican Party's demise: "I stand with Herbert Hoover on this issue—with all the leaders of the Republican Party from Lincoln to Eisenhower." A declaration of this nature, insisting that the Republican Party must stand for freedom and human dignity, revealed that Rockefeller and his staff believed some Republican leaders were looking to compromise on civil rights.

Morrow's version called for Rockefeller to address the Republican Party's "Operation Dixie." "Does this mean the Republican Party in order to remain true to its basic principles must forever abandon the effort to achieve a two-party South? Of course not!" Rockefeller argued that the Republican Party could make gains in the South without compromising on civil rights—or turning away from a moderate Republican such as himself—by focusing on other Republican principles that would attract a southern voter. Rockefeller posited that the Republican Party could attract southerners by emphasizing its commitment to fiscal integrity, "firmness and strength in foreign policy," and the American free enterprise system: "The Republican Party stands for these principles north and south—and above all it must stand for equal opportunity regardless of race for each

¹⁷ Herbert Hoover, "Address at the Republican National Convention," July 8, 1952, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, http://www.hooverassociation.org/hoover/speeches/republican_national_convention.php, September 3, 2011.

of our citizens, north or south, east or west.” Even when Rockefeller was far ahead in the polls, he and his staff were aware of the difficulties he would face campaigning in the South. The Republican Party through initiatives like Operation Dixie was exploring a future for the Republican Party that would garner electoral strength in the South. While the argument that the Republican Party could make strides in the South on the principles of fiscal integrity and robust foreign policy may have been sound in theory, the Rockefeller staff had received reports that southern Republican success was thanks to an acceptance of segregationist policies. Rather than discuss the growing divide in the Republican Party, Rockefeller continued to tout the civil rights initiatives of fellow Republicans like Javits, Keating, and John Lindsay. Many Republican leaders had expressed support for civil rights legislation at various points in their career (e.g. Nixon), but it was unclear how many would be willing to risk jeopardizing Republican gains in the South or alienating their constituencies for an uncertain political yield.

A few weeks later, on March 5, 1963, the governor gave a speech in Albany, New York, at a rally sponsored by the New York State Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Rockefeller continued to refute what he called the “widely accepted claim that the Kennedy Administration [was] achieving equality of opportunity through administrative action rather than legislation.”¹⁸ Kennedy had made a statement to Congress on February 28, calling for new measures to address discrimination in voting, schools, and jobs.¹⁹ Rockefeller said that Kennedy’s civil rights message was inadequate and two years late. Rockefeller noted that Kennedy had failed to fulfill the three promises related to civil rights in the 1960 Democratic Party platform:

¹⁸ *Public Papers*, 1963, 1063.

¹⁹ Anthony Lewis, “Program is Broad,” *New York Times*, March 1, 1963, 1.

The administration had not offered support for federal legislation establishing a Fair Employment Practices Commission, had not granted the attorney general the power to file civil injunction suits in federal court, nor had it broadened and strengthened the power of the Federal Civil Rights Commission, which Democrats had pledged to make permanent. Rockefeller noted that Kennedy made no mention of the first two issues and only proposed a four-year extension of the Federal Civil Rights Commission rather than make it permanent. He also pointed out that the 1960 Republican Platform made the same pledges—which was true because of his own intervention—and argued that Republicans would have been better suited to fulfill these goals.²⁰ In contrast to the Democratic Party, Republican Congressmen Lindsay and William E. Miller of New York had introduced civil rights legislation to the House Judiciary Committee that had the unanimous support of Republican leadership in the House. While Rockefeller's position on civil rights was uncontroversial in New York, his stance would not endear him to conservatives in the party who argued that a Rockefeller Administration would be the same as a Kennedy Administration. Meanwhile, Rockefeller's intention, at least regarding civil rights, was to show that he could achieve what remained Kennedy's best intentions.

Rockefeller's speech at the NAACP rally in Albany attracted little media attention, but a *Chicago Daily Defender* article noted that while Rockefeller did have an impressive record on civil rights in New York, he would have a difficult time wresting black support from Kennedy. The article stated, "Rockefeller must come up with something more persuasive than the record if he is to pry substantial numbers of Negro

²⁰ Rockefeller noted, as he did in his Lincoln Day speech, that "as early as the post-convention rump session of the Congress in the late summer of 1960, Senators Javits and Keating had introduced bills to put into effect both the Republican and Democratic platform planks on civil rights—and they reintroduced these measures at the opening of the new session in 1961." *Public Papers*, 1963, 1062.

voters away from the Kennedy New Frontier.”²¹ The article’s author, Lyle C. Wilson, agreed that the Kennedy Administration had refused to honor its campaign promises, but noted it had triumphed in the James Meredith episode, had opened new and important positions in federal government to African Americans, and created a sense of acceptance in the administration that exceeded even Franklin Roosevelt’s Administration. NAACP Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins emphasized Rockefeller’s difficulty declaring, “[His] record on civil rights is a good record, but, you know, he is running against President Kennedy!”²² It remained unclear if Rockefeller’s support of new civil rights legislation would lure supporters of the civil rights movement away from the Kennedy fold.

In an editorial entitled “A Bipartisan Guilt,” the then-liberal *New York Post* supported Rockefeller’s call for action, but highlighted his silence on Republican responsibility for the lack of new civil rights legislation. While referring to the legislation introduced by Lindsay and others as “welcome pressure,” the editorial criticized Rockefeller for critiquing Democrats while failing to address his own party’s failures on civil rights. Rockefeller’s criticism of Kennedy’s civil rights program and decision to not participate in attempts to curb the power of the filibuster in the Senate were justified, wrote the *Post*, but Rockefeller was at fault as well. The filibuster, as Rockefeller pointed out, was the “principal means of frustrating civil rights legislation” and members of his party had recently voted with southern Democrats to block an attempt to require fewer votes to break a filibuster making it easier to force a vote on a bill. Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans had banded together on numerous occasions to filibuster

²¹ Lyle C. Wilson, “Rocky Faces Tough Job Prying Negro from JFK,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, March 20, 1963, 9.

²² Public Papers, 1963, 1063; and Lyle C. Wilson, “Rocky Faces Tough Job Prying Negro from JFK,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, March 20, 1963, 9.

civil rights bills they opposed and there had been five attempts by liberal Senators in the previous ten years to decrease the number of votes required for cloture.²³ The *Post* queried, “But where was the Governor while this fight was being waged? He has been speaking on all manner of national and international issues, yet while aspiring to be the spokesman for the GOP nationally on Cuba, nuclear tests and the like, he issued no flaming manifestoes designed to promote the fight against the filibuster.” The editorial continued, “The Governor’s denunciations of President Kennedy and the Democrats in general have obvious relevance, but they would carry a more persuasive ring if his voice had been raised before this key battle was lost. The guilt is still bipartisan.”²⁴ The *New York Post* was willing to concede Rockefeller’s criticisms of Kennedy, but he needed to keep his own party accountable as well. Rockefeller was in a difficult position. The *Post* wanted Rockefeller to reform his “backward GOP brethren,” but the governor was trying not to alienate the conservative and southern Republican vote.²⁵ Rockefeller could not win the Republican nomination if he did not find a way to appease his party’s conservative wing.

A Precarious Bandwagon

Rockefeller began 1963 as the presumed Republican presidential nominee. Gallup polltakers across the country from November 1962, to April 1963, found that among a

²³ The future of the filibuster—an effort to block or delay Senate action on a bill or another matter by extending debate and subsequently preventing a vote—had recently been challenged when Democratic Senator Clinton Anderson of New Mexico proposed an amendment to Rule XXII, otherwise known as the cloture rule, which permits a filibuster with a two-thirds majority vote. Rule XXII, which is the only formal procedure for breaking a filibuster, required a two-thirds majority of the Senators present and voting and Anderson proposed reducing that to three-fifths. Controversy arose anew when southern Democrats blocked a vote on the resolution with a filibuster. Despite an attempt to get around this latest filibuster, a number of Republican Senators joined with southern Democrats to vote against it thus making it inevitable that Rule XXII would remain unchanged.

²⁴ “A Bipartisan Guilt,” *New York Post*, March 8, 1963.

²⁵ “A Bipartisan Guilt,” *New York Post*, March 8, 1963.

field of five Republicans, including Rockefeller, Barry Goldwater, Michigan Governor George Romney, Pennsylvania Governor William Scranton, and Oregon Governor Mark Hatfield, that Rockefeller and Goldwater consistently led the pack, with the governor far in the lead.²⁶ Rockefeller's lead seemed even more secure because Hatfield and Romney were less well known as newcomers to politics and Scranton—a favorite son candidate—expressed no interest in running for president. In December 1962, the poll results were: Rockefeller 42 percent, Goldwater 14 percent, Romney 11 percent, Scranton 3 percent, “None of these” 9 percent, “No opinion” 21 percent. The December poll revealed that Rockefeller's popularity even extended to southern states, where he led Goldwater 42 to 14 percent. Rockefeller enjoyed the most popularity in the Far West with 55 percent of respondents supporting him followed by the East at 50 percent.²⁷ Rockefeller was widely regarded as the clear frontrunner.

Roscoe Drummond of the *Washington Post* credited Rockefeller's lead in the polls to his popularity among progressive Republicans and the perception that Democrats feared he was the Republican who could offer an alluring alternative to the Kennedy Administration. While some conservatives “bitterly opposed” Rockefeller because they saw him as identical to Kennedy, his reputation as a vote-getter could win him the Republican nomination. According to Drummond, “conservatives who want to use conservative principles to deal with social and economic problems rather than use conservative principles as an excuse to neglect them will find in him an ally.”²⁸ The

²⁶ “The Gallup Poll: Rockefeller Gains as GOP Choice,” *Washington Post*, February 15, 1963, A2.

²⁷ George Gallup, “The Gallup Poll: Rockefeller Also Choice of GOP in the South,” *Washington Post*, December 12, 1962, A7.

²⁸ Roscoe Drummond, “Almost Certain '64 Candidate: Rockefeller's in the Driver's Seat,” *Washington Post*, November 4, 1962, E7.

disdain conservatives felt for Rockefeller could cost him the nomination, but moderate Republicans had substantial successes in the November 1962 elections that reaffirmed their reputation as vote getters. As columnist Drew Pearson noted, Republican moderates such as California Senator Thomas Kuchel, who had voted in favor of Medicare as well as various other Kennedy initiatives, won by a significant margin. Liberals like Javits and Hatfield had impressive victories too. In contrast, conservative Republicans in Indiana, New Hampshire, and South Dakota lost.

Despite Rockefeller's lead among Republicans, he badly trailed Kennedy in trial heats. In the hope of finding a way to overcome Kennedy's lead, Rockefeller employed political analyst Lloyd Free to conduct private polls, analyze public sentiment, and offer strategy. Free attributed Kennedy's substantial lead to his popularity after the Cuban Missile Crisis, which the public interpreted as a resounding American victory when the Soviet Union removed its missiles from Cuba. In a report to Rockefeller, Free wrote that "apart from opposition within his own party in Congress, JFK has had pretty much of a clear field." His recommendation to Rockefeller was to bring Republicans back to the fold by speaking on national issues such as the economy and the administration's foreign policy in an effort to present himself as an alternative to Kennedy in a fashion that would appeal to Republicans' traditional loyalties. While Rockefeller should remain largely positive, it was time, in Free's estimation, to take a few "well-calculated jabs and sideswipes at Kennedy and his administration," with the intention of sparking a controversy that might reignite Republican loyalties. Rockefeller hoped to unite the party

behind his candidacy, and convince skeptical conservatives that he was not too far to the left to offer an alternative to Kennedy.²⁹

As the frontrunner, Rockefeller traveled across the nation giving speeches intended to convince Republicans that he was conservative. He criticized Kennedy whenever possible and advocated policy that situated him to the right of Kennedy in relation to the nation's economy and Cold War national security. In March, Rockefeller ventured west revisiting some of the Midwestern states where he received the coolest reception when he tested the possibility of running for president in the winter of 1959. George Hinman, Rockefeller's long-time political adviser and special counsel for Rockefeller Family & Associates, referred to these trips as a "de-horning" process, where Rockefeller could show party regulars that he was not dangerous.³⁰ His first and possibly most significant stop in early 1963 was a trip to Milwaukee, to speak at a \$100-a-plate Republican fundraising dinner. In contrast to his previous visit to the state, Rockefeller was warmly welcomed by Republicans. A segment of the state's conservatives, however, were still decidedly against Rockefeller, this time supporting Goldwater.³¹ To Rockefeller's credit, the presidential hopeful gave a speech intended to allay the fears of conservatives and encourage unity within the party, an important message from a man who was considered a divisive party-spoiler in 1960. Laurence Stern of the *Washington Post* wrote, "It was a shrewdly balanced political medley of Old Time Religion—calculated to warm the conservative heart of Wisconsin Republicanism—and 'give-em-

²⁹ Memorandum from Lloyd Free to Nelson Rockefeller, "Objectives over the next few months," RAC, NAR, folder 691, box 63, J.1 Politics, Subseries 4, RG 4.

³⁰ Memorandum from Lloyd Free to Nelson Rockefeller, RAC, NAR, folder 691, box 63, J.1 Politics, Subseries 4, RG 4.

³¹ Laurence Stern, "Wisconsin Warms Up to Rockefeller's Bid," *Washington Post*, March 11, 1963, A8.

hell' flourishes aimed broadly at the record of the Kennedy Administration."³² Stern also noted, however, that "it was his exhortation for Party unity, for the pursuit of 'free enterprise in a climate of growth,' and for solution of Government problems at the local rather than Federal level that drew the heaviest applause." In sharp contrast to his last foray into national politics when he criticized his rival Nixon, Rockefeller made sure to praise Goldwater calling him one of the "outstanding men" who should be actively considered a contender for the 1964 presidential nomination.³³ Rockefeller's effort to encourage party unity and appease conservatives who previously supported Nixon also included holding a private meeting with the former Vice President in New York before leaving for Wisconsin.

While the press deemed the trip a great success, it would be a long process for Rockefeller to chip away at Kennedy's significant lead. Once Rockefeller left Milwaukee, his staff, under the guidance of Free, assessed the impact of the trip. The first positive news revealed that Rockefeller's trip had garnered a good deal of attention in the Milwaukee area, with the "remarkably high figure" of 40 percent of the people polled having heard or read what the governor said, according to Free.³⁴ Among Republicans who were familiar with Rockefeller's visit, 60 percent said they approved of the governor, while only 8 percent disapproved. Free's survey also found that the Milwaukee trip had helped Rockefeller in his effort to reduce Kennedy's significant lead among respondents who were asked who they would vote for in a general election. The same

³² Stern, "Wisconsin Warms Up to Rockefeller's Bid," A8.

³³ Edward T. Folliard, "Clearing 1964 Path: Rockefeller Attacks 'Confusion' of Labels," *Washington Post*, January 4, 1963, A4.

³⁴ Memorandum from Lloyd Free to Nelson Rockefeller, RAC, NAR, folder 691, box 63, J.1 Politics, Subseries 4, RG 4.

sample of people was interviewed before and after Rockefeller's appearance. Free found that after the trip 57 percent said they favored Kennedy—a decline of 7 points.

Rockefeller still lagged behind Kennedy at 27 percent, but his visit did appear to cause Kennedy's numbers to drop.³⁵ While Rockefeller's visit had a positive effect, this type of trip had an inherently limited impact. If Rockefeller were going to convince party professionals who supported Goldwater that he was the only Republican who could defeat Kennedy, he would need to be able to demonstrate that he was a real threat to the president.³⁶

Rockefeller continued to present himself as an economic conservative in comparison to Kennedy, who he said was mishandling the current economic downturn. He discussed his support for a 10-billion-dollar tax cut that would become effective on July 1, 1963, with \$7.5 billion going to individuals and the remainder to corporations. This plan was in opposition to Kennedy's plan for a tax cut that would be spread out over three years. Rockefeller made sure to discuss his plan using the phrase "fiscal integrity," to appeal to "GOP fundamentals," while insisting that government spending would be held at current levels.³⁷ When asked where he would cut spending Rockefeller replied, "I would postpone those things which are not high priority on the priority list." Rockefeller

³⁵ Free noted, "customarily, people don't shift allegiance directly from one candidate to another. Instead of changing their earlier assumptions immediately, they first begin to question their assumptions and shift into the undecided category."

³⁶ Memorandum from Lloyd Free to Nelson Rockefeller, RAC, NAR, folder 691, box 63, J.1 Politics, Subseries 4, RG 4.

³⁷ Rockefeller forecasted that with federal expenditures kept at the current levels paired with his proposed tax cut there would be a \$1.5 billion surplus in two years rather than the projected \$12 billion deficit under Kennedy's plan. Julius Duscha, "Fiscal Integrity Stressed Here by Rockefeller," *Washington Post*, April 11, 1963, A4.

refused, however, to name any specific low-priority items.³⁸ When additionally asked if he would postpone social legislation until the budget was balanced, he said no, explaining that not all social legislation costs money. The governor said he hoped the nation was not returning to the economic strategies of the Roosevelt Administration that failed to alleviate unemployment. He explained that the current Administration was “reaching backward to get old solutions—whether it is [the] WPA in a new form, or whether it is CCC camps.” Rather than looking for new solutions that would create a climate of growth. Rockefeller explained that there would be money “to meet urgent social problems” once taxes were cut, the budget was balanced, and incentives and confidence were returned to the economy. Despite years of telling New Yorkers about his fiscal integrity and “pay-as-you-go” approach to governance, this austere tone and plan to avoid social legislation that would cost money would surprise many in his state. While Rockefeller was laboring to distinguish himself from Kennedy, Walter Lippmann pointed out that both leaders’ proposed tax cuts were based on the theories of John Maynard Keynes. Both asserted that a tax cut, although initially creating a deficit, would ultimately produce more tax revenue from an expanding economy making it possible to balance the budget.³⁹

While his proposals may have been only incrementally different from Kennedy’s, Rockefeller still put himself in danger of alienating supporters. After Rockefeller’s performance in Washington, Marquis Childs wrote an article pointing out what he thought were surprising points in the governor’s statement, specifically his call for tax

³⁸ Transcript of Press Conference, Nelson Rockefeller, April 10, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 934, box 19, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

³⁹ Walter Lippmann, “Two Witnesses,” *Washington Post*, April 16, 1963, A17.

cuts and fiscal austerity. This approach was the antithesis of the recommendations made by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund reports. The reports called for a wide variety of government programs to stimulate economic growth at a rate of 5 percent rather than the 4 percent of the previous decade. Childs, who praised the reports, noted that the nation's economic growth had already slowed to 3 percent since their release.⁴⁰ Rockefeller's latest plan to cut taxes and freeze federal government spending was the reverse of this economic advice, and drew criticism from his allies who thought he was turning away from the reports' findings.⁴¹ The Rockefeller Brothers Fund reports recommended an increase in total government cash expenditures from \$114 billion to \$203 billion between 1957 and 1967. An increase in federal spending of this magnitude would help to meet the growing needs of states, which had mounting indebtedness created by local communities who consistently rejected tax increases despite being unable to meet the needs of their growing populations. As a governor, Rockefeller was all too familiar with the dilemma faced by states that required more support from the federal government because of insufficient tax revenue. During this conservative phase, however, the needs of states and their rising indebtedness no longer appeared to concern Rockefeller. Childs wrote that Rockefeller's friends feared he might sacrifice his position as a moderate Republican leader for a chance at the nomination.⁴² Although willing to recast himself as a conservative on fiscal matters, Rockefeller maintained a liberal stance on civil rights. He

⁴⁰ Marquis Childs, "Economic Advice for the Candidate," *Washington Post*, April 19, 1963, A22.

⁴¹ Childs noted that Kennedy's decision to stay spending for domestic programs at a time when the unemployment rate was between 5.5 and 5 percent had already drawn criticism from economists. Rockefeller's plan, in comparison, would require cuts to defense, space, or domestic spending; his call to keep spending at present levels would require a \$4.5 billion reduction to Kennedy's proposed budget for the next fiscal year.

⁴² Marquis Childs, "Economic Advice for the Candidate," *Washington Post*, April 19, 1963, A22.

continued to call for new federal legislation that placed him to the left of most mainstream politicians, including Kennedy.

Rockefeller's Loss, Goldwater's Gain

While Rockefeller's moves to the right concerned long-time supporters, a decision in his personal life delivered a sudden blow to his campaign. On May 4, 1963, Rockefeller, who had divorced his wife a year and a half before, married Margaretta "Happy" Fitler Murphy, a former campaign volunteer and recently divorced mother of four with whom he was presumed to have been having an affair.⁴³ While he would not be the first divorced nominee, Rockefeller's remarriage to a divorcee would set him apart.⁴⁴ The news upset the presidential nomination race and gave some people reason to reconsider their support for the governor—with negative results. Rockefeller was the expected nominee, but there were always significant challenges that ranged from opposition from conservatives to doubts that he could lure voters away from Kennedy. A controversial remarriage did not demolish the Rockefeller candidacy, but it did provide the ammunition that opponents were happy to use.

On March 24, 1963, the *Washington Post* printed a small article entitled "Joan Denies Marriage Plans," that addressed a rumor that Rockefeller and actress Joan Crawford had plans to marry. Similar stories had emerged and eventually dissipated in the weeks after Rockefeller's divorce.⁴⁵ A month later, on April 27, 1963, the *Post* again printed an article speculating whether Rockefeller had plans to remarry, this time

⁴³ Rockefeller married his second wife, who would be known as Happy Rockefeller, a little over a month after her April 1, 1963, divorce from Dr. James F. Murphy, who was affiliated with the Rockefeller Institute. Happy Rockefeller's first husband gained full custody of their four children who ranged in age from 11 years to 18 months.

⁴⁴ The Democratic Party had nominated two divorced men on three separate occasions, most recently in 1952 and 1956 when it nominated Adlai Stevenson.

⁴⁵ "Joan Denies Marriage Plans," *Washington Post*, March 24, 1963, A10.

including a photo taken four years earlier of Rockefeller and the future Mrs. Happy Rockefeller, then a campaign volunteer, dancing at Rockefeller's first inaugural ball.⁴⁶ There had been speculation for weeks about the possibility of Rockefeller remarrying and how that would affect his ability to obtain the presidential nomination, particularly in the South and West. Rockefeller had been trying to play it safe for months regarding his calls for unity in the party and attempts to assert his essential conservatism, but when it came to his personal life he did not play it safe.⁴⁷ The timing of Rockefeller's separation in November 1961 and eventual divorce in March 1962 was surprising considering not only that the New York gubernatorial election was the following year but also that Rockefeller desired to be the Republican presidential nominee in 1964. As the months passed, more unflattering and possibly damaging details about his divorce became known; however, Rockefeller said very little about his personal life and went on to win an impressive victory in New York. Rockefeller did not escape without some criticism, but his divorce appeared to have had little effect on his political future throughout 1962.

In a period when the press tended to respect the privacy of politicians, it was initially unclear what effect the remarriage would have for Rockefeller politically. On May 2, 1963, newspapers such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* reported that

⁴⁶ "Dancing with Mrs. Murphy," *Washington Post*, April 27, 1963, A2.

⁴⁷ The last year and a half had been tumultuous for Rockefeller. A spokesman for the Rockefeller family had announced on November 17, 1961, that Rockefeller and his wife of thirty-one years were separating with the intent of getting a divorce. The couple, who had known each other since childhood, had married in 1930, six days after Rockefeller's college graduation and had five children and eight grandchildren. The Rockefellers experienced another blow two days later when their youngest son Michael, who was doing anthropological research in Netherlands New Guinea, disappeared. Nelson Rockefeller immediately flew to the country to look for his son, but after ten days he returned to New York on November 29, 1961, making the solemn announcement that his son, who was never found, was presumed dead after a catamaran he was traveling in capsized. The press, particularly in the case of his son Michael, respected the privacy of the governor and his wife, but soon after the separation became public there was speculation in the press about how the separation would affect Rockefeller's political career.

Washington, D.C. Republican National Committeeman Carl L. Shipley said that many of the voters he had spoken to had said Rockefeller's impending marriage would be political suicide. He told the press that he was in agreement, but there was dissent among Republican chairmen across the country who were unsure what would come of the matter.⁴⁸ The hope within the Rockefeller team was that any negative impact would wear off in a few months. Rockefeller and his bride flew to Venezuela for a seventeen-day honeymoon on his private ranch in Chirgua, even inviting the press who eagerly photographed them as they rode horses together.

While Rockefeller was on his honeymoon, his staff, including Free and the group referred to as the "Public Relations Group," convened to analyze the repercussions of the governor's wedding and strategize the direction of his campaign in the coming months. Free, who summarized their conclusions for Rockefeller, wrote encouragingly regarding the remarriage: "As you know, the initial press reaction ha[s] been much friendlier in general than I had dared expect. Nevertheless, I still anticipate a backlash in terms of public opinion in certain sections of the country, and especially from some of the more hidebound church elements."⁴⁹ Rockefeller and his advisers believed there would be ample opportunity to repair any losses. Free's main recommendation was for the governor to continue to present himself as an "economizer." This might not be as difficult as first expected, the analyst explained, because the economy appeared to be strengthening, which would ease economic tensions in New York. It was essential that Rockefeller govern New York in a manner that would support the image he promulgated

⁴⁸ "Governor's Future In Politics Doubted," *New York Times*, May 2, 1963, 25; and Stanley Meisler, "View of Rockefeller Remarriage Here Reported: 'Political Suicide,'" *Washington Post*, May 2, 1963, A8.

⁴⁹ Memorandum from Lloyd Free to Nelson Rockefeller, May 8, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 691, box 63, J.1 Politics, Subseries 4, RG 4.

as a fiscal conservative, including, Free suggested, avoiding the introduction of any costly programs. In lieu of new programs Free offered several suggestions for raising the governor's profile including announcing a conference on crime or finding an organization to give the governor an award honoring his record on education or civil rights. "There ought to be some award you could be given for your really wonderful campaign for civil rights," explained the analyst.⁵⁰ Rockefeller's decision to remarry demonstrated a certain disregard for the public's perception of his personal life, yet he did work to find ways to satisfy the expectations of the public.

Rockefeller's remarriage eventually fueled numerous attacks on the governor, but, contrary to popular belief, that recent marriage was not the unmaking of his nomination run. The day before Rockefeller's eminent remarriage, Joseph Alsop in his *Washington Post* column wrote that the governor's liberal race record was the main obstacle to his nomination. Alsop explained, "The plain truth of the matter is that Rockefeller's heaviest single handicap, with great numbers of professional Republican politicians, is his aggressively and consistently liberal record on the racial issue. On many other subjects, he has recently been sounding a neo-conservative note; but on this subject he stands four-square with Sen. Jacob Javits."⁵¹ While this position had served him well in New York, Alsop continued, it was the reason why leaders of both parties predicted that if he did receive the nomination he would lose all of the southern states.⁵² The volatility of the race issue was a major reason why Kennedy—despite numerous campaign promises to make civil rights a priority if elected—still had not introduced new civil rights legislation. His

⁵⁰ Memorandum from Lloyd Free to Nelson Rockefeller, June 13, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 691, box 63, J.1 Politics, Subseries 4, RG 4.

⁵¹ Joseph Alsop, "Looking Before Leaping," *Washington Post*, May 3, 1963, A19.

⁵² Alsop, "Looking Before Leaping," A19.

remarriage would cause party professionals, Alsop predicted, to reassess whether he was the best nominee, but not to write him off altogether. The remarriage, while not the end of Rockefeller's prospects, was a significant liability, damaging the aura of certainty that had fueled his run for the Republican nomination. Given reason to hesitate, party professionals were more likely to question the wisdom of nominating a politician who would already have a difficult time getting elected against a popular incumbent. Rockefeller's liberal stance on civil rights made many Republicans fear that he was too similar to Kennedy and would be unlikely to win votes in the South—the region where Kennedy was most vulnerable. Alsop went on to say that the same politicians who said Rockefeller could never take the southern states from Kennedy also said that Goldwater “would carry almost every Southern and border state against the president or anyone else.”⁵³

Despite assurances from his staff that the reaction to his remarriage was not as bad as they had feared, Rockefeller returned to the U.S. to find his political campaign losing momentum. Rockefeller's polling numbers remained consistent during the first four months of 1963. In March, for example, Gallup showed Rockefeller still leading the Republican pack with 43 percent followed by 17 percent for Goldwater, and 13 percent for Romney. The following month Rockefeller's numbers remained the same but Goldwater gained strength, rising to 23 percent. Gallup collected data on Republicans' preference for the nomination during the first and last week of May. During the week that Rockefeller had married, the polling data revealed a narrow lead of six percentage points between Rockefeller at 35 percent and Goldwater at 29 percent. Two weeks later only 3

⁵³ Alsop, “Looking Before Leaping,” A19.

points divided the two frontrunners for the nomination. By June, Rockefeller's lead dwindled to 1 percent and by July Goldwater overtook Rockefeller for the first time with 31 percent in comparison to Rockefeller's 27 percent.⁵⁴

While early May marked a milestone in Rockefeller's personal life, a bigger story dominated the national news. On May 3, 1963, the nation read and watched reports of a civil rights protest in Birmingham, Alabama, that devolved into stark violence when dogs and the spray of fire hoses were used to attack demonstrators and five hundred youths were arrested under the direction of segregationist Bull Connor, Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety. On May 5, the *New York Times* front page was dominated by continued daily coverage of the melee in Alabama alongside a story announcing Rockefeller's remarriage.⁵⁵ In hindsight, Rockefeller's staff would blame his precipitous decline in the polls and Goldwater's simultaneous increase to backlash inspired by the Birmingham Riots. It is uncertain what specifically motivated the shift in

⁵⁴ **March 8-3, Gallup Poll, NAR 43% / BG 17% / Romney 13%** Gallup Poll (AIPO), Mar, 1963. Retrieved Jun-16-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropcenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html
April 4-9, Gallup Poll, NAR 43% / BG 23% / Romney 14% Gallup Poll (AIPO), Apr, 1963. Retrieved Jun-16-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropcenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html
May 2-7 - Gallup Poll, NAR 35% / BG 29% / Romney 14% Gallup Poll (AIPO), May, 1963. Retrieved Jun-16-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropcenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html
May 23-28, Gallup Poll, NAR 31% / BG 28% / Romney 15% Gallup Poll (AIPO), May, 1963. Retrieved Jun-16-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropcenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html
June 21-26, Gallup Poll, NAR 32% / BG 31% / Romney 13% Gallup Poll (AIPO), Jun, 1963. Retrieved Jun-16-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropcenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html
July 18-23, Gallup Poll, NAR 27% / BG 31% / Romney 15% Gallup Poll (AIPO), Jul, 1963. Retrieved Jun-16-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropcenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.
⁵⁵ Foster Hailey, "U.S. Seeking a Truce in Birmingham; Hoses Again Drive off Demonstrators," *New York Times*, May 5, 1963, 1; and Homer Bigart, "Gov. Rockefeller Marries Mrs. Murphy at Pocantico; Effect on 1964 is Weighed," *New York Times*, May 5, 1963, 1.

the polls, but Rockefeller's loss was not the gain of fellow moderate contenders like Romney and Scranton, whose records on race mirrored his own. Instead, Goldwater, a known opponent of federal civil rights legislation who was associated with the southern effort to maintain segregation, quickly overtook Rockefeller in the polls. Until May 1963, it appeared that the Republican Party was prepared to accept a Rockefeller nomination. Rockefeller was willing to do what he could to appease party members by saying the right things at the right time, particularly regarding fiscal conservatism and criticism of Kennedy, but he remained consistent in supporting civil rights, which always fueled conservatives' skepticism.

The Politics of a Moral Crisis

On the evening of June 11, 1963, President Kennedy gave an address informing the nation that in light of his decision that day to send National Guardsmen to protect two African American students who sought to desegregate the University of Alabama he was now convinced it was time for Congress to pass new civil rights legislation: "We face, therefore, a moral crisis as a Nation and as a people. It cannot be met by repressive police action. It cannot be left to increased demonstrations in the streets. It cannot be quieted by token moves or tort. It is a time to act in the Congress, in your state and local legislative body, and above all in our daily lives."⁵⁶ The spring of 1963 had been a particularly turbulent period marked by protests that turned violent in Birmingham, for example, where local authorities used brute force to maintain the racial status quo. Blacks responded violently when in the past they had chosen not to retaliate. Kennedy announced—after two and a half years of failing to introduce new civil rights legislation,

⁵⁶ "Text of the President's Address on Alabama," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1963, A8.

despite the recommendations of the civil rights commission he appointed—he was prepared to ask Congress “to make a commitment it ha[d] not fully made in this century to the proposition that race has no place in American life or law.”⁵⁷ Kennedy argued that desegregation was a moral issue that was overdue for a nation founded on the principle that all men were created equal. Much more than a regional problem relegated to segregated diner counters, inequality in America was a national problem, Kennedy noted that African Americans experienced unemployment at rates two and three times greater than whites. He attributed many of these discrepancies, for example, to a persistently segregated educational system despite the Supreme Court’s Brown v. Board of Education decision nine years prior.

The following week, on June 19, 1963, Kennedy ended his practice of appeasing southern Democrats and presented Congress with a far-reaching omnibus civil rights bill calling for desegregation in education, public accommodations, employment, and voting. Specifically, the president’s bill called for enforcement of laws to protect voting rights, a ban on discrimination in privately owned public accommodations, power for the attorney general to join lawsuits against segregated school systems, a proposal for a new Community Relations Service to seek voluntary compliance, and an extension for the Civil Rights Commission. The most controversial element of the bill called for the end of segregation in privately owned public spaces based on the premise that the federal government was obligated to eliminate this discriminatory practice under the commerce clause of the constitution and under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The civil rights movement, led by a myriad of citizens who worked to

⁵⁷ “Text of the President’s Address on Alabama,” *Washington Post*, June 12, 1963, A8.

achieve equality for African Americans paired with escalating violence in the South, had finally convinced Kennedy to fulfill his campaign promise and call for legislative action. In this speech Kennedy referred to the rising threat of violence several times and warned blacks to refrain from violence and marches that could result in violence. The volatility of the racial divide was underscored only hours after Kennedy's speech when NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers was murdered in his driveway by White Citizens' Council member Byron De LaBeckwith.⁵⁸

With his message to Congress on June 19, Kennedy chose a new direction hoping that new civil rights legislation would quiet the escalating turmoil. The objections of southern Democrats was so widely expected that rather than focus on the divisions in Kennedy's party the press looked to the Republican Party to see if it would come to the president's aid. It was soon clear that the Republican Party had its own historic test to face because of the public accommodations portion of the civil rights legislation. Republicans often hailed their party's courageous history as the party that freed the slaves, but its commitment to human equality was inconsistent and largely ineffectual. The Republican Party had had a record of disappointing equal rights advocates since the Compromise of 1877 when the party agreed to end Reconstruction in the South by removing federal troops in return for securing the White House for Rutherford B. Hayes. Despite the party's inconsistent record, the first civil rights legislation since Reconstruction had been passed under the Eisenhower Administration, but it had been stripped of the elements to ensure enforcement making it more effective rhetorically than legally. Eisenhower introduced what became the 1957 Civil Rights Bill with little fanfare,

⁵⁸ Medgar Evers had helped James Meredith enroll in the University of Mississippi the previous fall and had been instrumental in organizing a boycott campaign in Mississippi.

yet it passed largely because of the exhaustive work of Senator Lyndon Johnson aided by the common knowledge that little would change because of it. This was the sum of the Republican Party's civil rights legacy of late, but both parties had labored for decades to appease the overtly racist legislators and lawmakers of the South.

It was immediately clear that Kennedy's stand on civil rights would also be an important test for the Republican Party. The press questioned whether the Republican Party, with Goldwater as its rising star, would become the "White Man's Party." Kennedy's announcement attracted increased attention to the Republican Party's stand on civil rights because it was common knowledge that Kennedy's civil rights bill would need bipartisan support to gain passage despite Democratic majorities in both houses. This was particularly important in the Senate where twenty-five of the thirty-three Republican Senators would be needed for cloture or suspension of discussion to stop a southern filibuster intended to prevent a vote on the bill. While the issue of civil rights did not divide Republicans as starkly as it did Democrats, it evinced a range of responses for and against the bill. Although many Republican senators expressed support for new civil rights legislation, the day after Kennedy's announcement Republican Senator Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts stated that the majority of the senators expressed support for Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen's alternate civil rights bill which did not call for desegregation of privately owned public spaces.⁵⁹

Majority leader Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, introduced or co-sponsored three separate bills the day Kennedy addressed Congress.⁶⁰ The first was the president's omnibus bill unchanged, which went to the Judiciary Committee where James O.

⁵⁹ Richard L. Lyons, "GOP Silent On Position In Struggle," *Washington Post*, June 20, 1963, A1.

⁶⁰ Lyons, "GOP Silent On Position In Struggle," A1.

Eastland, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, a Southern Democrat from Mississippi was expected to prevent its progress. The second was a bill co-sponsored with Democratic Commerce Committee Chairman Warren G. Magnuson of Washington that only included the president's provision to outlaw discrimination in privately owned public accommodations, which was expected to have the necessary votes in the committee. And third was a bill co-sponsored by Minority Leader Dirksen that was identical to the president's except it omitted the public accommodations provision. Although Dirksen's bill removed the most controversial element of Kennedy's bill, it was believed that it would still require substantial compromise with Democrats to gain passage. Dirksen opposed the public accommodations provision, the element of the bill intended to quiet the rash of demonstrations throughout eateries and stores in the South, because, he argued, it was an invasion of private rights without due process of law.⁶¹ In the days before Kennedy presented his bill to Congress, Dirksen said he wanted to design a bill that would not require cloture.⁶² His offering in this effort was a bill that civil rights activists would consider symbolically and practically inadequate. Despite his rejection of the public accommodations provision, Dirksen tried to emphasize the Republican Party's support of civil rights by mentioning that Kennedy's bill was otherwise identical to measures detailed in the 1960 Republican Platform.

While Dirksen discussed Republican support for some form of civil rights legislation, there were known opponents to new civil rights legislation within the party. Goldwater, for example, was best known for his opposition. Initially, he had opposed any

⁶¹ At the time that Kennedy introduced the civil rights bill in 1963, thirty states had public accommodation laws and numerous courts had ruled in favor of the laws when the constitutionality of these laws was challenged.

⁶² Robert C. Albright, "GOP Offers Rights Collaboration," *Washington Post*, June 18, 1963, A1.

new civil rights legislation, but at the time Kennedy introduced his bill, Goldwater was willing to accept portions of the bill. Earlier in Goldwater's career he had supported desegregation laws in Phoenix, Arizona, and at various points had said that he opposed racism on moral grounds; however, his record in Senate did not reflect that position. In 1957, for example, Goldwater aided his friend Strom Thurmond break the record for the longest filibuster by taking the senate floor long enough for Thurmond to take breaks.⁶³ Goldwater's voting record in senate included voting against the Eisenhower civil rights bill in 1957, in 1961 he voted for the Thurmond amendment to prohibit withholding federal aid to segregated schools, and in 1960 and 1962 he voted against attempts to enact anti-poll tax legislation.⁶⁴ It was reported that Goldwater considered the effort to end desegregation a moral issue, rather than legislative, and that the president should appeal to the national conscience, perhaps going on a speaking tour in support of equality. Goldwater reportedly told Dirksen he would be willing to support a modified Part III and to give the Justice Department the ability to initiate school desegregation suits if asked to intervene in addition to making the Civil Rights Commission a permanent entity. Goldwater, with a burgeoning faction of supporters, would remain an important representation of Republican opposition.⁶⁵ Another Republican in Congress who opposed the bill was House Judiciary Committee member Richard H. Poff, who joined with a fellow Virginian Democrat William M. Tuck to attempt to block the bill in committee;

⁶³ Gary Donaldson, *Liberalism's Last Hurrah: The Presidential Campaign of 1964* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 255; and Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 431.

⁶⁴ "Civil Rights Voting Record," RAC, Graham Molitor Collection, folder 255, box 8, IV 3A 18.

⁶⁵ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "The White House Chat," *Washington Post*, June 20, 1963, A6.

they subscribed to a common criticism that the bill was an “unconstitutional and needless invasion of the rights of the people.”⁶⁶

While some Republicans sought to water down the civil rights bill and others opposed it altogether, there were Republicans who offered unequivocal support of the omnibus bill. Keating stated that Republicans could not remain neutral on the issue of civil rights if they hoped to play an important role in America. Looking to the party’s prospects in the 1964 elections, he explained that the party could win if it “identified itself with the struggle for freedom, not as a sympathetic observer, but as a leader and driving force.” He admitted that there were Republicans who were willing to abandon the party’s history as a steady advocate of civil rights, but he argued this strategy was politically and morally wrong.⁶⁷ Another Republican member of Congress who disagreed with Dirksen and Saltonstall’s objections to the bill was Ohio Congressman Robert Taft, Jr., the son of the late “Mr. Republican” and iconic Republican senator and presidential hopeful, Robert A. Taft. While speaking at a gathering in Newark, New Jersey, Taft criticized Kennedy for not going far enough in his civil rights program by not including a fair employment practices provision and deemphasizing the public accommodations phase of the program. Taft also gave an interview with the *Newark Evening News* where

⁶⁶ Congressman Tuck declined to comment on reports that he offered a motion at a closed meeting to strike from the bill the section dealing with voting rights. In August of 1963, Rockefeller accepted an invitation to speak at a dinner meeting of the Virginia League of Municipalities in Roanoke the following month and Poff refused to introduce him. Other Republicans who ultimately opposed the civil rights bill in committee included William C. Cramer of Florida and George Meader of Michigan. Frank E. Taylor, “Poff, Tuck Lead Rights Bill Fight,” RAC, NAR, folder 114, box 20, J.2 Politics, RG 4; “Rockefeller to Address Virginia Fete,” *Washington Post*, August 28, 1963, D2; and Anthony Lewis, “Civil Rights Bill is Sent to Rules Panel,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1963, 34.

⁶⁷ “Warns GOP Against Neutral Stand,” *Chicago Defender*, June 22, 1963, 12.

he said Goldwater did not represent the consensus of the Republican Party. He went on to say that his father would have been somewhere between Rockefeller and Goldwater.⁶⁸

Five Republicans on the Senate Commerce Committee released a pledge to support an “intensive effort” to produce “meaningful recommendations” regarding the public accommodations, facilities, and services provision on July 1. All of the senators, including Norris Cotton of New Hampshire, Thruston B. Morton of Kentucky, Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, J. Glenn Beall of Maryland, and Winston L. Prouty of Vermont were generally associated with the minority liberal wing of the party. Such support however, did not align perfectly along the liberal-conservative divide within the party, revealing the diversity of opinion present within the party. While Prouty expressed support for the public accommodations provision, his fellow Republican counterpart from Vermont, Senator George D. Aiken, who also had a moderate to liberal reputation, opposed the law on the principle that small business owners should be exempt in the same way as small businesses had been exempted from the minimum wage law.⁶⁹ The divisions within the Democratic Party, exemplified by the chasm between Kennedy and conservative southern Democrats, and the looming threat of a “Southern Filibuster,” were the most glaring examples of intraparty disagreement in the face of the civil rights bill introduced in 1963, but Republican leaders in Congress were also split on the issue.

⁶⁸ Marquis Childs, “Race Issue Snarls Old Party Lines,” *Washington Post*, July 12, 1963, A16.

⁶⁹ Senator Aiken’s opposition to the provision was referred to as the Mrs. Murphy amendment because the Senator stated, “Let them integrate the Waldorf and other large hotels, but permit the ‘Mrs. Murphys’, who run small rooming houses all over the country, to rent their rooms to those they choose.” Ultimately, this type of exemption became an often talked-about compromise that could help the bill pass if there was a cut-off for which companies would be exempt based on a dollar volume of the business. Conversely, conservative Senator from Colorado Peter Dominick was one of the nine Republicans who endorsed Kennedy’s civil rights package, but he told an African American leader that if civil rights leaders continued with their plans to stage a march on Washington he would vote against the bill because he would “not submit to intimidation.” Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “The President’s Poll,” *Washington Post*, July 2, 1963, A17.

In a statement delivered from Albany on June 25, Rockefeller called for bipartisan support for Kennedy's civil rights bill, calling the bill "an essential first step in assuring full equality of opportunity for all Americans." With unequivocal support for the passage of civil rights legislation, Rockefeller reaffirmed his place within the Republican Party as the principal proponent of civil rights. Rockefeller went on to say that the legislation was "two years late," and if Kennedy had acted sooner, some of the tension in the nation could have been avoided: "I have been consistently urging Federal legislation along the same lines. Now the President has set forth immediate goals in his message to Congress. In my opinion, it is imperative that Congress act promptly to pass this long overdue legislation."⁷⁰ Rockefeller's enthusiastic support of the civil rights bill was noteworthy when only nine of the thirty-three total Republican Senators had joined the forty-six Senators who co-sponsored the bill.⁷¹

While such newspapers like the *New York Times* and *Chicago Defender* welcomed Rockefeller's open support for the civil rights legislation, he received cooler responses from moderate Republicans. According to the *Times*, Rockefeller and Kennedy were on the side of morality and inevitability, sensing that it was time for change in America. An editorial on the matter concluded,

⁷⁰ Douglas Dales, "Rockefeller Urges Congress to Adopt a Civil Rights Bill," *New York Times*, June 26, 1963, 1.

⁷¹ Robert C. Albright, "Rockefeller Asks Rights Bill Support," *Washington Post*, June 26, 1963, A1.

In point of fact, the great impetus to civil rights has come neither from the Administration nor from the demonstrators; it has come from “Bull” Connor and Ross Barnett and Orval Faubus and George Wallace. They have stirred the American people to revulsion by showing how hideous racial discrimination can be. No romantic legends about the Old South can ever again cover up the stark and ugly reality. Governor Rockefeller, like President Kennedy, comprehends the calendar.⁷²

Rockefeller, like the *Times*, believed rightfully that the majority of American people were ready to embrace civil rights legislation and he was willing to stake his candidacy on it.

The *Chicago Defender* stated, “Gov. Rockefeller’s personal commitment on civil rights has never been in question. But in pursuit for the GOP Presidential nomination, he has been inclined to equivocate.” The *Defender* expressed hope that Rockefeller’s statement would signal the beginning of an offensive by his fellow moderates against the party’s “temporizers and conservatives who want to transform the GOP into ‘the white man’s party.’”⁷³ However, a response to Rockefeller’s statement from Republican Congressman Fred Schwengel of Iowa reveals that it was equally likely to inspire infighting.

Schwengel contacted Rockefeller’s aide George Hinman the day after his statement expressing a concern he shared with other Republican congressmen that the governor’s statement undercut Republican-introduced legislation that pre-dated Kennedy’s.

Schwengel also said that he hoped Rockefeller would acknowledge these Republicans in future statements. Rockefeller had acknowledged fellow moderates’ activism on behalf of civil rights, as well as his own in New York, but Rockefeller’s decision to support Kennedy’s bill displeased Schwengel.⁷⁴

⁷² “Time for a Change,” *Washington Post*, June 29, 1963, A10.

⁷³ “GOP Liberals,” *Chicago Defender*, July 15, 1963, 12.

⁷⁴ Memorandum from John Deardourff to Nelson Rockefeller, June 27, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 964, box 37, 34 Diane Van Wie Files, RG 15.

President Kennedy's new civil rights policies did not seem to hurt his approval rating, but half the nation in the summer of 1963 thought he was moving too fast on civil rights. On June 17, 1963, after his televised appeal for racial discrimination on June 11, Gallup poll-takers found that 36 percent of the nation said Kennedy was moving too fast on civil rights, up four points from the year before.⁷⁵ One month later that number increased to 48 percent.⁷⁶ During the remainder of the summer the number was consistent, with 50 percent of the population stating that the president was moving too fast.⁷⁷ While an increasing number of Americans thought that Kennedy was moving too fast on civil rights, Gallup polls found that between May and August the president's approval rating remained consistent between 61 to 65 percent, although his ratings were lowest in the days after he introduced the civil rights legislation.⁷⁸

The civil rights question in America was the issue of the day, but it was unclear which party would or could make political gains because of it. For Republicans, in particular, journalists predicted that it would be the deciding factor for the 1964 Republican Party presidential nomination. In the weeks after Kennedy's message to

⁷⁵ Southern whites had a higher rate of disapproval at 62 percent, while northern whites responded that the president was moving too fast at a similar rate to the entire nation at 34 percent. George Gallup, "JFK Pushing Too Fast On Rights, 36% Believe," *Washington Post*, June 17, 1963, A9.

⁷⁶ Gallup Poll (AIPO), Jul, 1963. Retrieved Jul-20-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

⁷⁷ Gallup Poll (AIPO), Aug, 1963. Retrieved Jul-20-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

⁷⁸ Gallup Poll (AIPO), May, 1963. Retrieved Jul-20-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html. Gallup Poll (AIPO), Jun, 1963. Retrieved Jul-20-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html. Gallup Poll (AIPO), Aug, 1963. Retrieved Jul-20-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html. Kennedy's disapproval rating ranged from 23 to 26 percent in the same period.

Congress, Joseph Alsop of the *Washington Post* wrote two articles considering the ramifications for the Republican Party as it had to confront an internal divide over civil rights that was represented by the contest between Rockefeller and Goldwater. Alsop believed that nominating Goldwater would be irrefutable proof that the party had decided to become the “white man’s party.”⁷⁹ He agreed that Goldwater was no racist, but said that was irrelevant because he advocated for the party putting states’ rights before civil rights and opposed cloture, which was equated to being against civil rights. According to Alsop, Republicans had a clear and tempting choice to embrace discontent caused by Kennedy’s decision to call for new legislation. In Alsop’s opinion, before Rockefeller’s remarriage the governor had attempted to be all things to all men, to appease Republican conservatives who felt he was too liberal. The remarriage made Rockefeller vulnerable, but one positive was that he could conduct a “fighting candidacy” that unapologetically supported civil right without fear of losing the conservative wing of the party he tried to court earlier in the year.⁸⁰ Rockefeller had gained the admiration of Alsop, but his stand on civil rights further alienated him from party conservatives who hoped the party could benefit from Kennedy’s strong stance on civil rights.

Campaigning Against Great Odds

On July 14, 1963, in response to Goldwater’s gains in the polls and his own setbacks, and after he had emphasized consensus for the first half of the year Rockefeller decided to publicly warn his party that it was not taking a firm stand on civil rights. In 1960, Rockefeller’s call for stronger leadership in the Republican Party received mixed reactions, but he decided to employ intraparty confrontation after emphasizing his

⁷⁹ Joseph Alsop, “Lily White vs. Liberal,” *Washington Post*, June 28, 1963, A19.

⁸⁰ Joseph Alsop, “Candidate with a Difference,” *Washington Post*, July 8, 1963, A 17.

conservatism had failed to keep him at the top of the polls. “The Republican Party stands today at the crossroads of its destiny,” he declared. “Its destiny is to save the nation by first saving itself.” Rockefeller directed a couple of criticisms at the Democratic Party that he said had been captured by “unprincipled opportunism,” but Rockefeller’s purpose was not to reproach the Kennedy Administration; rather, it was to criticize the “radical right” and the Republican Party’s failure to root it out. According to Rockefeller, the “radical right” consisted of conservative extremists who used proclamations supporting states’ rights as a pretext for defending segregation and racism, because they had no program or solutions for America’s most important issues. This politically amoral and “well-financed” minority threatened Republican traditions by arguing that the party should “write off” racial minorities, the industrial North, and big cities, in favor of building a new Republican constituency in the South and West. The Republicans could then win the 1964 presidential election with a “program based on racism and sectionalism” that would not only lead to the party’s defeat but its destruction altogether.⁸¹ In doing so, Rockefeller hoped to defend his position within the Republican Party and regain his lead in the polls by challenging Republicans to follow his lead on civil rights.⁸²

Rockefeller stated that as a member of a minority party, he like many other Republican leaders had been emphasizing unity within the party while trying to avoid a confrontation with the radical right. His reasoning had been that the “responsible

⁸¹ The John Birch Society, founded in 1958 by John W. Welch, Jr., was an independent politically oriented group known for its conservatism and anti-communism that inspired denunciations of the Civil Rights Movement and leaders including Eisenhower.

⁸² In the days and weeks after his statement commentators would question why Rockefeller declared war on his own party and even if they agreed that the events at the YRNF conference were troubling they did not consider it cause for such a dramatic public statement.

elements” of the party were united in principle despite “differences in emphasis” and because of that “the activities of the radical right, while deeply disturbing in many ways, would represent an inconsequential influence on the Republican Party.”⁸³ He went on to say that the majority of the party fell into three categories: those who were either complacent, too afraid to complain, or “fantastically short-sighted” and opportunistic. To his dismay, the radical right appeared to be gaining influence over the party, which motivated him to break his silence and confront this element for the well-being of the Republican Party. Rockefeller did not allow that there could be “responsible” Republicans who felt the party’s most ideologically conservative contingency offered an important corrective for the party. For Rockefeller, the “radical right” and those who were influencing them threatened to drag the party away from its century-long tradition of a Republican “middle course” consisting of “sound and honest conservatism” and “sound and honest Republican liberalism that ha[d] kept the party abreast of human needs in a changing world.”⁸⁴ The governor intended to isolate this “radical right,” which had voiced its enthusiastic support for Goldwater, although he did not mention the senator by name. He argued that they were determined to take over the party of Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Robert Taft, a party that must remain “fiscally responsible,” “humanely principled,” and situated within “mainstream American thought.”⁸⁵

Rather than unite the party behind him in opposition to the radical right, Rockefeller exacerbated the liberal-conservative Republican divide. According to

⁸³ “Text of Rockefeller’s Statement Criticizing ‘Radical Right’ of the Republican Party,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1963, 23.

⁸⁴ Text of Rockefeller’s Statement Criticizing ‘Radical Right’ of the Republican Party,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1963, 23.

⁸⁵ “Text of Rockefeller’s Statement Criticizing ‘Radical Right’ of the Republican Party,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1963, 23.

journalists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, Rockefeller's "bomb," as they called his criticism of the radical right, "gravely widened the breach between the Party's left and right and spelled out the split over Negro equality in plain language." Evans and Novak (who at that time were themselves moderate Republicans) explained that despite concern among Eastern Republicans about the rising strength of the South and West, few leaders came forward to praise Rockefeller's statement. Suspicion that Rockefeller's statement had more to do with self-interest than party integrity left moderates largely unimpressed. Potential candidate, Pennsylvania Governor William Scranton, among others had remained conspicuously silent. A Republican who believed Rockefeller did have the best intentions stated, "He has now posed the ideological issue in highly personalized terms—himself on one side and Goldwater on the other," and few Republicans wanted to participate in such a battle.⁸⁶

Republican leaders offered little public support for Rockefeller's statement. Senator Thruston Morton agreed that there had been a recent shift to problematic aggression among some in the party, but immediately qualified his statement saying that the radical right was of little consequence.⁸⁷ While New York senators Keating and Javits were willing to side with Rockefeller, few other local politicians were. J. Dudley Divine, who held a leadership position in the Association of New York State Young Republican Clubs, summarized Rockefeller's statement as a broad generalization that was a "slur on the growing number of responsible conservatives in the party who desire a much more

⁸⁶ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Inside Report...Rockefeller's Bomb," *Washington Post*, July 17, 1963.

⁸⁷ Senator Morton of Kentucky also said during his interview on the "Today" show that it was his duty as Chairman of the Republican Campaign Committee to remain neutral and while he was still not very disturbed by the radical right he was more concerned than he was before Rockefeller's statement. "Today" show, July 16, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 761, box 26, 22 New York Office, RG 15.

clear-cut alternative to the Kennedy Administration than the Governor has heretofore and at the present time seen fit to offer.”⁸⁸ Moderate Republican Governor Mark O. Hatfield of Oregon offered himself as a mediator between liberals and conservatives, stating that “our party is in no position to incite political mayhem by ruthless intramural attacks which only lead to fratricide.”⁸⁹ Other Republicans who chose to remain neutral attempted to downplay the episode. Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen of Illinois said that while all Republicans had the right to express their opinion, the party would ultimately rally around whomever received the nomination.

While Rockefeller’s statement created an immediate controversy, there were some bright spots. Rockefeller’s statement caused a deluge of letters to pour into the governor’s office, including over ninety letters expressing support for the governor. These letters of support were sent in the eight days after the statement was published and hailed from twenty-seven states with New York and California being the most popular points of origin.⁹⁰ The letter writers thanked Rockefeller for his courage and expressed hope that he would be the presidential nominee. Most newspapers criticized Rockefeller’s decision to challenge his own party, although the more liberal New York papers did praise him, particularly for his effort to recommit the Republican Party to the advancement of civil rights. Two days after Rockefeller released his statement; the *New York Times* printed an editorial praising the governor’s efforts to save his party by writing what it called his own

⁸⁸ Peter Kihiss, “Goldwater Denies Sectional Appeals,” *New York Times*, July 16, 1963, 1.

⁸⁹ Kihiss, “Goldwater Denies Sectional Appeals,” 1.

⁹⁰ Of the letters Rockefeller’s staff collected and sent responses, twenty-two came from New York, thirteen from California, and six from Massachusetts. The others came from all parts of the country including Iowa, Maryland, Indiana, Montana, Tennessee, and Oklahoma. Other than the letters referenced here that the author counted and sorted by state, the Rockefeller staff did not isolate or organize the letters that were sent in response to his statement on the Republican Party and the radical right. RAC, NAR, folder 1216, box 42, 24 Political Files, RG 15.

1964 Republican platform and a warning against nominating Goldwater. The editorial was most enthusiastic about Rockefeller's stand on civil rights. This was an issue worth fighting for, although it might not result in a victory for Rockefeller in 1964: "This is a standard that may not win the nomination for Rockefeller, as he clearly hopes it will. But it is creditable, correct and can be fought for unashamedly."⁹¹ Not surprisingly, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the flagship paper of liberal Republicanism, also endorsed Rockefeller's statement. For the *Herald Tribune*, the statement was a resounding success, regardless of its effect on Rockefeller's possible candidacy. Furthermore, their editorial in response stated that if the Republican Party nominated any candidate that prolonged segregation it would "bear the shame of abandoning the cause of freedom and equality that gave it birth." In the editorials of the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune*, Rockefeller was a hero. Any personal motivations behind the declaration paled in comparison to the significance of his statement and did not depreciate the message.⁹²

Many readers of the *Herald Tribune*, however, took exception to the paper's editorial, suggesting that Rockefeller's Republican support may not have extended far beyond elite liberal circles. Ruth Thompson of Douglastown, New York, wrote that Rockefeller's statement would destroy the party, which she said the governor and Javits had already accomplished in New York implying that they did not advance Republican principles.⁹³ A reader from the Bronx was particularly angry about what the editorial insinuated about Goldwater: "Your editorial...was disgusting. You subtly accuse Senator Goldwater of being a racist. It was Goldwater who ended Jim Crow practices in Phoenix

⁹¹ "Rockefeller to His Party," *New York Times*, July 16, 1963, 30.

⁹² "Rockefeller Accepts the Challenge," *New York Herald Tribune*, July 16, 1963.

⁹³ "Letters to the Editor: The GOP Debate," *New York Herald Tribune*, July 21, 1963.

long before the current movement began. Goldwater believes in integration, but by voluntary acts, not Federal coercion.”⁹⁴ The *Herald Tribune*’s editorial stated that Rockefeller was well-suited to take on his fellow Republicans, but a common theme in the readers’ responses was that not only was Rockefeller’s statement self-serving and desperate, he was also in no position to criticize fellow Republicans. Rockefeller’s decision to confront elements of his own party again dredged up the standard criticism that he was too liberal to be a Republican and essentially no different from a Democrat. While numerous letter writers criticized Rockefeller, there was the occasional letter of approval. David White of Plainfield, New Jersey, for example, supported Rockefeller and his belief that Goldwater would be a terrible presidential nominee. “[Goldwater’s] stand against the public accommodations section of the civil rights bill,” he argued, “would give the party a lily-white label and destroy the heritage of Lincoln.” For White, Rockefeller’s fear that Goldwater would succumb to the influence of the radical right had already come to fruition. He stated that Goldwater’s support of the RS-70 bomber, a “Cuban Government in exile,” and “Bible reading in public schools” was proof that he was a “captive of the ultra-Right.”⁹⁵

The reaction that most people waited for was from Goldwater himself. Despite reports that Rockefeller’s statement shocked Goldwater—the two had shared an amicable relationship and had met privately in Washington, D.C., in recent years—the senator publicly downplayed its significance. Goldwater insisted that the statement was simply Rockefeller’s “formal declaration of candidacy.”⁹⁶ In response to the accusation that

⁹⁴ “Letters to the Editor: The GOP Debate,” *New York Herald Tribune*, July 21, 1963.

⁹⁵ “Rockefeller was Just in Time,” *New York Herald Tribune*, July 29, 1963.

⁹⁶ Peter Kihiss, “Goldwater Denies Sectional Appeals,” *New York Times*, July 16, 1963, 1.

Goldwater intended to run a campaign that disregarded Northeastern cities, industrial centers, and African American votes, he replied, “I have never had any theory of that kind...I am not giving up on anybody’s vote.” Regarding the black vote he clarified, “I have said that the Negro vote is going to be very difficult for us to get, but I never advocated giving up on it.”⁹⁷ Earlier in 1963, Goldwater was asked to attend a conference in New York City that dealt with finding new ways for the party to connect with minority voting populations. Goldwater said he gave the conference his “wholehearted support,” but he was unable to attend.⁹⁸ In a letter to Leonard Nadasdy, chairman of the Young Republican National Federation, which was eventually published as a news release by the Republican National Committee, Goldwater explained that he thought the Republican Party should refrain from making specific overtures to minority groups and instead reach out to all Americans. “It seems to me that the whole subject of ethnic and minority groups and their relationships within our society has been talked to death.”⁹⁹ Goldwater said it was unnecessary for Republicans to make overtures to minorities because of the party’s history of lessening the divisions in society and consistent record on civil rights. He went on, “Too often in the past we have seen our Party’s solid record of

⁹⁷ Kihiss, “Goldwater Denies Sectional Appeals,” 1.

⁹⁸ The conference sponsored by the National Federation of Young Republicans included a luncheon panel of speakers including black Republicans, General Counsel to the Chairman of the Republican National Committee Grant Reynolds and Secretary of the Department of industrial Relations for Ohio William O. Walker. The panel included elected officials such as Congressman Ed Foreman of the 10th District of Texas, who was known to be conservative, Javits, and Rockefeller, who gave a luncheon address. Foreman was the youngest member of both houses of Congress and was elected in 1962 at age 29. He opposed federal aid for medical care for the aged, urban renewal, mass transportation, and education. His campaign stressed strong support of states’ rights, but avoided discussions of race. The “All-American” Conference, intended, according to YRNF Executive Secretary Jerry D. Roe to “demonstrate to young members of minority and ethnic groups that the Republican Party is vitally interested in their welfare. Letter from Barry Goldwater to Leonard J. Nadasdy, March 25, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 958, box 20, 33, Speeches, RG 15.

⁹⁹ Letter from Barry Goldwater to Leonard J. Nadasdy, March 25, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 958, box 20, 33, Speeches, RG 15.

accomplishment largely ignored by those who benefited the most from it.”¹⁰⁰ Goldwater never said that the Republican Party should reject African Americans or other ethnic or religious minority groups, but because these people, he explained, were choosing Democrats over Republicans, it was now time for a new strategy. Statements like this made his potential campaign attractive to segregationists who needed an escape from the increasingly liberal national Democratic Party.

The impact of Rockefeller’s statement remained uncertain. During a press conference Rockefeller was asked if he believed Goldwater’s support in the South was due to his stand on civil rights, the governor did his best to rebuff the notion. He replied:

Well, I think that for the Republican party to even appear to be a party of segregation, a party of racism, a party of regionalism, would be the death knell of the Republican Party in terms of its heritage from its Founding Father, Abraham Lincoln. I think it would stain its history. But I would add that I do not think that the growing Republican strength in the South is an evidence of racism or segregation. I think there is a very strong trend among citizens in the South to want to have a two-party system, and that they want to bring the South to that position, and that this is not just segregation in itself.

When a reporter then asked if Rockefeller believed Goldwater brought “an aura of racism to the Republican Party,” he dodged the question altogether.¹⁰¹ Rockefeller continued by saying that Goldwater’s refusal to vote for cloture in the Senate meant he did not want to see any civil rights legislation of substance passed. He also said that Goldwater was one of two Senators who recommended sending President Eisenhower’s civil rights bill to the Eastland Committee, “the graveyard of civil rights legislation.”¹⁰² The other senator was John Kennedy. Perhaps, in time, if Goldwater’s popularity began to wane Rockefeller

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Barry Goldwater to Leonard J. Nadasdy, March 25, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 958, box 20, 33, Speeches, RG 15.

¹⁰¹ Transcript of News Conference, November 7, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 1019, box 24, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

¹⁰² Transcript of News Conference, Nelson Rockefeller, November 7, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 1019, box 24, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

could remind fellow Republicans that he had warned against rallying behind the Senator, but Goldwater's popularity remained strong throughout the summer. To many observers, it appeared that Rockefeller believed Goldwater and southern Republicans were racists, but Rockefeller still hoped that he might find some support in the South.

Limitations of a Moral Crisis

Many Republicans accused Rockefeller of self-interest and exaggeration when he publicly opposed the radical right and those who wanted the party to capitalize on racism and segregation, but Rockefeller and his staff had collected evidence that supported his argument and revealed a direct connection between Goldwater's rise and efforts to protect the Jim Crow South. While the majority of Republican politicians agreed that segregation in the South was a moral crisis, this did not mean they would join Rockefeller in publicly rejecting all strategies to thwart the advance of civil rights in exchange for votes. Rockefeller quickly learned that there were severe limitations to this so-called moral crisis and decided it was best to be more measured with his words. Numerous Republicans accused Rockefeller of unfairly attacking his own party after his statement against the radical right, but the narrative he chose not to tell was far more revealing and illustrative of internal attempts to abandon the Republican Party's history of advocating for African American equality.

In his effort to capture the Republican presidential nomination and the general election, Rockefeller commissioned a biography entitled, *The Real Rockefeller: The Story of the Rise, Decline and Resurgence of the Presidential Aspirations of Nelson Rockefeller* by Frank Gervasi. Gervasi was a respected veteran journalist and author who wrote for numerous publications including the *New York Post* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. The book,

an argument for a Rockefeller presidency, documented his life from his childhood to his efforts to win the 1964 presidential nomination. As a promotional publication, it was edited by several people within the Rockefeller staff to ensure that it reflected the message of his campaign. Initially, Gervasi's work included a detailed discussion of Rockefeller's most recent presidential bid, which meant an entire chapter that detailed Rockefeller's precipitous decline in the polls in 1963. In subsequent revisions, Gervasi was directed to cut this section. Rockefeller staffer and future National Endowment for the Arts chairwoman Nancy Hanks, for example, suggested the book should avoid discussions of the current political terrain to avoid controversy. Gervasi's original examination of Rockefeller's 1963 campaign correlated his decline in the polls to his moral stand on civil rights. If published, this chapter in particular, would have linked Goldwater's rising popularity to racism and an overt backlash to the civil rights movement. Republican Party professionals would have been embarrassed by such an account and given them more reason to accuse Rockefeller of trying to destroy the party if he could not lead it. In the revised final chapter of *The Real Rockefeller*, the candidate's decline in the polls was attributed to his remarriage alone, saying that Rockefeller and his new bride returned to a "political hornet's nest."¹⁰³ The final draft was candid about the controversy caused by the remarriage, but offered no explanation why Goldwater was the only potential candidate to benefit from Rockefeller's decline. While the published work steered clear of much of the controversy related to civil rights, it did include an excerpt from Rockefeller's statement against the radical right, which warned of a strategy to write off the Negro and other minorities in favor of the electoral votes of the South and West.

¹⁰³ Gervasi, *Real Rockefeller*, 251.

The popularity of Goldwater with segregationists was the issue that the omitted chapter, "Thunder on the Right," sought to expose and, it argued, was the reason Rockefeller's numbers in the polls had fallen the summer of 1963. Gervasi wrote that Goldwater "ran a poor second to Rockefeller until Bull Connor catalyzed the counter-revolution to the Negro Revolution."¹⁰⁴ Birmingham resulted in a "collective shift of allegiance from a Rockefeller whose political commitments to advancement of Negroes' civil rights were well and widely known, to a Goldwater whose advocacy of States' Rights had been vocal and consistent throughout his career."¹⁰⁵

What spelled danger to Democratic party unity, spelled opportunity to Republican counterparts of Democratic diehards who shared the prevalent white resentment of Federal 'interference' with States' Rights, and antagonism to desegregation. 'I'm afraid,' said a prominent Republican Senator to an important GOP official in Washington soon after the Birmingham riots, 'that a lot of our people down there agree with Bull Connor on the racial issue.' He was right, of course, for the Republican party has its fair share of politicians who would...roll back to pre-McKinley days the progress made in civil rights....And the man around whom Republican rightwingers and their Democratic bed-fellows rallied was Barry Goldwater.¹⁰⁶

The chapter acknowledged that Goldwater's supporters represented a range of opinions from people who opposed a growing federal government to those who had long supported politicians like Ohio senators Robert Taft and John W. Bricker. However, with the controversy surrounding civil rights growing, Goldwater attracted people who hoped to maintain segregation and who agreed with Goldwater's argument, for example, that African Americans did not have a civil right to attend school with whites. The Goldwater movement was not in toto a vehicle for segregationists, the Ku Klux Klan, John Birch Society members, and racists, but it did provide a safe haven for these factions who did

¹⁰⁴ "Thunder on the Right," RAC, Graham Molitor Collection, folder 259, box 8, IV 3A 18.

¹⁰⁵ "Thunder on the Right," RAC, Graham Molitor Collection, folder 259, box 8, IV 3A 18.

¹⁰⁶ "Thunder on the Right," RAC, Graham Molitor Collection, folder 259, box 8, IV 3A 18.

not choose a more blatant champion for their cause such as Alabama Governor George Wallace.

Goldwater conservatism, wrote Gervasi, was intended to give the rising extremism, particularly in the South, a respectable face. The relationship between segregationists and racists and Goldwater was noted by Ralph McGill, a liberal editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*. McGill wrote that Goldwater found support among southerners who opposed school desegregation and

at a recent Ku Klux Klan rally at Stone Mountain, some 20 miles out of Atlanta, a State Trooper said, 'My God, is this a rally for Goldwater, or the Klan?' Most of the bumpers had Goldwater stickers. Senator Goldwater is not that kind of person. Yet, he does not disown them... The Senator says he is not a segregationist. Yet, he sees nothing contradictory in saying he believes in leaving the problem to 'the State'... The Senator, by being so vague, had given aid and comfort to the nation's extremists.¹⁰⁷

The Real Rockefeller intended to present Rockefeller in the best light, and this should not be discounted, but the discussion of southern Goldwater support demonstrated that it was Goldwater not Rockefeller who would benefit from the rising "moral crisis" triggered by the civil rights movement.

In the summer of 1963, Rockefeller confronted what he called the radical right, and a storm of controversy ensued; however, the backlash Rockefeller experienced should be considered in relation to the ongoing struggle over civil rights in the United States. In the early months of 1963, Rockefeller was careful to avoid discussing the resurgence of the Republican Party in the South as hinging on an effort by white southerners who hoped to use the GOP to maintain segregation. Once President Kennedy introduced civil rights legislation in June, Rockefeller again emphasized the efforts of Republicans who had supported civil rights and the party's traditional association with

¹⁰⁷ "Thunder on the Right," RAC, Graham Molitor Collection, folder 259, box 8, IV 3A 18.

protecting the rights of African Americans. When the governor's polling numbers did not rebound as the summer continued, he discussed openly the influence of the radical right and the desire of outsiders to transform the Republican Party into a white party by aligning themselves with Goldwater. Rockefeller attempted to soften the blow to Goldwater, who he had worked for years to build a cordial relationship, by saying the senator was in danger of being led astray by outsiders who were trying to co-opt his burgeoning candidacy. Many Republicans disapproved of what they considered Rockefeller's self-interested attempt to sway voters. What the public did not know, however, was that Rockefeller had received letters from southerners such as George W. Lee of Memphis, Tennessee, who told first-hand accounts of segregationists, including members of the Ku Klux Klan, entering the Republican ranks with the intention to use the party as a means to counter the liberalism of northern Democrats. These letters expressed the opinion that the contest over whether the party would embrace a new brand of social conservatism was a question of whether Goldwater or Rockefeller would receive the nomination. Letters from Republicans in support of his statement against the radical right, along with letters like that from Lee earlier in the year, revealed that Goldwater's popularity in the South was inextricably intertwined with the fight to counter the progress of the civil rights movement in America.

While Rockefeller faced a great deal of public criticism, he received support from Republicans from all regions of America. The letters he received from the South and Southwest did not focus on what Rockefeller might gain politically from focusing on civil rights and targeting the radical right. Instead, these Republicans discussed what they considered a drastic shift within southern politics and their hope that Rockefeller would

stop this trend. The sense of urgency was expressed succinctly by Edward Coyne of Phoenix, Arizona, who wrote, "Dear Governor: Your statement July 14 was long overdue. If you think you merely made a political speech you are wrong. The fruit cake fringe masquerading as conservative Republicans has complete control of the state of Arizona."¹⁰⁸ Another Arizonan by the name of Earl C. Calkins did not think Rockefeller's statement was an unfair indictment of Goldwater and accused the senator of supporting segregation. He wrote, "Dear Governor: You are so right [about] Barry Goldwater and his right wing support...He has already lost the negro vote, when he talks about state rights. He seems to think a state has the right to let half of its citizens go uneducated....If the right wing is not stopped, a civil war could be in the making."¹⁰⁹ A southerner from Columbia, South Carolina, who made a point to say he was a white man with a Republican heritage that originated in the 1860s, wrote a letter similar to the letter Rockefeller received in January from Lee in Memphis, Tennessee, equating the new southern Republicanism with overt racism.

Dear Gov. Rockefeller,

Thank you for what you said about the RADICAL RIGHT. My grand father Andrea was a Republican in 1861 in S.C. and followed Lincoln. Today in South Carolina and evidently in many other states in the South the Klu Klux Klan [sic], White Citizen Councils and the John Birch Society have captured and taken over the Republican Party lock stock and barrel. They are making the Republican Party a Lilly [sic] White party filled with haters of Civil Rights for negroes. This to me, a white man, and a liberal Republican and a Catholic, fills my heart with sadness to see the Grand Old Party taken over by the far right.¹¹⁰

While some blamed outsiders for taking over the Republican Party in the South,

Rockefeller also received a letter of praise from a Republican who felt the Party of

¹⁰⁸ RAC, NAR, folder 1216, box 42, 24 Political Files, RG 15.

¹⁰⁹ RAC, NAR, folder 1216, box 42, 24, Political Files, RG 15.

¹¹⁰ RAC, NAR, folder 1216, box 42, 24, Political Files, RG 15.

Lincoln was the party best suited to those who wanted to discriminate. Newton Estes, of Memphis, Tennessee, wrote that the Republican Party needed to be saved from the “radical right” because no other major party offered protection from the federal government, which sought to take away his right to choose his associations.

I value my right to discriminate as to what kind of neighborhood I shall live in, who I would sell my home to, to attempt to prevent my children from associating with negro children or any group that my experience tells me would not further their upbringing. I furthermore resent my government teaching my children that I am wrong in telling them that they should not force themselves on others not wanting them....

I would rather secede, revolt or emigrate than have our government step into my home!¹¹¹

Estes’s view that the Republican Party was best-suited to protect what he considered his American right to discriminate was a novel observation—particularly in light of southern Democrats’ consistently successful commitment to protecting one’s right to discriminate. For Estes, the Republican Party, safe from a radical right, would be the ideal organization to protect a segregated South because of its commitment to small government. While the letters sent to Rockefeller represented a wide-range of opinions, they all expressed a sense of urgency and belief that something extraordinary was happening in American politics.

Republican voters who were committed to maintaining the party’s progressive civil rights legacy would look to Rockefeller for guidance and protection. It was unclear, however, how much he would do for the cause. While Goldwater’s poll numbers remained high, Rockefeller’s political analyst, Lloyd Free, warned him not to do anything that might confirm people’s belief that he was a liberal. It was uncertain what Rockefeller would or could do as the year progressed and his liberal reputation became more of a

¹¹¹ RAC, NAR, folder 1216, box 42, 24, Political Files, RG 15.

detriment. Rockefeller tried to avoid alienating himself from his party, but on the issue of civil rights he was firmly on the left with liberal Democrats.

A *U. S. News & World Report* article published in July 1963 and entitled “The Changing Mood of America” addressed the nation’s significant concern over civil rights, fear that the demonstrations would break out into widespread violence, and belief that while African Americans had a legitimate complaint, they were pushing too hard too fast. The *U.S. News* article pointed out that until recently the nation was most concerned about communism and foreign affairs, but Americans had now turned their sights stateside: “You find much sympathy for the Negroes in their drive for equal rights. Yet there is a widespread feeling—even outside the South—that Negroes may be pushing things too fast. There is a growing fear of a racial conflict.”¹¹² The article compiled the views of respondents across the nation to get a sense of what concerned people the most and their opinions of the politicians of the day. While the article reported a general sense of sympathy for African Americans, there was also a growing sense of resentment. A freelance writer in New York City said, “The guilt complex of the white man has been worn very thin by the pushing for extreme integration...people whom I have always thought to be extremely liberal are against further action on civil rights.”¹¹³ While people interviewed in the South were most concerned about the integration of public accommodations, respondents in the North and West were most concerned about housing integration. Amid a rising sense of resentment among whites, *U.S. News* found some whites who felt African Americans were looking for superiority rather than equality in America. Tangential to this feeling was the opinion that blacks had not earned the right to

¹¹² “The Changing Mood of America,” *U.S. News & World Report*, July 29, 1963, 36.

¹¹³ “The Changing Mood of America,” *U.S. News & World Report*, July 29, 1963, 37.

be equal in America. A banker from Weston, Connecticut, described the situation plainly, asserting “Negroes should improve themselves before they make so many demands for their rights.” A print shop owner in New York City expressed a similar view: “Negroes blame all their woes on the white people. They should correct some of their faults, such as delinquency and narcotics addiction, which can’t be blamed on whites.”¹¹⁴ While the *U.S. News* survey revealed that some whites debated whether African Americans had earned the rights of citizenship and equality that the whites considered their birth right, it also assessed respondents’ views on Kennedy’s record and the Republicans who hoped to challenge him the following fall.

The *U.S. News* survey found that no one issue had hurt the president, whose approval ratings were still good, and that Americans failed to see a Republican they thought could defeat him. There was, however, an overall sense of “slight disappointment” in President Kennedy’s performance, but such was perhaps inevitable considering the enthusiasm and optimism that his election had inspired. An editor from Cleveland predicted Kennedy’s reelection, “although not as easily as or as certainly as some months ago. [The Republicans] have no one in sight with the strength, personality, and gift of articulation of Kennedy. Rockefeller’s divorce is too much of a potential cross to bear. Goldwater does not to me represent the progress of the future. He attracts those who yearn for the strength of stability.”¹¹⁵ When discussing Rockefeller the article focused on the effect of his remarriage and revealed the opinion that he was either a “Republican Kennedy” or someone who had failed to articulate his views. Goldwater did not fare much better with people labeling him an ultra-conservative or a reactionary, but

¹¹⁴ “The Changing Mood of America,” *U.S. News & World Report*, July 29, 1963, 39.

¹¹⁵ “The Changing Mood of America,” *U.S. News & World Report*, July 29, 1963, 41.

he did receive positive assessments from southerners. A restaurant owner in Greensboro, North Carolina, summed up the situation this way: “The Kennedys have sold out, lock, stock, and barrel, to the Negroes...I wonder if the Republicans want to be known as the white man’s party. I have a hunch that the Republican ‘brain trust’ is encouraging that idea. And it may pay off.” The prospects for Republican presidential hopefuls did not look good in a period where the economy was doing relatively well and Americans were, as *U.S. News* reported, “reasonably content—outside the South where there is bitterness over the issue of race.”¹¹⁶

Rockefeller was in a difficult position in the fall of 1963; his stand on civil rights appeared to have limited his prospects rather than endeared him to Republicans. A letter his office received on October 28, 1963, highlighted that some Republicans perceived his civil rights stand as extreme. In a letter with the complimentary close, “Yours very truly,” a W. W. Edwards of San Francisco, California, chastised Rockefeller for “attempting to out demagogue the demagogic Kennedy’s in a bid for the votes of ignorant negroes” and as a result cost himself the presidential nomination. He continued:

I do not try to argue here that negroes have no just case for complaint about the treatment they receive in this country, but as YOU and I know, the members of that unfortunate race are not ready, nor have they earned the privilege of full participation in government. In spite of that patent fact, demagogic ambitious politicians like yourself would, if you could, virtually turn over vast areas in the United States to the control and domination of arrogant, ignorant negroes. Moreover, the way demagogues like yourself have maligned and traduced the people of the South for serving the Union by curbing the political machinations of negro people is a damnable disgrace and unworthy of decent men.¹¹⁷

Edwards said that if Rockefeller had “imitated the wisdom and prudence of Senator Goldwater, there [was] hardly a doubt but that you, instead of him, would be at the top of

¹¹⁶ “The Changing Mood of America,” *U.S. News & World Report*, July 29, 1963, 36.

¹¹⁷ RAC, NAR, folder 1198, box 41, 24 Political Files, RG 15.

polls now being taken all over the country.” The letter writer confided that he knew that Rockefeller knew African Americans were not ready for acceptance in white society, again insisting that Rockefeller was only pandering for the black vote. The level of ire in this letter increased until the closing, where he referred to African Americans as baboons and called black men sexual predators that posed a threat to white women. Rockefeller may not have confronted his party on its inconsistent record on civil rights for the sake of party politics, but his vocal advocacy for African Americans and insistence that the nation should go the way of New York was enough to draw fervent opposition. For a man like Edwards, Rockefeller had bound his political ambitions with African American demands for equality—and this was reason enough to reject Rockefeller altogether.

After at least two years of working to secure the Republican presidential nomination, on November 7, 1963, Rockefeller formally announced his candidacy. Embracing his status as an underdog and declaring that his campaign was one founded on principle, Rockefeller presented himself as the moderate candidate committed to giving the nation more than a choice between extremes.¹¹⁸

On November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated while riding in a motorcade driving into downtown Dallas, Texas. Republicans and Democrats alike were left to wonder what would become of the Kennedy program. President Johnson vowed to continue with Kennedy’s work to pass a tax cut and civil rights legislation, but it was unclear if each party’s conservatives would be willing to aid Johnson’s attempt to honor the slain president’s legacy. Johnson adopted a Kennedy-devised agenda, but Republican leaders were left without a blueprint to guide them in the following year.

¹¹⁸ Statement by Nelson Rockefeller, November 7, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 1018, box 24, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

Many Republican leaders had acquiesced to Goldwater's growing popularity as the likely nominee because they had viewed Kennedy as an insurmountable foe, but now they wondered if it was time for a new strategy. The theory had been that Goldwater would lure southern voters away from Kennedy, but now, with a southern president as his opponent, Goldwater's allure was unclear, despite Johnson's support of Kennedy's civil rights bill. Regardless of party professionals' misgivings, Goldwater's base remained as strong as ever, with supporters who rallied behind him because he most closely reflected their ideological perspective, not because of his ability to beat Johnson.

Despite the fact that Rockefeller could endorse conservative economic and foreign policy, keep a balanced budget in New York, and track the latest trends in voter opinion, it all was for naught. As long as Rockefeller maintained a liberal position on the passage of civil rights legislation, which he believed was the national consensus, he would remain out of step with the Republican Party. For Rockefeller, it was clear that the party needed to embrace the effort to desegregate the South and protect the civil rights of African Americans, but even his fellow moderates were reluctant to challenge conservatives who opposed federal intervention to usher in this change. Rather than unite in an effort to strengthen moderate Republicanism, potential moderate candidates like Scranton, Hatfield, and Romney waited to see what would happen to Rockefeller, while they also hoped to maintain favor with the party.

Conclusion

"The Republican Party is the ship, all else is the sea." Elmer Carter shared Frederick Douglass's famous words with speech writer Hugh Morrow because he thought

they would be rhetorically important in a speech wherein Rockefeller intended to reaffirm the Republican Party's commitment to civil rights. Carter suggested Rockefeller say,

Proper commemoration of the memory of Lincoln and the birth date of the Republican Party would hardly be complete without some mention of Frederick Douglass, Negro abolitionist, who, by his unmatched oratory a living symbol of the injustice of slavery and one of the great figures of the Party. It was he who said, 'The Republican Party is the ship....'¹¹⁹

Ironically, what Elmer Carter did not say, and perhaps did not know, was that Douglass, who continues to be the personification of the Republican Party's commitment to African American freedom, said those words in a speech in favor of blocking the candidacy of a fellow African American Republican, John Mercer Langston in 1888. Langston, while not as well-known as Douglass today, was similarly prominent and held numerous positions of leadership, including serving as the first dean of Howard University's Law School and ambassador to Haiti, two positions Douglass had also held. Douglass was speaking on behalf of former U.S. Senator William Mahone and Confederate general, a powerful Republican Party boss who controlled the final Republican stronghold in Virginia and did not want to relinquish power to a black man who sought the Congressional seat of the heavily black Fourth Congressional District. Despite the efforts of Mahone and Douglass, who had a long-contentious relationship with his fellow black Republican, Langston went on to run as an independent and won the seat.¹²⁰ The particulars of this history are suggestive of the complexities of the Republican Party's identity as the Party of Lincoln and its inclusion of figures such as Douglass. The

¹¹⁹ Memorandum from Elmer A. Carter to Hugh Morrow, January 24, 1963, RAC, NAR, folder 902, box 19, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

¹²⁰ William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek, "John Mercer Langston: Principle and Politics" in *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Leon F. Litwack and August Meier (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, 1991), 119-120, 122-124.

relationship of the Party of Lincoln with African Americans was always complicated, but like much of what is commemorated in public memory, the intricacies and contradictions often get softened or omitted in favor of a simpler narrative better suited for rousing rhetoric.

At its inception, the Republican Party, although conflicted on the race issue, was the principal opposition to the pro-slavery Democratic Party. Founded in 1854 as a response to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the new party, espoused a commitment to free labor, land, and men and an opposition to slavery, however, it did not take an activist stance on abolition of slavery. Rather, Republicans wanted to contain the spread of slavery in the states where it existed rather than terminate the institution. Republicans like Lincoln maintained that African Americans were human beings and were entitled to some rights bestowed by the Declaration of Independence, but these party members did not call for social or political equality for blacks. Lincoln, for example, supported colonization as a solution for slavery rather than working to create an egalitarian multi-racial society. Douglass became a loyal Republican after the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, remaining in the party holding various appointed positions between 1870 and 1895, long after the party curtailed its efforts to protect blacks. In 1876, Republicans and Democrats struck a deal to ensure Republican Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency despite losing the popular vote to Democrat Samuel J. Tilden. Republicans in return, agreed to remove federal troops from the South, ensuring the end of Reconstruction. The following year, the Freedman's Bureau no longer had the protection necessary to continue functioning in the South. During all of this, Douglass was careful not to condemn the party because as he said in 1871, "this party has within it

the only element of friendship for the colored man's rights." Historian Merline Pitre argues that Douglass remained loyal to the Republican Party in the sincere belief that it was the best practical instrument for protecting the rights of African Americans.¹²¹ While all else may have been the sea, the ship that was the Republican Party offered little protection for blacks, in favor of party politics and the rising influence of business interests in the Nineteenth Century.

Lincoln Day dinners in the mid-twentieth century were the time to commemorate the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Republican Party's commitment to black freedom and support for civil rights, which belied its troubled relationship with African Americans.¹²² What those speeches and dinners did not discuss was the Republican Party's limitations when it came to supporting the notion of black equality amid the nineteenth century's intense racial and ethnic prejudice. Republicans such as Rockefeller often proclaimed the party as the Party of Lincoln, the great emancipator, and therefore the party of freedom and equality, but the same Republicans ignored the party's equivocation regarding the rights of African Americans. Rockefeller attributed the Republican Party's support of civil rights to its history as the party that freed the enslaved, but the party's relationship with African Americans remained just as troubled in the 1960s as it had been in the 1860s. Rockefeller was far from alone in the Republican Party as a supporter of new civil rights legislation, but there were also Republicans who were open to harnessing the opposition to civil rights to meet the needs of a changed political environment.

¹²¹ Merline Pitre, "Frederick Douglass: The Politician vs. the Social Reformer," *Phylon*, 40:3 (1979): 270.

¹²² The Emancipation Proclamation, while marking the beginning of a new phase of the Union's effort to fight the Civil War as an effort to secure the abolition of slavery, did not, for example, free the enslaved in the Border States that had remained in the Union.

In 1964, the following February, Rockefeller found himself at another Lincoln Day Dinner, but civil rights was no longer the speech's focus. This time he was in Medford, Oregon, on the campaign trail a month before the first primary in New Hampshire. The Lincoln Club of Jackson County heard a speech that emphasized the need for a mainstream Republican Party that could right the wrongs of a Democratic Administration riddled with failures and indecision. Unlike the previous year's speeches that were treatises on the Republican record on civil rights and the legacy of Lincoln, Rockefeller focused on a wide variety of topics. Rockefeller reminded the audience that the Democratic Administration had still failed to bring action on civil rights legislation, but this was buried within a laundry list of criticisms that mentioned the mishandling of foreign policy related to Panama, Zanzibar, New Guinea, Malaysia, and France recognizing Red China. Rockefeller told his audience, "We want a Republican Party whose doors are open to all men and women in the broad mainstream of American life and American thought, and without regard to race, color, creed, national origin or economic status."¹²³ In this statement, there was an acknowledgement of the qualities Rockefeller had highlighted in the previous year's Lincoln Day commemoration, but the tone and emphasis had definitely shifted.

Rockefeller called on the party to rededicate itself so as to offer "all the American people a program for progress consistent with our heritage and based upon the realities of the present."¹²⁴ His speech was more ambiguous than the previous year's speech, which had enumerated the New York Republican Party's progressive civil rights record; it was

¹²³ Excerpts of Remarks by Nelson Rockefeller, February 7, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 1062, box 25, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

¹²⁴ Excerpts of Remarks by Nelson Rockefeller, February 7, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 1062, box 25, 33 Speeches, RG 15.

even further away from the alternate speech Morrow had prepared for him suggesting that the Republican Party would disappear like the Whig Party if it failed to defend the freedom of the Negro. Outspoken support of civil rights was no longer safe for Rockefeller, even if he did so with the purpose of praising a sanitized history of the Republican Party's commitment to equality. With the rise of Goldwater in tandem with growing hopes that the Republican Party could embrace the interests of the South and West and escape its minority party status, there was less room for Rockefeller to maneuver as the standard bearer for the Eastern Establishment and civil rights.

The Republican Party's identity as the party of emancipation and equality was inconsistent from its inception, but by the early 1960s, racially progressive Republicans discussed the party's early history as if it were unquestionably devoted to African American freedom. Meanwhile, in 1963, Republicans across the political spectrum considered it betrayal to reveal that some in the Republican Party were open to redrafting the Republican Party as the "white man's party." Even Rockefeller, the most outspoken advocate of civil rights, withheld the majority of the warnings he received from southern Republicans, who said the party was forfeiting its commitment to racial equality in favor of electoral strength. In many Republicans' minds, Rockefeller had already said too much; to say more would have further jeopardized his presidential hopes, but, as a result, it was more certain that the Republican Party would relinquish any leadership position in the effort to secure civil rights. Without a unified effort by moderate Republicans to protest the racial conservatism that rose in the Republican ranks, it would be impossible to reverse the party's rightward shift.

Chapter Four

Chasing a Republican Ideal: The 1964 Republican National Convention

Nelson Rockefeller lost the final primary for the 1964 Republican presidential nomination on June 3. Goldwater's narrow 3 percent win in California, earning him the state's 86 delegates, essentially guaranteed him the presidential nomination. On June 15, Rockefeller suspended his campaign and pledged his support for fellow moderate Republican Governor William W. Scranton of Pennsylvania. Scranton had announced his candidacy days before in an effort to give moderates a final opportunity to make a bid for the nomination at the Republican National Convention. While Goldwater's imminent nomination was notable, the major political drama of the summer took place in Congress. After eighty-three days of debate, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed in the senate on June 19, with a vote of 73 to 27. Rockefeller immediately made a public statement praising Congress and the Republican Party for their role in the passage of the bill, which he called a "major milestone on the road to freedom and equality for all Americans—a road charted by the Emancipation Proclamation of Abraham Lincoln and broadened by the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 under the administration of Dwight D.

Eisenhower.”¹ Rockefeller framed the bill’s passage as a Republican victory noting that more Republican Senators than Democrats voted for cloture to allow a vote, and more Republicans voted for the bill itself. Rockefeller looked to the impending Republican National Convention and stated that mainstream thought in the Republican Party remained true to the party’s heritage on racial equality. The tradition Rockefeller spoke of, the support of civil rights, was an issue that Taftite or Midwestern conservatives, moderates, and the Eastern Establishment had been able to come to an agreement despite divisions on foreign policy and progressive government. Therefore it was “inconceivable” to Rockefeller that the party could nominate Goldwater as its standard bearer when he voted with southern Democrats and “abandoned the Republican Party on the most fundamental issue of our time.” “Twice he supported the move to sidetrack the bill to the Eastland Committee, the traditional graveyard of civil rights legislation,” noted Rockefeller, voted against closing debate, and voted “twenty-three times to weaken the bill before its final passage in the Senate.” The party must nominate Scranton, he argued, because he supported the advancement of civil rights, unlike Goldwater, who would create grave problems for every Republican who adhered to the “traditional Republican position of fighting to make equality of opportunity an actual reality for all.”²

The day before the historic vote in the Senate, George Hinman, Rockefeller’s campaign manager, sent a memo to the governor and his campaign advisers stating that if Goldwater voted no on the civil rights bill it was essential, both “morally and strategically” to write the strongest statement possible criticizing the senator’s vote. Now was the time, explained Hinman, to frame Goldwater’s vote as a “challenge for a civil

¹ *Public Papers*, 1964, 791.

² *Public Papers*, 1964, 791-792.

rights battle on the floor of the Convention that could well split the Party.”³ While the statement that followed did not call for a floor fight directly, Rockefeller’s critique of Goldwater and support for Scranton did suggest that the convention in San Francisco could divide the party. It became clear quickly, however, that civil rights would not be the rallying point he and his advisers had hoped for, even among fellow moderates.

The 1964 Republican National Convention was a high drama that appeared to contemporary observers as the Goldwater wing of the Republican Party’s decisive capture of the party. It looked that way because of the senator’s passionate supporters and the orchestration of Goldwater’s campaign manager F. Clifton White, who was determined to translate Goldwater’s nomination into the elevation of a long subordinate segment of the party. However, if you examine moderate Republicans’ inability to effectively counter the Goldwater wave and party professionals’ somewhat reluctant support of the senator, it is possible to see that the convention is momentous less because of the party appearing to be awash in gold, but the inaction of party moderates and professionals to take a stand on an issue that had been long agreed upon within the party. The party’s transformation is most readily demonstrated by the tepid fight to ensure the Republican Party’s commitment to equality that went back to its inception in a hotbed of abolitionist ferment. It is true that the party’s civil rights record had been inconsistent and sometimes contradictory when it came to enforcement, even in its earliest years, but with the convention taking place only two weeks after Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, if there was any time to rally around the party’s identity as the Party of Lincoln, this was it.

³ Memorandum from George L. Hinman to Nelson Rockefeller, June 18, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 647, box 94, J.2 Politics, RG 4.

This chapter will focus on lesser-known events in the months leading up to the convention and then during its four-day span in July to demonstrate that a significant shift occurred among party moderates and regulars. In many ways, Rockefeller's participation during the 1964 Republican National Convention can appear to be insignificant to the party as a whole. Rockefeller dropped out of the race a month before and committed his support and resources to a last hour bid by Scranton. The convention was obviously Goldwater's moment and his supporters reveled in it. But by examining the participation of Rockefeller and fellow moderates, it is possible to see that what could have been a fleeting victory for Goldwater and the party's right-wing, particularly because Lyndon Johnson trounced him in the general election, became a major sea change for the future trajectory of the Republican Party. At the moment the nation appeared ready to embrace racial equality, the Republican Party forfeited its claim to the advancement of civil rights, and the party's most consistent stewards of civil rights were unwilling to unite in an effort to stop it. While the convention appeared to be completely resistant to moderate views, there were moments of possibility that were squandered or avoided altogether. The efforts of moderates, who often undercut each other's efforts on civil rights in the name of party unity, meant that Rockefeller's confrontation with Goldwater supporters could be little more than a momentary personal victory—a victory that ultimately cost him dearly.

Rather than focus on the primary battles of early 1964, the chapter begins with a discussion of the civil rights debate in Congress to show how out-of-step Goldwater was with the majority of his party. It then explores Rockefeller's efforts to influence the party, as he did in 1960, through the design of the Republican Party platform. The successful behind-the-scenes work of the Rockefeller camp, despite Goldwater's lead in the polls,

reveals how influential moderates remained within the party. When the party produced its platform in San Francisco observers called it “all Goldwater,” but it included a plank-pledging support of civil rights. The civil rights plank, which Goldwater allowed to avoid conflict in the party, again shows that the party’s turn away from active support of civil rights was not a forgone conclusion. Next, the chapter examines a floor fight to enhance the civil rights plank that was led—and then undermined—by party moderates that includes Rockefeller’s one shining moment at the Cow Palace. Throughout this sequence of events, it will be possible to see how moderates failed to coalesce around an issue with moral implications that had the potential to sway their party and why many chose a different path.

“Hallmarks of the Police State”

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is a great achievement motivated by a bad conscience on the part of white men. If Negroes had been treated like other human beings from the time of emancipation, their equal rights would not now require spelling out. We were not that Christian a society. But we have at least shown that the slowly self-correcting machinery of democracy still works.

To get this law passed, the white conscience required stimulation by years of organized Negro protest, lawsuits, defiances and demonstrations, some of them splendid, like last year’s March on Washington, some of them ugly and violent.⁴

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the culmination of a journey that began two and a half years after Kennedy promised that civil rights would be his first priority if he was elected president. In June of 1963, after Republican and Democratic Congressmen had attempted to introduce new civil rights legislation, the president was spurred to action when civil rights demonstrations led by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Birmingham, AL, devolved into the city’s pro-segregation

⁴ “Landmark II: Equal Rights,” *Life Magazine*, June 26, 1964, 4.

authorities lashing out against the young black participants. The president announced that he and the nation must tackle the greatest challenge of their time—American segregation and inequality. Kennedy soon encountered what amounted to a hopelessly deadlocked Congress that consisted of racially conservative pro-segregation Democrats from the South, racially conservative Republicans from the South and West, potential supporters of new civil rights legislation who would not demand a comprehensive or enforceable law, and finally, pro-civil rights liberal Democrats and Republicans. Until Johnson, who was personally committed to the passage of an enforceable civil rights bill, called for the passage of a civil rights bill as a testament to Kennedy, it seemed like the efforts of the civil rights movement would not move Congress to action. Despite increasing support for a strong civil rights bill in the North and in the press, the bill only made it to the congressional floor for general debate on January 31, 1964 after the Rules Committee Democratic Chairman Howard W. Smith had prevented any progress on the bill for weeks. Traditionalists in Congress had opposed bypassing the Rules Committee with a discharge petition for the sake of procedure. Meanwhile, many Republicans, particularly Midwestern conservatives, felt no incentive to move the bill to the floor despite offering a great deal of rhetorical support for it because the civil rights logjam in Congress drew attention to the divisions within the Democratic Party. Johnson worked doggedly using his power of persuasion as President and as a skilled legislator along with the assistance of Missouri's Democratic Congressman Richard Bolling to gain the necessary votes for the bill to reach the floor.⁵ Once past the Rules Committee, the House of Representatives passed the civil rights bill by a vote of 290 to 130 on February 10, 1964. Republicans

⁵ Robert A. Caro, *The Passage of Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 430-431, 484-489.

were eager to note that 80 percent of House Republicans compared to 60 percent of Democrats supported the bill.⁶

While passage in the House after months of consideration was significant, the Senate posed the greater challenge to new civil rights legislation. Although the cultural and moral significance of the bill was acknowledged by several senators, the process of passing a comprehensive civil rights bill—even for those who were willing to support it—was contingent on the workings of standard partisan politics. Minnesota Senator Hubert Humphrey, a dedicated champion of civil rights and the floor manager of the bipartisan administration civil rights bill, played a major role in organizing and rallying the pro-civil rights faction of the Senate, but everyone agreed the bill would not have passed without the efforts of Senate Republican Leader Everett Dirksen of Illinois. Southern Democrats threatened a filibuster that would derail the bill and prevent it from going up for a vote and as a result liberal Democrats needed Republican votes for cloture. Dirksen, who, in 1956, introduced the Eisenhower Administration's failed civil rights legislation and later that summer led the party platform subcommittee on civil rights, was the man who could deliver the votes.⁷ The Illinois senator was willing to work with pro-civil rights senators such as Humphrey and Republican senators Thomas Kuchel of California and Jacob Javits of New York to help write and re-write the civil rights bill to ensure that a number of conservative Republicans would support it. Dirksen, who was more of a party professional than ideologue, was best known by the public for his eccentricities, but he was also a highly regarded member of the Senate known for his

⁶ Robert D. Loevy, *To End All Segregation: The Politics of the Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 123-127.

⁷ Loevy, *To End All Segregation*, 238.

attention to the legislative details of major bills. Dirksen presented Humphrey, Kuchel, Javits, and New Jersey Senator Clifford Case with proposals of amendments that would cripple the bill on March 31.⁸ After numerous delays and an assurance to Humphrey that he only had but one more small amendment, Dirksen presented Humphrey with a list of seventy on May 5, 1964.⁹

With time, it became clear that Dirksen and the Department of Justice, which was working on behalf of Johnson to produce a strong bill, were in agreement on most amendments. The major conflict was over the enforcement of provisions in the bill. Dirksen wanted local government to enforce the public accommodations and employment provisions, while the Department of Justice argued that local southern governments would not comply. Eventually Dirksen was able to find a compromise that balanced local and federal jurisdiction. On May 13, Dirksen agreed to support the bill, move for cloture to suspend the southern Democrat-led filibuster to allow for a vote, and work to get the necessary Republican votes for the bill. After weeks of negotiations when Dirksen jeopardized the bill's efficaciousness and chance at passage, he began describing the final bill as "an idea whose time has come."¹⁰ By June 10, when Dirksen rose to speak in favor of cloture, which would allow for a vote on the civil rights bill, he said the bill's passage was a matter of morality.¹¹

After eighty-three days of debate, the longest filibuster in Senate history was ended by a cloture vote of 71 to 29—44 Democrats and 27 Republicans supported

⁸ Loevy, *To End All Segregation*, 245-246.

⁹ Humphrey's legislative assistant observed, "Humphrey is frustrated and blocked by [Senate Majority Leader Mike] Mansfield. Kuchel is frustrated and boxed in by Dirksen....I think one must fully appreciate the profound difficulties in getting this bill underway...Nobody seems concerned except the few committed leaders. The rest seem willing to let the time fritter away." Loevy, *To End All Segregation*, 256.

¹⁰ Loevy, *To End All Segregation*, 269.

¹¹ Loevy, *To End All Segregation*, 283.

cloture, while 23 Democrats and 6 Republicans opposed it. The six Republicans who voted against cloture were all from Western states: Wallace F. Bennett of Utah, Goldwater of Arizona, Edwin L. Mechem of New Mexico, Milward L. Simpson of Wyoming, John Tower of Texas, and Milton Young of North Dakota.¹² On June 19, after eighty-three days of debate, the civil rights bill was passed in the senate with a vote of 73 to 27—the bill required 67 votes to get past the filibuster. Bennett and Young, who had voted against cloture, supported the bill. The six Republican senators who broke from the party majority to oppose the bill were Norris H. Cotton of New Hampshire, Goldwater, Bourke B. Hickenlooper of Iowa, Mechem, Simpson, and Tower.¹³ Goldwater said he had voted against the bill on constitutional grounds, fearing that Titles II and VII, which addressed public accommodations and equal employment, were unconstitutional. He also argued that the federal government would have to create a federal police force and a surveillance culture to make the law enforceable.¹⁴ “Neighbors spying on neighbors,” Goldwater warned, “worker spying on workers, businessmen spying on businessmen, where those who would harass their fellow citizens for selfish and narrow purposes will have ample inducement to do so. These, the Federal police force and an ‘informer’ psychology, are the hallmarks of the police state and landmarks in the destruction of a free society.”¹⁵ The following day, Dirksen stood before the Senate, looked in Goldwater’s direction, without naming him, and denounced Goldwater’s stance as an

¹² Irving Bernstein, *Guns or Butter: The Presidency of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 76.

¹³ “Rights Bill Roll-Call Vote,” *New York Times*, June 20, 1964, 1.

¹⁴ Goldwater, like southern Democrats, argued that the public accommodations provision was unconstitutional. Once the bill was passed the public accommodations provision along with all the other major sections of the bill were all ruled to be constitutional when tested in courts and in appeal before the Supreme Court. Loevy, *To End All Segregation*, 330.

¹⁵ “Text of Goldwater Speech on Rights,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1964, 18.

extreme opinion and said that society's conscience would prevail in regard to civil rights as it did in the past when it supported child labor laws, the minimum wage, and Social Security.¹⁶ Despite Dirksen's dramatic speech opposing Goldwater, Dirksen refused to help moderate Republicans who hoped to derail Goldwater's nomination. Robert Novak explained that Dirksen, "the flexible old fox of the Senate had survived for twenty-five years by never becoming too closely identified with any single faction or any single cause...He most certainly could live with Goldwater—civil rights bill or no civil rights bill." Goldwater understood Dirksen and knew he would not oppose him at the convention; he told friends, "That old boy's got an antenna three feet long, he knows where the winner is."¹⁷ Goldwater may not have been the first choice of many party regulars, but they were resigned to his nomination.

While the civil rights bill wound its way through Congress, both parties were engaged in presidential primary contests that dramatized further each party's regional and ideological divides on civil rights. Although Johnson was the Democratic Party's presumed nominee, Alabama Governor George Wallace began a campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination. Wallace campaigned on one issue—opposition to the civil rights bill. Johnson decided it was best not to engage Wallace directly, so he had favorite son candidates from each state where a primary was to be held run against Wallace as stand-ins for himself. The Alabama governor was the southern darling of segregationists and racists, but it was unclear how much appeal he would have in northern states. Wallace's appeal in the North was underestimated, thus his ability to win 34 percent of the vote in Wisconsin, 30 percent in Indiana, and 42 percent in Maryland—

¹⁶ Anthony Lewis, "Arizonan Target of G.O.P. Leader," *New York Times*, June 20, 1964, 1.

¹⁷ Robert D. Novak, *The Agony of the G.O.P. 1964* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1965), 446-447.

although people expected him to pose a legitimate threat in the border state—enabled Wallace to claim his showings as moral victories. Meanwhile, Republicans were immersed in their own contentious battle between Goldwater, Rockefeller, and other possible candidates to determine the Republican presidential nominee.

Goldwater was not a one-issue candidate like Wallace, but when he officially began his presidential bid in January 1964, his calls to reduce the size and purview of the federal government, which he said unfairly infringed on Americans' rights, were attractive to segregationists who opposed mainstream political support for civil rights. While the senator's conservative positions, which were further right than many Republicans, cost him support in some northern communities, they also offered the possibility that the party could rebuild its presence in the South and West. Although Rockefeller and Goldwater were the only announced candidates, Republicans went to the polls and voiced their dissatisfaction with the two candidates by supporting a wide variety of alternatives. The Republican primaries began in New Hampshire on March 10. Henry Cabot Lodge—a write-in candidate—won the primary with 35 percent of the vote followed by Goldwater and Rockefeller with 22 and 21 percent. Senator Margaret Chase Smith, who was not an active candidate, won the Illinois primary with 26 percent of the vote. In Indiana, Harold Stassen, the perennial presidential candidate, received 27 percent of the vote.¹⁸ Rockefeller won an upset over Lodge in the Oregon primary on May 15, 1964, winning 33 percent of the vote followed by Lodge and Goldwater with 27 and 17 percent.¹⁹ Goldwater had cancelled all campaign appearances in Oregon two weeks

¹⁸ Primary Interpretations, RAC, Graham Molitor Papers, folder 179, box 5.

¹⁹ A Harris poll taken after Lodge's New Hampshire win found that 46 percent of Oregon Republicans preferred Lodge followed by 17 percent for Nixon, 14 percent for Goldwater, and 13 percent for

before the primary; he said, to return to Washington for the civil rights debate, but many Republicans speculated that it was because his poll numbers were poor in the state, which had a strong moderate Republican presence.²⁰ Rockefeller campaigned hard in the state, despite trailing Lodge, and won an important victory over Lodge and Goldwater.

The final contest between Rockefeller and Goldwater took place during the primary battle in California on June 2. Before the Oregon primary, Goldwater led Rockefeller in the California polls 48 to 39 percent. After winning Oregon, Rockefeller surged in the polls and remained in the lead until the weekend before the California vote. The week before the primary, Rockefeller's campaign produced a documentary entitled "The Extremists" to be aired in California on May 28. It opened with an introduction by Rockefeller who discussed his efforts to prevent "right-wing extremists' [attempts] to turn the Republican Party away from its traditional path of moderation." While Rockefeller did not explicitly name Goldwater, he alluded to Goldwater's popularity among extremists who believed his candidacy would give them "great influence, if not control, over the Republican state party." This expose of the radical right, narrated by Dave Garroway, a founding host of NBC's *Today* show, featured groups such as the John Birch Society, the Minutemen, and the Christian Crusade. Garroway explained that these extremists acted "without reason" and relied upon hate mail, communist conspiracies, and other acts of intimidation to further their cause. The thirty-minute documentary included first-hand accounts of Californians, including Republicans, who had been targeted by extremist groups for a variety of reasons including support of the United

Rockefeller. Earl Mazo, "Rockefeller Finds Chances Buoyed by Oregon Vote," *New York Times*, May 17, 1964, 1; Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1964* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1965), 112.

²⁰ Julius Duscha, "Oregon Primary," *Washington Post*, May 7, 1964, A21.

Nations.²¹ Upon viewing the finished product, Rockefeller's staff was divided on whether the documentary would backfire.²² While Rockefeller was said to be in favor of airing the documentary, his advisers who opposed it succeeded with their argument that Rockefeller was already ahead in the polls by 170,000 votes; this film might potentially wrecking the party and their ability to work with Republicans who favored Goldwater.²³ Out of fear of oversaturating the electorate, Rockefeller's campaign wound down the weekend before the primary, while Goldwater's campaign launched a media blitz that helped the Senator surge into the lead, aided by Rockefeller's wife giving birth to Nelson Rockefeller Jr., which reminded voters of his controversial remarriage.²⁴

Ultimately, Goldwater won the race by less than 3 percent, a difference of 59,000 votes out of more than 2 million cast, earning him the state's eighty-six delegate votes and giving him over 400 of the 655 delegates needed to win the nomination.²⁵

Rockefeller's speechwriter Hugh Morrow described the primary result succinctly, "It was decisive. He lost it in Orange County."²⁶ After the loss in California, Rockefeller withdrew from the race on June 15, pledging his support for Scranton, who had entered the race days before. In addition to his public support, Rockefeller gave the Pennsylvania governor the use of his staff, financial support, and even the rooms that were booked for Rockefeller's campaign headquarters for the convention in San Francisco. Rockefeller assumed a less-visible role during the party platform hearings, but he continued to

²¹ RAC Film Collection, Nelson A. Rockefeller Films, "The Extremists."

²² Hugh Morrow Interview of Harry O'Donnell, August 9, 1980, RAC, NAR, folder 36, box 3, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

²³ Guy Wright, "Rocky's Canceled Expose," *San Francisco News Call*, June 17, 1964.

²⁴ Kramer and Roberts, *An Investigative Biography of Nelson Rockefeller*, 282; White, *Making, 1964*, 122.

²⁵ Charles Mohr, "California Vote Puts Goldwater Near Nomination, *New York Times*, June 4, 1964, 1; Kramer and Roberts, *An Investigative Biography of Nelson Rockefeller*, 282.

²⁶ Hugh Morrow Interview of Harry O'Donnell, August 9, 1980, RAC, NAR, folder 36, box 3, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

support fellow moderates, including lending his speech writer to Oregon Governor Mark O. Hatfield for his convention keynote address.²⁷

A “Consensus Platform”

On Monday, July 6, the Republican Party’s Committee on Resolutions, otherwise known as the platform committee, was scheduled to meet in San Francisco. Earlier in the day, in advance of the proceedings, Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania and a dozen liberal and moderate committee members discussed strategies to disrupt the meetings and possibly Goldwater’s nomination.²⁸ They hoped to start a platform fight by calling for the adoption of liberal planks that Goldwater would deem unacceptable. If the plan was successful, the moderates could persuade some delegates to sever their commitments to Goldwater, once it became clear that he and his supporters intended to draft a more conservative platform than those of recent years. Massachusetts Congressman Silvio O. Conte raised concerns that the platform had already been written to reflect Goldwater’s views alone. He also accused Goldwater supporters of trying to increase their influence over the committee by securing key positions on the committee through “undemocratic” means. To bolster the moderates’ efforts, Scranton sent an open letter to Congressman Melvin Laird of Wisconsin, chair of the committee, outlining fourteen planks that he wanted in the platform. Not only was this strategy unlikely to sway the majority of the platform committee and the wider field of delegates who were conservatives in support of Goldwater’s nomination, but more importantly, it was unlikely to create a controversy

²⁷ Rockefeller’s speech writer Hugh Morrow assisted Hatfield’s speechwriter Travis Cross with the governor’s keynote address which he delivered at the opening of the convention. Letter from Hugh Morrow to Travis Cross dated July 6, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 1170, box 29, Speech Files, RG15.

²⁸ The assemblage of moderates included Joseph F. Carlino, Speaker of the New York State Assembly, Representative Abner W. Sibal of Connecticut, Peter Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, Silvio O. Conte of Massachusetts, and Richard Van Busen of Michigan, who they named as their coordinator.

related to the platform planks because Laird was well aware of the planks they wanted in the platform and there were signs that he had already incorporated them into the working draft of the platform.

While Laird was one of the earliest supporters of a Goldwater nomination in the House of Representatives, he was not as conservative as Goldwater. From the outset of his appointment as chairman of the platform committee he perceived his role to be that of a mediator who would oversee the writing of a platform that any Republican could approve.²⁹ In this effort he consulted with both Rockefeller and Goldwater from as early as February 1964—and later with Scranton. Before meeting with Laird in February, Rockefeller's adviser and former counsel to the governor Roswell Perkins expressed concern that Laird would be heavily influenced by Goldwater because he was next door neighbors of Edward McCabe who was Goldwater's research director. Perkins fears were allayed during their initial meeting after Laird asked him for whatever research material Rockefeller was willing to provide because he believed the governor had the most complete and valuable research among the Republican ranks. Laird said he hoped that Rockefeller would submit ideas and position papers to be used during the preparation process.³⁰

One of Laird's main goals was to write a platform, and oversee hearings, that neutralized dissent as much as possible. During his earliest meetings with Rockefeller staff, Laird expressed opposition to subcommittee activity, which he said got "out-of-

²⁹ Stephen Shadegg, *What Happened to Goldwater? The Inside Story of the 1964 Republican Campaign* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 64.

³⁰ Memo from Roswell B. Perkins to Hugh Morrow, et al., February 15, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 598, box 58, 21.2 Hugh Morrow, RG 15; Memo from Roswell B. Perkins to Nelson A. Rockefeller, Hugh Morrow, et al., February 21, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 598, box 58, 21.2 Hugh Morrow, RG 15.

hand” in 1960, and said that topical sections on subjects such as labor and civil rights should be eliminated if at all possible because they began to resemble pressure groups and encouraged too much detail. Laird, like Goldwater, preferred short, general platforms like the 1962 Congressional Platform Laird wrote, rather than the long documents that platforms had become.³¹ Theodore H. White, author of *The Making of the President 1964*, noted that the removal of such subcommittees gave the Executive Committee, which was dominated by Goldwater supporters more power over the final platform.³² Laird’s work to avoid confrontation; however, would prevent Goldwater’s supporters from writing a platform that only represented the senator. For example, on June 17, 1964, Laird told the Overseas Press Club that the plank on civil rights should contain support for the Republicans in Congress that adopted the civil rights legislation, a call for “prompt and effective implementation of this legislation;” a strong position in favor of law and order; and an affirmation of traditional Republican support for equal opportunities and civil rights, while repudiating “inverse discrimination.” After listening to the press conference, Perkins informed Rockefeller that it would be difficult to wage a floor fight based on such a civil rights plank. He wrote, “assuming these are the points which actually appear in the platform, we will be extremely hard pressed to decide whether a real civil rights issue can be made on the platform as such.”³³

³¹ February 15, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 598, box 58, 21.2 Hugh Morrow, RG 15.

³² White, *Making, 1964*, 192.

³³ The phrase “Inverse discrimination” was said to be in reference to practices such as quotas based on race, religion or creed, and pupil assignment. During a meeting earlier in the month Charles Goodell who also served as a member of the executive committee overseeing the platform committee told Perkins there was sentiment for including a statement “in opposition to ‘bussing’ and other allegedly artificial ways of achieving integration (‘inverse discrimination’)” in the civil rights plank. Memo from Roswell B. Perkins to Nelson A. Rockefeller, June 18, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 598, box 58, 21.2 Hugh Morrow, RG 15; Memo from Roswell B. Perkins to Nelson A. Rockefeller, June 9, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 598, box 58, 21.2 Hugh Morrow, RG 15.

In the Colonial Ballroom of San Francisco's St. Francis Hotel, one hundred Republicans were assigned the task of hearing testimony from witnesses who hoped to influence the platform writers. Entrusted with the task of writing a party platform that any Republican presidential candidate could endorse was the Committee on Resolutions, a traditionally conservative assembly whose members that year were largely in support of Goldwater. While the platform committee was intended to be an impartial body, the presumed nominee often had considerable influence over the platform. Party moderates complained that Goldwater's forces had undue influence over the platform, seeming to forget that four years before, Nixon tried to supersede much of the 1960 platform committee's work to appease Rockefeller. The result had been a platform that included a far more liberal civil rights plank than that first devised by the committee. Goldwater and his staff had no intention of the committee drafting a platform he could not run on, but he wanted to exert his power in as quiet a manner as possible. It was a well-played tactic; moderates like Scranton and Henry Cabot Lodge were soon frustrated when they realized that the conservative committee members planned to be the picture of politeness and conciliation as they listened to and summarily rejected all of the liberals' testimony and proposals.

Even though the platform committee hearings were designed to draw attention away from the party's divide over civil rights, Martin Luther King Jr., Roy Wilkins, and other civil rights activists such as Dick Gregory spoke before the committee in order to ensure that the recent civil rights act was more than a pyrrhic victory for African Americans. Wilkins and King were relegated to offering their testimony to one of the four committee sub-panels, rather than the collective group as they had in the past, but

their criticisms of Goldwater and the Republican Party were widely disseminated in the press. Wilkins criticized Goldwater's decision to oppose the civil rights act on constitutional grounds. He argued that such opposition threatened "peace, justice and order in the nation by providing an excuse for those who would defy law, generate tension and stir actual strife and bloodshed." In response to Goldwater's argument that the new law would result in a "police state," Wilkins explained that Mississippi was already a police state.³⁴ To write a plank that even appeared to endorse Goldwater's argument of unconstitutionality would fly "in the face of a series of court decisions over the past 50 years upholding the constitutionality of such legislation."³⁵ Wilkins also told the panel that seven NAACP board members who were touring Mississippi had wired Goldwater the previous night to detail the intimidation and terrorism faced by blacks in the state. The NAACP Executive Secretary concluded by critiquing Goldwater's emphasis on state's rights when African Americans lived in terror in Mississippi.³⁶ King likewise focused on the issue of constitutionality. He told the committee it should include a statement saying the party supported the civil rights act because it was "the law of the land and constitutional" and would continue to do so until the Supreme Court stated otherwise. King urged the party to pledge support for using federal forces to protect civil rights and sending a panel of marshals to observe voter registrar offices. He also called for a "Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged" that would help any American, regardless of race, who earned less than \$3,000 a year.³⁷

³⁴ Anthony Lewis, "Goldwater Foes Falter in Quest for Winning Issue," *New York Times*, July 8, 1964, 1.

³⁵ Robert C. Albright, "Rockefeller Joins Move to Reject 'Extremism,'" *Washington Post*, July 8, 1964, A1.

³⁶ Lewis, "Goldwater Foes Falter in Quest for Winning Issue," 1.

³⁷ Lewis, "Goldwater Foes Falter in Quest for Winning Issue," 1.

While Rockefeller maintained a relatively low profile during the week of hearings, he spoke before the committee in support of moderates' most controversial positions: the inclusion of planks affirming the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act and a firm rejection of extremism. Rockefeller stated that "the platform must make clear the Republican party's pride and special responsibility as the party of Abraham Lincoln." He also called for a platform that credited the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to the moral leadership of the Republican Party.³⁸ Rockefeller challenged the committee to face "extremism" on the left and right, which he called the "greatest crisis" of the party's history. Rockefeller's statement failed to induce an emotional response from Goldwater supporters on the committee, who had been instructed to not make a scene. Instead, they politely stood and applauded Rockefeller along with the Scranton supporters.³⁹ After Rockefeller's appearance, Rhodes and Tower described his testimony as "very moderate" and agreeable except for a few points. Although determined not to react to Rockefeller's provocation, Rhodes said that a plank that named the John Birch Society was "completely unacceptable."⁴⁰

Rockefeller spoke in favor of a plank that called the civil rights act constitutional, but moderates had begun to back down on this point. Laird opposed the idea of the platform committee stating that the new civil rights law was constitutional because, he said, the platform committee was not the Supreme Court. Ohio Congressman, William M. McCulloch, who served as House Manager of the civil rights bill, joined Laird in opposing such a plank. It was a major blow to Scranton supporters. McCulloch had been

³⁸ Rockefeller's Speech to the Platform Committee, RAC, NAR, folder 1171, box 29, Speech Files, RG15.

³⁹ Robert C. Albright, "Rockefeller Joins Move to Reject 'Extremism,'" *Washington Post*, July 8, 1964, A1.

⁴⁰ Albright, "Rockefeller Joins Move to Reject 'Extremism,'" A1.

influential in getting Republicans in the House to support the civil rights act. Scranton and his supporters hoped to get committee members like McCulloch to join their efforts to oppose Goldwater, but instead, McCulloch said it was not the committee's role to state whether legislation was constitutional. Instead, he said, the committee should write a plank pledging to enforce the new law, which Goldwater said was acceptable.⁴¹ Many party moderates and supporters of the civil rights act refused to join the efforts of Scranton; instead, they decided to entrust the maintenance of the Republican Party's support of civil rights to Goldwater and his supporters. Scranton and his associates began to quiet their calls to declare the civil rights act "constitutional" once McCulloch opposed it.

Accounts of the platform hearings that focus on the Goldwater perspective, including the senator's 1979 memoir *With No Apologies*, F. Clifton White's *Suite 3505*, and political scientist John H. Kessel's *The Goldwater Coalition* do not discuss Goldwater's decision to allow a civil rights plank in favor of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁴² White, however, writes that Goldwater told Rhodes and Tower to make sure that the platform could please "practically all members of the party along with Democrats and independents." This seems to have taken precedence over what White called their first objective of the convention: to write a "conservative Republican platform."⁴³ Kessel also notes that Goldwater's approach to interacting with the committee was to identify with

⁴¹ Lewis, "Goldwater Foes Falter in Quest for Winning Issue," 1.

⁴² Barry M. Goldwater, *With No Apologies: The Persona and Political Memoirs of United States Senator Barry M. Goldwater* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1979); F. Clifton White, *Suite 3505: The Story of the Draft Goldwater Movement* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1967); John H. Kessel, *The Goldwater Coalition: Republican Strategies in 1964* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968); Shadegg, *What Happened*.

⁴³ White, *Suite 3505*, 386-387.

the difficult task before them and express confidence in their good judgment, rather than lead them in a heavy-handed fashion.⁴⁴

The day after Rockefeller's testimony to the platform committee the *Washington Post* printed an editorial in approval of the governor's calls for a plank affirming civil rights. "The Governor would like to see the platform express pride in the conduct of the 80 per cent of the Republican members of Congress who supported the Civil Rights Act. He would hail that act as a milestone on the road to equal opportunity and expressive of the spirit of the Constitution." The *Post* explained that a strong Republican pledge in support of civil rights would play a major role in defining the tone and focus of the general election.

This plank, and a candidate willing to run on it, would take the civil rights issue out of the election campaign. Nothing else seems likely to do so. Nothing else ought to be permitted to do so. The Republican Party is confronted with a clear choice between its past commitments to equal rights and a compromise or a desertion of that commitment; between the leadership of the party in Congress and the leadership of a very small minority hostile to the congressional party. This is the essence of the Republican dilemma at San Francisco.⁴⁵

Regardless of many party regulars' denials, Goldwater's nomination—fueled by the backlash to achievements made by the civil rights movement—was proof that the party had shifted to the right on race issues. Despite avid denials by some and determined displays of ignorance by others, the Republican Party was undergoing a transformation evidenced by leaders like McCulloch who decided to leave Goldwater to uphold the party's stance on civil rights.

Despite the inability of some moderate Republicans to break the united front presented by Goldwater supporters and other moderates' decision not to challenge

⁴⁴ Kessel, *The Goldwater Coalition*, 107-110.

⁴⁵ "Civil Rights Choice," *Washington Post*, July 8, 1964, A20.

Goldwater at all, Rowland Evans and Robert Novak reported that southern Republicans were still unhappy with their predicament in San Francisco. “They feel like the faithful wife abandoned just as her husband becomes a success,” wrote Evans and Novak, because the Republican platform would contain a plank in support of the new civil rights act.⁴⁶ Evans and Novak wrote that upon their arrival in San Francisco, southern Republicans were disappointed to learn that the platform had already been written by Laird, with a plank pledging support of the civil rights act. They most likely hoped for a plank on civil rights similar to the “Goldwater plank” in the Nevada GOP Platform, which echoed statements made by Goldwater. The Nevada platform plank stated that “human relations” could not be legislated and that the solution for discrimination “lies in the individual conscience...of every American.” It also stated that remarkable progress had been made in Nevada without government intervention and that such legislation was not necessary “at the state or federal level.”⁴⁷ Such a plank, however, was not to be written by Laird nor did Goldwater demand it. Despite Goldwater’s eminent victory, he was determined to support the civil rights act to neutralize the issue moderates hoped to exploit to their advantage. Goldwater had the assistance of his “designated agents” on the committee, Laird and Rhodes, who were both perceived as moderate Republicans, who were more conservative than Rockefeller and Scranton, but not as far right as Goldwater. Rhodes had supported the law’s passage, but did not side with moderates who demanded a strong civil rights plank. “The truth,” wrote the journalists, “emerging here is that most Republican leaders still feel the Southern position on civil rights is a minority position

⁴⁶ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “The Southern Republicans,” *Washington Post*, July 9, 1964, A19.

⁴⁷ “Analysis of 1964 Nevada GOP Platform,” May 21, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 598, box 58, 21.2 Hugh Morrow, RG 15

nationally—white backlash or no white backlash. That even the Goldwater revolution within the Republican Party has not changed this is hard for the Southern Republicans to swallow.”⁴⁸ While racially liberal Republicans hoped for a plank that pledged resounding support for the new bill, southern Republicans were angry that the platform offered any support at all. Evans and Novak reported that Goldwater was determined to support the civil rights act because it could help ensure his nomination. Both Goldwater and Scranton remembered that in 1952 Robert A. Taft was prevented from receiving the nomination after losing a test vote over the seating of delegates. Scranton supporters had hoped to use a fight over a civil rights plank and a test vote at the convention to prevent the nomination of Goldwater, but Goldwater was determined to nullify their efforts with the inclusion of a plank supporting civil rights.⁴⁹

The main event of the platform committee’s week-long proceedings took place on Friday, July 10, 1964, when Goldwater went before the platform committee to give his testimony. During a presentation that drew enthusiastic applause, Goldwater told the committee and those in attendance that he sought stronger opposition to Communism abroad and a “minimum of government” at home. The loudest demonstrations erupted when he called for firmer foreign policy and for respect for whites as well as Negroes.⁵⁰ While Goldwater’s testimony resembled a nomination convention speech—he was interrupted by applause forty-one times during his testimony—the question-and-answer session did lead to a few uncomfortable moments.⁵¹ Gordon A. Parker, a resident of

⁴⁸ Evans and Novak, “The Southern Republicans,” A19.

⁴⁹ Evans and Novak, “The Southern Republicans,” A19.

⁵⁰ Anthony Lewis, “Goldwater Ask a Tougher Stand Against Red Bloc,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1964, 1.

⁵¹ Charles McDowell, Jr., *Campaign Fever: The National Folk Festival, from New Hampshire to November, 1964* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1965), 100.

Washington, D.C., the lone black committee member rose to interrogate Goldwater on his civil rights stance, questioning Goldwater's ability to defend the civil rights act "consistently, conscientiously and in good faith" after vigorously and openly opposing it. Goldwater replied: "Well, sir, when you use that argument you are questioning my honesty and I should resent it but I won't. I'll try to explain this again." Parker denied that he was questioning Goldwater's integrity; instead, he said he hoped Goldwater would be frank. Goldwater was not appeased; his anger was palpable,

You are questioning my integrity but I'll overlook it. I've answered the question once; I'll answer it again, by reminding you that when the President takes an oath of office he takes in that oath a pledge to uphold all laws. And I have said time and time and time again and I say again, even though I was in the minority on the civil rights bill because I felt, and I still feel, that two of the titles are unconstitutional—and they will be tested by the court for final decision, not by me or this party—I will uphold that because it's the voice of the majority.

Goldwater went on to discuss his lifelong opposition to segregation in his hometown. Despite the Senator's assurances Parker pressed on: "I address this because of a feeling that I know exists on the part of a large number of Americans, persons who belong to the Republican party and who expect to vote for you if nominated. My particular question is a thing that I'm interested in and they're interested in."⁵² Even though Goldwater again vowed to enforce the law if he were president, he also reminded Parker that discrimination was a problem that could not be solved by laws; it had to be solved in the hearts all citizens.

Parker said that many Americans wondered, as he did, if Goldwater would enforce the law if he were president. A Harris Survey from that month revealed the extent of the doubt Parker referred to; when respondents were asked "Do you think Senator

⁵² "Excerpts from Goldwater Remarks at G.O.P. Platform Session," *New York Times*, July 11, 1964, 8.

Goldwater is for or against...full use of federal power for Negro rights?" The vast majority of Americans surveyed—81 percent—said Goldwater was against full use of federal power.⁵³ As Goldwater pointed out impatiently, he had assured numerous people on several occasions that he would enforce the law if he were elected, but few were convinced. The press was divided on the significance of Goldwater allowing or pledging to support a plank in support of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Evans and Novak were most likely unimpressed by Goldwater's agreement to support the civil rights plank, which they called the "weakest Republican civil rights plank in memory."⁵⁴ Meanwhile the conservative *Los Angeles Times*, which printed an editorial on July 9 stating that the Republican Party had nothing to be ashamed of when it came to its civil rights record, gave the impression that Parker's exchange with Goldwater was unremarkable. In an article that referred to Parker as a "Baiter of Goldwater," the *Los Angeles Times* and equated it to his attempt to get the party to adopt a stronger civil rights plank in 1956.⁵⁵ Ultimately, Goldwater's inability to convince people that he would enforce civil rights to the best of his ability was integral to his electoral strength in the South.⁵⁶ His performance allowed him to align himself with the mainstream of the party by pledging support of civil rights, while maintaining his voting base in the South.

⁵³ Harris Survey, Jul, 1964. Retrieved Mar-20-2012 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.
http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

⁵⁴ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Current Tactics May Transform the GOP," July 17, 1964, *Los Angeles Times*, A5.

⁵⁵ "The GOP's Civil Rights Plank," *Los Angeles Times*, July 9, 1964, A4; William Chapman, "Wants Strong Plank," *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1964, 3.

⁵⁶ To further consolidate his strength in the South, Goldwater hoped that Wallace would end his presidential bid. Meanwhile, Wallace mistook Goldwater's public praise for an invitation to join his ticket as vice president. Wallace sent an aid to San Francisco to see if Goldwater was receptive to his plan, while Goldwater wanted Wallace's supporters he was not willing to work with him directly. Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 376.

Goldwater called for a unified party and in response the Executive Committee responsible for writing the platform approved “intact or in modified versions the Scranton language on the United Nations, foreign aid, Cuba, medical care for the aged, Social Security, agriculture and urban needs.”⁵⁷ The committee rejected four of the most controversial Scranton-supported planks: proposals to strengthen the civil rights plank, condemn extremism, reaffirm sole-presidential control of nuclear weapons, and reject national right-to-work laws, which would ban union-floor workplaces. The four rejected planks were in direct opposition to Goldwater’s positions, including his opinion that military leaders should be able to use nuclear weapons without first consulting the president. Goldwater and his supporters had the clear advantage; they could have rejected all of Scranton’s proposals, but the main objective was to avoid controversy during the convention. Meanwhile, the Scranton faction began considering a convention floor fight to put their objections on the record.

“Full Implementation and Faithful Execution”

Indeed, the presence of the white backlash tactic was felt all last week as the platform committee drafted the weakest Republican civil rights plank in memory.

Rowland Evans and Robert Novak⁵⁸

The only two Negroes in the whole U.S. who are going to vote for Goldwater are his chauffeur and his maid. And even they are trying to figure out a way to double-cross him when they draw the curtains in the voting booth.

Dick Gregory⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Anthony Lewis, “Goldwater Ask a Tougher Stand Against Red Bloc,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1964, 1.

⁵⁸ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Current Tactics May Transform the GOP,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 1964, A5.

⁵⁹ “Top Hypocrite,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 23, 1964, A6.

The Committee on Resolutions released the Republican platform in two parts the weekend before the convention. The document was a “consensus platform” of sorts, as Goldwater’s supporters referred to it, but the tone reflected Goldwater’s domination and a significant shift from previous party platforms. In a section entitled “Discord and Discontent,” the platform attacked the Administration’s record on a range of issues including civil rights, the appointment of federal jobs to veterans, and settling labor disputes. On civil rights, it stated, “This Administration has exploited interracial tensions by extravagant campaign promises, without fulfillment, playing on the just aspirations of the minority groups, encouraging disorderly and lawless elements, and ineffectually administering the laws.” Furthermore, the administration failed to fulfill its campaign promises on civil rights, despite overstepping its boundaries to achieve its goals. The platform stated that there should be a Congressional investigation into the abuse of power shown by federal departments and agencies, the Department of Justice, in particular, which had used “police tactics” to achieve “partisan political, economic, and legislative goals.”⁶⁰ The federal government’s intervention in the steel price dispute of 1962 was offered as an example, but the most publicized episodes of federal intervention in this period were the Justice Department’s involvement in desegregating schools in the South when Kennedy had failed to introduce new civil rights legislation. The platform included a line that would placate those who felt the federal government had unfairly aided African Americans by declaring opposition to “federally sponsored inverse discrimination, whether by the shifting of jobs or the abandonment of neighborhood schools for reasons of race.” Rockefeller called the platform draft an “utterly inadequate

⁶⁰ “Text of Sections 1 and 2 of 1964 Republican Platform as Approved by Committee,” *New York Times*, July 12, 1964, 56.

document” that failed to represent the majority of the Republican Party on nuclear weapons, civil rights, and extremism. Furthermore, for the Republican Party to “retreat from its historic stand for civil rights,” explained Rockefeller, “in order to please a narrow, doctrinaire minority [was] equally inconceivable.”⁶¹ The *New York Times* agreed, in an editorial published on July 13, 1964, it called the platform a significant break with the party’s past. “The party of Abraham Lincoln is now cautious on civil rights, criticizing the Justice Department for ‘police state tactics’ despite mounting evidence that some states cannot or will not control lawlessness and anarchy.”⁶² The “consensus platform” was intended to please both sides on this issue, but was more likely to disappoint.

Ultimately, the committee-approved plank on civil rights pledged the party’s commitment in a carefully worded statement, but it displeased the party’s most liberal and conservative members. The plank began:

We pledge...full implementation and faithful execution of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and all other civil rights statutes to assure equal rights and opportunities guaranteed by the Constitution to every citizen; Improvements of civil rights statutes adequate to changing needs of our times; Such additional administrative or legislative actions as may be required to end the denial, for whatever unlawful reason, of the right to vote.⁶³

Evans and Novak reported that when the closed-door session to draft the platform commenced, Congressman McCulloch proposed that the civil rights plank include a promise of “vigorous enforcement” of the new law. The article explained that Tower took offense to this language because the “word ‘enforcement’ ha[d] unfortunate connotations

⁶¹ New York State, Governor, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 53rd Governor (Albany, 1964), 813.

⁶² The Goldwater Platform,” *New York Times*, July 13, 1964, 28.

⁶³ Johnson and Porter, *National Party Platforms*, 683. Text of the Second Half of 1964 Republican Platform, as Approved by Committee,” *New York Times*, July 13, 1964, 16.

in the South—reminiscent of reconstructions days. The McCulloch amendment, he warned, would badly hurt Sen. Goldwater in the South and undercut the ‘Southern Strategy’ of the conservatives.”⁶⁴ In the end, the committee decided that “enforcement” was too extreme and promised “implementation” and “execution” instead.⁶⁵ The plank undermined the party’s pledge further by including a reference to Goldwater’s longstanding belief that a commitment to civil rights was a matter of heart rather than legislation. If a Goldwater Administration failed to advance civil rights or “implement” additional laws as needed, he could remind the nation that civil rights was a matter of the heart and that new legislation was unwarranted.

The party platform was approved after an all-night session of the platform committee that ended on Sunday, July 12, at 6:00 AM, but tension remained high between the Scranton and Goldwater factions. There had been a single roll-call vote on an amendment to the civil rights plank, which was presented by Joseph Carlino, Speaker of the New York Assembly. The proposed Carlino plank pledged support for the application of the voting section of the 1964 Civil Rights Act in state as well as federal elections and would broaden the executive order against discrimination in federally aided housing. The committee decided in a vote of 68 to 30 to reject the amendment and keep the civil rights plank that promised implementation rather than enforcement. With this loss, the Scranton supporters, led by Senator Scott, issued a minority report expressing their disapproval of the platform and announced their plan to wage a floor battle at the convention on three specific issues. On the second day of the convention, delegates

⁶⁴ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Concession to the South: Omission of ‘Enforcement’ from Platform Plank of Civil Rights Significant to Dixieite,” *Washington Post*, July 19, 1964, E7.

⁶⁵ “Text of the Second Half of 1964 Republican Platform, as Approved by Committee,” *New York Times*, July 13, 1964, 16.

would hear amendments calling for a strengthened civil rights plank, a plank that denounced extremists within the party, and a reaffirmation of party support for sole-presidential control of nuclear weapons. Romney also arranged to present his own amendments on civil rights and extremism that were designed to be less contentious than those in the minority report. There was little chance of changing any minds at a convention teeming with Goldwater supporters, but the Scranton supporters pressed on.

The futility of the Scrantonite endeavor was most apparent, not in the dedication of Goldwater supporters, but in the lack of support among party regulars and moderates who were determined to maintain order at the convention by approving a platform with a deliberately weakened civil rights plank. For example, Laird told the press that he predicted the amendment would be beaten on the floor because the platform committee's civil rights plank had the support of Congressman McCulloch of Ohio and Senator Dirksen, who led the effort to write the 1964 Civil Rights Act.⁶⁶ Scranton and Scott along with other moderate to liberal Republicans also lacked the backing of prominent peers such as former National Chairman Thruston Morton. When they most needed his support, Morton told the press that Goldwater would maintain Eisenhower's party line and would prove to the public that he was not the "17th-century monster that some people have painted him."⁶⁷

Whether political commentators approved of the Goldwater surge in San Francisco or were dismayed by the apparent shift in the party's orientation, there was a sense that a major change was underway. Robert J. Donovan of the *Washington Post*

⁶⁶ Anthony Lewis, "G.O.P. Drafts Goldwater Planks; Scranton Pledges Floor Fight; Delegates Begin Sessions Today," *New York Times*, July 13, 1964, 1; Richard L. Lyons, "Scranton Girds for Floor Fight," *Washington Post*, July 15, 1964, A1.

⁶⁷ Tom Wicker, "Goldwater Says He Has 739 Votes," *New York Times*, July 13, 1964, 1.

wrote that the party was turning away from the “moderate majority that ha[d] for a generation controlled its presidential nominations.”⁶⁸ Julius Duscha reported that Republican moderates were generally resigned to accept defeat; he quoted one moderate governor as saying, “Let the Goldwater people have the whole thing. We’ve had ours. Let them have theirs this time and we’ll see what they can do.”⁶⁹ Vermont Royster of the *Wall Street Journal* wrote, “If you’ve been following the carryings-on from afar, you might well wonder if the Republicans have lost their cotton pickin’ minds.” He marveled at Republicans’ determination to nominate a man who readily admitted that he could not beat Johnson. Royster admired Goldwater’s “realistic” assessment of his chances, but noted that the party’s decision to uphold conservative ideals by nominating a candidate who admitted he could not beat Johnson marked a major change in party practice. The party had regularly nominated moderates, overlooking their party irregularity because of their reputation as vote-getters. It was not surprising that Goldwater’s most ardent, self-identified, “rock-ribbed Republicans,” seemed to admire him more because he ran on unwavering principle, despite acknowledging that his chances of winning were low. It was notable, however, that party professionals and regulars—even those who had initially shunned Goldwater—were now ready to support his nomination without a fight. Theodore White noted that the convention may have lacked a certain kind of excitement because Goldwater was so far in the lead; nonetheless party moderates’ inability to organize a creditable threat to Goldwater made the convention remarkable. White wrote,

The forces of Eastern liberalism were captained by the grandsons of three men who, seventy-five years before, had set their granite faces against the future: grandsons,

⁶⁸ Robert J. Donovan, “Convention May Be Political Landmark,” *Washington Post*, July 13, 1964, A14.

⁶⁹ Julius Duscha, “Republican Moderates are Prepared to Sit It out This Year,” *Washington Post*, July 14, 1964, A10.

respectively, (Rockefeller) of Senate Majority Leader Nelson Aldrich, the most truculent defender of turn-of-the-century big industry against any government regulation or control whatsoever; (Lodge) of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, the arch-isolationist, architect and progenitor of the exclusionist immigration acts; and (Scranton) of William Walker Scranton, a burly industrial primitive who, in his home town, had helped organize armed posses to shoot down, in hot blood, workers trying to unionize. While their opponent, true spiritual descendant of their own grandfathers, was the grandson of a Democrat, an immigrant from Eastern Europe.⁷⁰

The Scranton-Lodge-(Romney)-Rockefeller Republicans represented the evolution of a specific and influential strand of Republicanism in the twentieth century, but in 1964 their ties to and influence in the party were tenuous. It was unclear if moderate Republicanism would one day return to prominence in the Republican Party, but for now it seemed their day had come and gone. They could wage a debate over the merits of the civil rights plank, in the name of the party's abolitionist-anti-slavery origins and present-day Republicans' support of civil rights, but the party was moving on—with or without them.

A “Common Zeal” for Civil Rights

Goldwater's supporters, most notably Curtis, squelched the first controversy of the convention early on the first day. Scranton forces had contested the exclusion of George W. Lee of Memphis, Tennessee, a perennial convention delegate since the 1930s. This was the same Lee, who at the end of 1962, sent an impassioned letter to Taft and Rockefeller stating that the Republican resurgence in his state was the result of the KKK and racists co-opting the party. Scrantonites noted that the lifelong Republican was unable to be a delegate that year because Tennessee's Shelby County Republican organization changed the election rules temporarily so they could have their state's first

⁷⁰ White, *Making*, 1964, 194.

all-white delegation in fifty years.⁷¹ Lee's exclusion was even more remarkable because twelve years before he made a memorable speech seconding the nomination of Robert Taft. In response to this controversy, Delegate Newton I. Steers, Jr. of Maryland offered a resolution that would have denied the admittance of state delegations who could not prove they selected delegates without discrimination based on race, color, creed, or national origin.⁷² It is customary at the start of a convention, before the permanent rules are adopted, to abide by the rules established by the previous convention. Adopting Steers's resolution would, as its supporters argued, prevent practices and procedures that discriminated against blacks. Curtis stood in opposition to this resolution and said that this was not the appropriate time to consider the Tennessee case. Rather than begin his speech by stating his opposition based on procedural rules, he used the opportunity to play to the crowd generating excited approval of his effort to block a resolution intended to defend civil rights. Curtis shouted to the audience, "You are the salt of the earth. You are the hope of mankind. We are here to adopt a platform and nominate the next President of the United States," which drew roars of excitement from the audience.⁷³ The number of black delegates at the convention was at a record low. Of the 1,308 delegates fifteen were African American, and for the first time in the history of the RNC not one of the South's 279 delegates was black.⁷⁴

⁷¹ According to Rick Perlstein, the county convention was moved to an all-white section of town by John Grenier ensuring that the blacks who had voted for George W. Lee in the past were not present for the vote. Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 379.

⁷² Republican Party and Lloyd L. Harkins, *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Republican National Convention Resulting in the Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater, of Arizona, for President, and the Nomination of William E. Miller, of New York, for Vice President* (Washington: Republican National Committee, 1964), 30-31.

⁷³ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 34.

⁷⁴ "Wake Up America!," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 25, 1964, 18.

On the second night of the convention, Scranton supporters waged their final battle against the platform and the impending nomination of Goldwater. Scott filed the minority report with three amendments to the platform. It was unusual for such a report and subsequent debate to take place before the delegates. Tom Wicker noted that Scrantonites had Goldwater and his staff to thank for allowing them an opportunity to force their amendments to be heard on the convention floor. As a result, “instead of having its platform proposals ignored—the usual situation—the minority finds itself this year unhappily smothered by the generosity of the majority.”⁷⁵ Goldwater directed White to tell the delegates they were to reject all of the amendments regardless of their content to demonstrate the overriding control of conservatives at the convention. While White followed Goldwater’s orders, White also ensured that the “battle” would take place after primetime on the East Coast to reduce the viewing audience as much as possible. He rescheduled Eisenhower’s speech to push the debate into the late hours of the night, and for good measure he planned—to the almost certain dismay of delegates and audience members alike—a reading of the entire platform by committee members.⁷⁶ After the 90-minute reading of the platform that had both delegates and audience members milling about the hall to stave off boredom, the Scrantonites got their floor debate, which began as midnight approached on the East Coast. The first Scott Amendment called for the incorporation of additional language to the introduction of the platform rejecting extremism. It stated, “we repudiate the efforts of irresponsible extremist groups, such as the Communists, the Ku Klux Klan, the John Birch Society, and others to discredit our

⁷⁵ Tom Wicker, “Republicans: The Convention, The Men and Questions,” *New York Times*, July 12, 1964, E3.

⁷⁶ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 190.

Party by their efforts to infiltrate positions of responsibility in the Party or to attach themselves to its candidates.”⁷⁷

The second amendment on civil rights inspired the greatest amount of debate; however, the extremism plank, more specifically, Rockefeller’s speech in support of it, sparked a firestorm that left an indelible impression on the nation. Rockefeller approached the podium with a wide smile on his face, commencing a speech that remains one of the most infamous episodes of modern convention history. Permanent Chairman of the Convention Morton had allotted Rockefeller five minutes to offer support for the amendment; as Rockefeller waved at the crowd and mouthed hellos, the initial cheers quickly mixed with booing in the auditorium and were peppered with chants of “We want Barry” as Morton asked for order. The sound of the chanting and air horns seemed to please Rockefeller as he continued to smile and mouth greetings rather than attempt to be heard over the cacophony. One newscaster took advantage of this standoff to remind viewers that “Governor Nelson Rockefeller who two years ago, in all the polls, was the leading contender for the Republican nomination this year [had fallen] by the wayside.”⁷⁸ Goldwater supporters needed no reminders; this was their opportunity to voice their long felt frustration because of the Eastern Establishment’s supremacy personified by the New York governor. Once Rockefeller began speaking, saying he was there in support of adding language to the party platform, he was interrupted by an irate audience member yelling “No.” That was all the invitation needed for the booing to recommence.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 216.

⁷⁸ RAC Film Collection, Nelson A. Rockefeller Films, “NAR’s Address to Republican National Convention,” July 15, 1964.

⁷⁹ RAC Film Collection, Nelson A. Rockefeller Films, “NAR’s Address to Republican National Convention,” July 15, 1964.

The Governor's five-minute speech exceeded ten minutes and focused on the themes presented in *The Extremists* documentary that he had kept from airing in June. Rockefeller was interrupted by prolonged booing from Goldwater's supporters whose resentment of Rockefeller had grown exponentially over the past year. Rockefeller had become a symbol of all they detested. Regardless, Rockefeller—at what might be called his last stand of 1964—did not flinch; on the contrary, he seemed to enjoy himself. More than once, Rockefeller asked Morton to control the audience to no avail. For those who tried to drown him out, Rockefeller reminded them, “It is still a free country, ladies and gentlemen. These things, ladies and gentlemen, have no place in America.” The speech he gave between the booing and heckling associated Goldwater support with a “doctrinaire militant minority,” that was “wholly alien to the sound and honest Republicanism that has firmly based the Republican Party.” This minority, which he noted, he had spoken out against a year to the day before, on July 14, 1963, was attempting to “convert [the Republican Party] into a cloak of apparent respectability for a dangerous extremism.”⁸⁰ He referred to the tactics of rightwing conservatives who subjected him and his supporters to “anonymous midnight and early-morning telephone calls, unsigned and threatening letters, smear and hate literature, [and] strong-arm and goon tactics.”⁸¹ Rockefeller's speech—in support of a plank that had no chance of approval—was a personal victory. The audience response seemed to confirm all of his accusations. Upon Rockefeller's conclusion, the debate continued with speakers for and against the amendment, which the delegates quickly rejected and prepared themselves for the rest of the minority report.

⁸⁰ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 217-218.

⁸¹ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 218.

Senator Scott, who organized the platform debate and decided who would best demonstrate to the viewing public that a substantial segment of the party was unhappy with the platform, told a staff assistant while on the way to the Cow Palace convention hall, “I have the feeling that Nelson is not too popular with that crowd.” Scott, however, did not expect the reception Rockefeller received. He recalled, “I was still shocked when I discovered—along with millions of people in the television and radio audience—discovered the extent of the bitterness against Governor Rockefeller in that convention hall.”⁸² Rockefeller adviser George Hinman called Rockefeller’s confrontation with the Goldwaterites “his finest hour,” according to Hinman, coupled with his ability to win the Oregon primary, his close loss in California, and then his performance in the Cow Palace rehabilitated Rockefeller’s career after his remarriage: “He was again a...national figure outside the party...It took great courage on his part. But he was again a national figure who had to be taken into account, even by the party.”⁸³ In Hinman’s opinion, this made Rockefeller’s efforts worthwhile. The reality was, however, that many Republicans who already bristled at the idea of Rockefeller ever becoming party standard bearer would instead interpret him as a party wrecker—as they did in 1960—because his “finest hour” was at the expense of his party. Rockefeller came to the aid of Scott and Scranton, but a significant portion of the party would resent his actions.

The Scott Amendment on Civil Rights generated a debate between ten Republicans, five proponents and five opponents, who came forward to discuss the merits of the amendment. While the original plank called for “full implementation and faithful

⁸² Hugh Scott, *Come to the Party* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 212-213.

⁸³ Hugh Morrow Interview of George Hinman, October 10, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 10, box 1, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

execution of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,” it omitted any acknowledgment that Republicans in both houses of Congress had been indispensable to the passage of the civil rights act.⁸⁴ Roscoe Drummond of the *Washington Post* reported that Goldwater had “not allow[ed] the platform to praise four-fifths of the Republican Congressmen and five-sixths of the Republican Senators who voted for the civil rights bill which Goldwater opposed.”⁸⁵ Rather than praise the new law, the plank pledged to observe it. The Scott Amendment sought to reverse this silence, while it invoked the party’s legacy as the Party of Lincoln and called for the Republican Party to become a champion and standard-bearer for protecting civil rights. This proposed new language regarding civil rights would transform the original statement, which Goldwater opponents considered perfunctory and insincere.

According to the Scott Amendment, the passage of the Civil Rights Act was an important achievement that needed to be reinforced and built upon. For example, it called for a “substantial increase in the professional staff of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice” and federal judiciary appointments to “men devoted to protecting the constitutional rights of the citizens” as the means for insuring the enforcement of the law.⁸⁶ In this spirit, the amendment stated that the Republican Party supported the passage of legislation requiring school districts in direct violation of the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*—ten years after the ruling—to adopt plans to begin compliance with the decision. In contrast to the tone of the original plank, which said the party would support the improvement of civil rights statutes as required, it said,

⁸⁴ Johnson and Porter, *National Party Platforms*, 683.

⁸⁵ Roscoe Drummond, “Goldwater’s Platform: Some Handouts for Unity,” *Washington Post*, July 15, 1964, A23.

⁸⁶ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 229.

“much still needs to be done before equality becomes a reality for all.”⁸⁷ The amendment proclaimed, “The overwhelming support of the Civil Rights Division of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in Congress reflects our Party’s deep belief that the Federal Government has constitutional responsibility to assure that all Americans are absolutely guaranteed the right to vote, are assured equal access to public accommodations and public facilities, are guaranteed equal educational and employment opportunities and assured equal protection of the law.”⁸⁸ It also credited Republican governors for following Lincoln’s example by leading the nation in the passage of fair housing and employment acts and providing open access to public accommodations. Finally, the amendment cautioned against the misuse of states’ rights as means to evade state or national responsibilities or to “turn it into a weapon against human rights.”⁸⁹

The Scott Amendment on Civil Rights reinforced the idea that moderate and liberal Republicans were the inheritors of Lincoln’s political legacy. The floor debate that included participation from Republicans who supported the amendment, such as Clifford Case, Massachusetts Attorney General Edward W. Brooke, and Representative John V. Lindsay, and those against, including McCulloch, and Representatives Charles E. Goodell and Arch Moore, did expose some of the divisions within the party, but made no mention of the significance of the party nominating a candidate who voted against the Civil Rights Act. Rather than include the participation of men who agreed with Goldwater’s opposition to the civil rights act, the five men who stood in opposition to the Scott Amendment were Republicans who had supported the law. In fact, all of the

⁸⁷ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 229.

⁸⁸ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 229.

⁸⁹ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 229.

participants were known as supporters of civil rights legislation. As a result, everyone involved, whether they approved of the Scott Amendment or not, gave the impression that the Republican Party was united in its support of civil rights legislation.

The debate took place between Republicans who on the one side were prepared to approve the civil rights plank as written for the sake of unity and those on the other side who would criticize it because they viewed it as too feeble. McCulloch, for example, was one of the most prominent Republican backers of civil rights legislation, introducing legislation months before President Kennedy.⁹⁰ While Moore, who made no mention of Goldwater's record on civil rights or the undercurrent of civil rights opposition in the party, claimed that the Republican Party remained the only party who worked on behalf of African Americans.⁹¹ Those who supported the original plank accused those who defended the Scott Amendment of base political motives, but supporters such as Lindsay and Case tried to disprove these arguments. Lindsay told the convention that if the party was willing to pledge to meet its constitutional responsibilities to Americans by preserving limited government, it should also stress its commitment to protect citizens' most basic human rights. "This platform finds it possible to be specific in one hundred areas, and yet it abandons our earlier pledges to safeguard the right to vote in all elections, as has been the pledge of Republicans in the Congress of the United States for the past decade."⁹² Lindsay concluded, "My fellow Republicans, do not deny the history and tradition of our great Party. Do not exchange our birthright for a political dead

⁹⁰ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 240-243.

⁹¹ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 240.

⁹² Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 242.

end.”⁹³ Case also warned that the party should not break with its past, but instead of confronting Goldwater supporters and their decision to remove the word “enforcement” from the civil rights plank he spoke of their “unintended” break from Republican tradition.⁹⁴

Goodell’s speech stood apart among the opposition to the Scott civil rights amendment, because he introduced himself by saying he planned to support the nomination of Scranton. He told the convention that he too was a strong advocate of the Civil Rights Act of 1964: “I worked and fought to strengthen that Act, particularly in the area of fair employment practices.”⁹⁵ He said that while he respected the efforts of those who supported the amendment, he opposed their efforts because the current plank contained “a complete commitment...to the cause of human rights.”⁹⁶ Goodell warned his fellow Republicans to resist the urge to be carried away by their “common zeal” for civil rights and warned them not to be “extremists on this crucial issue tonight.”⁹⁷ Amidst numerous moderate and liberal Republicans’ statements invoking the party’s foundation in Lincolnian and Reconstruction era politics, Goodell made a historical argument that stood apart for its appeal to Republicans’ romanticized vision of themselves. He warned, “Let us not be the party of the reconstruction era that watered and nourished the seeds of bitterness and prejudice in this country.”⁹⁸ Goodell went on to say the party should adhere to “common sense” and understanding:

⁹³ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 242.

⁹⁴ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 233.

⁹⁵ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 237.

⁹⁶ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 237.

⁹⁷ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 238.

⁹⁸ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 238.

My fellow Americans it is not the heritage of Lincoln to be unmindful of the deep and difficult human problems involved in civil rights. There is a story of Abraham Lincoln in the White House, when he was first informed that the fighting had ended in the great war, and they asked him what they should say, and he said 'Sing Dixie.' That is the spirit of Abraham Lincoln.⁹⁹

Goodell suggested that moderate and liberal Republicans' calls for an expanded civil rights plank would increase prejudice in the nation, and by inference, within the Republican ranks. Goodell concluded with a message to "the friends of Bill Scranton." He warned, amid applause and cheers, "I believe sincerely in my heart you have chosen the wrong issue, the wrong place, and the wrong time. I ask that we vote this amendment down and then we bind up our wounds and not only stand but run on this good, great 1964 Republican Platform for the people."¹⁰⁰

Once both sides finished their arguments, the chairman of each state delegation announced the number of delegates who were voting for or against the Scott Amendment on civil rights in a parliamentary inquiry or roll call. Scott and the delegation from Pennsylvania had demanded the vote be recorded in this manner, and consequently, the roll call began with the delegation from Alabama, whose twenty total delegates voted against the Scott Amendment. Similarly, all 86 delegates from California rejected the amendment. Despite overwhelming delegate support, although never unanimous, from states such as Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, the Scott Amendment on civil rights failed by a vote of 897 to 409.¹⁰¹ When the Scranton forces devised their plan to present a civil rights amendment Lodge remarked, "I can assure that a Republican National Convention could never vote against a

⁹⁹ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 237.

¹⁰⁰ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 238.

¹⁰¹ Senator Scott's home delegation of Pennsylvania supported the amendment sixty-two to two.

strong civil rights plank on a roll-call vote, particularly not on television.”¹⁰² Lodge underestimated the Goldwater boom and the state of his own party. Shortly after midnight, eastern standard time, all three Scott Amendments were rejected.¹⁰³ The failure of the Scott Amendment and the refusal of many moderates to challenge Goldwater or the party on the civil rights issue marked the end of an era. After the demise of Scott and Scranton’s final challenge to the Goldwater bandwagon, one Texas leader told a *Newsweek* reporter, “The South took the Mason-Dixon line and shoved it right up to Canada.”¹⁰⁴

“The Growing Menace in Our Country”

With the platform approved, the convention commenced the nominating process on Wednesday, July 15 when several Republicans’ names were placed in nomination, including Scranton, Rockefeller, Romney, Lodge, Hiram L. Fong of Hawaii, Margaret Chase Smith of Maine, and Walter H. Judd of Nebraska, but this was Goldwater’s convention. Goldwater received the Republican presidential nomination on the first ballot with 1,220 of the possible 1,308 delegate votes. The vote was finalized after a speech from Scranton, as Goldwater had done four years before in support of Nixon, asking the delegates to make the nomination unanimous.¹⁰⁵ With the unanimous vote to nominate William E. Miller, a conservative Catholic Republican from New York, who was the

¹⁰² Novak, *Agony*, 452.

¹⁰³ The two amendments introduced by Michigan delegate Richard C. Van Dusen on behalf of Romney were also rejected with little fanfare. Romney’s amendments on extremism and civil rights were far less controversial than the Scott Amendments and some Goldwater advisers thought they should direct the delegates to approve the extremism plank, which White believed was easily acceptable, but Goldwater refused to offer any conciliation to moderates because it would be interpreted as weakness. Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 226; White, *Suite 3505*, 399.

¹⁰⁴ Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 383.

¹⁰⁵ The initial ballot tabulation had Goldwater in the lead with 883 votes, followed by Scranton with 214, Rockefeller with 114, Romney with 41, Smith with 27, Judd with 22, Fong with 5 and Lodge with 2. Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 366-374.

current Republican National Committee Chairman, the vice presidential nominee, it was time for Goldwater to give his acceptance speech.

Defying all conventional wisdom, the Goldwater bandwagon experienced its greatest victory on Thursday, July 16, 1964, with Goldwater giving his acceptance speech before a convention full of delegates and rank-and-file supporters who saw his nomination as the manifestation of their defiance of party regulars and the Eastern Establishment. Goldwater told the enraptured audience that Americans had “followed false prophets” that had led the nation away from freedom, saying that “the good Lord raised this mighty Republic to be a home for the brave, and to flourish as the land of the free,” calling for the reemergence of a strong and confident nation that did not “cringe before the bullying of communism.”¹⁰⁶ The presidential nominee’s speech, which party professionals expected would be an attempt to reunite the party, was instead a call-to-arms for his most loyal troops. The line that made it clear that Goldwater was done conceding to party moderates and caused the greatest uproar in the convention center would define his entire campaign: “Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice! Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue!”¹⁰⁷ Those outside of Goldwater’s most-devoted supporters were shocked. Halfway through his speech one reporter exclaimed in disbelief, “My God, he’s going to run as Barry Goldwater.”¹⁰⁸ Upon first hearing the statement, Goldwater’s speech writer Karl Hess, remarked, “It was as if I stepped on a land mine. But everyone on staff, including Goldwater[,] loved it.”¹⁰⁹ Goldwater loyalists

¹⁰⁶ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 413.

¹⁰⁷ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 419.

¹⁰⁸ White, *Making*, 1964, 217.

¹⁰⁹ Political scientist Henry Jaffa suggested the line to Goldwater. Robert Alan Goldberg, *Barry Goldwater* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 207.

loved it as well. At the utterance of his most famous line, delegates who had been ordered at numerous points during the convention to remain orderly roared in approval. Some, for example, shook the struts of the ABC broadcast booth that hovered high above the convention floor subjecting anchorman Howard K. Smith, who was unfortunate enough to be in the booth, to five minutes of shaking, creaking floorboards and objects sliding off his desk.¹¹⁰

Goldwater's speech never mentioned civil rights or the party's participation in the passage of the civil rights act; instead, Goldwater discussed the party's commitment to freedom, both domestically and internationally. The closest reference to the nation's struggle over civil rights came in a statement about private property and constitutionality that would have reminded his audience of Goldwater's objections to the constitutionality of the civil rights act. Goldwater told his audience, "We see, in the sanctity of private property, the only durable foundation for constitutional government in a free society. We do not seek to lead anyone's life for him—we seek" a government that performs "only those needed and constitutionally sanctioned tasks which cannot otherwise be performed."¹¹¹ The audience replied with prolonged applause. He warned the audience that "equality, rightly understood, as our founding fathers understood it, leads to liberty and to the emancipation of creative differences. Wrongly understood, as it has been so tragically in our time, it leads first to conformity and then to despotism."¹¹²

Goldwater took special care to speak out against violence. He told the audience, "The growing menace in our country tonight, to personal safety, to life, to limb and

¹¹⁰ Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 392

¹¹¹ Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 418.

¹¹² Republican Party and Harkins, *Nomination of Barry M. Goldwater*, 415.

property, in homes, in churches, on the playgrounds, and places of business, particularly in our great cities, is the mounting concern, or should be, of every thoughtful citizen in the United States.” Rising crime and violence in cities had not been at the forefront of the nation’s attention that summer—although that would change in a couple of weeks with the outbreak of the first major urban riot of the decade in Harlem, New York. Instead, when Goldwater made his pronouncement, the violence that dominated headlines had occurred in rural Neshoba County, Mississippi, when three civil rights workers—James Chaney of Mississippi and Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner of New York—had disappeared on June 21, 1964, and were feared dead. Their bodies would not be found until August 4, but news of their disappearance appeared on June 23, 1964, on the front-page of the *New York Times*. In response to Goldwater’s speech, *The New York Amsterdam News* published an editorial questioning Goldwater’s statements about violence in “homes, churches, playgrounds, and places of business”:

Is Senator Goldwater aware of how much time is lost by the police forces of Mississippi and Alabama as they spend their time dragging citizens from polling places, beating them with clubs, prodding them with cattle prods and brutalizing them with police dogs—time which could well be spent in doing what policemen are supposed to do—tracking down criminals and bringing them to justice?¹¹³

Goldwater spoke of freedom, the sanctity of private property, and the danger of tyranny abroad, but said nothing of the crimes permitted by southern law enforcement and local governments in the name of maintaining social order.

Goldwater’s speech was unlike any other presidential nomination acceptance from a major-party candidate in recent memory. There was a sense of abandon in both the presidential nominee and his supporters. The speech troubled many Republicans who

¹¹³ “Wake Up America!,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 25, 1964, 18.

were concerned about the public's perception of Goldwater and the Republican ticket he was to lead. Senator Keating, for example, fled the convention hall while Goldwater was at the podium, to later insist that he left early to avoid traffic. Judd, whose name had been placed in nomination, remarked: "Barry, who is always warm and charming in person, seemed more defiant than conciliatory, militant than magnanimous. It is hard to see how he can win on that basis."¹¹⁴ Rockefeller released a statement in opposition to Goldwater's speech: "To extol extremism—whether 'in defense of liberty' or in 'pursuit of justice'—is dangerous, irresponsible and frightening. Any sanction of lawlessness, of the vigilantes, and of the unruly mob can only be deplored." Furthermore, and to reiterate his own speech before the convention, he continued, "The extremism of the Communists, of the Ku Klux Klan and of the John Birch Society—like that of most terrorists—has always been claimed by such groups to be in defense of liberty."¹¹⁵ Rockefeller did not explicitly refuse to endorse Goldwater, but his disapproval was clearly conveyed.

The overall tone of the convention disturbed many observers. Journalist John M. Cummings, quoted an editorial from the *San Francisco Chronicle* that spoke to his own concern. He wrote that the convention "left a bad impression on San Francisco," and quoted a short front-page editorial in the *Chronicle*, which said it was not concerned with what happened, but how it happened: "Behind the banners, balloons and ballyhoo there was a disturbing element of disciplinary organization and blind faith. There was an unwelcome climate of conflict, rudeness and arrogance... This was not the Town Meeting

¹¹⁴ Goldberg, *Barry Goldwater*, 206.

¹¹⁵ Statement from Rockefeller on Goldwater's Acceptance Speech, RAC, NAR, folder 1178, box 29, Speech Files, RG15.

by which America built her destiny.”¹¹⁶ A Republican from Carmel, California, Adriana Merritt Hope, was dismayed by the impression the convention would make on the world:

What has taken place at our recent convention...is hardly believable and certainly not to be endured...The entire convention suggested a frightening and, I hope, unintentional satire of a nazi beer klatch...the same militant air...Even the noteworthy and historic event of the nomination of Senator Fong, which should have been greeted with an ovation, was trampled over in the melee of hooves and horns.¹¹⁷

Goldwater’s greatest victory in 1964 was his nomination at the convention. Rather than unite his party, Goldwater remained a symbol of the raw and untamed power of an ideologically conservative right that he rarely controlled. The majority of party regulars, moderates, and long-time adherents of Midwestern conservatism dissociated the party from the advancement of the civil rights movement only days after its greatest victory, in exchange for the opportunity to defeat the Eastern Establishment and the promise of future electoral gains represented by Goldwater’s supporters.

Ultimately, the conservative victory at the 1964 Republican National Convention did not translate to the general election. Goldwater’s loss was remarkable; he trailed Johnson in the popular vote by nearly 16 million ballots, a margin greater than any other presidential candidate in the United States. In the immediate aftermath, it appeared that Americans rejected the key elements of what Goldwater stood for: a more aggressive foreign policy, his opposition to the increasing centralization of federal government, his rejection of the welfare state including programs as universally admired as the Tennessee Valley Authority, and his denunciation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. However, the landslide vote against Goldwater was due more to Americans choosing the relative

¹¹⁶ John M. Cummings, “San Francisco Is Displeased,” RAC, NAR, folder 1322, box 49, 24 Political Files, RG 15.

¹¹⁷ RAC, NAR, folder 1322, box 49, 24 Political Files, RG 15.

prosperity and stability of Johnson's first year in office, rather than rejecting conservatism. Theodore White remarked on the unusual tone of Goldwater's campaign. "However often one listened to him at any time in 1964," he wrote "there was always this tension—an exhalation of sincerity which could rise almost instantaneously to fury. One puzzled over the peculiar quality of outrage one could find in almost any Goldwater utterance."¹¹⁸ "Goldwater the Patriot, and Goldwater the Prophet," as White called him, was an unconventional presidential candidate, but he did connect with a significant number of southerners. Many white southerners were drawn to Goldwater's objections to the civil rights act and the federal government's interference in the social order of the region, perhaps most importantly though, they connected with the barely contained fury. When Goldwater spoke of the nation following false prophets, he seemed to appreciate the significance of white southerners' struggle. In Goldwater, they found an ally, a man who could perceive their battle in biblical terms and understood their sense of urgency, for Goldwater was also fighting with uncompromising conviction to maintain a world that he feared would be lost forever. Northerners' affinity for Goldwater was decidedly more subdued; a survey of New York Republican voters found that 46 percent planned to vote for Johnson, not because they were "pro-Johnson," but because they did not want Goldwater in the White House. The Republicans who did plan to vote for Goldwater most often said they would do so because of his views on civil rights and his "outspoken brand of 'conservatism.'"¹¹⁹ Despite the limited scope of his popularity in 1964, Republicans from across the political spectrum accepted Goldwater's nomination,

¹¹⁸ White, *Making*, 1964, 208.

¹¹⁹ Survey Prepared by Eugene T. Rossides for Rockefeller, RAC, NAR, folder 695, box 64, J.1 Politics, RG 15.

regardless of the traditions they had to abandon in the process, in the hope of finding a new equation for besting the Democratic Party in future elections.

Conclusion

Goldwater carried only six states, but five of them were particularly important to the future of the Republican Party. In addition to winning the Electoral College vote in his home state of Arizona, Goldwater won Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. He also ran well in Florida, further validating the party's "Operation Dixie." Goldwater's overall success in the Deep South reaffirmed the party's successes in the region during the 1962 mid-term elections. Goldwater's victory in the South also gave weight to Johnson's prediction that the Republican Party would reap the benefits of the Democratic Party's support of civil rights.¹²⁰ While Goldwater did not win, he further energized the conservative base, and demonstrated the power that could be marshaled by the right-wing of the Republican Party. Scranton and a few other high-profile moderates did attempt to prevent the Goldwater nomination, but many chose to fall in line behind Goldwater. The civil rights debate at the convention emphasized that many mainstream Republicans refused to anger the ideologically conservative base by demanding the party affirm its support of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Instead, they left the Democratic Party to reap the political benefit and burden of civil rights, allowing, even encouraging, the Republican Party to become a safe haven for voters who opposed the aims of the civil rights movement.

Shortly after the 1964 election, moderates tried to capitalize on Goldwater's staggering defeat. The first step was to replace Goldwater's personal choice of

¹²⁰ Michael Oreskes, "The Political Impact of a Landmark Law," *New York Times*, July 2, 1989, 16.

Republican National Chairman, Dean Burch, with a party regular and stalwart, Ray Bliss of Ohio. With the aid of Bliss, moderates tried to move the party back to the center while encouraging ideological tolerance and remaining silent about the increased racial conservatism in the party. Bliss's appointment was intended to return the party to its previous middle path, while easing the tensions between moderates and conservatives. Goldwater's nomination did not bring about the demise of moderate Republicanism, but moderate Republican politicians' decision to follow Bliss's lead and remain silent about the party's rightward shift on race, as many did at the convention, meant they would continue to lose their position as leaders who could dictate the tenor of the party. While there were continued efforts to maintain a Republican presence in the industrial North, but there was an equally countervailing, concerted effort to protect southern gains. This remained true even when it required marshaling contradictory interests within the party.

In 1965, the RNC sponsored four regional meetings in Des Moines, Iowa, Atlanta, Georgia, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The purpose was to strengthen the party in preparation for the upcoming elections in 1966, and increase the party's outreach and appeal to a variety of groups including young voters, women's organizations, senior citizens, ethnics, and professionals.¹²¹ Bliss attended each of these meetings and learned firsthand how difficult it could be to lead a party that appeared to have a different political ideology depending on the region. "Flustered and embarrassed, Republican National Chairman Ray C. Bliss evaded newsmen's questions Saturday about the southern GOP's segregationist and John Birch Society ties," declared an article

¹²¹ Excerpts of Remarks by Ray Bliss on November 5, 1965 and November 20, 1965, RAC, NAR, folder 26, box 5, J.2 George L. Hinman Files, RG4.

printed in the *Los Angeles Times*.¹²² At a press conference for Atlanta's southern regional meeting, Bliss read a prepared statement where he lauded the Republican Party's major gains that had re-established a thriving two-party system in the South. Bliss, who wanted to focus on organizational and electoral gains—without mentioning the ideological shifts that made it possible—was forced by persistent members of the press to address the party's reorientation. The *Times* wrote that he tried to avoid discussing “the party's attraction for segregationists and its near-exclusion of Negroes from party affairs in some states.” Bliss tried to discount questions about the party's inconsistency by comparing Republicans and Democrats, who he noted included figures as disparate as Adam Clayton Powell (Democratic U.S. representative from New York City) and Russell Long, (Democratic U.S. senator from Louisiana). He refused, however, to say if this meant the party would accommodate the segregationist practices of the Mississippi state party. The Mississippi GOP was still distributing copies of its 1964 platform with a statement that said they believed segregation was essential to “harmonious racial relations and continued progress of both races in the state of Mississippi.” In response to questions from a black reporter from Atlanta, Bliss said that he thought the party should try to staunch the exodus of African Americans from the party's southern wing, but he admitted that he knew of no actual efforts to retain these longtime Republicans. When Bliss's attempts to avoid this line of questioning continued to fail he said he was only a “technician,” that it was not his responsibility to discuss “issues.”¹²³ Bliss was determined

¹²² Jack Nelson, “Bliss Ducks Queries on Racism, Birch Society,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 1965; and RAC, NAR, folder 26, box 5, J.2 George L. Hinman Files, RG4.

¹²³ Jack Nelson, “Bliss Ducks Queries on Racism, Birch Society,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 1965; and RAC, NAR, folder 26, box 5, J.2 George L. Hinman Files, RG4.

to exploit the party's increasing popularity in the South, which he said was best for the party and the nation.

Bliss's decision as a professional politician to focus on increasing the party's electoral strength, regardless of ideology, aided conservative ideologues' efforts to become more influential in the party. It created an opportunity for southern Republicans to assert their influence more quickly because they were far less accommodating. Goldwater and his supporters often disparaged moderate Republicans for their "me-tooism" that led the party to accept the excesses of New Deal Liberalism, but now moderates' compliance would make the ascendance of conservatives in the party a far quicker endeavor. Goldwater's nomination was a break from the party's recent history of nominating party moderates, but his nomination fit with an older tradition of the party equivocating on African American rights. The largely unchallenged nomination of a man who broke with the party on civil rights reflected the party's intrinsic struggle to balance its moral and practical obligations to African Americans with the party's pursuit of electoral success.

Rockefeller was the best known moderate Republican who had critiqued the Republican Party's new southern orientation, but it had been a politically dangerous position. Another leader who refused to remain silent was Grant Reynolds, a black Republican and civil rights activist, who was forced to resign as Counsel to the Chairman of the Republican National Committee after he opposed the nomination of Goldwater. Despite his frustration, Reynolds was not ready to abandon the party he had been loyal to all his life. Instead, he helped found the National Negro Republican Assembly (NNRA)

on August 23, 1964.¹²⁴ First as the organization's National Director of Political Activities and later as its president, Reynolds strove to maintain the Republican Party that had been a safe haven for African Americans. The formation of the NNRA was in opposition to pragmatic moderate Republicans' efforts to consolidate the party's power by accepting segregationists in the party. In a speech to the Oberlin College Young Republican Club on February 12, 1965, Reynolds told his audience gathered for a Lincoln Day observance that the party was at a crossroads.

This is a time when Republican orators, many of them pregnant with self-righteousness and self-delusion, celebrate the birth of Lincoln by blaming all the ills that beset the nation on the Democrats. Very few will seize upon this as an opportunity to acknowledge our party's mistakes and design a consensus of broad appeal to American voters. Their motto is: "Stop fighting Republicans and start fighting Democrats."

Let me warn my party at the outset, unless we can vanquish more so-called Republicans than we have, we soon won't have anything left with which to fight Democrats. Any party which has lost its moral moorings can do little more than invite a destructive pounding by the political storms which lie ahead.¹²⁵

Despite increasingly poor treatment from fellow Republicans and his growing disappointment with former allies who chose to remain silent, Reynolds and his associates such as George G. Fleming of New Jersey, George W. Lee, and Jackie Robinson warned that the party could not survive if it abandoned its moral grounding. Reynolds was incorrect, however. Rather than go into decline, the party became successively more popular as it distanced itself from its identity as the Party of Lincoln

¹²⁴ Grant Reynolds' term as a staff specialist for the RNC was abruptly ended after the July convention. Dean Burch decided that Reynolds' services would no longer be needed, but did not tell Reynolds. Reynolds continued to serve his duties as previously determined and was later forced to send several letters to Burch and Thruston Morton asking to be reimbursed for various costs that Burch tried to avoid paying because they occurred after he decided that Reynolds was no longer needed. Reynolds, Grant, RAC, NAR, folder 319, box 51, J.2 George L. Hinman Files, RG4.

¹²⁵ Speech by Grant Reynolds to Oberlin College Young Republicans Club, February 12, 1965. RAC, NAR, folder 319, box 51, J.2 George L. Hinman Files, RG4.

Chapter Five:

The Lure of Law and Order: Reelecting Rockefeller, 1964-1966¹

Nelson Rockefeller is a liberal, and there is no doubt his public image is that of a liberal. Yet the public has the general aura that liberals today are perhaps misguidedly destroying the effectiveness of criminal justice administration—whether through court decisions, ignorance, American Civil Liberties Union approaches, or whatever. It is now uneasy about the results of mixing liberal and law enforcement...Actually, the Governor's record on crime validly could be portrayed as one of enlightened liberalism and he has fought hard to maintain many essential tools his enforcement authorities say they need, and they are not readily accepted by the liberal community (to continue wiretapping under court order; the 'stop and frisk' and 'no knock' laws; police strengthening). It is important with wide segments of the population, therefore, that the Governor's proper liberal image be affirmatively tempered and bolstered with an accurate portrayal of his deep concern with effective criminal justice administration. 'He is a liberal who is not soft on crime.' This is a subtle problem and guidance is needed.²

Such was the conclusion of Eliot H. Lumbard, Rockefeller's Special Assistant Counsel for Law Enforcement, who explained why Rockefeller could face serious difficulty during his 1966 reelection campaign because of the public's desire for increased law and order. Lumbard stated that despite Rockefeller's enthusiastic support

¹ An excerpt of an earlier version of this chapter entitled "'Governor Rockefeller for Governor': The 1966 New York Gubernatorial Campaign" appears in the Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online, published in 2012 by the Rockefeller Archive Center.

² Memorandum from Eliot H. Lumbard to Dr. William J. Ronan and Robert R. Douglass, August 21, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 91, box 8, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

of the police and his actions to lower crime rates in New York, the governor should not underestimate the damage his liberal reputation could inflict on his re-election bid because the issue of crime held great sway over the electorate.

Law and order took center stage in New York under the guidance of Rockefeller in early 1964. In January, Rockefeller introduced a crime package with two major bills to counter the rise in crime in New York. The governor, who was also campaigning for the Republican presidential nomination, explained that the state was part of a national trend—the nation’s crime rate had risen four times the pace of population growth in recent years—but he was proud to say that the state’s increase was lower than the national numbers. The first bill would allow the courts to authorize police officers to execute search warrants without notice, soon to be known as the “no-knock” law. The second bill later known as the “stop-and-frisk” law enabled police to stop, question, and search any person “whom they reasonably suspect of committing a felony or serious misdemeanor.”³ The bills passed with ease after only three hours of debate despite African American legislators’ arguing that the laws would create a “police state” and subject the people of their districts to “even greater abuse than they now suffer at the hands of police.”⁴ In spite of the opposition of liberal Democrats and local chapters of the NAACP and of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a civil rights organization founded in Chicago in 1961, and the NAACP, Rockefeller signed the first major bills of his legislative program into law on March 3, 1964.⁵ The *New York Amsterdam News*

³ Transcript of News Conference with Nelson Rockefeller, January 20, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 91, box 8, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

⁴ Laymond Robinson, “Assembly Votes Anticrime Bills,” *New York Times*, February 12, 1964, 41.

⁵ Douglas Dales, “Rockefeller Signs Bills Increasing Powers of Police,” *New York Times*, March 4, 1964, 1.

wrote that although Rockefeller knew that no police department was perfect, he decided nonetheless to give the worst of the force, who they described as “bigoted or sadistic,” a virtual “green light” to abuse their authority.⁶ Regardless of criticism and protest, the laws went into effect on June 1 with and the “stop-and frisk” law surviving a constitutional challenge on July 10, in a six-to-one decision by the State Court of Appeals.⁷

The police’s “right to ‘stop and frisk’ a suspicious-appearing person to make sure that when he begins his questioning the answer won’t be a bullet,” as the *New York Times* described the law, ensured increased tension between the police and African Americans in the summer of 1964, but few could have predicted what would come next.⁸ On July 18, two days after the conclusion of the 1964 Republican National Convention, the United States’ first urban riot of the 1960s broke out in Harlem, followed by outbreaks in Brooklyn’s Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, and in Rochester, New York. The unrest in Harlem was triggered by a rally held to protest the murder of a black teenager by a police officer. James Powell, a fifteen-year-old, was fatally shot by New York City police officer, Lieutenant Thomas Gilligan, after the youth and his friends got into a confrontation with a building superintendent who tried to chase them off with the spray of a water hose. The rally to protest Powell’s murder was originally planned by a local chapter of CORE—a civil rights organization founded in Chicago in 1961—to draw attention to the disappearance and suspected murder of three civil rights workers in Neshoba County, Mississippi, but at the last moment, it was reorganized to protest

⁶ “A Bad Law,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 7, 1964, 12.

⁷ Edith Evans Asbury, “Police Sustained in Right to Frisk,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1964, 11.

⁸ Asbury, “Police Sustained in Right to Frisk,” 11.

Powell's murder. The peaceful rally eventually drew a large crowd who gathered at the West 123rd police station to demand the suspension of Gilligan, who was on paid sick leave because of an injury he was reported to have obtained in the altercation with Powell. As the crowd began to clash with police in front of the station, chaos ensued. After the first night of rioting, the *Chicago Defender* reported the death of a single Negro man at the hands of the New York police, while the *New York Times* emphasized the property damage at the hands of what were described as wild roving mobs of blacks who attacked the police with anything they could throw as the police fired warning shots into the air. When the uprisings came to a close, five people were killed, 867 injured, and 1,650 arrested in the three communities.⁹

The timing of events put Rockefeller in a difficult position: Rockefeller had spoken out against the violent extremism of Goldwater supporters before the convention on July 14; then unrest broke out in Harlem the night of July 18, and spread to Bedford-Stuyvesant on July 20. However, it was not until rioting broke out in Rochester on July 24, that the governor was compelled to release a public statement. On July 25, 1964, Rockefeller's statement from the Executive Chamber in Albany denounced the riots in New York City and Rochester as the result of "lawlessness, hoodlumism, and extremism."¹⁰ Before this statement Rockefeller had been noticeably absent. Two days after the violence had erupted, CORE's James Farmer had requested Rockefeller send state troopers to Harlem to protect the residents from city police, but had received no

⁹ One man died in Harlem, while four died in Rochester (three of the fatalities were caused by a helicopter crash). Property damage was well over \$1 million. "Harlem Riots Over Death of 15 Yr. Old Boy: Police Kill Man in Harlem Riots," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 20, 1964, 1; Paul L. Montgomery and Francis X. Clines, "Thousands Riot in Harlem Area; Scores are Hurt," *New York Times*, July 19, 1964, 1; and Paul L. Montgomery, "Night of Riots Began with Calm Rally," *New York Times*, July 20, 1964, 1.

¹⁰ State of New York, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller Fifty-Third Governor of the State of New York*, 1964, 823.

response—Rockefeller was vacationing in Wyoming and had yet to return to New York.¹¹ Mayor Wagner was also on vacation when the riot broke out in Harlem, but he managed to return to the city and Johnson, at the same time, had ordered the FBI to Harlem to investigate days before Rockefeller released a statement.¹² When Rockefeller broke his silence, he said rioting and looting would not be condoned, while praising the police, whom he called “our principal bulwark against mob violence and chaos.” Rockefeller assured the public that although he had been out of state, he was in “continuous communication with the appropriate officials.”

Despite Rockefeller’s statements opposing the actions of rioters, the unrest infuriated many whites who blamed blacks and leaders like Rockefeller, who they believed condoned it. Amid letters that attributed the situation to a wide range of causes from deplorable living conditions to the savagery of Negroes, a couple from Port Chester, NY, sent a missive blaming the “rioting of lawless Negro[es]” on Rockefeller and city officials’ “past and present appeasement of Minority Groups.” A Lucile Jansen of Miami, Florida, said the riots were a “forewarning of what the Negroes intend to do” and complained that leaders like Rockefeller supported the use of the national guard in the South, but did nothing when wild mobs roamed the streets of New York. She continued, “If this is the way you would handle the Negro rioting in the country should you have been elected President we are fortunate indeed that Mr. Goldwater carried the

¹¹ R.W. Apple, JR. “Violence Flares Again in Harlem; Restraint Urged,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1964, 1.

¹² “LBJ Orders FBI to Harlem: Johnson Sends FBI to Probe Harlem Riots,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 22, 1964, 1; and Peter Kihiss, “City to Increase Negro Policemen on Harlem Duty,” *New York Times*, July 21, 1964, 1.

nomination.”¹³ Rockefeller continued to face these criticisms as urban uprisings became a more common—and increasingly dreaded—occurrence throughout the 1960s. Critics, who had long opposed the civil rights movement and the efforts of the black community to achieve social and economic parity, needed little to convince them that African Americans deserved no more favors. The fallout would be tremendous for the African American community and the politicians associated with their demands for equality. The political careers of leaders like Johnson and Rockefeller were soon jeopardized.¹⁴

After two terms in office where Rockefeller called for tax increases and two unsuccessful presidential bids, many accused the governor of being too wealthy and personally ambitious to be concerned with the average New Yorker. One way Rockefeller sought to connect to voters was to show that he shared their concerns about crime and rising rates of drug addiction, which many believed were the result of permissive liberal leadership. Rockefeller’s focus on crime was not intended to appeal only to whites. Although crime in New York, particularly that which was tied to narcotics trafficking and addiction, would become an issue of great contention between blacks and whites in this period, it could also unite these communities, both of whom expressed a desire for a crackdown on drug-related crime. Rockefeller hired civil rights leaders like Jackie Robinson and Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker to serve as a direct connection to the African American community and help increase his programs’ appeal to blacks. As

¹³ New York State Archive, Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller, Second Administration, 1963-1966, Reel 17, Subject File 1963-1966, Discrimination, MFB 16/7.

¹⁴ Phyllis Schlafly in her 1967 book, *Safe Not Sorry*, claimed that Rockefeller approved of urban riots. Rockefeller’s aides told him that he should avoid conversations related to her accusations whenever possible, but if necessary, he should insist that he did not condone violence. Rockefeller’s staff believed that his words had been distorted because of his “known record in favor of civil rights.” Memo from Richard P. Nathan and Graham T. T. Molitor, RAC, NAR, folder 690, box 66, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

blacks became increasingly frustrated with the slow pace of change in America, many became less receptive to liberal politicians. There was a growing dissatisfaction and distrust among blacks who believed the elected leaders they had supported were unable or unwilling to deliver real relief from social and economic inequality. The situation was made more difficult for Rockefeller, as a Republican, because his party was increasingly associated with racial conservatism. An examination of the 1966 gubernatorial campaign will demonstrate how Rockefeller attempted to balance his support for the black freedom struggle and strained relationship with African Americans, with his aim to attend to the demands of white New Yorkers who were becoming more resistant to the demands of African Americans. Rockefeller sought to make his tough-on-crime persona appeal to both communities, but crime was a multi-faceted and volatile issue that could divide his constituency as much as unite it.

This chapter considers the strategies and means that Rockefeller used to navigate an increasingly hazardous middle ground between appeasing voters who wanted him to adopt more racially conservative positions and his black allies who looked to him to preserve racially progressive Republicanism. By examining Rockefeller's 1966 program against narcotics addiction and rising crime rates in New York, the latter he largely attributed to increased drug use, this chapter demonstrates how the governor used policy to revise his image and extend the life of moderate Republicanism in New York. Rockefeller's 1966 campaign responded to widely held concerns about narcotics addiction and rising crime rates that cut across race and class lines and found a receptive audience among African Americans and increasingly racially conservative whites who would soon find precious little to agree upon.

The chapter includes a discussion of a highly contentious referendum vote in 1966, that pitted New York City's police, led by the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA) and John Lindsay's Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) that called for community oversight of the police force in response to complaints made largely by the city's African Americans and Latinos about the police misconduct and brutality in policing their communities. While Frank O'Connor, Rockefeller's Democratic opponent for governor, voiced support for the CCRB, the governor disassociated himself from the issue and praised the police to maintain his image as being tough on crime, while accusing O'Connor of being "soft" on the issue. This campaign focus, in a period when Republicans blamed liberal Democrats for urban uprisings and crime, enabled Rockefeller to use similar criticisms against his Democratic opponent in the final days of the campaign. Rockefeller, however, avoided the race-baiting of more conservative Republicans. The 1966 gubernatorial campaign reintroduced Rockefeller to the people of New York and with the support of deep coffers and his record of progressive—and expensive—programs, he held together the increasingly fragile voter base that had secured his victories in the past. While Rockefeller won an impressive third-term re-election, he undermined his steadfast record of racial liberalism that had set him apart from other mainstream politicians.

Rockefeller did not abandon his support of civil rights in 1966, but he was no longer at the forefront of mainstream political support for the concerns of the civil rights movement. The movement had shifted its attention from desegregating the Jim Crow South to protesting police brutality and intractable economic and social inequality in the North. After Rockefeller situated himself to the left of politicians like President Kennedy

in his early political career, Rockefeller needed to be particularly careful about his stance on controversial racial issues when he sought reelection. As the struggle for racial equality became more complicated and divisive in the North, it would be increasingly hard for a moderate Republican to fuse together the multi-racial, multi-interest constituency that had ensured his victory in the past.

The “War on Crime” and Narcotics Addiction

Goldwater’s call for law and order in 1964 drew significant support in a period when the nation’s crime rate was at the forefront of people’s minds. Americans first became preoccupied with crime as a national issue during a perceived crime epidemic in the 1920s and 1930s. Concern over crime in this period reflected a widely held fear of a “crime wave,” although it was due more to a few high profile cases that fueled publicity rather than a documented increase in crime.¹⁵ Herbert Hoover became the first president to discuss crime during an inaugural address or message to Congress in 1929, ushering in an era when presidents and presidential candidates were remiss not to make promises to combat crime.¹⁶ While fear of rising crime never went away entirely, the nation’s crime rates remained low in the fifteen years after World War II. Despite these relatively low crime levels—although not as low as other Western nations—public officials expressed great concern over juvenile delinquency and organized crime in the 1950s, provoking

¹⁵ Scholars have shown that there was no major crime wave in the 1920s and 1930s, rather a “slowly rising level,” but the perception gained popularity with a series of high-profile although unusual crimes such as the exploits of John Dillinger and the Lindbergh baby kidnapping. Federal Bureau of Investigations chief, J. Edgar Hoover also popularized the myth of a “crime wave” to raise the profile of his organization. Samuel Walker, *Popular Justice: A History of American Criminal Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 157-158; and Ted Robert Gurr, “On the History of Violent Crime in Europe and America,” in *Violence in America: Historical & Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979), 358-359.

¹⁶ Lawrence M. Friedman, *Crime and Punishment in American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 273-274.

another crime scare in that decade.¹⁷ The popularity of Goldwater's statements coupled with a desire to get in front of a political crisis convinced Johnson he needed to address the nation's crime problem and on July 26, 1965, he announced the establishment of the Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. Johnson explained that the "present wave of violence and the staggering property losses inflicted upon the nation by crime must be arrested," citing a report released by the FBI on the same day that found that "serious crimes" increased in 1964 by 13 percent, in comparison to the previous year and that crime overall increased six times faster than the nation's population growth since 1958.¹⁸

In his January 1966 Annual Message to the Legislature, Rockefeller announced proposals that addressed four major areas of concern for New Yorkers. Rockefeller would devote his eighth year in office to reducing crime, combatting pollution, expanding the economy and addressing rising medical care costs. However, his first concern was the rising crime rate. Rockefeller explained that the national crime rate had increased at an alarming pace—the number of crimes was growing six times faster than the population—and despite the state's best efforts more needed to be done so that people did not live in fear.¹⁹ "First," Rockefeller explained, "we must fight crime with an all-out attack on a prime cause of crime—narcotics addiction." Narcotics addicts committed half the crimes in New York City with "their evil contagion...spreading into the suburbs."²⁰ Setting his

¹⁷ Walker, *Popular Justice*, 167-170.

¹⁸ "President Forms Panel to Study Crime Problems," *New York Times*, July 27, 1965, 1.

¹⁹ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1966, 11.

²⁰ Although Rockefeller's claim that addicts committed half the crimes in New York City was common—it was often repeated by public figures and went largely unquestioned in the popular media—it was a figure that was difficult to verify. In an article for *National Affairs*, Hudson Institute co-founder Max Singer, asserted that it was highly unlikely that addicts could commit half of the property crimes in New York City. Furthermore, Singer explained that crime numbers were often exaggerated because the public was unlikely

sights on drug dealers, Rockefeller announced that he would “propose stiffer, mandatory prison sentences for these men without conscience who wreck the lives of innocent youngsters for profit.”²¹ The law Rockefeller proposed called for the removal of “pushers” from the street and the commitment of addicts in new and expanded state facilities for “effective treatment, rehabilitation and aftercare.”²² A California law that put addicts in compulsory treatment programs served as the model for Rockefeller’s proposal. The California Civil Addict Program, which began in 1961, had survived a Supreme Court challenge the following year in *Robinson v. California*, where it found that a state could establish a compulsory treatment program for addicts who had committed a crime or threatened the “general health or welfare of its inhabitants.” The court, however, found it unconstitutional to imprison persons solely because there was evidence they suffered from an addiction.²³

With the aid of exaggerated crime statistics, Rockefeller announced his “war on crime.” When Rockefeller made crime reduction a central issue for his governorship in 1966, it placed him well within this ongoing political debate about crime. The rising crime rate in New York City had been a major issue during the mayoral election in 1965 that helped usher Lindsay into office with his pledges to reduce crime. Rockefeller chose

to question them if they believed there is a crime problem. He estimated that the common figure of \$2 to \$5 billion dollars in property stolen by heroin addicts in the city was likely to be no more than \$250 million and even that number was unlikely because it would mean that addicts were committing almost all shoplifting and property theft—which car theft was a third and addicts usually avoided stealing cars—and the perpetrators most often attributed to these crimes were not street addicts. Max Singer, “The Vitality of Mythical Numbers,” *National Affairs*, 23, (spring 1971), 3-9.

²¹ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1966, 12.

²² *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1966, 13.

²³ M. P. Rosenthal, “The Constitutionality of Involuntary Civil Commitment of Opiate Addicts,” *Journal of Drug Issues*, 18:4: 641. The Supreme Court found that addiction was an illness like the common cold and that it was cruel and unusual punishment to imprison a person for even a day because of an illness, particularly when there was no evidence that the person had purchased or taken drugs within state lines. Findlaw, “*Robinson v. California*, 370 U.S. 660 (1962),” 1995-2012. <http://laws.findlaw.com/us/370/660.html> (21 May 2012).

to focus on crime related to increased drug trafficking in the state and the crimes committed by drug addicts, in particular, who resorted to theft, prostitution, and other crimes to support their daily habits. Addicts needed to be protected from themselves, but more importantly the public-at-large needed to be protected from their disregard for law and order. Rockefeller cited crime statistics from 1963 to 1964 that found that addicts comprised 20 percent of those arrested for felonies against property and were responsible for a 49 percent increase in arrests for murder.²⁴ While these were the numbers Rockefeller announced publicly—including the claim that narcotics addicts committed half of all the crimes in New York City—these numbers were higher than those cited by members of his staff.²⁵ A memorandum from Rockefeller adviser Edward H. Van Ness noted in December 1965 that the best estimates available found there to be 25,000 to 35,000 addicts in New York City and that of the 208,844 persons charged with crimes in the city in 1964, narcotics users comprised 9.1 percent as compared to 7 percent in 1963.²⁶ Rockefeller launched programs to address drug addiction in New York earlier in the decade, but his efforts in 1966 were particularly focused on the crimes associated with the illegal narcotics trade, rather than the illness of addiction.

Rockefeller's call for tougher narcotics laws was a corrective, he explained, to the ineffectiveness of the Metcalf-Volker Narcotic Addict Commitment Act of 1962. The law, which he had supported, established a central narcotics office in the Department of Mental Hygiene, created a State Council on Drug Addiction, and sent convicted addicts

²⁴ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1966, 167.

²⁵ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1966, 12.

²⁶ Memorandum from Edward H. Van Ness to Alton G. Marshall, December 16, 1965, RAC, NAR, folder 497, box 43, 10.3 Counsel's Office, RG 15. Van Ness served as an adviser to Rockefeller from 1960 to 1974 and in 1977 became the executive vice president of the non-profit National Health Council.

to state mental-hygiene facilities for treatment.²⁷ This legislation, aimed at treating “unfortunate victims” of drug addiction in need of “human renewal,” as described by Rockefeller in 1962, offered the option of entering rehabilitative treatment in a specialized state hospital facility rather than serve a prison term.²⁸ This therapeutic approach to narcotics addiction was more popular in the first half of the 1960s. In September 1962, for example, Kennedy convened a White House Conference on Narcotic and Drug Abuse where the majority of those in attendance supported the civil commitment of narcotic addicts. The subsequent commission report released a year later called for the relaxation of mandatory minimum sentences, which were found to be ineffective in reducing addiction; the increase of appropriations for research on addiction; and the dismantling of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics.²⁹ In 1966, Rockefeller said this approach had failed and called for a new toughened approach that he supported with rhetoric focused on criminalizing addiction. The “humanitarian and landmark legislation has allowed,” he explained, “too many [addicts] to choose a short stay in prison and an early return to drugs when their real need is treatment, rehabilitation and aftercare to help them become constructive citizens in our society.”³⁰

New York City was particularly hard hit by an urban crime wave fueled by a thriving heroin trade that led to a rise in robberies and muggings. The rise in robberies

²⁷ James A. Inciardi, “Compulsory Treatment in New York: A Brief Narrative History of Misjudgment, Mismanagement and Misrepresentation,” *Journal of Drug Issues*, 18:4 (1988): 547-560.

²⁸ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1962, 1042.

²⁹ Created in 1930 under the auspices of the Treasury Department, the FBN had called for mandatory punitive sentences against drug dealers and users during the Red Scare of the 1950s, in particular, the FBN and its supporters linked the increased presence of narcotics in America to a Communist conspiracy led by China to destroy Western society through the supply of heroin to American drug dealers. David F. Musto, *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 231-232, 238.

³⁰ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1966, 12-13.

and muggings drew the most attention because they are the only crimes most likely to be committed inter-racially, opposed to homicides, rapes, and aggravated assaults, which were also on the rise, but were committed intra-racially. Between 1960 and 1968, the rate of robbery jumped 825 percent and burglary, 480 percent. While this drastic increase was most likely due in part to new reporting techniques, the growth of crime was irrefutable as the homicide rate—a crime that is usually reported more reliably—also doubled in this period. While New York City’s African American and Puerto Rican communities were most often affected by the rising crime rate, theft drew the most attention because it was the type of crime that spilled beyond the borders of their segregated communities and affected white New Yorkers.³¹ Crime rates were highest in poorer neighborhoods most often populated by racial minorities; African Americans in this period were two or three times more likely to suffer from violent crime than whites.³² While the crimes committed by addicts feeding their habits drew the most attention from Rockefeller, it was impossible to know what percentage of thefts for which they were responsible because it was not known how many addicts were in the city. This did not stop Rockefeller from citing astronomical figures about the crimes committed by heroin addicts.³³

Rockefeller’s executive secretary, Alton Marshall, noted that it was not the governor’s original intent to put addicts in compulsory treatment programs in 1966. His preference was for incarceration. “His original drug program,” explained Marshall, “ [was to] round them up.” Rockefeller and his staff joked about “putting barb wire around the

³¹ Eric C. Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 116-117.

³² Schneider, *Smack*, 118.

³³ Schneider writes that conservative estimates from the New York State Narcotic Addiction Control Commission found that there were 60,000 heroin addicts in New York City in 1967, half of them African American, a quarter Puerto Rican, and a quarter white, most of whom lived in a limited number of neighborhoods. Schneider, *Smack*, 121.

Adirondack Mountains and then just dump[ing] them all in there.” Marshall said that Rockefeller’s advisers, who were influenced by the “treatment modality” of the time believed that treatment was better than incarceration, which would in effect remove addicts from society, and convinced Rockefeller that this was the better choice.³⁴

Marshall continued: “There was no such thing as a due process surrounding the use of drugs or cocaine, you’d forfeited that by using cocaine. He was amazed to find how many chose jail because they just wanted to serve their time if they had to and get back on the street.” Marshall went on to say that it was not that Rockefeller was not a “humanitarian,” but that Rockefeller believed that removing addicts from society would benefit the most people and thus justified his approach.³⁵

Rockefeller—at the urging of his advisers—expressed concern for those who suffered from addiction, but his main purpose was to address the rising crime rate. In his special message to the legislature where he outlined more of the specifics of his new efforts to curb narcotics addiction, he made his interest clear: “The objective...is to eliminate this major cause of crime by *preventing* those who have not resorted to crime from doing so, and those engaged in crime from repeating their acts; and to eradicate the fear and anxiety created by this problem.”³⁶ Rockefeller’s program proposed longer sentences for drug pushers, provided up-to three years of compulsory treatment to addicts, and created a state Narcotic Addiction Control Commission (NACC) as an independent department within the Department of Mental Hygiene to establish policy and

³⁴ Hugh Morrow Interview of Alton Marshall, October 11, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 26, box 2, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

³⁵ Hugh Morrow Interview of Alton Marshall, October 11, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 26, box 2, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

³⁶ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1966, 166.

“command the war on narcotic addiction.”³⁷ Addicts were still “unfortunate victims,” as he stated in 1962, but they were also the enemies in this war. Rockefeller argued that “a desperate addict will steal, attack and even kill to get money for drugs or the drug itself.” As a result, the proposed law also made it possible for a person to be sent to a treatment facility if the addict applied for an order from the state Supreme or County Courts. His new position fit well with his tough stance on crime and narcotics addiction, but there was little evidence that involuntary treatment worked. Studies from the period had not demonstrated that incarceration, even with treatment and aftercare, was a consistently effective method of treatment for addiction.³⁸ A person found to be an addict could also be committed by the courts if a third party turned him or her in. Rockefeller worked alongside Lindsay to draft the proposal modeled after California’s drug program, which included a maximum five years of compulsory treatment for addicts.³⁹ Rockefeller estimated the program, scheduled to commence on April 1, 1967, if passed, would cost \$75 million to be paid for by the sale of state bonds, and an additional \$6-7 million would be requested from the Legislature to begin setting up the program. The governor expressed hope that the federal government would ultimately help pay for the program in a similar manner to how it paid for two-thirds of urban renewal projects.⁴⁰

³⁷ The minimum sentence for a drug dealer who was found selling to a person under the age of 21 would be increased from seven to ten years and the maximum from fifteen to twenty. Those who were found selling to a person over the age of 21 or were found in possession of narcotics with intent to sell would receive a minimum sentence of 7 years from the previous minimum of five. *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1966, 172.

³⁸ Dennis S. Aronowitz, “Civil Commitment of Narcotic Addicts,” *Columbia Law Review*, 67 (March 1967): 407; and James A. Inciardi, “Compulsory Treatment in New York: A Brief Narrative History of Misjudgment, Mismanagement,” *The Journal of Drug Issues*, 18 (1988): 553.

³⁹ Connery and Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York*, 266-267.

⁴⁰ Bernard Weinraub, “Confinement of Addicts Proposed by Rockefeller,” *New York Times*, February 24, 1966, 1.

Immediate reactions to Rockefeller's proposal were mixed. While many people were concerned by the rising prevalence of drug addiction and crime in New York, there was a great deal of skepticism about the effectiveness of compulsory treatment. The American Civil Liberties Union opposed the incarceration of addicts, who had not been convicted of a crime. Executive Director Aryeh Neier noted that *Robinson v. California* said it was unconstitutional to imprison someone for addiction. Former State Senator George R. Metcalf, co-sponsor of the 1962 law, said that emphasis should be placed on after-care and the process of helping addicts remain clean when they return to their surroundings where they first became addicted rather than commitment.⁴¹ The majority of critics favored a less expensive alternative such as outpatient treatment at methadone clinics, but New Yorkers, particularly in urban areas, supported Rockefeller's decision to focus on narcotic addiction. When Rockefeller first announced his plan, the *New York Amsterdam News* published an editorial in praise of his plan to "wage an all-out war on narcotics addiction" across all the classes and stated that "there [was] nothing so crippling in certain areas of New York as the misery connected with drug addiction."⁴²

On March 6, 1966, Rockefeller and his newly appointed Special Assistant for Urban Affairs, Wyatt Tee Walker, participated on a panel assembled to discuss the benefits of the governor's plan, for a television special that appeared on Channel 7 in New York entitled, "The State versus the Addict." To demonstrate that Rockefeller's program would benefit more than poor non-whites, the show began with a recounting of the death of a young white woman from an affluent background named Celeste Crenshaw

⁴¹ Natalie Jaffe, "A.C.L.U. Questions the Legality of Mandated Addict Treatment," *New York Times*, February 27, 1966, 54.

⁴² "All Our Fight," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 8, 1966.

who died of an intravenous drug overdose. Crenshaw's death, but one of 250 deaths caused by overdose in New York City in 1965, served as an example of how the scourge of narcotics addiction had reached beyond poor minority communities to privileged white America.⁴³ Rockefeller argued that only compulsory commitment could have saved Crenshaw and that his program would provide "rehabilitation," not "removal," as his critics argued. Rockefeller admitted that the federal government would not provide two-thirds of the financing for the program, but he felt it was necessary for the state to proceed with the plan, which would eventually receive some aid. He also argued that the program would not be as expensive as some feared because a great deal of emphasis would be placed on after-care and vocational training rather than three years of confinement. During the show, Walker, a reverend, former Executive Director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and aide to Martin Luther King Jr., explained that he believed the program would be particularly beneficial to the African American community. He stated:

It is not alone physiological addiction that is the problem, but the need for narcotics themselves have their root in an emotional instability and some insecurity. Naturally in the compounded frustration of the ethnic minorities, the Negro and Puerto Ricans who live with unemployment, with all kinds of insecurities, and deprivations, housing problems, etc. it becomes another one of those crutches that our decadent society demands.⁴⁴

Walker noted that Oberia Dempsey, a prominent minister in Harlem, gave the governor his full support, although he believed the program should go further and seek out addicts who would then be ordered to a treatment facility. The next step should then involve preventive measures including the removal of the social conditions that drove people to

⁴³ RAC Film Collection, Nelson A. Rockefeller Films, "The State Versus the Addict," March 6, 1966.

⁴⁴ RAC Film Collection, Nelson A. Rockefeller Films, "The State Versus the Addict," March 6, 1966.

narcotics. Walker did not refute the perception that drug addiction was most prevalent in urban African American communities; instead, he used Rockefeller's interest in narcotic policy reform as an opportunity to address the concerns of blacks. Walker believed that narcotics addiction and the crimes related to it were a uniquely damaging scourge upon the black community.

When he appointed Walker as special assistant for urban affairs, Rockefeller said that the 36-year-old was the newest member of a team he was assembling to "tackle the multiple problems" of Negroes in urban areas, including addressing issues related to defacto segregation, medical facilities, job opportunities, and narcotics trafficking.⁴⁵ Walker's first task was to coordinate plans for two-year technical colleges that Rockefeller had proposed for Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Buffalo, and Syracuse.⁴⁶ During the luncheon Rockefeller held to announce his appointment, Walker expressed his intention to use his role to address a need for a new approach to alleviating the ills of black America. Walker said that he and the governor shared "the conviction that the people of the area to which I will be giving primary attention have had enough social studies, political speeches and pious platitudes to last a lifetime."⁴⁷ Instead, it was time for action. In his special assistant, Walker often talked about the need to tackle the "hopelessness and frustration" felt in inner city communities, soon joining in

⁴⁵ Martin Arnold, "Ex-Aide to Dr. King Appointed State's Expert on Urban Negro," *New York Times*, March 2, 1966, 38.

⁴⁶ During a staff meeting in August 1964, William Ronan noted that despite Rockefeller's talk of an "Urban Community College in Harlem," the state department of higher education was not interested in implementing the program. Strategy Meeting, August 12, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1000, box 74, 5, Campaigns, RG 15.

⁴⁷ Arnold, "Ex-Aide to Dr. King Appointed State's Expert on Urban Negro," 38.

Rockefeller's effort to reduce narcotics addiction and crime related to it, which Walker saw as a uniquely damaging scourge upon the black community.⁴⁸

Residents of Harlem had for years lamented the rise in crime in their community that was associated with rising poverty and ineffective policing. The week before Rockefeller and Walker's television appearance, Harlem's African American Assemblyman Mark T. Southall, told an assemblage of Harlemites that their community was in a state of emergency that defied any well-meaning talk about inequity being to blame because "These are acts of Negroes victimizing, assaulting and raping other Negroes." Southall called for maximum punishment for "every criminal apprehended and convicted until this crime wave has been completely terminated."⁴⁹ Rockefeller's calls to address addiction and crime resonated with a significant number of urban African Americans in New York, who had complained about criminals victimizing their neighborhoods for many years. While the majority of New Yorkers may have become concerned with crime since the 1960s, The *New York Amsterdam News*, for example, had been publishing editorials and news stories calling for the arrest of major drug dealers, providing adequate hospitals for addicts, and reporting rising rates of addiction among teenagers in the early 1950s, although with far less frequency than in the subsequent decade.⁵⁰

On March 28, 1966, the State Senate approved Rockefeller's program by a vote of 59 to 3. Despite the lopsided vote there was a heated debate over the compulsory

⁴⁸ Arnold, "Ex-Aide to Dr. King Appointed State's Expert on Urban Negro," 38.

⁴⁹ Les Matthews, "Harlemites Decry Crime In Streets, Demand Police Act," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 5, 1966, 4.

⁵⁰ "Halt Dope Smuggling," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 23, 1951, 8; "A Slap at Dope!," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 1, 1952, 14; and Clyde Reid, "East Harlem Disagrees on Crime Decline," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 4, 1954, 1.

commitment component of the law. One of the leading opponents of the bill, Manfred Ohrenstein, a Democrat from Manhattan's West Side, said that compulsory commitment would do nothing but create a "20th century leper colony."⁵¹ Two days later, after four hours of debate, the Assembly passed the law with a vote of 151 to 7, although some assembly members voted for the law reluctantly saying "it was better than nothing at all."⁵² In a *New York Times* editorial that noted several experts' opposition to compulsory treatment, the paper remarked on the slow nature of Rockefeller's war. "The Rockefeller plan is an odd mixture of verbal urgency and deferred appropriations. In his message to the legislators, the Governor wrote: 'Every delay means more crime, more suffering, more human misery. We must act now.'"⁵³ However, Rockefeller's plan was not set to go into effect for another year—after the gubernatorial election. The newspaper editorial expressed hope that the delay was intended to give the next Legislature more time to study the issue, but also noted the political advantage of the delay, which allowed Rockefeller to keep the additional expense off the state budget until after his reelection.⁵³ Rockefeller signed the narcotics bill into law on April 6, 1966, with both the controversial component calling for compulsory treatment and increased sentences for drug dealers.⁵⁴ He appointed a black Republican, Lawrence W. Pierce, to chair the newly created NACC. Before this position, Pierce served as an assistant district attorney in Brooklyn, a Deputy Police Commissioner in New York City, and a director of the State Division for Youth, but had no experience leading treatment facilities.

⁵¹ John Sibley, "State Senate Votes Rockefeller Plan for Compulsory Treatment of Addicts," *New York Times*, March 29, 1966, 19.

⁵² John Sibley, "Forced Care for Addicts Is Approved by Assembly," *New York Times*, March 31, 1966, 1.

⁵³ "Slow War on Narcotics," *New York Times*, March 30, 1966, 44.

⁵⁴ Sydney H. Schanberg, "Rockefeller Signs Bill on Narcotics," *New York Times*, April 7, 1966, 35.

With the passage of its new narcotics law, New York became one of twenty-five states that permitted civil commitment for narcotics addiction. Congress also established a national policy for civil commitment of addicts with the enactment of the Narcotic Addict Rehabilitation Act of 1966 on November 8, 1966, a federal law that sought to treat addiction as a disease rather than a criminal act and sentenced addicts convicted of nonviolent federal crimes to treatment rather than imprisonment, allowing for voluntary commitment of drug users involved in criminal proceedings. In 1967, Johnson's commission on crime reported that the extent of nondrug offenses committed by addicts and drug users was unknown—and most likely impossible to know. Politicians' focusing on crime held great appeal in cities such as New York because the concentration of addicts was high, but the commission found that there was no reliable data to assess the “common assertion that drug users or addicts are responsible for 50 percent of all crime.” According to Johnson's crime commission, while heroin addicts were readily associated with an increase in property theft, it was unusual, despite popular belief, that addicts committed assaultive or violent acts. The commission noted that crime levels had also increased in cities where drug use was not considered a major issue; therefore, committing resources “against abuse solely in the expectation of producing a dramatic reduction in crime may be to invite disappointment.”⁵⁵ Numerous factors contributed to the decline of once stable working-class communities in New York, but rising heroin use and crimes related to it were easily targeted factors that drew substantial ire from the public and encouraged the singling out of addicts as the main cause of a lowered quality of life in the state's urban centers.

⁵⁵ President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administrative Justice, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967), 222.

While Rockefeller presented his new program as a means to treat addiction as an illness, the rhetoric he used emphasized the criminality of addicts by blaming them for much of the state's crime. There was to be a war on crime with addicts as the enemies. Considering the tone of the rhetoric, it was fitting that the NACC would purchase its addiction "rehabilitation centers" for voluntary and involuntary confinement from the New York State Department of Corrections. This assured that people addicted to drugs would be held in medium and maximum security institutions with high walls, barbed wire, ex-prison guards renamed "rehabilitation officers," and cell blocks.⁵⁶ The governor spoke of his desire to free good citizens of the fear that he said was a constant companion when they walked the streets of New York; therefore, it was fitting that the "rehabilitation centers" were designed for confinement rather than treatment.

Rockefeller's advocacy for strengthened narcotics laws became one of his major selling points when the gubernatorial race neared its conclusion. While accusing O'Connor of being "soft on crime," Rockefeller pointed to his own new narcotics law as evidence of his tough stance on crime.

The 1966 Campaign Trail

Rockefeller began hiring new staff in preparation for his 1966 reelection campaign in late 1964. He also commissioned private studies of New Yorkers to monitor his political standing throughout 1965. The governor had Lloyd Free prepare reports analyzing his prospects against potential Democratic and Republican opponents. The news was not good. Free's analysis from December 1965, for example, read:

In brief, the overall picture that emerges from the December study is only mildly encouraging as compared with our survey last May, when you really hit bottom.

⁵⁶ Inciardi, "Compulsory Treatment," 553.

There has been some improvement—particularly in certain aspects of your ‘image’—but, from the point of view of your standing vis-à-vis potential competitors, the situation remains decidedly unfavorable.⁵⁷

The major problem, according to Free, was the persistent stereotype that Rockefeller was not “for the people” and too much of a big spender. Almost half of the people surveyed associated Rockefeller with two groups of descriptors: “Poor fiscal policy, high tax man, unbalanced budget” and “Not helpful for the people—seems above the common man; not helpful to the poor little man.”⁵⁸ Among possible Republican contenders, both Javits and Lindsay were more than twice as popular as Rockefeller.⁵⁹

The good news for Rockefeller was that voters rarely mentioned his personal life, but they often complained about his record on increasing already high taxes and fees. After taxes, pollsters found that “crime and juvenile delinquency,” education, “narcotics and dope addiction,” aging/deteriorating neighborhoods, and “civil rights and integration” were most likely to concern respondents. It was difficult to strike a balance between limiting taxation and meeting the public’s expectations for services in New York. While the New Yorkers polled opposed Rockefeller’s record on taxing and spending, they said they wanted a governor who favored more spending for education, tuition assistance, aid for the mentally disabled, and the reduction of water pollution.⁶⁰ As

⁵⁷ Memo from Lloyd Free to NAR, RAC, NAR, folder 699, box 64, J.1 Politics, New York City Office, RG 4.

⁵⁸ Memo from Lloyd Free to NAR, RAC, NAR, folder 699, box 64, J.1 Politics, New York City Office, RG 4.

⁵⁹ In response to Rockefeller’s decline in popularity, some New York Republican legislators encouraged Javits to oppose Rockefeller for the nomination. The senator canvassed the state to see if he could potentially beat Rockefeller, but the nominating system in New York favored the incumbent. New York was one of the few states at the time that did not choose candidates in open primaries, Javits would need to take the nomination at the state convention—an unlikely scenario. Ultimately, Javits chose not to run.

⁶⁰ New York State Candidate Standing and Campaign Issues, RAC, NAR, folder 702, box 64, J.1 Politics, New York City Office, RG 4.

the incumbent, Rockefeller needed to practice great care to address these conflicting demands while campaigning.

Long before Rockefeller's opponents began their campaigns, the governor and his staff launched an active—and exhaustive—ten-month campaign beginning in January 1966. To reach voters, a great deal of effort was expended to help the governor connect with specific demographic groups. Outreach to the African American community consumed a disproportionate amount of Rockefeller's resources. As one Rockefeller adviser pointed out, "we need Negroes...to win in New York City," but it was still difficult for the governor, as a Republican to win black votes.⁶¹ Rockefeller was warned that it would not be easy for him to emulate Lindsay's success with blacks the year before because of different dynamics between New York City versus statewide elections. On getting the support of African Americans, Rockefeller adviser John D. Silvera stressed the need for a "dramatic and hard-hitting campaign" in communities such as Harlem. Silvera suggested that Rockefeller "eschew the Republican label," express to black voters that they were wanted, stress Rockefeller support of Negro colleges, and discuss his programs related to narcotics, Medicare, and the Manpower Retraining Act.⁶² One way that Rockefeller sought to appeal to African Americans was by hiring advisers who had been active in the civil rights movement and were attuned to the social and political challenges faced by the black community. On February 7, 1966, Rockefeller named Jackie Robinson his Special Assistant to the Governor for Community Affairs. Robinson, who served on Rockefeller's personal staff, had worked for Rockefeller's campaigns in

⁶¹ Memorandum from Warren E. Gardner to Leslie Slote, August 19, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 422, box 30, 5, Campaigns, RG 15.

⁶² Memorandum from John D. Silvera to John Wells and Eugene Rossides, June 8, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 422, box 30, 5, Campaigns, RG 15.

smaller capacities in 1964 as a Deputy Campaign Director and in 1962 as a head of a committee to re-elect him. As an assistant for community affairs, Robinson said he hoped “to bring the remarkable Rockefeller record to the attention of minority groups throughout the state.”⁶³ Robinson often spoke of Rockefeller’s longtime commitment to civil rights and his willingness to remain abreast of the current concerns of the black community without relying on his family’s philanthropy or his previous record.

For Robinson, a devoted Republican, Rockefeller represented the hope that blacks would continue to have a place within the party. “In our opinion,” said Robinson, “it is important for the Governor to ‘win big’ because, if he does, this will once again serve notice on the National Republican organization that the Goldwater, Bill Buckley route is the sure road to disaster.”⁶⁴ Robinson did not always agree with Rockefeller, but he was committed to the strand of racial liberalism the governor represented within the party.⁶⁵ In addition to his duties in-state, Robinson also called for greater unity among black Republicans nationally, intensified voter registration, and an effort to reverse the Goldwater influence that remained in the party. Robinson told Glenn Douglas of the *Chicago Defender* that John Lindsay’s upset victory the year before to become mayor of New York City in 1965 was the result of a “Negro revolt in voting patterns,” and as a

⁶³ “Jackie Robinson Is Appointed Aide to Rockefeller,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1966, 31.

⁶⁴ Jackie Robinson, “Wishes Rocky The Big Win,” *Chicago Defender*, January 15, 1966, 10.

⁶⁵ After a couple of 1964 campaign appearances on behalf of Goldwater, when Rockefeller praised the nominee for his “courage and integrity” and chastised New York Republicans for the “childish horseplay of being divided,” Robinson expressed his disapproval of Rockefeller poignantly in a private letter. He told Rockefeller: “I see that Barry Goldwater is now, in your opinion, a man of courage and integrity. You know and I know that a Goldwater victory would result in violence and bloodshed. His candidacy reeks with prejudice and bigotry. His remark that this has become a nation ruled by minorities while the majority suffers is not only stupid, but undeserving of support from a man with real courage and integrity.” “Rockefeller Calls Goldwater ‘Man of Courage and Integrity,’” *New York Times*, October 7, 1964, 28; and Letter to Rockefeller from Jackie Robinson dated October 7, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 2078, box 207, Projects, RG 4.

result both parties should have “more respect for the needs and ambitions of the Negro citizen.” Robinson believed that a decisive victory for Rockefeller in 1966 would be significant for the nation because it would demonstrate that black voters would support a “stand-up” Republican who did not “sell out his principles.”⁶⁶

In Robinson’s newspaper column of January 15, wherein he praised Rockefeller’s commitment to civil rights and the political health of the nation, he lauded the governor’s openness to criticism and willingness to make changes. Robinson spoke from recent experience. Just days before the column was published, Robinson had a private meeting with Rockefeller after he wrote a critical letter to the governor about the lack of black appointees on his staff. Robinson informed Rockefeller,

while I sincerely believe there is not a more dedicated politician on the scene, your record toward the Negro regarding political appointments cannot be accepted by any self-respecting Negro. In New York, it seems to me inexcusable, that on the state level, excluding a few appointments, you do not have any one of color on your staff. In states far less sophisticated, as far as race relations are concerned, the governor is completely aware of the necessity of having qualified Negroes on his personal staff.⁶⁷

Robinson continued to say that the lack of progress in this matter, despite Rockefeller’s assurances at a previous meeting to make changes, meant the governor had no plans to hire more advisers. Unless more was done, Robinson said he would need to make his grievances public.⁶⁸ It appears that Robinson’s insistence was significant enough for Rockefeller to take action. The following month, Rockefeller hired Warren E. Gardner Jr. as an assistant press secretary; Wyatt Tee Walker; and Sandy F. Ray as a member of the governor’s youth commission—all of them African American. Robinson had to make

⁶⁶ Glenn Douglas, “How Rockefeller And Robinson Got Together,” *Chicago Defender*, February 19, 1966, 6.

⁶⁷ Letter from Jackie Robinson to Rockefeller dated January 12, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 392, box 16, Ann C. Whitman, Politics, RG 4.

⁶⁸ Letter from Jackie Robinson to Rockefeller dated January 12, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 392, box 16, Ann C. Whitman, Politics, RG 4.

several overtures to get Rockefeller to pay for the personal staff he promised him, but eventually he was able to hire his own assistants including Alfred Duckett, founder of the public relations company Alfred Duckett Associates, who had collaborated with Martin Luther King Jr. on speeches and a book project.⁶⁹

Despite Rockefeller's new appointments and his attempts to tailor his message to meet the new demands of an important voting bloc, he and his staff thought it was necessary to reassign Eugene T. Rossides, who was the Deputy Director for New York City, to take on the specific role of managing the campaign in Negro areas. Rockefeller adviser Jack Wells explained that appointing several Negro leaders to run this aspect of the campaign had produced very little in the past and even less during the current campaign because the black community was "badly fractured." Wells expressed concern about finding ways to reach out to a range of groups within the black community including Black Nationalists and Black Muslims, whom he referred to as "'hard' Negroes;" groups such as CORE and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), who he called militants who sought jobs and acknowledgment as equals; Martin Luther King's SCLC, known for nonviolent protests; and African Americans who were not politically active.⁷⁰ There was an additional fear that the "hard Negroes" might focus on Rockefeller in an antagonistic manner and that it could be difficult to communicate Rockefeller's strong record on civil rights to groups like CORE whom Wells found to be

⁶⁹ Alfred A. Duckett helped Robinson write his 1972 autobiography *I Never Had It Made*. Duckett assisted King with the writing of his "I Have a Dream" speech for the 1963 March on Washington. "Alfred A. Duckett, 67, Dead," *New York Times*, October 8, 1984.

⁷⁰ Black Nationalists gained attention in this period for their activism on behalf of the black community. While they shared many of the same objectives as the broader community of civil rights leaders, they placed a greater emphasis on racial pride and separatism opposed to integration.

overaggressive and scornful because they were frustrated with the speed of change in urban areas.⁷¹

Wells recommended that Rockefeller open more storefront campaign headquarters in black neighborhoods. This proved to be a challenge for the governor's campaign. "Let me say, first, that I cannot tell you how much I admired your raw courage on Tuesday evening," wrote Walker to Rockefeller. "It certainly equaled or surpassed the San Francisco incident. Under very, very trying circumstances, you did the very best that anyone could do."⁷² Walker sent this encouraging message to Rockefeller after he faced protests and jeer during a quick tour to open storefront campaign headquarters in Harlem; Flushing, Queens; Bensonhurst, Brooklyn; and the South Bronx on August 9, 1966. The governor's aide was probably particularly sympathetic because he was also booed during the tour.⁷³ The *New York Times* wrote that the events—modeled after Lindsay's mayoral campaign the year before—which included pretty girls in straw hats, staff armed with walkie-talkies, and bands that played jazz and rock and roll from the back of decorated trucks were successful, although the presence of hecklers was noted.⁷⁴ It was Walker's opinion, however, that the tour was not a success. The day before the tour, Robinson had received word that a local chapter of CORE planned to picket Rockefeller appearance because he had not "done enough for the ghetto areas;" however, there was little time to

⁷¹ Memorandum from Jack Wells to Eugene T. Rossides, July 30, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 422, box 30, 5, Campaigns, RG 15.

⁷² Memo from Wyatt Tee Walker to Rockefeller dated August 11, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1180, box 43, Diane Van Wie Papers, Politics Files, RG 4.

⁷³ Strategy Meeting, August 12, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1000, box 74, 5, Campaigns, RG 15.

⁷⁴ Thomas P. Ronan, "Rockefeller Off and Running in His Storefront Drive," *New York Times*, August 10, 1966, 1.

address this issue.⁷⁵ Walker believed that more forethought should have gone into the planning of the campaign tour stops in black communities and Rockefeller could not afford to repeat this mistake. Walker explained:

The black community is in a very ugly mood and have some very legitimate reasons for being so. Most of it is despair, and any candidate who comes into their midst will feel the brunt of their venom and hostility because they are in no mood for voting for anybody so much as they are in the mood to vote against somebody. Since you are the incumbent, you can't escape feeling the wrath which is the harvest of apathy (Emphasis in the original).⁷⁶

In this political climate, Walker said Rockefeller should have never gone to Harlem without an effort made beforehand to emphasize the “new job program” or the “signing of some bill that touches the ghetto community.” Furthermore, there was no outreach to the “Nationalists” or to those who sympathized with them.⁷⁷

Another Rockefeller staff member Leslie Slote had a different opinion that reflected the divide that could exist in Rockefeller's large staff between special assistants like Walker and the political strategists Rockefeller relied upon to keep the mechanics of his campaign running smoothly. Slote blamed the negative reception in Harlem on the advance men whom he criticized for not ensuring that Rockefeller supporters were in the front row instead of the Nationalists that had heckled the governor. Meanwhile, Rossides said their biggest problem in Harlem had been Robinson because he did not live in the

⁷⁵ Knight did make an attempt to avert the CORE demonstration, which he referred to as “unnecessary,” but it appears to have failed, although it is not certain who demonstrated at the event. Memorandum from Fred W. Knight to Jackie Robinson, August 8, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 589, box 45, 5, Campaigns, RG 15.

⁷⁶ Memorandum from Wyatt Tee Walker to Rockefeller dated August 11, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1180, box 43, Diane Van Wie Papers, Politics Files, RG 4.

⁷⁷ Memorandum from Wyatt Tee Walker to Rockefeller dated August 11, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1180, box 43, Diane Van Wie Papers, Politics Files, RG 4; and Thomas P. Ronan, “Rockefeller Off and Running in His Storefront Drive,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1966, 1

community and was not popular there.⁷⁸ While Walker's suggestions for paying more attention to communicating Rockefeller's record and reaching out to Black Nationalists may have helped Rockefeller in Harlem, and perhaps the activities in the newly opened headquarters assisted in those efforts in the future, the Rockefeller campaign found it necessary to provide security for the Harlem storefronts. Pfeiffer explained that they paid the "wrong element" to hold watch over the storefronts throughout the night and ensured that the headquarters always remained lit to prevent vandalism and break-ins. "Without that we couldn't have opened up a store. You couldn't get anybody to stay in the store for one minute, unless we had this right element and to a lesser extent in the Puerto Rican section."⁷⁹

The summer of 1966 was difficult for civil rights activists and the broader African American community, and as Walker told Rockefeller, there was a new level of frustration with elected officeholders. Despite the passage of major civil rights legislation many blacks were upset that those hard-fought and undeniably important victories had not translated into tangible improvements amidst defacto segregation, a lack of jobs, and persistent inequality. The year before, CORE met in Durham, North Carolina, for a convention entitled "The Black Ghetto—An Awakening Giant" where the organization identified the need for a new phase of the freedom movement to address these disparities, particularly in the North. Feelings of despair and fatigue within the black community inspired those at the convention and in groups such as SNCC to give a rallying cry for

⁷⁸ The staff members at the meeting attributed the demonstration to "Nationalists," but no specific group was mentioned, nor was it explained why they identified the hecklers as Nationalists. Strategy Meeting, August 12, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1000, box 74, 5, Campaigns, RG 15.

⁷⁹ Hugh Morrow Interview with William Pfeiffer, April 5, 1980, RAC, NAR, folder 44, box 3, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

“Black Power,” which, for them, reflected a change in both the attitude and emphasis of the African American freedom struggle. It was a significant development, not because of a major change in the aims of these activists, but in the response they received from Americans who feared calls for Black Power would lead to more violence. It led to divisions within the civil rights movement; most significantly, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP rejected Black Power calling it reverse racism and “antiwhite” power that would only spawn counter-violence from whites.⁸⁰ Floyd B. McKissick, national director of CORE, rejected these characterizations. In an article published in the *Chicago Defender*, he said the misinterpretation of Black Power to mean violence and racism was “further proof that there remains in this nation a malevolent Southern tradition that, even now, seeks to divide black Americans into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ niggers.”⁸¹ McKissick said that the Black Power movement was founded in racial pride, not racial supremacy. The ultimate goal was to mobilize black communities to create the meaningful change that had eluded them. Although the press often characterized this debate over Black Power as a split between traditional leaders like Wilkins of the NAACP and “radical” leaders such as McKissick, King also criticized Wilkins’ stance. During an interview with Gene Roberts of *The New York Times*, King explained, “I get the impression that the N.A.A.C.P. wouldn’t mind a split because they think they are the only civil rights organization.” He continued, “My problem with S.N.C.C. [the student committee] and CORE,” he said, “is not their militancy—I think you can be militantly nonviolent. It’s what I see as a pattern

⁸⁰ “Excerpts From the Speech by Wilkins,” *New York Times*, July 6, 1966, 14.

⁸¹ “McKissick Defines ‘Black Power,’” *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 11, 1966, 5.

of violence emerging and their use of the cry, ‘black power,’ which, whether they mean it or not, falls on the ear as racism in reverse.”⁸²

Like King, Walter Lippmann, in his column for the *Washington Post*, called attention to the futility of a divide within the black community because of Black Power. Lippmann discussed the “bleak realization” that progress had stalled and that African Americans, regardless of their opinions on Black Power or their approaches to activism, would make no more progress as the Vietnam War drained the nation of its resources. The promise of Johnson’s 1964 election and the consensus it represented rested on the prospect that expansion of the economy—not tax increases—would make it possible to fulfill the promises of reform in housing, schools, jobs, and hospitals that were promised in recent federal legislation. In his article, “Broken Promises,” Lippmann, concluded cogently:

The crude truth is that the great majority of us, for the most part white, who are safely beyond the poverty line will resist higher taxes in order to help the poor, so many of them black. The Johnson consensus of 1965 was based on the economic calculation that the reforms could be financed by economic growth. The rich would not have less, they would even have more, but not quite so much more. This was the material foundation of the hope that a great society could be built by consensus.⁸³

Without the certainty of having more prosperity, Lippmann wrote that the majority of the nation would reject the aims of the civil rights movement. In 1966, the nation began to experience a slowed growth that would worsen until the recession of 1969. Overall, the 1960s were an unmatched period of economic growth for the nation, but, by the end of the decade, the rising costs of the Vietnam War and the War on Poverty along with the Johnson Administration’s decision not to raise taxes meant the nation’s economy was

⁸² Gene Roberts, “Dr. King Declares Rights Movement Is ‘Close’ to a Split,” *New York Times*, July 9, 1966, 1.

⁸³ Walter Lippmann, “Broken Promise,” *Washington Post*, July 12, 1966, A13.

overburdened. The economy began to weaken because of several factors including rising inflation, the Federal Reserve's tight fiscal policy, a decrease in production in manufacturing and construction, and increased competition in global markets. One consequence of the contracting economy and diminished public support for social change in the mid-1960s was increased infighting between civil rights organizations that competed not only for the limited resources, but also for political clout, and sympathies of white Americans. The impact, however, extended far beyond debates over the strategies and rhetoric of activists.

The collapse of the liberal consensus that Lippmann had spoken of would leave many casualties in its wake. While the nation's poor would face the worst losses, politicians like Rockefeller who relied on the liberal consensus would suffer significantly as well. It was increasingly difficult to cobble together a diverse voting base with promises of mutual—and for the majority, sacrifice-free—prosperity. As Walker noted, Rockefeller was not a unique target for anger within the black community. Instead, he experienced the aftereffects of African Americans' disappointment and anger once they realized that full incorporation into American society was still beyond their grasp. Campaign stops in Harlem with the standard reverie provided by pretty girls and lively bands were not going to be enough to earn goodwill from Negroes, despite the efforts of Rockefeller's black aides. Rockefeller aides often noted that regardless of Rockefeller's record he would have difficulty among blacks who were still upset about Goldwater's nomination in 1964. They warned Rockefeller that the black community was badly fractured and in need of a delicate touch. The Rockefeller campaign continued its targeted efforts in black communities into the fall enlisting additional support from black

clergy. It was essential that Rockefeller capitalize on his record on civil rights, but seemingly intractable poverty, segregation, as well as rising rates of crime and addiction decreased the support he could garner.⁸⁴

Campaigning on Law and Order

Rockefeller's campaign remained aggressive; he made appearances in all of New York's sixty-two counties, delivered 380 speeches, and hired agencies that produced cutting-edge advertisements for television and radio that were particularly uncommon for non-presidential races, while his opponents' campaigns were just beginning. After the state-nominating conventions in September 1966, the gubernatorial race became a four-man contest between Rockefeller, the Republican Party candidate; Frank D. O'Connor, the Democratic Party candidate; Franklin Roosevelt, Jr., the Liberal Party candidate; and Paul L. Adams, the Conservative Party candidate. The ballot was more crowded than usual. In the past, the Liberal Party had always endorsed the Democratic Party nominee, but in 1966 liberal Democrats decided not to endorse O'Connor, former Queens District Attorney and current New York City Council President, because of his association with party bosses. This split among Democrats resulted in a weakened position for O'Connor, who would lose some traditional Democratic supporters to Roosevelt. While New York Republicans were also split between those who supported Rockefeller and more conservative party members who backed Adams, a political science professor and dean at Roberts Wesleyan College outside Rochester, New York, the Liberal Party nominee posed a more significant threat to O'Connor. A private poll taken shortly after the state's nominating conventions found that 30 percent of New Yorkers said they would vote for

⁸⁴ Correspondence related to targeting the Negro vote, RAC, NAR, folder 422, box 30, Series 5, Campaign Files, RG 15.

Rockefeller, while that number reflected an improvement from previous polls, Rockefeller still trailed O'Connor by 7 percent.⁸⁵ O'Connor was in the lead, but running against an incumbent with the resources and determination of Rockefeller would be a daunting task. By Election Day, Rockefeller outspent his Democratic opponent ten-to-one.⁸⁶

In addition to more traditional methods of outreach to specific voting blocs, Rockefeller hired the services of Jack Tinker & Partners, a New York advertising agency started in 1960. Rockefeller became the first politician to join the agency's cadre of clients, which included Alka-Seltzer and Braniff Airways, Inc.⁸⁷ The agency's first task was to reintroduce New Yorkers not to Rockefeller but, rather to highlight Rockefeller's accomplishments. As a result, the agency decided that neither Rockefeller nor his voice would be used in the early commercials—an unusual choice for a political candidate in this period.⁸⁸ The first Tinker advertisement, featuring hand puppets discussing Rockefeller's Pure Waters Program, was eye-catching, drawing the viewer in over the sixty second duration with information about this one program rather than focusing on a list of the governor's accomplishments.⁸⁹ Such early commercials reflected the

⁸⁵ Roosevelt and Adams trailed the two leading candidates with 17 and 2 percent of the vote respectively. New York State Candidate Standing and Campaign Issues, RAC, NAR, folder 702, box 64, J.1 Politics, New York City Office, RG 4.

⁸⁶ Kramer and Roberts, *Investigative Biography of Nelson Rockefeller*, 309.

⁸⁷ Jack Tinker & Partners was known for its off-beat approach to ad campaigns. For Alka-Seltzer, the agency revamped its image with ads depicting people's stomachs at work and at play, and for Braniff, they repainted the planes in bright colors and dressed the flight attendants in uniforms designed by Emilio Pucci—it was known as "The End of the Plain Plane" campaign. Mary Wells, who later founded the Wells Rich Greene advertising agency, was the mastermind behind the Alka-Seltzer and Braniff campaigns. She made the presentation to the Rockefeller staffers, but left the agency immediately after to begin her own firm.

⁸⁸ Kramer and Roberts, *Investigative Biography of Nelson Rockefeller*, 312.

⁸⁹ The advertisement began with a hand wearing a press hat and a microphone asking a fish puppet if he was familiar with "Governor Rockefeller's Pure Waters Program." When the fish said no, the reporter informed him of the program's accomplishments. The ad concluded on a lighter note with the reporter

campaign's first phase or "soft-sell," as noted by James M. Perry, a senior editor of the *National Observer*, who described Rockefeller's innovative campaign in the book *The New Politics: The Expanding Technology of Political Manipulation*. Perry found Rockefeller's use of advertising notable because of its targeted approach that made it possible to create a campaign that was customizable to suit trends in public viewership and opinion down to the county level. The first phase of commercials never mentioned opponents or even the upcoming election; rather, they sold Rockefeller's achievements on such issues as increasing state-aid for college tuition and improving the state's network of roads.

The second phase of advertisements, which commenced after the convention, relied less on humor—and puppets—and were narrated by Rockefeller himself, yet they still refrained from mentioning Rockefeller's Democratic opponent. The commercials continued to focus on single programs advanced by the governor, but they featured a more staid tone when discussing the state's new minimum wage law or Medicaid program. "Rockefeller's Medicaid," the narrator intoned, "we hope you never need it."⁹⁰ The advertisements would end with Rockefeller speaking directly into the camera making a case for high-cost programs that regularly incurred the wrath of conservative Republicans. These commercials, offered a stark defense for programs that the private polls said the voters wanted, although they balked at the cost.

stating: "Already, over seventy cities and industries have agreed to correct violations." After a brief pause the fish responded, "Frankly, my problem with Rockefeller is some of his best friends are fishermen." RAC Film Collection, Nelson A. Rockefeller Films, "1966 Campaign Commercials."

⁹⁰ In another ad, Rockefeller intoned, "Arthritis may start with a little twinge in the fingers. By the time it's finished you may be unable to walk...I don't have a cure for arthritis. I wish I had. But I do have a plan. I want the state to help set up centers where arthritis victims can get special treatment." RAC Film Collection, Nelson A. Rockefeller Films, "1966 Campaign Commercials."

The third phase of advertisements featured what have more recently become known as “attack ads,” portraying, for example, O’Connor as a product of New York City’s bossism and fiscal mismanagement. Rockefeller exploited the classic upstate-downstate divide in New York. One version of the commercials in this series used a simple black background with a bi-line at the bottom of the screen stating that the viewer was watching an advertisement. A narrator, not Rockefeller, stated, “Frank O’Connor, the man who led the fight against the New York State Thruway is running for governor. Get in your car, get down to the polls, and vote.”⁹¹ The negative advertisements at this stage in the campaign, in particular, reflected what Perry calls a, “sharp turn for the worse,” because they were no longer “ethically acceptable.”⁹² Perry, who admired Rockefeller and called him a strong campaigner and an “exceptionally able governor,” says the governor crossed the line into murky territory as Election Day neared.⁹³ The criticism of O’Connor’s stance on the Thruway, for example, misrepresented the former state legislator’s position on the highway. O’Connor, like the majority of Democrats in the state legislature, did not oppose the construction of the Thruway, he opposed the tolls that Republican legislators wanted to institute. Due to a general lack of organization on the part of the Democrats, they had little success trying to correct such statements.⁹⁴ Other advertisements in this phase featured Rockefeller at a podium, as if at a dramatically lit

⁹¹ RAC Film Collection, Nelson A. Rockefeller Films, “1966 Campaign Commercials.”

⁹² James M. Perry, *The New Politics: The Expanding Technology of Political Manipulation* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1968), 130.

⁹³ Perry, *New Politics*, 137.

⁹⁴ Rockefeller’s flush coffers also meant that he could easily inundate voters with television advertisements, which began airing in late July. The Rockefeller campaign, for example, paid for 208 commercials on WNBC in New York City at a cost of \$237,000, compared to the O’Connor organization’s twenty-three commercials on the same station for \$41,000. Upstate television stations also benefited more from the Rockefeller drive rather than O’Connor’s, WBEN, in Buffalo, for example, received \$27,762 from Rockefeller and \$2,465 from O’Connor. Perry, *New Politics*, 135.

press conference, where he portrayed himself as tough and hard-hitting. This final advertisement stage was also the period when Rockefeller further politicized the issue of narcotics and crime, pointing to his punitive turn as evidence that he should be reelected:

Governor Rockefeller's narcotics program will get addicts off the street and into treatment. Both houses of legislature passed it overwhelmingly. All sixty-two DA's endorsed it. The state medical society endorsed it. Frank O'Connor is against it.⁹⁵

The Rockefeller campaign used the passage of the new narcotics bill as evidence of his efforts to curb rising crime rates, which he attributed to addicts in New York. Fortunately for Rockefeller, O'Connor opposed the new narcotics law, making it easier for the governor to criticize O'Connor's record on crime.

Rockefeller commissioned a private survey of 600 registered voters in New York in September 1966 to identify the issues most likely to influence voters' choice of gubernatorial candidate. The survey revealed that voters were most likely to favor someone who expressed strong support for combatting crime and juvenile delinquency, increasing state aid to help the mentally ill, and compulsory hospitalization of narcotics addicts. Respondents considered crime and narcotics addiction the worst problems in New York, with 85 percent and 72 percent, respectively, saying they were more likely to vote for a candidate who proposed tougher programs in those fields.⁹⁶

The previous month, Rockefeller staffers were informed by Lumbar, Special Assistant Counsel for Law Enforcement, that in his campaign against Rockefeller O'Connor intended to focus on crime and his reputation as the "Fighting D.A." O'Connor had told Lumbar that he believed that, as the incumbent, Rockefeller was vulnerable on

⁹⁵ RAC Film Collection, Nelson A. Rockefeller Films, "1966 Campaign Commercials."

⁹⁶ September 1966 Poll of Candidate Standing, RAC, NAR, folder 702, box 64, Series J.1 Politics, New York City Office, RG 4.

the issue of crime due to the rising rates throughout the state. Lumbard, who referred to O'Connor as an "old friend and working compatriot in the area of crime," recommended Rockefeller attack the issue of crime in an affirmative way, rather than wait for O'Connor to raise the issue. In Lumbard's opinion, Lindsay's victory in 1965 was due largely to putting the Democratic candidate and City Comptroller Abraham Beame on the defensive because of the crime issue and Rockefeller must avoid this turn of events. Crime, however, was an "intensely complex" issue that could unite an electorate as much as it could divide and required Rockefeller calibrate his message in specific ways to gain the most value. Lumbard pointed out that the "catch 'em and lock 'em up" approach worked well in certain communities, while Negroes and Puerto Ricans found it to be "irritating, if not outrageous, and simply another attempt by 'Whitey' to suppress them."⁹⁷ One way to rectify this divide was by sending specialized mailings that addressed the crime issue in communities such as Harlem to emphasize that Rockefeller's reelection would be beneficial to African Americans.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, a significant segment of the Negro community viewed tougher law enforcement as essential because "most violent crimes [were] committed by Negroes against Negroes" in their own communities.⁹⁹ Lumbard also noted that while a focus on narcotics addiction was very effective in New York City, it meant little to voters in upstate communities who viewed it as a "strictly hypothetical

⁹⁷ Memorandum from Eliot H. Lumbard to Dr. William J. Ronan and Robert R. Douglass, August 21, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 91, box 8, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

⁹⁸ One letter, attributed to the Midtown Voters' Association, which represented local clergy, endorsed Rockefeller and began, "Crime is at war with decent Americans, and it is about time for Americans to declare war against crime, and most particularly in our area. The election of Governor Rockefeller will have a tremendous meaning to the lives of all the people of New York City. Harlem has had the reputation as the nation's worst urban mess... Therefore we churchmen and lay leaders throughout the city are working for the re-election of Nelson Rockefeller." RAC, NAR, folder 422, box 30, 5, Campaigns, RG 15.

⁹⁹ Memorandum from Eliot H. Lumbard to Dr. William J. Ronan and Robert R. Douglass, August 21, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 91, box 8, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

and unreal” concern. The more effective way to appeal to upstate New Yorkers on crime, according to Lumbard, was to discuss Rockefeller’s efforts to improve the state police and increase the professionalization and salaries of local police.¹⁰⁰

Crime and narcotics addiction became major issues for the Rockefeller campaign and he used them most often to attack O’Connor. Voters could turn on their televisions and hear their governor’s assurances that he, unlike the Democratic challenger, had an aggressive approach to reducing crime in the state. In another press conference style commercial Rockefeller declared that a vote for O’Connor was a vote in favor of crime:

The other day, the dean of boys at a Brooklyn High School told me a terrifying thing. He told me that he had been to fifty-seven funerals of neighborhood boys who had died from overdose of narcotics. Let me tell you, they aren’t the only victims of narcotics addiction, everybody is. The muggings, the stealing that addicts do to get the money for a fix account for half of the crime in New York City. Apparently, Frank O’Connor wants to keep it that way because he opposes my new law to get the addicts off the street and the pushers into jail. My law is endorsed by Frank Hogan and all the other DA’s, endorsed by the state medical society, and just last week a law like mine was passed by the United States Congress. If Frank O’Connor becomes governor my law will be scrapped and the addicts and the pushers will stay on the street. If you want to keep the crime rates high O’Connor’s your man, but if you want to protect yourself and your children you vote for me.¹⁰¹

Campaign commercials like this one punctuated nearly a year’s worth of speech-making and legislation related to crime and narcotics addiction. For the sake of his campaign, Rockefeller equated O’Connor’s opposition to the controversial law with a weak record on crime, but O’Connor was not alone in his criticism. Many legislators who had voted for the new legislation shared the concern of experts who found compulsory treatment to be ineffective.

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum from Eliot H. Lumbard to Dr. William J. Ronan and Robert R. Douglass, August 21, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 91, box 8, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

¹⁰¹ RAC Film Collection, Nelson A. Rockefeller Films, “1966 Campaign Commercials.”

The negative campaign commercials, which intensified in the final days of the campaign, augmented Rockefeller's criticism of O'Connor. Rockefeller claimed that crime rates soared in Queens during O'Connor's tenure as the borough's district attorney. O'Connor refuted this claim, explaining that the rise in Queens's crime rate matched the borough's population increase and was no worse than other New York counties. Rockefeller, O'Connor concluded, had resorted to "Goldwater Republicanism" out of desperation and "abysmal ignorance" of national crime trends.¹⁰² O'Connor responded that he opposed compulsory commitment for addicts because, in his experience, they could not be cured against their will. Not to be outdone, Rockefeller told an audience in White Plains, New York that electing O'Connor would leave addicts "on the streets for purse snatching, mugging and murder."¹⁰³

During the final debate before the election, the candidates discussed drug addiction and its connection to crime. The moderator asked the candidates if they thought it was true that if the next governor did not adopt Rockefeller's plan for addicts crime rates would increase. Adams, the Conservative Party candidate, agreed that the compulsory program was necessary, but rather than give Rockefeller credit for the plan he asserted that the governor had actually taken the idea from William F. Buckley, who had run for mayor of New York City the year before.¹⁰⁴ Roosevelt, the Liberal Party candidate, also opposed Rockefeller's plan, but for financial reasons, said he preferred

¹⁰² Homer Bigart, "Democrat Back Record," *New York Times*, November 2, 1966, 31.

¹⁰³ Ralph Blumenthal, "Governor Warns on Street Crimes," *New York Times*, November 4, 1966, 26.

¹⁰⁴ In the 1965 New York City mayoral race, John Lindsay, who received endorsements from both the Republican and Liberal Parties, William F. Buckley, the Conservative Party candidate, and Controller Abraham D. Beame, the Democratic Party candidate all advocated the use of treatment, rather than imprisonment for narcotics addicts. Buckley thought the federal government should quarantine and rehabilitate addicts. He also endorsed the use of Methadone. Lindsay advocated a program similar to the one he helped Rockefeller design the following year. Martin Tolchin, "Candidates Flood the Voters with Position Papers but Reveal Few Differences," *New York Times*, October 31, 1965, 82.

out-patient treatment programs. O'Connor criticized Rockefeller for unfairly accusing him of being lenient on crime and turning the newly passed narcotics law into a campaign issue. O'Connor continued to explain that in the past eight years crime rates had increased 55.4 percent across the state in both rural and urban communities and that this trend could be addressed with the creation of a centralized Department of Justice in New York patterned after the Federal Justice Department.¹⁰⁵ O'Connor was the only candidate who questioned the effectiveness of compulsory commitment programs, thus making him an easy target for Rockefeller.

“Politics is a Rough Business”: The Civilian Complaint Review Board

The public's rising fear of crime coupled with a diminishing tolerance for racial minorities among many whites in New York City spawned another controversy during the 1966 campaign that reverberated across the state. Tensions had risen in the city when blacks and Puerto Ricans became increasingly critical of the city's police. The result was a local issue that drew attention across the nation and became a factor in the New York gubernatorial election. The issue was a contest that pitted the PBA and the New York Conservative Party against the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), which was intended to monitor the police department. The year before, during the mayoral campaign of John Lindsay, the Republican Congressman had promised that, if elected, he would appoint a civilian panel to replace the old review board that consisted of three deputy police commissioners. Opponents of the all-police review board accused the police of being unwilling to monitor themselves and disregarding the concerns of minorities who filed complaints. Lindsay said he would appoint a new board with four civilians and three

¹⁰⁵ “Special Candidate Debate,” folder 665, box 64, series 21.2 Hugh Morrow, Gubernatorial Campaign, Record Group 15 Nelson A. Rockefeller Papers (NAR Papers), Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

police officers with the belief that they would be more receptive to investigating allegations of police misconduct and brutality waged against African Americans and Hispanics in New York City. The PBA tried to get the CCRB declared illegal by the State Supreme Court, and when that failed they collected 92,000 signatures along with the Conservative Party, which organized its own petition, to get a referendum placed on the 1966 ballot to disband the CCRB. Meanwhile, Lindsay appointed the first civilians to the new board in July 1966, setting the stage for a contentious fight during the fall election.¹⁰⁶

The CCRB became a hotly contested issue that pitted the city's racial minorities, liberal politicians, and white liberals who supported the board, against the PBA and their supporters who argued that the board impeded policemen's ability to do their job. The battle over the civilian review board was linked to the larger civil rights movement and efforts to curb its influence. J.P. McFadden, of the *National Review*, opposed the CCRB because he believed that minorities' desire to police the police as hoodlums roamed the streets was an outgrowth of the civil disobedience advocated by civil rights activists.¹⁰⁷ The CCRB became a major point of contention; although it had little power and was largely a symbolic gesture made by liberal politicians who wanted to offer a diplomatic and harmless overture to the cities racial minorities.¹⁰⁸ Some civil rights leaders, for example, thought the CCRB should only have civilian members to create an opportunity for the new board to reverse the influence of the previous all-police board. Despite the

¹⁰⁶ Emanuel Perlmutter, "Lindsay to Name 4 Civilians Today for Police Board," *New York Times*, July 11, 1966, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Vincent J. Cannato, *The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 165.

¹⁰⁸ Tamar Jacoby, "The Uncivil History of the Civilian Review Board," *City Journal*, Winter 1993, <http://www.city-journal.org/article01.php?aid=1151>.

board having little power, many whites in the city were outraged, for they saw it as tacit acceptance of the riots in Harlem and Brooklyn in 1964 and rising crime rates throughout the city. Meanwhile, the *New York Times* praised the CCRB as part of a larger effort to protect individual rights. It attributed much of the controversy to misunderstandings. The paper noted in editorials printed on October 10 and 22, that the civilian review board was not a tool of minorities as its opponents claimed. The majority of the complaints heard by the new board came from whites, who reported discourtesy, unnecessary force, and abuse of authority. In fact, whites filed more complaints than people from all other minority groups combined.¹⁰⁹

Lindsay and Javits, both Republicans, were in support of the review board alongside Democrats such as Robert Kennedy, Roosevelt, and O'Connor, who all campaigned actively in support of the board. Both Lindsay and Kennedy argued that the referendum to disband the board sought to isolate the police and immune them to any oversight. Their position referred to a clause in the referendum to disband the CCRB that stated, "Neither the Mayor, the Police Commissioner, nor any other officer of the City of New York shall have the power to authorize any person, agency, board or group to receive, to investigate, to hear or to require or to recommend action upon, civilian complaints against members of the Police Department."¹¹⁰ In the face of such opposition, Lindsay interpreted the CCRB fight as the ultimate test for liberals who supported the civil rights movement. He explained, "This is a historic moment, perhaps the most important fight I have ever seen. I am appalled to discover, after passage of many civil

¹⁰⁹ "The Rights of Civilians," *New York Times*, October 10, 1966, 40; and "Success of Civilian Review Board," *New York Times*, October 22, 1966, 25.

¹¹⁰ Bernard Weinraub, "Kennedy Sees Peril to Civilian Control of Police," *New York Times*, November 4, 1966, 29.

rights bills, that many of the wonderful liberals are slightly doctrinaire, it appears. This fight is the guts of it. This separates the men from the boys.”¹¹¹ While the state’s most high-profile racially liberal politicians were united in their efforts to protect the CCRB, Rockefeller tried to keep his distance. It is important to note that at this time, Javits and Kennedy were not up for reelection; however, gubernatorial candidates Roosevelt and O’Connor were highly involved in the review board controversy, to the point that they competed to demonstrate who did more to save it.¹¹² Rockefeller’s press aide Harry O’Donnell reflected on the Democrat’s position, saying “O’Connor...was sort of a conservative Democrat, [but] somebody must have said: ‘Frank you’ve got to take a liberal position on at least one thing,’ so he took a liberal position in favor of the Police Review Board.”¹¹³ Rockefeller, on the other hand, remained relatively silent.

Although Rockefeller did offer support for Lindsay’s decision to put civilians on the board, he was careful to say that it was a local matter and that he was running a state-wide campaign. A private poll Rockefeller commissioned after the state convention found that voters were equally split between those who said they were more likely to vote for a candidate who supported the board, those who said they were less likely to support a candidate who defended the board, and others who were indifferent. The equal split among respondents showed that although the review board was not yet a lightning rod of backlash sentiment, there was little evidence that supporting the board would aid

¹¹¹ Woody Klein, *Lindsay’s Promise: The Dream that Failed* (New York: MacMillan, 1970), 232.

¹¹² There was a disagreement related to the board between Roosevelt and O’Connor; however, when the latter predicted in the days before the vote that the referendum would win. Roosevelt, determined to set himself apart from O’Connor, accused the Democratic Party candidate of “appeasing the backlash vote” when he said the referendum was likely to win. “Roosevelt Says O’Connor Appeases ‘Backlash Vote,’” *New York Times*, November 1, 1966, 28.

¹¹³ Hugh Morrow Interview of Harry O’Donnell, August 9, 1980, RAC, NAR, folder 36, box 3, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

Rockefeller's reelection campaign. Rockefeller's position on the CCRB was much discussed during his staff's strategy meetings throughout the campaign. Jack Wells first raised the issue in August when he argued that the governor should not campaign for the CCRB, but rather call it a local issue. He prepared a statement for Rockefeller that stressed that this was a local decision and that if Lindsay, who was elected by the city, supported a review board the governor would back his decision. The statement also addressed the possible racial backlash associated with the review board. It read: "I sincerely hope that the public will vote on the proposition calmly and without prejudice. It would be most unfortunate if the referendum became an occasion for indulging prejudices against any minority or minorities."¹¹⁴ Rockefeller approved of Wells's position paper that included a denunciation of brutality, needless humiliation, and insults committed by the police. Although Rockefeller liked the statement he usually just focused on it being a local issue during public appearances, with no mention of the racial controversy or backlash. Meanwhile, earlier on the same day that Wells said Rockefeller should not campaign for the issue Pfeiffer spoke to Cassese of the PBA and informed him that the governor would support the CCRB, which he assumed was the right and natural position for Rockefeller to take. Cassese assured Pfeiffer, who throughout the campaign's strategy meetings said the governor should support the CCRB, that the PBA would support the governor regardless of his position.¹¹⁵ Later in the campaign, Cassese informed Rockefeller's staff that the PBA was planning its public endorsement of the governor, but Rockefeller's staff told him not to endorse him publicly because it would

¹¹⁴ Strategy Meeting, August 23, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1000, box 74, 5 Campaigns, RG 15; and Strategy Meeting, August 25, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 939, box 72, 5 Campaigns, RG 15.

¹¹⁵ Strategy Meeting, August 23, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1000, box 74, 5 Campaigns, RG 15.

appear that a deal had been made. Instead, Cassese was directed to endorse no one and praise the governor's narcotics program.¹¹⁶ The review board was treated as a delicate issue throughout the campaign, and Pfeiffer repeatedly argued that there could be no question that Rockefeller supported it. While Rockefeller's staff unanimously agreed, however, Rockefeller was cautioned not to join Lindsay's non-partisan committee in support of the CCRB. Rockefeller's position, which one staff member in early October, referred to as "embarrassing," was considered the safe choice because, as Wells pointed out, there was a "strong backlash" against the CCRB.¹¹⁷ In late October, Pfeiffer expressed concern that despite all of the effort and resources focused on Harlem that there was little improvement on Rockefeller's behalf in Harlem.¹¹⁸ While there had been early optimism that Rockefeller could win the Negro vote as Lindsay had the year before, as the campaign progressed there was little sign that this would be accomplished. Pfeiffer was informed in early November that during several meetings of interracial groups, grave concern was expressed about Rockefeller's position on the CCRB.¹¹⁹ Rockefeller's staff knew that support of the CCRB was an important issue to African Americans, and they agreed that the review board served an important purpose, but the issue was deemed too controversial for Rockefeller to campaign for it.

Despite the findings of Rockefeller's September poll, the CCRB became an increasingly controversial issue as Election Day neared and its opponents waged an

¹¹⁶ Strategy Meeting, September 28, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1001, box 74, 5 Campaigns, RG 15.

¹¹⁷ Strategy Meeting, September 29, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1001, box 74, 5 Campaigns, RG 15; Strategy Meeting, October 4, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1002, box 74, 5 Campaigns, RG 15; and Strategy Meeting, August 23, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1000, box 74, 5 Campaigns, RG 15.

¹¹⁸ Strategy Meeting, October 20, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1002, box 74, 5 Campaigns, RG 15.

¹¹⁹ Memorandum from Reginald B. Jackson to William L. Pfeiffer, November 3, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 341, box 26, 5 Campaigns, RG 15.

aggressive race-baiting campaign against it.¹²⁰ Supporters of the CCRB accused the PBA of running a campaign “based on fear and bigotry.”¹²¹ One PBA advertisement featured a photo of a ransacked street after the Philadelphia riot of 1964 with the caption: “This is the aftermath of a riot in a city that *had* a civilian review board.”¹²² Newspaper and television advertisements claimed that the civilian review board would endanger citizens because police officers would hesitate at a crucial moment, allowing rapists and murderers to escape, for fear that the review board would reprimand them.¹²³ The *New York Times* reported that, while making a campaign stop in Brooklyn, Rockefeller spent the time “delivering hard attacks on his Democratic opponent and attempting to make crime in the streets the major issue of the campaign.”¹²⁴ He criticized O’Connor’s record as Queens District Attorney, touted his narcotics program as a crime deterrent, and praised the city’s police. When some voters in the crowd asked Rockefeller to take a position on the civilian review board, he said, “I think we have got a wonderful police department. We owe them a great deal. I have taken the position that I favor home rule. I’ve supported the mayor, as I support mayors throughout the state.”¹²⁵

Rockefeller’s answers may have disappointed those who hoped he would more readily choose a side, but his praise for the police and his decision not to refute the

¹²⁰ New York State Candidate Standing and Campaign Issues, RAC, NAR, folder 702, box 64, J.1 Politics, New York City Office, RG 4.

¹²¹ Bernard Weinraub, “Police Review Board Panel Killed By Large Majority in City,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1966, 23.

¹²² Vincent J. Cannato, *The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 174.

¹²³ Michael W. Flamm writes that the PBA made use of a “widespread and well-founded fear of crime” by employing “racial, class, and gender code” with a poster of a young middle-class white woman fearfully exiting the subway with the text: “The Civilian Review Board must be stopped! Her life... your life... may depend on it.” Sidney E. Zion, “‘Sleeper Issue’ on Police Referendum Wakes Up,” *New York Times*, October 30, 1966, E4; and Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 76.

¹²⁴ “Doubled, Rockefeller Says,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1966, 31.

¹²⁵ “Doubled, Rockefeller Says,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1966, 31.

controversial statements of the CCRB's opponents were telling. The editorial board of the *New York Amsterdam News* was unimpressed with the governor's decision to stay out of what he called a strictly local New York City issue: "Rockefeller is like the man who was against sin but wouldn't do anything about it," wrote the newspaper. Although the *Amsterdam News* did not openly accuse the governor of siding with the opponents of the CCRB, it implied that such conclusions were possible. "It would be unfortunate," stated the editorial, "if the Governor would be accused of lying low on the review board issue in order to get the anti-review board vote in the city."¹²⁶ Rockefeller refused to join Lindsay and Javits, along with Kennedy, O'Connor, and Roosevelt, who had formed a non-partisan alliance to campaign in favor of the CCRB. Robinson did not publicly criticize Rockefeller's stance in his newspaper column; instead, he praised the leaders who chose to campaign in favor of the CCRB. In an article entitled, "In Praise of 2 Brave Senators," Robinson said that he was so impressed by Kennedy's support on the board that he had reversed his previous negative opinion of the senator. He explained that he had been suspicious of the senator's liberalism, but now admitted that he was "mistaken." While Robinson remained silent on Rockefeller's position, he thought support of the CCRB was significant enough to serve as a litmus test for a leader's commitment to liberalism.¹²⁷

Years later when reflecting on O'Connor's position on the CCRB, Rockefeller told Hugh Morrow that O'Connor had been a "law and order man," but he used O'Connor's support of the civilian review board to dispute that record. "I can see him now," explained Rockefeller, "parading up Fifth Avenue with John Lindsay, Bob Kennedy and Jake Javits together in support of what to me was obviously an unpopular,

¹²⁶ "Rocky and the Board," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 15, 1966, 6.

¹²⁷ Jackie Robinson, "In Praise of 2 Brave Senators," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 10, 1966, 15.

unsound concept.” Rockefeller explained that the press tried to trap him with the CCRB, but he refused to get involved, while “Frank got in the middle of it.”¹²⁸ Rockefeller went on to say that he took advantage of O’Connor’s liberal stance on law and order issues. “His second mistake was that I had come out for very tough laws relating to the control of hard drugs as being essential to reducing crime on the streets...He not only opposed it but actually campaigned against it. This, combined with his position on the Civilian Review Board for police action, gave me the opportunity to in all honesty summarize my position in a brief television spot to the effect [of] if you want to keep crime on the street vote for Frank O’Connor. This proved to be a very effective spot. Obviously he had misjudged public sentiment.” Rockefeller summed up his 1966 campaign against O’Connor simply: “Politics is a rough business, but a lot of fun if you enjoy it.”¹²⁹ The governor understood the potency of attacks on a politician’s record on law and order because he faced the same criticism before and after the 1966 campaign, but his own experiences did not dissuade him for using the same tactic when it suited him.

On November 8, 1966, New York City residents voted three-to-two to disband the board, with the most opposition represented in Queens, with a vote of two to one. Opposition was heavy in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Staten Island as well. Manhattan was the only borough that voted in favor of the CCRB.¹³⁰ A costly advertising campaign to disband the board succeeded in determining the timbre of the debate—the PBA forces were estimated to have spent between \$500,000 and \$1 million, while supporters of the

¹²⁸ Hugh Morrow Interview with Nelson Rockefeller, August 16, 1977, RAC, NAR, folder 8, box 1, Q1 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

¹²⁹ Hugh Morrow Interview with Nelson Rockefeller, August 16, 1977, RAC, NAR, folder 8, box 1, Q1 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

¹³⁰ Weinraub, “Police Review Board Panel Killed By Large Majority in City,” 1.

civilian review were believed to have spent less than \$200,000.¹³¹ The victory of the referendum to disband the board was a major defeat for New York's most prominent liberals. Cassese, who from the outset said he was willing to use the PBA's entire treasury totaling \$1.5 million to fight the CCRB because he was "sick and tired of giving in to minority groups with their whims and their gripes and shouting," considered the referendum's passage a major victory.¹³² "Thank God we saved this city," he exclaimed on election night.¹³³ With the success of the referendum, the police commissioner would now appoint a new board free of civilians.

Conclusion

With nearly 5.5 million votes cast in a heavy voter turnout, Rockefeller won his third-term in office by defeating O'Connor by close to 400,000 votes. The Liberal Party candidate Franklin Roosevelt, Jr. and Conservative Party candidate Paul L. Adams trailed far behind with less than 500,000 votes each.¹³⁴ O'Donnell, a Rockefeller adviser, thought that O'Connor's position on the CCRB cost him the election. "O'Connor came out for it and it cost him his own home borough of Queens, which is conservative and where they strongly supported the police...Nelson carried Queens by 3,000 [votes]."¹³⁵

The Republican Party won impressive electoral gains across the nation in 1966—forty-seven new seats in the House—twenty-four of the thirty-eight seats gained by Democrats in 1964 were returned to the Republican column—three seats in the Senate,

¹³¹ Sydney H. Schanberg, "The Men Behind the Bitter Fight Over Civilian Review Board," *New York Times*, November 6, 1966, 87.

¹³² Vincent J. Cannato, *The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 168.

¹³³ Weinraub, "Police Review Board Panel Killed By Large Majority in City," 23.

¹³⁴ Richard Witkin, "State Vote Heavy," *New York Times*, November 9, 1966, 1.

¹³⁵ Hugh Morrow Interview of Harry O'Donnell, August 9, 1980, RAC, NAR, folder 36, box 3, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

and eight governorships.¹³⁶ The G.O.P. furthered its advances in the no-longer-solid South and maintained its presence in northern industrial centers, while continuing its traditional dominance in the Midwest. These victories were a great relief after Goldwater's staggering loss to Johnson two years before. Candidates who represented the party's right and left wings had impressive wins: Ronald Reagan defeated an incumbent to become the governor of California, Edward Brooke won a U.S. Senate seat from Massachusetts, and Senator Clifford Case of New Jersey won reelection. While Democrats were able to win major gains in 1964, Republican victories in 1966 suggested that the era of Democrats settling their internal differences was nearing its conclusion. Republicans became the new champions of party unification and while RNC Chairman Bliss looked to economic policy to lead the party to victory the tense status of race relations in 1966 helped the party more. The month before the election, *Newsweek* reported that for the first time since 1962, the majority of Americans polled by Gallup (52 percent) said the Johnson Administration was pushing civil rights too fast. Louis Harris, however, found that closer to 75 percent of Americans thought the Johnson Administration was moving too fast, which he attributed to backlash politics. Harris predicted that backlash politics—understood as a rejection of the societal changes associated with the civil rights movement, including new federal civil rights reforms, disruption of the status quo, and unrest in the streets (both nonviolent and violent)—could be the decisive factor in nearly half of the districts where freshmen Democratic congressmen sought re-election.¹³⁷ A Harris survey from the same month found that 69 percent of respondents thought that the Republican Party “would do a better job of

¹³⁶ Edsall with Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, 59.

¹³⁷ “Politics: The White Backlash, 1966,” *Newsweek*, October 10, 1966, 27.

slowing down the pace of civil rights.”¹³⁸ It was an important distinction. While the mid-term elections were an astounding victory for a party that many predicted would go extinct after Goldwater’s defeat, the party’s revival was bittersweet for African Americans who remained in the Republican Party despite Goldwater’s nomination. The party’s revival also forced Rockefeller to prove that he was still electable despite his racially liberal reputation, while rising racial tensions reconfigured the political terrain of New York and quickened the rightward shift of the Republican Party.

Like Democrats who feared backlash politics and urban crime might hurt their reelection bids, Rockefeller sensed his own vulnerability related to these issues. In response, the governor deployed new strategies in race relations to respond to the growing controversy caused by the civil rights movement, remaining an advocate of civil rights, while tempering his message to suit the tenor of the times. Moderate Republicans were in a precarious position amidst growing tension over the civil rights movement in America. Advocates of black equality were increasingly frustrated by the lack of tangible change for African Americans, particularly in the North, while opponents of the movement felt that the nation’s elected leaders had done too much to appease minorities. The controversy ignited by the referendum on the CCRB put Rockefeller in a difficult position, but the national party also threatened Rockefeller’s reelection bid. In October, the national Republican Coordinating Committee, with the support of Eisenhower, released a statement accusing the Johnson Administration of condoning and encouraging street violence. In a time when Rockefeller was being careful with his words, he felt it

¹³⁸ Harris Survey, Oct, 1966. Retrieved Jun-12-2012 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.
http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

necessary to disagree with his party. During an interview he refuted the claim, “I don’t think President Johnson or Vice President Humphrey are responsible [for the rioting].” Instead he blamed the mayors of the communities that erupted in unrest. He also said he disagreed with the Republican Coordinating Committee’s opinion that white backlash would be a deciding factor in the November elections.¹³⁹ Rockefeller had limits to how he would use the anger and backlash incited by the riots. In a period of increased partisanship and animosity between Republicans and Democrats, Rockefeller could not afford to alienate Democratic and Independent voters who planned to vote for him despite his party affiliation. The *New York Amsterdam News* reported that Rockefeller made further gains within the black community, winning the support of African Americans who regularly voted Democrat; however, O’Connor received more votes than Rockefeller in all of the assembly districts that were predominately or substantially black and Puerto Rican.¹⁴⁰

The final days before the election were marked by Rockefeller accusing O’Connor of being soft on crime and drug addiction. These denunciations were fitting in an election year where a backlash to the civil rights movement and calls to reestablish “law and order” in America became important rallying points for Republicans. The press reported the GOP’s gains across the country in the 1966 elections, most notably in the South, as the result of a rejection of the Democratic Party that was blamed for the lawlessness that swept the nation in the form of urban riots, first in New York City in

¹³⁹ Homer Bigart, “Governor Spurns G.O.P. Riot Views,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1966, 1.

¹⁴⁰ For example, in the three assembly districts in Harlem O’Connor received a total of 42,372 to 29,345. In the 37, 35, and 56 assembly districts in Brooklyn, O’Connor received 28,670 votes to Rockefeller’s 15,022. “Rocky Won Negroes,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 12, 1966, 1; and Cathy Aldridge, “Election Night At Headquarters,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 12, 1966, 1.

1964, most notably in Los Angeles the following year, and again in cities across the nation in 1966. Rockefeller's victory suggests that while moderate Republicans remained viable candidates their racial liberalism required further calibration to avoid alienating disparate constituencies. In a period when liberal politicians were accused of being lenient on crime, Rockefeller hurled this divisive accusation at his Democratic opponent to disassociate himself from the label and possibly benefit from growing frustration over the social unrest of the mid-1960s.

The 1966 gubernatorial campaign gave Rockefeller his first opportunity to test the feasibility of adopting a more conservative campaign strategy to put himself in the good graces of mainstream Republicans. He steered clear of the major civil rights issue of the day in New York while also working to maintain his ties to the black community whose support he sought at the polls. Rockefeller remained a strong supporter of progressive social programs and defended his calls to raise the money to fund them. However, by this time in his gubernatorial career, Rockefeller chose alternative funding sources such as moral obligation bonds to placate increasingly weary taxpayers—an ultimately unsustainable financial policy for the state—to continue with his major programs. Rockefeller's unfulfilled 1962 campaign promise not to raise taxes was a major source of the voter dissatisfaction he faced during his second term in office. While he had raised taxes in the past, many voters were particularly angry because he called the new taxes fees, in an attempt to adhere to the campaign promise he could not keep.

After Rockefeller's failure to successfully challenge his party in 1964, he decided it was time for a new approach. The fall of 1966 was his first opportunity to conduct a campaign that could offset his support of social programs with get-tough rhetoric related

to crime and policing that could appease more traditional Republican sensibilities in a period when racial divisions were becoming more severe. The Rockefeller who proposed lifetime imprisonment for anyone in possession of an illegal narcotic was still years away, but the Rockefeller of 1966 was willing to use concern about narcotics addiction and crime as political capital to ensure his third-term victory. As a result, the 1966 gubernatorial campaign represents a pivotal moment in Rockefeller's career that makes it possible to understand how the twentieth century's most iconic liberal Republican, *the* Rockefeller Republican, could also be the progenitor of the 1970s most shockingly punitive drug laws, a legislative version of a blunt force weapon that Rockefeller knew from the outset would disproportionately affect the African American community. Rockefeller maintained his connections to African Americans with the aid of an extensive network of black advisers; soon, however, his advisers, Robinson in particular, experienced great alarm when the Republican Party's most prominent champion for civil rights adopted conservative positions that targeted African Americans in order to curry favor with conservative whites. Before that happened though, Rockefeller would experience a particularly demoralizing loss to Nixon in 1968 that would lead Rockefeller to reexamine and renegotiate his place within local and national politics.

Chapter Six

The Public Welfare Debate: The Limits of Rockefeller Republicanism

In 1967, public opinion researchers Lloyd Free and Hadley Cantril published *The Political Beliefs of Americans*, a book that examined American political consciousness during the presidential campaign of 1964. For the authors, the passionate debates aroused by the contest between Johnson and Goldwater allowed them to examine the liberal-conservative divide over the growth of the federal government and the welfare state in America. Free and Cantril found that while the majority of Americans considered themselves ideological conservatives, who sought to limit federal power, in practice, they approved of the liberal direction of the federal government and its efforts to provide social justice and Keynesian controls on the economy.¹ Despite Johnson's assertion that his election and the passage of Great Society programs settled the old debate about the welfare state, the authors found that what they referred to as Americans' "operational liberalism" did not prevent the same questions about progressive government from taking center stage in the 1968 presidential race.

¹ Lloyd A. Free and Hadley Cantril, *The Political Beliefs of Americans: A Study of Public Opinion* (New York: A Clarion Book, 1968), 6-8.

As a continuation of this work, Free prepared a new report that he presented to Rockefeller in April 1968. This preliminary report on American public opinion was carried out in February by the Gallup poll interviewers, who collected a sample of 1,500 in-person interviews with a sample of adults from across the country. In the previous study conducted in 1964, Free found that the top five concerns of Americans were all related to international and military defense issues. While concern for foreign policy issues remained high in 1968, several domestic “law and order” issues had risen in people’s minds. Crime, juvenile delinquency, urban rioting, and illegal narcotics and narcotics addiction were the domestic issues at the forefront of respondents’ minds. A growing number of Americans expressed concern about the rising cost of government, but this issue was in the middle of the list, ranked ninth out of twenty-one domestic and foreign policy issues. Meanwhile, concern over the “trend toward a more powerful Federal Government” was second-to-last.² Free noted that while the common perception since the elections of 1966 was that Americans were taking a more conservative stance toward federal programs, he found that huge majorities favored maintaining or increasing support for key programs sponsored by Johnson such as construction of low-rent public housing, Head Start, support for college education, urban renewal, and job training for the poor. Ultimately, Free found evidence in support of his 1964 findings that three-fourths of respondents were “operational liberals,” meaning they supported individual government programs, while still associating themselves with conservative values that

² The Republicans interviewed were found to be more concerned about government spending and Communism, while Democrats tended to be more concerned than Republicans about improvements for public education, poverty reduction, provision of medical care to low income families, and urban renewal. Independents fell in between. Preliminary Report on American Public Opinion in Early 1968, By Lloyd A. Free, April 12, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 706, Box 65, J.1 Politics, New York City Office, RG 4.

opposed increased government spending, making them “ideological conservatives.”³

Finding that Americans were torn between, on the one hand, their support for individual social programs believed to benefit segments of the population that needed aid and, on the other hand, an innate opposition to increasing the cost and purview of government Free’s report spoke to a political reality that challenged Rockefeller throughout his governorship. New Yorkers were alarmed by growing state budgets and the increased taxes they demanded, but they still wanted the state government to extend more support to their communities.

Nixon’s nomination and subsequent defeat of Hubert Humphrey to become the thirty-seventh President of the United States nullified Rockefeller’s argument that he was the only Republican who could be elected president. It was a watershed moment for the three-term governor, who the press reported had subsequently been passed over for two appointments in the Nixon Administration. In the final weeks of 1968, rumors circulated that Rockefeller’s career in politics was coming to an end. To slow the spread of what *Time Magazine* called “premature postmortems” for Rockefeller’s political career and avoid the “lame duck” label, the governor announced his plan to seek reelection in 1970.⁴ Despite his announcement, Rockefeller’s prospects appeared to remain in decline because the state faced an expected \$1 billion shortfall for the 1969 budget.⁵ Whether Rockefeller decided to raise taxes to pay for previously approved expenditures to increase state aid for education, public welfare, and Medicaid, or if he sought instead to cut these expenses, Rockefeller faced difficult challenges in New York. While Rockefeller’s career may have

³ Preliminary Report on American Public Opinion in Early 1968, By Lloyd A. Free, April 12, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 706, Box 65, J.1 Politics, New York City Office, RG 4.

⁴ “Rocky’s Crisis,” *Time Magazine*, December 20, 1968.

⁵ “Rocky’s Crisis,” *Time Magazine*, December 20, 1968

been on the decline, his ambition was undiminished, and as a result, Rockefeller decided to adapt his rhetoric and policies to the changing times. Nixon's successful campaign and appeal to the nation's growing conservative sensibilities, particularly in the field of domestic policy associated with racial inequality, demonstrated to Rockefeller that it was time to reorient himself to the right in order to appeal to remain relevant.

This chapter examines Rockefeller's evolving position on public welfare, beginning with his earliest years in office and focuses on specific moments of conflict or "crisis" when Republican leaders on the local and state level called for cuts to budget allocations for public assistance. Initially, Rockefeller offered steadfast support for welfare that put him in opposition to the majority of his party, but during his final two terms in office the chasm between the governor and more conservative Republicans narrowed as the governor looked to cutting welfare benefits to close budget deficits. An examination of welfare in this period is ideal because it allows one to observe how the governor evolved in relation to a controversial issue that often exacerbated racial divisions, and subsequently, reveals one of the key fields where Rockefeller reversed his progressive stance.

The 1960s were a period when Americans increasingly associated rising welfare expenditures to racial minorities in the urban North. African Americans who had migrated to the nation's cities to find work and escape the social stratification of the South soon found themselves living in segregated and high-priced housing stock that suffered from years of neglect in communities on the decline. Worse yet, they found few economic opportunities as the factories that had once provided stable livable wages in the urban North picked up and moved to the South and West where wages were lower, and

unions were weaker. As the 1960s progressed, civil rights groups turned their attention to the economic and social inequity in the nation's cities and intensified their fight for jobs, livable welfare benefits, and an end to segregation. Meanwhile Americans, many of whom had left urban centers for suburbs, bristled at the increased demand for state assistance in urban communities. The instability of cities and the riots that broke out throughout the decade convinced a growing segment of white America that racial minorities preferred to receive welfare than find work and as a result were unfairly burdening the government. While the increased racialization of welfare recipients did not accurately reflect the makeup of recipients nationwide, this perception—and stigmatization—grew in popularity. Compounded by the opinion that New York City was in the midst of a welfare crisis that could cripple the metropolis, these factors created an atmosphere that highly politicized public welfare, making it the target for severe budget cuts in New York State.

Rockefeller's subsequent shift rightward is demonstrated through his efforts to curb state spending through a disproportionate focus on rising welfare costs. The governor contributed to the increasingly negative perception of public welfare during the economic downturn of the late 1960s. He adopted a conservative stance on this already unpopular race-inflected issue to prove his Republican credentials as an advocate of economy and the protestant work ethic. As the governor's political influence declined, Rockefeller no longer hoped to lead his party from the left, instead he sought to fall in line, and that caused overcorrections that contradicted his political traditions and alienated him from some of his most loyal liberal supporters. As public welfare was under intense scrutiny in the late 1960s, this chapter places Rockefeller's activism within

the context of the nation's troubled relationship with welfare throughout the twentieth century and Nixon's efforts to reform welfare during his first term in office. Between 1969 and 1972, Rockefeller encouraged and validated the perception that New York was in a fiscal crisis because of the generosity it had shown to the state's poor, whom the general public stereotyped as blacks and Latinos that were exploiting the welfare system out of laziness and greed.

Public Welfare in New York, 1958-1967

In 1958, Rockefeller first stressed the importance of protecting the most vulnerable New Yorkers on public assistance, despite objections from members of his state party. In the late 1950s, some of New York's most conservative Republicans looked to impose a one-year residency requirement on welfare recipients because, they argued, the state's benefits attracted undesirables to the state. Rockefeller used his influence to keep a residency requirement out of the New York State Republican Platform in 1958; consistently maintaining that it was the state's duty to provide for the poor. However, New York's welfare program remained an easy target for criticism, and when opposition flared up anew in 1961, the governor appointed the Moreland Commission on Welfare to determine whether the system needed reform.

The commission's chief duty was to investigate accusations that New York's public welfare system was riddled with fraud at the hands of dishonest recipients and wasteful administrators. The commission became necessary after an alleged welfare crisis in Newburgh, New York, garnered national headlines. This small town of approximately 31,000 in the Hudson River Valley had fallen into economic decline over the past decade as its factories left for the South and West where labor was cheaper and as the waterfront

lost productivity when trucking became the preferred method of transporting goods.⁶ The Republican-led city council of the majority-white town attributed the city's decline to its most economically vulnerable residents—African American migrants—who came to Newburgh in the early 1950s in search of work. One city councilmember explained, “The colored people of this city are our biggest police problem, our biggest sanitation problem... We cannot put up with their behavior any longer. We have been too lenient with them... If necessary we will enforce our ideas on them.”⁷ The town's city manager, Joseph Mac D. Mitchell first focused on cutting welfare in February 1961 as a means to erase the budget deficit caused by the cost of snow removal that winter by closing out thirty “borderline” welfare cases and reducing food relief allotments. This initial decision prompted the state department of welfare to enforce an injunction on the city. Undeterred, Mitchell designed and the city council passed a set of thirteen rules aimed at reducing the welfare rolls. The new rules, known as the “Newburgh Plan,” included requiring that new residents of the town prove they moved there because of a “concrete offer of employment,” converting cash payments to earmarked vouchers, instituting work requirements, and advising mothers of illegitimate children that if they had more children their benefits would be denied.⁸ The state department of welfare found half of the provisos to be illegal, but Mitchell's plan drew praise throughout New York and across the nation.⁹ William D. Ryan, the Democratic mayor of the town, expressed concern because he believed the laws were immoral. Ryan, however, was in the minority. One

⁶ “Newburgh Manager Vows Fight to Keep New Welfare Curb,” *New York Times*, June 22, 1961, 33; and “State Calls Newburgh Code Illegal,” *New York Times*, June 23, 1961, 11.

⁷ Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 129.

⁸ “Newburgh Welfare Rules,” *New York Times*, June 24, 1961, 7.

⁹ “State Calls Newburgh Code Illegal,” *New York Times*, June 23, 1961, 11.

letter writer to city hall, for example, who agreed with the more popular sentiment during the affair, stated that the nation was “breeding a population of parasites—and it’s about time we did something about it.”¹⁰ Meanwhile, Mitchell justified his decisions by declaring that welfare brought “the dregs of humanity into th[e] city” in a “never-ending pilgrimage from North Carolina to New York.”¹¹ The Newburgh Plan was inspired by an amalgam of every popular conservative criticism of welfare and its recipients.

The report submitted by the Moreland Commission in January 1963 found that while New York’s public welfare system needed more centralized state leadership, better staff workers, and more emphasis on services to encourage independent living, there were no significant instances of fraud. Data supporting the commission’s findings revealed that in 1962 public assistance constituted 6.76 percent of the state’s budget in comparison to 10.27 percent in 1953, refuting the common perception that welfare costs had risen sharply. Members of the commission also determined that a residency requirement was unnecessary.¹² The commission’s failure to find evidence supporting popular misconceptions about welfare led its members to ask why the public held public assistance in such low esteem.

The commission found that much of the public suffered from what it called “factual malnutrition” about public assistance and its need in society. It found that people viewed welfare as a program that should be required only during economic depressions and believed that anyone who remained on it afterward was suspect. Unlike popular

¹⁰ Charles Grutzner, “Newburgh Policy Has Wide Support,” *New York Times*, June 24, 1961, 7.

¹¹ “Panel in N.Y. Asks Welfare Reform,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1963, 4.; and Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 128-130.

¹² Moreland Commission on Welfare, *Public Welfare in the State of New York* (Albany, NY: Executive Chamber, 1963), 1-9; “Panel in N.Y. Asks Welfare Reform,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1963, 4; and “The State and Welfare,” *New York Times*, February 16, 1963, 6.

programs such as these for education, deemed constructive for the nation's future, public welfare was thought unnecessary in a time of prosperity. The commission did not place all of the blame on the public, it noted that the aversion to welfare stemmed from a reluctance to admit that "a full-employment economy lies beyond our reach; full acceptance of public welfare thus becomes a kind of criticism of our economic system." Americans, it noted, had virtually no knowledge that the majority of welfare recipients were the unemployable elderly, young children, the disabled, and the unskilled. Much of the criticism lay in moralistic thinking that welfare recipients should abide by moral codes more strict and austere than what "deserving" people should experience.¹³

Ultimately, twelve of the thirteen points in the Newburgh Plan were ruled illegal in court and the commission found that there was little cause for concern in Newburgh—only 2.9 percent of the population was on public assistance. Opposing the Newburgh Plan, Rockefeller released a statement, quoting the state constitution's pledge to care for the needy and said he was committed to this principle. While Rockefeller said he was against welfare "chiseling" and the use of public assistance to encourage idleness, he chose not to criticize the Newburgh city council. The governor's "carefully worded statement," as described by the *New York Times*, and Rockefeller's reticence to pressure Newburgh officials until after the court made a decision spoke to the controversial nature of welfare.¹⁴ While Rockefeller avoided criticizing the leaders of Newburgh, his response was in stark comparison to Goldwater who said the Newburgh Plan should be adopted by every city in the nation when he was asked about the plan in 1961. "I don't like to see my

¹³ Moreland Commission, *Public Welfare*, 16-18.

¹⁴ Warren Weaver, Jr., "Governor Scores Newburgh's Code," *New York Times*, July 14, 1961, 20; and Connery and Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York*, 283.

taxes paid for children born out of wedlock,” stated the senator, “I’m tired of professional chiselers walking up and down the streets who don’t work and have no intention of working.”¹⁵

When Rockefeller ran against Goldwater for the Republican presidential nomination in 1964, he continued to support spending for welfare and Medicaid, while his opponent remained highly critical. The governor criticized Johnson’s war on poverty and initiatives like the Community Action Program, not because of the expense, but because he wanted the president to be more specific about how the money would be spent. Rockefeller’s staff notes during the campaign were critical of Johnson’s initial poverty message because there was no mention of civil rights and without the passage of a civil rights bill there was no way to ensure that federal funds would be distributed fairly, an issue that was essential to African Americans who suffered from a higher rate of poverty than the rest of the nation.¹⁶ However, in his State of the Union address, Johnson did say that the federal government must abolish all racial discrimination to ensure the programs he introduced were made available to people of all colors.¹⁷ Rockefeller also criticized Johnson’s administration for failing to address the “fundamental cause of poverty,” which was the lack of jobs with adequate wages, but overall, his approach to social welfare was similar to the President’s.¹⁸

Despite Rockefeller’s unwavering defense of welfare programs and the government’s responsibility to address poverty, welfare remained a relatively

¹⁵ “Goldwater Hails Newburgh Plan as Welfare Ideal for All Cities,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1961, 1.

¹⁶ Poverty Meeting, March 17, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 122, box 21, 17 Issue Books, RG 15.

¹⁷ Caro, *Passage of Power*, 547.

¹⁸ Excerpt on Poverty Program from NAR San Diego Speech, April 20, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 122, box 21, 17 Issue Books, RG 15.

controversial issue for the governor in New York. Welfare was not a major issue during the 1966 gubernatorial campaign, but that was partially because Rockefeller's advisers determined that was the best choice politically. Before the nominating convention Pfeiffer learned that four hundred welfare recipients across the state would be getting "large allowances because of the rise in the cost of living." Rockefeller could take credit for the achievement, but his staff agreed the campaign would allow the Board of Social Welfare to make the announcement instead because there was no "political advantage" for the governor.¹⁹ Furthermore, State Senator Earl W. Brydges and Assemblyman Perry B. Duryea, Republicans from upstate New York and the eastern tip of Long Island, respectively, told campaign advisers that the governor should not discuss the Medicaid issue and avoid identifying himself with it because it would hurt him with conservative Republicans; in fact, "efforts should be made to have local welfare Commissioners keep their mouths shut."²⁰ Although Rockefeller advanced the field of welfare and Medicaid in New York, even calling for more comprehensive aid to the state's poor, his staff agreed that drawing attention to these issues would not aid the governor in winning reelection.

The National Debate on Welfare, 1967-1968

In 1967, the Johnson Administration feared that conservative Republicans and southern Democrats in Congress would dismantle several Great Society programs during its first session that year.²¹ Ultimately, the 90th Congress succeeded in giving states and local governments more control over antipoverty programs such as those created by the Community Action Program (CAP), which were intended to give the poor more political

¹⁹ Strategy Meeting, August 18, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1000, box 74, 5 Campaigns, RG 15.

²⁰ Strategy Meeting, August 19, 1966, RAC, NAR, folder 1000, box 74, 5 Campaigns, RG 15

²¹ John Herbers, "Washington Veering to Right on Welfare," *New York Times*, January 8, 1968, 60.

and economic power.²² Congress's decision would make it easier for local governments to reduce the power of CAPs, which had often created conflicts between traditionally white city leaders and the newly created and often black-run programs.²³ "The socially regressive and financially niggling restrictions Congress imposed on grants to the states under the public welfare and Medicaid provisions of the revised Social Security Act," wrote the *New York Times*, "provide clear warrant for [Governor Rockefeller's] complaint about the practice in Washington of launching ambitious domestic programs, underfinancing them at the outset and then starving them as they enlarge."²⁴

In January 1968, Johnson announced the creation of a Commission on Income Maintenance Programs. Over the last two years, criticisms mounted that the nation needed to rethink how the government addressed poverty. A criticism that had gained traction in this period was that the Great Society's emphasis on services had failed and alternatives were needed. As the public became more concerned with the nation's rising debt and growing inflation, dissatisfaction with the public welfare system made welfare reform an important campaign issue in 1968. An often-discussed alternative was the negative income tax, a progressive tax where the government would give low-income citizens payments to raise them above the poverty line. A second approach under discussion was the guaranteed annual minimum wage, or guaranteed annual income, which would provide income maintenance for Americans who fell below the poverty

²² The Economic Opportunity Act, which included CAP, was signed into law on August 20, 1964, after Congress passed it despite objections raised by Republicans who complained that it threatened states' rights and southern Democrats who opposed its racial integration proposals. Proponents of the bill admitted that its budget of less than a billion dollars would not go far in what was proposed as a "total war on poverty," but they said it was a start and would draw more attention to the problem. Marjorie Hunters, "Antipoverty Bill Wins Final Vote in House, 226-184," *New York Times*, August 9, 1964, 1.

²³ Edsall with Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, 66.

²⁴ "Budgetary 'Domino Theory,'" *New York Times*, January 25, 1968, 36.

line. The negative income tax's most influential and longtime supporter was conservative University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman, who advocated replacing public welfare with his tax plan.²⁵ In the spring of 1968, the general consensus among the presidential candidates of both major parties was that the nation's welfare system needed reform or a complete overhaul. The argument was that public welfare, exemplified by Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), originally named Aid to Dependent Children, was instituted in the 1930s as a worthwhile, but minor, program to aid widows and their children, had become a drain on the nation's limited resources both financially and socially in the 1960s. Established in 1935 as a component of the Social Security Act, AFDC provided financial assistance to children under the age of sixteen who were deprived parental support or care "by reason of the death, continued absence from the home, or physical or mental incapacity of a parent."²⁶ It encouraged people to remain jobless, give birth to illegitimate children they could not support, and seek ways to fraud the system, negative perceptions that tended to be associated with racial minorities.

²⁵ In 1943, Milton Friedman, who worked in the Treasury Department on income-tax matters became concerned that some taxpayers with fluctuating incomes from one year to the next would end up paying more in taxes over an extended time period than another person whose income remained steady. The inequity was particularly pronounced for low-income wage earners who went from a zero tax bracket to a positive one. His solution was to introduce a negative income tax so that if a worker experienced a better year financially he or she would pay more, but in other years the Treasury would pay taxes to the worker. By the late 1940s, Friedman and his fellow economist George Stigler considered the possibility that a negative income tax could be a permanent answer to poverty by paying workers who routinely remained in the zero tax bracket to help raise them above the poverty line. This approach was also supposed to include a work incentive for recipients because they would receive smaller payments if they earned higher wages as long as they remained below a certain income level, but it would not eliminate their payments altogether. In this period AFDC deducted dollar-for-dollar the money that a recipient earned from their welfare payments. Daniel P. Moynihan, *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income: The Nixon Administration and the Family Assistance Plan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 50.

²⁶ In 1962, the words "Families with" were added because many people believed the program discourage marriage. Susan W. Blank and Barbara B. Blum, "A Brief History of Work Expectations for Welfare Mothers," *The Future of Children*, 1:1 (Spring 1997), accessed October 25, 2012, http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/07_01_02.pdf; and "The Social Security Act of 1935," accessed October 25, 2012, <http://www.ssa.gov/history/35act.html>.

With the exception of Democrat Eugene McCarthy, all of the prominent presidential candidates in the spring of 1968, opposed the negative income tax on practical or philosophical grounds. The most adamant opposition to this approach came from California Governor Ronald Reagan, who said he rejected the “strange” idea of paying a salary whether a person worked or not. He was also the most vocal opponent of welfare programs in any form, he characterized welfare recipients as “free-loaders” who believed work was for other people and program administrators as wasteful bureaucrats who collected extravagant salaries at the expense of the poor.²⁷ Kennedy released a carefully worded policy statement opposing the guaranteed income in May, while Humphrey said that some form of income-maintenance would be preferable to the current welfare system, but refused to endorse the new plan. A common fear among candidates was that support of a negative income tax would alienate voters who thought it would serve as a disincentive to work. Even McCarthy, who supported some form of progressive tax or subsidy, said such a plan required the inclusion of “built-in incentives for self-improvement.”²⁸

Historically, the United States has had a troubled relationship with government-funded public assistance and that uneasiness has shaped—and stunted—the welfare system in comparison to other western nations. As a result, America developed a stigmatized and incoherent patchwork of uneven public assistance, administered by private agencies in an effort to disassociate the federal government from its role of providing a safety net for the poor. The main exceptions are Social Security and

²⁷ Positions on the Issues, 1968, RAC, NAR folder 1717, box 76, 25, Press Office, RG15.

²⁸ Domestic Research Staff to Rockefeller on the Negative Income Tax, May 29, 1968, RAC, NAR folder 27, box 4, G, DNA, RG4.

Medicaid/Medicare, which are federally funded. Welfare reform debates in the relatively affluent postwar era, even among welfare advocates in the 1950s, centered on “rehabilitation” policies that sought to fix the poor, whose poverty was believed to be the result of “psychological and social challenges” that would keep them poor.²⁹ With the activism of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, more Americans began to pay attention to the poverty and inequity in postwar America. Johnson committed himself to wage a War on Poverty, a phrase first used by Kennedy, and got major legislation passed in response, but his war did little to change often derogatory opinions about the impoverished in America. While the majority of Americans agreed that hunger and poverty were terrible, they also believed these problems were in most cases the product of the poor’s personal failings. The public stigma that was tied to poverty paired with a rising number of public welfare recipients in the 1960s, a period of relative prosperity, led many Americans to assume there was a troubling and unwarranted rise in governmental dependence. By the latter half of the 1960s, there was a perception that the United States was in the midst of a welfare crisis.³⁰

Shortly after Congress passed Great Society legislation, domestic spending soared, particularly in the field of social security, and in response legislators began to pass laws intended to control costs. AFDC became a favorite target for cuts. The number of Americans on public assistance grew from 7.1 million in 1960 to 7.8 million in 1965 to 14.4 million in 1974. This growth was attributed to the rise in the number of AFDC

²⁹ Jennifer Mittelstadt, *From Welfare to Workfare: The Unintended Consequences of Liberal Reform, 1945-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 1-11.

³⁰ James T. Patterson, *America’s Struggle Against Poverty, 1900-1985* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); and Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

recipients, which increased from 3.1 million in 1960 to 4.3 million in 1965 to 10.8 million by 1974.³¹ Although spending on social security was about ten times as high as spending on AFDC in 1970—a difference of \$2.5 billion versus \$30.3 billion—the latter lacked social security’s powerful lobbies, middle class support, and public sympathy.³² Federal poverty spending drew a disproportionate amount of blame for rising costs, despite its share of the federal budget remaining below 10 percent.³³ In comparison, non-poverty social spending (including social security and Medicare) rose from 30.1 percent to 54 percent of the federal budget.³⁴ Much of the public disdain was directed at the poor themselves. A 1967 survey found that 42 percent of Americans believed that poverty resulted from “lack of effort.” In response to the same question two years later, 58 percent of respondents said poverty was caused by a “lack of thrift and proper money management by poor people.”³⁵ As the number of welfare recipients rose, public assistance and other poverty programs drew increased disapproval as the national economy strained under the financial burden of the Vietnam War.

When opposition to the expansion of welfare coalesced, it was met by an organized grassroots effort led by welfare mothers known as the national welfare rights movement. Conservative estimates from 1971, show that the movement’s largest organization, the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) had twenty to thirty thousand card-carrying members and 540 local chapters making it the largest

³¹ Patterson, *America’s Struggle*, 171.

³² Katz, *In the Shadow*, 267

³³ Federal poverty spending rose from 4.7 percent in 1961 to 9.4 percent in 1976.

³⁴ Henry Aaron of the Brookings Institute also reported that in that same fifteen year period federal poverty spending increased from \$4.6 billion to \$34.6 billion, while nonpoor social spending rose from \$29.4 billion to \$197.8 billion. Michael Harrington, *The New American Poverty* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 27.

³⁵ Patterson, *America’s Struggle*, 172.

organization of poor people in the history of the United States. Founded by George Wiley in 1966, an African American with a Ph.D. in chemistry who had left academia to work fulltime for CORE, the NWRO worked to gain welfare recipients “justice, dignity, democracy and MORE MONEY NOW!”³⁶ A local organization that was also significant to the welfare rights movement in New York City was the City-Wide Coordinating Committee, which consisted of several thousand public aid recipients who used public demonstrations, civil disobedience, legislative lobbying, voter drives, and legal action to increase welfare benefits. As welfare recipients began to organize in Manhattan and Brooklyn, their contemporaries likewise organized similar efforts in Northern and Southern California among a few other locations in the early 1960s. The movement was influenced by and in some aspects was an outgrowth of the civil rights movement. Welfare recipients, with the support of middle class allies such as social workers, attorneys, priests, nuns and professional organizers, built an interracial, cross-class coalition that demanded a national guarantee of income security, which would reduce eligibility requirements, and called for an end to foreign wars that drained federal budgets for domestic programs.³⁷

Rockefeller Republicanism Circa 1968

On March 21, 1968, Rockefeller held a press conference to announce that he would not seek the Republican presidential nomination. He said it was time to be frank about his isolation within the party. It would be “illogical and unreasonable,” Rockefeller

³⁶ Kornbluh, *Battle for Welfare Rights*, 60-61.

³⁷ While the welfare rights movement shared some concerns with the feminist movement in the 1960s, the women involved, who had often worked as domestics or rural sharecroppers, sought a privilege traditionally only bestowed upon financially secure white women, the ability to stay home and raise their children rather than the right to work outside the home. Kornbluh, *Battle for Welfare Rights*, 1-4; and Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors*.

explained, to seek support from Republican leaders who were determined to maintain party unity after the divisive 1964 campaign.³⁸ Rockefeller's decision meant that Nixon, the presumed nominee, would go unchallenged. Three weeks later, however, the press reported that Rockefeller had begun assembling a campaign staff. Rockefeller hoped that recent events would convince party leaders to reconsider their opposition to him. The nation had been taken aback when Johnson, who suffered from low approval ratings and a bitterly divided Democratic Party, announced that he would not seek reelection on March 31, 1968. Days later, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, TN, on April 4, 1968, and in the aftermath of his death riots erupted in over a hundred cities. Believing the party and the nation might be ready for a moderate Republican after all, Rockefeller launched his third bid for the Republican presidential nomination on April 30, 1968. Although it was the same plan that failed in 1960 and 1964, Rockefeller thought the recent upheaval in the nation might finally convince party leaders to overlook their hostility toward him.³⁹

³⁸ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1968, 983-984.

³⁹ Rockefeller had remained out of the race, instead supporting the candidacy of another moderate Republican, Michigan Governor George Romney, who ended his campaign on February 28, 1968. Rockefeller's advisers were divided on whether or not the governor could win the nomination over Nixon. Those who were hopeful, along with the governor, thought that his best chance for the nomination in the early part of the year was to remain an unannounced candidate. Rockefeller hoped to appear to be a unifying figure who might subsequently gain popularity among delegates as the candidate with the best chance to defeat the Democrats. As a result, many of Rockefeller's advisers were surprised and dismayed when the governor announced he would not run. Staff members like Hugh Morrow, among others, blamed this decision, as they did Rockefeller's re-entry into the 1960 campaign, based on criticism of Eisenhower's foreign policy, on Rockefeller's relationship with Emmet Hughes. Memoranda from George Hinman, RAC, NAR, folder 153, box 12, 35 Ann C. Whitman, RG 15; Memoranda from Jack Wells to Nelson Rockefeller, RAC, NAR, folder 153, box 12, 35 Ann C. Whitman, RG 15; Hugh Morrow Interview of Theodore Braun, November 6, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 2, box 1, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4; Hugh Morrow Interview of Joseph Canzeri, August 21, 23, 1979, RAC, NAR, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, folder 3, box 1, RG 4; Hugh Morrow Interview of George Hinman, October 10, 1979, RAC, NAR Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, folder 10, box 1, RG 4; and Hugh Morrow Interview of Jack Wells, August 14-15, 1979, RAC, Q2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, folder 23, box 2, RG 4.

While Rockefeller's campaign was short-lived, his three-month campaign revealed the idealism that remained within the racially liberal strand of moderate Republicanism in 1968. Nixon appeared guaranteed to win the nomination, but Rockefeller made the case that he himself was more likely to win the election if the Democrats nominated Kennedy, whose campaign had gained traction soon after Johnson's withdrawal from the race. The nation, according to Rockefeller, needed a politician who could heal the country's racial divide, and with a strong record on civil rights and continued support from African Americans, Rockefeller was a better choice than Nixon. While Nixon told voters that the federal government had done all it could in the field of civil rights and inequality and that it was time to be realistic and make cuts to domestic spending. Rockefeller launched his campaign with a challenge to the same community to wake from complacency—an American slumber—and address the inequality that produced the depressed urban centers and riots that the civil rights movement could not repair.⁴⁰

With a speech entitled, "The Making of a Just America," Rockefeller planned to launch his campaign before a luncheon meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) on April 18. Paul E. Neville, of the *Buffalo Evening News*, who served as the ASNE program director, added Rockefeller to the speakers' schedule the month before and enthusiastically encouraged the governor to make a major statement on Vietnam that could help him win the presidency.⁴¹ But Rockefeller focused on urban

⁴⁰ "The Making of a Just America," Delivered by Nelson A. Rockefeller to the America Society of Newspaper Editors' Luncheon, RAC, NAR, Folder 1718, Box 77, 25 Press Office, RG 15.

⁴¹ Neville, nonplused by Rockefeller's announcement that he would not seek the Republican nomination, wrote Rockefeller's speech writer Hugh Morrow to tell him the ASNE speech would be even more important in helping "launch" him into the "top spot."

domestic policies. In the midst of this planning, King was assassinated in Memphis, and Hugh Morrow drafted a speech that began with a meditation on a conversation Rockefeller had with the late civil rights leader. King's words would serve as inspiration for Americans to recommit to racial equality, but, in subsequent drafts, this theme was removed after advisers expressed fear that the speech would alienate whites.⁴²

Examining Rockefeller's original speech and the process of revision reveals the governor's efforts to reconcile his desire to ground his 1968 campaign in civil rights activism with his sense that support of civil rights might not be the unifying force it was a few short years before. In the original text of the speech, Rockefeller said that five years before, King told him about a southern city police chief who had a "very serious problem." "His problem," explained King, "is that he doesn't know he has a problem."

Rockefeller continued:

The policeman's problem was his failure to understand tha[t] an era of meekly-accepted oppression was ending—and right there in the deep south. The chief didn't realize that the cry for social justice could no longer be smothered effectively in a barrage of head-cracking or buried for very long in jail cells. The education of that police chief cost his city a great deal—in human lives, in damaged reputation, in lost prestige, and measurable economic loss as well. Many other American cities have paid a similar price. And yet, five years later, as we look at the current scene, it is reasonable to ask whether America as a whole doesn't still have somewhat the same sort of problem as the police chief. For there are signs—frightening signs—of a collective failure in this country to realize bone deep, in all its implications, that we do indeed have a problem, one that could readily destroy our very way of life.⁴³

The rioting that had just engulfed the nation's cities was proof, according to Rockefeller, that the nation had a problem that the majority of Americans had ignored like that

⁴² Hugh Morrow ASNE Speech Draft 1, April 10, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 2303, Box 58, 33, Speeches, RG 15; Memo from Andrew von Hirsch to Hugh Morrow dated April 10, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 2303, Box 58, 33, Speeches, RG 15.

⁴³ Hugh Morrow ASNE Speech Draft 1, April 10, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 2303, Box 58, 33, Speeches, RG 15.

southern police chief. Rockefeller said that the rioting was not the result of criminality; rather, the men and women involved were “products of urban ghettos that [had] literally crushed their hopes, their very faith in the American political system.”⁴⁴ If the nation continued to ignore the decay of its urban centers, disaster would “spill across city boundaries and engulf the whole American middle class in dangerous turmoil.”⁴⁵ Therefore, the nation needed to rebuild its cities and transform urban ghettos into safe and decent communities.

As an example of what was needed nationwide, Rockefeller presented his recent efforts to rebuild blighted sections of New York’s cities with the creation of the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), a public authority with the power to override local zoning laws and build low-income public housing funded by a bond issue. Rockefeller had introduced his \$6 billion urban redevelopment plan in late February, but it stalled in the state legislature. Before flying to King’s funeral on his private plane, along with the eighteen black legislators he invited to join him, Rockefeller demanded the UDC be passed in honor of King. The bill did not pass easily, but Rockefeller put great pressure on Republican assemblymen who opposed it and eventually it was passed four minutes before the midnight deadline.

Two of Rockefeller’s aides, Andrew von Hirsch and Richard Nathan, expressed a major concern that the first draft’s focus on the black urban experience would alienate white suburbanites. A focus on ghettos, wrote von Hirsch, would not appeal to the “self-interest of middle-class suburban whites.” Instead, urban problems should be framed in a

⁴⁴ Hugh Morrow ASNE Speech Draft 1, April 10, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 2303, Box 58, 33, Speeches, RG 15.

⁴⁵ Hugh Morrow ASNE Speech Draft 1, April 10, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 2303, Box 58, 33, Speeches, RG 15.

way that would appeal to white suburban voters who would be more likely to be concerned about “the spread of urban blight.” For example, a discussion of transportation issues, he explained, could appeal to suburban residents, who commuted to cities, and ghetto residents, who hoped improved transportation would increase their access to jobs.⁴⁶ The final draft of the ASNE speech was intended to have a more universal appeal, but Rockefeller still argued that white America was to blame for urban blight.

Rockefeller’s discussion about King was removed, but he stated that the complacency of white Americans had led to urban decline and sacrifices needed to be made to rebuild cities.⁴⁷ He also spoke about growing inequality in America that created an “Affluent Society” and an “Afflicted Society,” noting that while Americans spent \$17.4 billion on tobacco and liquor only \$8 billion was spent on the entire war on poverty. Rockefeller and his staff worked to temper his message; he insisted that the crisis of the American city affected Americans of all races, but his call for public and private investment—and sacrifice—to end what was understood as a black problem did little to propel his candidacy.⁴⁸

The speech Rockefeller delivered in Washington, D.C., offering an answer to urban unrest and blight—only a week and a half after 13,600 National Guard troops were deployed in the Capital to disband rioters who came within two blocks of the White House—elicited a lackluster response. Rockefeller received nothing more than polite

⁴⁶ Memo from Andrew von Hirsch to Hugh Morrow dated April 10, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 2303, Box 58, 33, Speeches, RG 15.

⁴⁷ In response to a recommendation from Henry Kissinger, Rockefeller opened the speech explaining why he was not going to focus on American cities rather than Vietnam. “Our concern for freedom in South Vietnam, explained Rockefeller, must rationally relate to our concern for justice in South Chicago.” “The Making of a Just America,” delivered on April 18, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 2303, Box 58, 33, Speeches, RG 15.

⁴⁸ “The Making of a Just America,” delivered on April 18, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 2303, Box 58, 33, Speeches, RG 15.

applause from the editors in attendance. The editors were unimpressed and likened his message to the “reconciliation” speeches made by several Democratic politicians. Perhaps even worse, a handful of young supporters, who were invited to the event to ensure an enthusiastic response, quietly listened in the back of the room and upon Rockefeller’s conclusion walked tentatively to the podium with their Rockefeller banners at half-mast. Mary McGrory of *The Evening Star* noted that a “Philosophical Rockefeller” was unlikely to appeal to the average GOP delegate. It “was not encouraging,” wrote McGrory.⁴⁹ Editorials in the *Evening Star* and *Washington Post* derided the speech, not for its content, but its style, described by the *Post* as having sound ideas and well-researched proposals that were “packaged in layers of verbiage, mountains of metaphor and contrived rhetoric.”⁵⁰

In contrast, two days later, Nixon received a noticeably better reception when he spoke before the same assemblage of ASNE editors. Nixon, who answered questions from a panel of editors rather than give a prepared speech, was said to be confident and at ease and drew frequent applause (ten times) and laughter (twelve times), according to the *New York Times*.⁵¹ Nixon told the editors that “while we all have an immense interest in helping the poor” the nation must resist the idea that those problems could be solved by spending \$150 or \$250 billion dollars. The figures he mentioned alluded to Rockefeller’s proposals that were estimated to cost \$150 billion.⁵² During his ASNE talk, Nixon emphasized the need for private enterprise to invest in the nation’s urban centers and hire

⁴⁹ Mary McGrory, “A Philosophical Rockefeller Is Taking the High Road,” *The Evening Star*, April 19, 1968, A4.

⁵⁰ “Disappointing,” *Washington Post*, April 19, 1968, A24.

⁵¹ Robert B. Semple Jr., “Nixon Vows Vietnam Silence to Aid Peace Move,” *New York Times*, April 20, 1968, 17.

⁵² Semple, “Nixon Vows Vietnam Silence to Aid Peace Move,” 17.

city residents. The following day in Minneapolis, Nixon continued to criticize federal spending on cities as an attempt to buy African Americans' cooperation so they would stop rioting.⁵³ While the *Washington Post* lauded Nixon's ASNE appearance—which was more polished and he more poised than during his days as Vice President—its editorial board questioned the popular desire for private enterprise to solve the problem of Negro poverty and unemployment. Generalizations, rather than “practical application of this theory,” would not address the urban discontent that wrought the recent unrest, explained an editorial.⁵⁴

The Rockefeller campaign entered a new phase in June 1968. Shortly after the assassination of Kennedy on June 6, in Los Angeles, Rockefeller praised the New York senator's ability to bring Americans from diverse backgrounds together and sought to capture the excitement that Kennedy's campaign had inspired. During a trip to Los Angeles the following week, Rockefeller spoke of the need for “New Leadership” in America and toured Watts to meet with minorities. The unscheduled visit to Watts—against the wishes of his Secret Service guards—was described as carnivalesque, bordering on pandemonium, as African American youths flocked to the governor.⁵⁵ Rockefeller relied upon his charismatic campaigning style and liberal reputation to appeal to Democrats and independents that had been drawn to Kennedy. During the same California trip, however, when Rockefeller spoke before the “lions' den of the ultraconservatives” he presented himself as a more traditionally conservative

⁵³ Relman Morin, “Poor-Aid Promises Irk Nixon,” *Washington Post*, April 21, 1968, A1.

⁵⁴ “A Gifted Professional,” *Washington Post*, April 21, 1968, B6.

⁵⁵ George Lardner Jr. “Rocky, Ignoring Security, Campaigns in Watts Crowd,” *Washington Post*, June 13, 1968, A2.

Republican.⁵⁶ James Reston of the *New York Times* wrote that Kennedy's death had startled Rockefeller out of a trance and given him a new direction that was more natural to him. For Reston, Rockefeller was now being his true self. "Ever since he came into national politics under Roosevelt 28 years ago," wrote Reston, "he has been comfortable only while moving to the left of his party. This is where he stood and fought for progressive policies in the 1960 Republican convention and this is where he fought and lost against Goldwater."⁵⁷ According to Theodore White, who joined the governor's press corps after Kennedy was killed, Rockefeller went before audiences with the same message and same emotion that was infused in the Kennedy campaign. Rockefeller promised the change these enthusiastic listeners yearned for.⁵⁸ Members of the press commented on a distinct shift to the left in Rockefeller's campaign after Kennedy's assassination, but he began the campaign by situating himself to the left of Nixon, while attempting to offset that stance in his private meetings with delegates and party leaders. Rockefeller's third bid for the Republican presidential nomination found him, once again, pulled between those who were quick to criticize him if they sensed he was appealing conservatives, while party leaders continued to question his Republican credentials.

In a *Washington Post* article, Louis Harris reported in early July that Rockefeller had gained ground among Democrats and independents, but at the expense of support from Republicans. "The closer he comes to demonstrating that he might be the one Republican to win in November," wrote Harris, "the weaker he becomes in his own

⁵⁶ Leroy F. Aarons, "Rockefeller Seeks Kennedy Mantle," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1968, A1; and Marquis Childs, "Rocky Battling Against Long Odds," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1968, A16.

⁵⁷ James Reston, "New York: Rockefeller Comes Out of His Trance," *New York Times*, June 12, 1968, 46.

⁵⁸ Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1968* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1969), 234.

party.”⁵⁹ Harris noted that between May and June, Rockefeller gained ten points among independents and young people favored him over Humphrey in a head-to-head race, while Nixon trailed Humphrey. In those two months, however, Rockefeller’s Republican support dropped from 61 to 59 percent when compared to Humphrey—the decline was eight points when compared to McCarthy.⁶⁰ A Harris Poll conducted in the final week of July found that in a three-way race against Humphrey and Wallace, Rockefeller was in the lead, while Nixon trailed Humphrey, but this lead showed little sign of swaying Republican delegates.⁶¹ After a vigorous three-month campaign where Rockefeller spoke before delegates in 45 states, his standing among them changed very little. Although a Gallup poll from June found that only 27 percent of Americans considered themselves Republicans, Republican delegates and regulars were not ready to choose the candidate who had a record of appealing to Democrats and independents.⁶² Instead, these Republicans preferred Nixon, the moderate Republican or “middling conservative,” who had proven himself a regular Republican by supporting Goldwater during the general campaign of 1964, and who had spent years committed to traveling around the nation stumping for a myriad of Republican candidates.⁶³

⁵⁹ Louis Harris, “Rockefeller Gaining with Non-Republican Voters,” *Washington Post*, July 2, 1968, A4.

⁶⁰ Harris, “Rockefeller Gaining with Non-Republican Voters,” A4.

⁶¹ Rockefeller led against Humphrey and Wallace with 40 percent of voters’ support compared to 34 percent for Humphrey, while Nixon trailed Humphrey 36 percent to 41 percent. Harris Survey, Jul, 1968. Retrieved Dec-27-2012 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropcenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

⁶² Gallup Poll (AIPO), Jun, 1968. Retrieved Nov-18-2012 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

http://www.ropcenter.uconn.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

⁶³ “Middling conservative” is a label conceived by political scientist Clinton Rossiter, who in 1955 defined “the contemporary right” as consisting of four categories: “the lunatic right,” “ultraconservatives,” “middling conservatives,” and “liberal conservatives.” Historian David Greenberg writes that Rockefeller, along with other figures such as Earl Warren, fell into the last category. David Greenberg, *Nixon’s Shadow: The History of an Image* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 6-7.

Ultimately, Rockefeller's plan to win the nomination required him to prove he was more electable than Nixon, while needing Nixon to make a major mistake. Rockefeller hoped that his strength in the polls would convince GOP leaders and delegates that they should nominate him instead. However, past experience that decade had shown that party leaders preferred a more conservative candidate who might be less likely to win to a moderate who seemed out of place within the party. If Nixon faltered there would be a good number of Republicans in Miami, for example, who expressed interest in nominating Reagan over Rockefeller. Reagan had already proven to be a popular force among party conservatives and if the Nixon campaign failed there would be a strong push to nominate him instead. Reagan remained an unannounced Nixon challenger, and still enjoyed strong support from conservatives and southerners who were not enthusiastic about Nixon's nomination. Meanwhile, Rockefeller's late campaign that avoided the primaries alienated further many Republicans who still harbored contempt for Rockefeller's Goldwater challenge.

Candidate Rockefeller on Welfare Reform

The welfare reform debate posed a particularly difficult challenge for Rockefeller on the campaign trail because the year before he convened a conference that resulted in a study of public welfare that recommended the politically unpopular institution of a negative income tax. Rockefeller did not believe he could support such a plan on the campaign trail, but he had to be careful not to oppose its findings publicly. In 1967, Rockefeller invited one hundred of the nation's leaders in industry, labor, news media, philanthropy, and government to participate in a conference paid for by private foundations to recommend policies to fix the nation's public welfare problem. The

conference, which brought together representatives from fourteen states and twelve cities, commemorated the one hundredth anniversary of the New York State Board of Social Welfare.⁶⁴ Rockefeller sought to convene the best minds in industry from the nation's top companies, in particular, and give them an opportunity to study and offer solutions to the nation's welfare crisis. The hope was that the private sector would find opportunities to employ welfare recipients thus breaking the "cycle of dependency" or restructure the current system to make it more cost effective. At the opening of the two-day conference in November 1967, Rockefeller expressed hope in corporate rather than government know-how, stating that it was "the private sector of the nation that has historically demonstrated ingenuity and inventiveness...that made America what it is today."⁶⁵ The logic behind the planning of the conference was straightforward, but the findings proved to be unexpected.

While one might assume that these business-minded men would be determined to find ways to slash welfare spending and force recipients off the roles, the opposite was true. The conference was more than a two-day event; working papers were circulated among the participants six months in advance and a steering committee of twelve was appointed to synthesize the thinking of the group as a whole and put together a single paper with its findings. With but one African American member, the all-male and mostly white steering committee was headed by Joseph C. Wilson, chairperson of Xerox Corporation. The steering committee included the CEOs and presidents of organizations

⁶⁴ Governor's Conference on Public Welfare, Arden House 1967, Ad Hoc Steering Committee, *Report from the Steering Committee of the Arden House Conference on Public Welfare, appointed by Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller; commemorating the 100th anniversary of the New York State Board of Social Welfare*, New York, 1968.

⁶⁵ Governor's Conference, *Arden House Conference*.

such as Joseph L. Block of Inland Steel Company, Albert L. Nickerson of Mobil Oil Corporation, and Gilbert W. Fitzhugh of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. The Arden House Steering Committee did find that money was spent ineffectively, but overall they believed the nation's state and federal governments needed to offer more money to welfare recipients and abolish practices that they deemed demeaning and unnecessarily obtrusive. A *New York Times* editorial called the conference remarkable because "all the discussion centered on saving people rather than on saving money."⁶⁶ "The real crisis in welfare," according to the Arden House sessions was "the paucity of programs for building hope and opportunity for those on the relief rolls, especially the 3.5 million children growing up in an atmosphere of dependency and defeat."⁶⁷ Their position was in stark contrast to many in the public sphere, most recently evidenced by the House-passed Social Security bill that singled out mothers of illegitimate children on welfare as the cause of the nation's welfare crisis. The bill penalized them as a means to force them into the job market and stop having children out of wedlock.⁶⁸

While the *New York Times* editorial expressed admiration for the industrialists' interest in "saving people," members of the NWRO and the City-Wide Coordinating

⁶⁶ "Welfare Industrialists," *New York Times*, November 6, 1967, 46.

⁶⁷ "Welfare Industrialists," *New York Times*, November 6, 1967, 46.

⁶⁸ Both houses of Congress passed the Social Security Amendments of 1967 in December and Johnson signed them into law right before the midnight deadline on January 2, 1968. While raising the benefit payments to close to 24 million social security beneficiaries, the bill tacked on welfare amendments including a work-incentive program for persons older than eighteen who were out of school and deemed employable, a mandate exempting the first \$30 a month and one-third of all additional wages earned by welfare recipients, and a limitation on Federal participation in AFDC based on the proportion of the child population under the age of 18 as of January 1, 1968. Before signing the bill Johnson created a Commission on Income Maintenance Programs to search for better ways to address rising welfare costs in the future. He also asked the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to establish "compassionate safeguards" to protect deserving mothers and children against loss of support. Overall, the new law cut the Federal contribution for welfare. "Welfare Industrialists," *New York Times*, November 6, 1967, 46; Wilbur J. Cohen and Robert M. Ball, "Social Security Amendments of 1967: Summary and Legislative History," *Bulletin*, February 1968: 3-19; and Max Frankel, "President Signs Bill to Increase Pensions of Aged," *New York Times*, January 3, 1968, 1.

Committee of Welfare Groups, were not impressed with the high-profile guest list. With the conference being held at Columbia University's Arden House, atop a mountain in Harriman, New York, two groups with over fifty people organized a demonstration, including mothers on welfare; they positioned themselves at the entrance of the private road that led to the center because they should be able to participate in this discussion about their well-being. With seemingly no concern for irony, the state police arrested twelve of the demonstrators for trespassing toward the end of the second day of the conference.⁶⁹ This meeting on welfare was the purview of businessmen and experts such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was the director of Joint Center for Urban Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, not welfare recipients.

The general consensus of the leaders in attendance at the Arden House was that public welfare in America had failed and the numbers told the story. Despite eighty-one months of consecutive economic growth, the welfare rolls were bigger than ever. Although many Americans heard that figure and blamed welfare recipients, those in attendance were troubled by another disparity. Eight million Americans were receiving public welfare at a cost of \$6.5 billion to Federal, state, and local governments, but 34 million people were living beneath the poverty line, which was understood as \$3,100 for a family of four. Public welfare, therefore, failed to address the majority of the nation's impoverished population who needed aid to rise above the poverty line. A popular remedy among conference participants, was the adoption of a guaranteed annual

⁶⁹ The *Times* reported that one of the demonstrators was Jeanette Washington, who was identified as a 32-year-old Negro mother of six children who had received welfare assistance for eight years. Washington, who identified herself as "Mrs. Jeanette Washington, of 183 West 81st," had appeared in a film viewed by the participants at the conference the night before. In the film, Washington was shown participating in a recent welfare rally where she declared, "Give us money, and we'll take care of our own problems." Peter Kihiss, "Governor Picks 12 Leaders to Seek Welfare Solutions," *New York Times*, November 4, 1967, 1.

income.⁷⁰ The final report read: “The present system of public assistance does not work well...it is demeaning, inefficient, inadequate, and has so many disincentives built into it that it encourages continued dependency...It should be replaced with an income maintenance system, possibly a negative income tax.”⁷¹ The steering committee also stressed the need for more research. Released April 29, 1968, the day before Rockefeller officially announced his bid for the Republican presidential nomination, this report put the governor in a difficult position when much of the nation railed against the excesses of the public welfare system.

Regardless of the amount of study the nation’s business leaders gave to the issue of welfare reform, the negative income tax remained unpopular during the campaign season. The problem for Rockefeller was not that he took issue with the findings of the Arden House report; the issue was how to frame the findings in a way to protect himself from conservative critics. As a result, Rockefeller used the report’s call for further research to refrain from supporting the Arden House recommendation for the negative income tax. In preparation for an important policy speech on the economy before the Economic Club of Detroit, Rockefeller and his staff prepared for the possibility that he might be questioned on welfare reform. If Rockefeller was questioned about welfare reform, it was important that he distance himself from the Arden House report. It was a significant campaign stop for Rockefeller that pitted him against some of the party’s most influential Midwestern Republicans, who, during his previous presidential bids, stood

⁷⁰ Moynihan, who wrote one of the working papers studied by conference participants, disagreed. He argued that it would “divide the nation between those who receive the benefit and those who pay for it.” His preferred method of reform was the adoption of a family-allowance payment for every child, regardless of the family’s income. Peter Kihiss, “Conference Assays Causes of the Welfare Problem,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1967, 60.

⁷¹ Governor’s Conference, *Arden House Conference*.

firm in their opposition to his nomination. On May 22, 1968, Rockefeller made a case for his most conservative economic self. He said the nation needed to restore confidence in the dollar and check inflation by suspending “the habitual rise in public spending,” reviewing U.S. financial commitments around the world, and making an effort to “avoid further controls and regulations, both domestically and internationally.”⁷² As usual, Rockefeller’s speech drew only perfunctory applause from the members of the Economic Club of Detroit, who had never shown more than measured tolerance for Rockefeller during his campaigns.

If Rockefeller was asked about the appropriate role of the federal government in the alleviation of poverty, he was advised to say that the appearance of second and third generations of individual families on the welfare rolls was an “indictment of past efforts of both the private and public sectors.” The solution would come in the form of job creation, the federal government incentivizing the private sector to meet those needs, and an overall focus on improved education, health services, and job training programs.⁷³ Ultimately, Rockefeller was not asked to explain his position at this appearance, but his prepared response provides insight into the governor’s cautious approach to mentioning income maintenance as a viable option for welfare reform. His notes read:

The present welfare system does not work. In far too many instances, it results in disincentives. Our welfare system clearly requires a complete reevaluation. To reverse the rising welfare population and resulting costs, we must rethink the traditional services in both the public and private sectors. We must equip our people to get off the dependency cycle. The various forms of income maintenance, such as a negative

⁷² Rockefeller also critiqued the Johnson Administration for the first time since beginning his campaign. He said that rising inflation had done more to harm low-income Americans than the “so-called Great Society” had helped. Richard L. Madden, “Rockefeller Charges ‘Grave Failures’ to President,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1968, 23.

⁷³ Domestic Research Staff to Rockefeller on the Negative Income Tax, May 17, 1968, RAC, NAR folder 27, box 4, G, DNA, RG4.

income tax, deserve careful study on their feasibility and cost. However, we should not begin an income maintenance program unless we are sure that some form of it, such as the negative income tax or children's allowances, is practical and would actually work.⁷⁴

Rockefeller sought an appropriately conservative tone by relying on popular criticisms of public welfare—references to the “dependency cycle”—and a cautious approach to reform. His staff warned him, however, that if he did not offer his own alternative, he could “sound too conservative.”⁷⁵ Samuel Lubell advised Rockefeller, however, to “flatly” reject the guaranteed annual income tax and instead advocate an “intensified ‘work’ program for the poor and underprivileged.” At an appearance a few days later, Rockefeller took Lubell’s suggestion, rejected his staff’s prepared response calling for more research, and received tremendous applause when he adamantly rejected the negative income tax.⁷⁶

In a series of statements released in June and July, Rockefeller laid out his own program for welfare reform, which was presented as a shift from “social welfare to social services;” welfare recipients would be encouraged to work and become self-sufficient, rather than trust to receive handouts. While there was a tacit acknowledgment that the economy had made the nation’s poor vulnerable, the emphasis was on rehabilitating the poor, particularly children who received aid, so that they could become “self-sufficient, economically-productive citizens.” He called for the removal of the aged, blind, and disabled from the welfare rolls so they could receive automatic payments from social security, which would cut down on administrative costs and remove the necessity of

⁷⁴ Domestic Research Staff to Rockefeller on the Negative Income Tax, May 29, 1968, RAC, NAR folder 27, box 4, G, DNA, RG4.

⁷⁵ Domestic Research Staff to Rockefeller on the Negative Income Tax, May 29, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 27, Box 4, G, DNA, RG4.

⁷⁶ Letter from Ann Whitman to Ruebhausen, May 22, 1968, RAC, NAR, Folder 713, Box 67, 21.2, Hugh Morrow, RG15.

periodically checking this category of recipients to see if they were still eligible for assistance. This reform would give the aged, blind, and disabled preferential treatment that would spare them the ostracism and surveillance that the majority of welfare recipients received. Ultimately, Rockefeller's reforms would continue to isolate the nation's poor despite his calls to help them rejoin mainstream American society. While Rockefeller called for many changes prescribed by the Arden House Steering Committee, he avoided the most controversial recommendation—income maintenance—and placed emphasis on rehabilitation, which fit with the mood of the day.⁷⁷

Nixon and Rockefeller forwarded similar positions on welfare and welfare reform while campaigning in 1968. Like Rockefeller, Nixon opposed a guaranteed annual wage or negative income tax. They emphasized the need to address the current welfare system's rising costs and the perceived deleterious effect of welfare dependency. Both candidates ascribed to the common perception in America that poverty was antithetical to the nation's identity as the land of opportunity. As a result, persistent poverty was the product of a failure on behalf of those below the poverty line. Therefore, the current welfare system required reform because it did not equip the poor with the necessary tools or opportunities to become self-sufficient. Nixon warned that the nation could no longer afford the "old" approach to welfare from the 1930s and said that without budget cuts the nation neared economic disaster. However, Nixon and Rockefeller did have different opinions on the importance of social service programs; the former placed less emphasis on social service programs to improve the unemployed. Where Rockefeller looked to job training and education, Nixon spoke of reinvigorating the poor black community, in

⁷⁷ NAR Speakers Kit, Welfare & Poverty, July 10, 1968, RAC, NAR folder 27, box 4, G, DNA, RG4.

particular, by re-immersing them in the free market system. The private sector, Nixon argued, was best equipped to reform the urban poor because its leaders had “developed a social conscience far beyond anything the leaders of the twenties or the thirties would have recognized.”⁷⁸

The separation of public assistance and social security allowed for the marginalization of the nation’s poor, who were often seen as undeserving. This perception increased in the post-war era by the rising association between poverty and race. Although Nixon avoided discussing racial minorities on public assistance in overtly negative terms, he fueled the perception that the majority of welfare recipients were African American. In May 1968, for example, Nixon claimed that welfare payments were white America’s attempt to buy off the Negro and “its own sense of guilt.” In response, Nixon—the “New Nixon,” as many in the press referred to him—called for an investment in “black capitalism” in the form of “loan guarantees, new capital sources, and incentives to industry to provide job training.” The nation’s ghettos could be revitalized by encouraging “black ownership,” which would lead to “black pride, black jobs, black opportunity and, . . . black power” opposed to welfare payments that discouraged “self-reliance and self-respect.”⁷⁹ It was a positive reframing of traditional Republican opposition to government assistance to the poor that claimed that welfare payments, rather than a lack of well-paying jobs, damaged minority communities. The private sector

⁷⁸ Robert B. Semple, Jr., “A ‘Crisis of Spirit’ in U.S., Nixon Says,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1968, 31.

⁷⁹ Nixon’s discussion of “black capitalism” was attributed largely to his then 31-year-old adviser on urban problems and other domestic issues, Martin Anderson, who was on leave from an associate professorship at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Business. Anderson went on to serve in the administrations of Nixon, Reagan, and George H.W. Bush and became a senior fellow of the Hoover Institute at Stanford University. Tom Wicker, “In the Nation: A Coalition for What?,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1968, E12; Positions on the Issues, 1968, RAC, NAR folder 1717, box 76, 25, Press Office, RG15; and Arlen J. Large, “The Braintrust,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 16, 1968, 1.

only needed to be encouraged to invest in the ghetto and the federal government should do that through tax incentives. The main goal was to get the urban poor off the welfare rolls. Nixon's position on welfare reform reflected his efforts to design a campaign that tempered promises of conservative reforms with optimistic assurances that by spending less on government programs everyone would benefit.⁸⁰

Rockefeller established a record of supporting public welfare and committing the state to providing a safety net for New York's poorest residents during his first ten years in office. At the same time, he had almost as long a record of being careful not to criticize opponents of welfare too harshly, thus subjugating his own position on welfare during election cycles to protect himself from critics. As welfare became increasingly controversial, Rockefeller began to participate in the conservative dialogue about welfare dependency and the personal failings of recipients. Despite this conservative position, Rockefeller would eventually become a public advocate of a guaranteed annual income, but only after Nixon led the way. In this period, Rockefeller advocated for federal revenue sharing, which would have provided New York with more money to support the social spending on programs such as Medicaid and welfare. These positions suggest that Rockefeller remained an advocate of public welfare, but only when it cost him the least political capital. During budget battles with the state legislature, after the 1968 election. Rockefeller's position on welfare shifted to the right. One Rockefeller adviser, however, insisted that this was not because of a fundamental change in the governor's thinking, but

⁸⁰ The Republican Party platform plank on poverty written in Miami reflected a moderate position that emphasized self-reliance, uplift, and confidence in the private sector's ability to right the wrongs of the public welfare system. While the platform stated that "welfare and poverty programs [would] be drastically revised to liberate the poor from the debilitating dependence [that] erode[d] self-respect and discourage[d] responsibility," it did not call for major cuts. The suggested reforms addressed the concerns of both liberals and conservatives. "Excerpts From the Republican Platform Proposed by Committee on Resolutions," *New York Times*, August 5, 1968, 25.

rather a building frustration. Alton Marshall reflected; “We did things in welfare here and in Medicaid...that probably we should not have undertaken in those degrees because we were trying to solve a problem with state machinery which needed to be solved [on the federal level].”⁸¹ As a result, Marshall believed Rockefeller overtaxed the state literally and figuratively trying to solve problems that were too big for one state to solve, even if revenue sharing was adopted.⁸² Eventually, Rockefeller came to agree with Marshall; New York was no longer competitive with other states like New Jersey because it had taken on too many burdens by itself. Marshall explained that at first Rockefeller expressed anger in response to this idea, but in the next year, 1969, he voiced the same opinion during his annual message.⁸³

A New Era of Welfare Reform, 1969-1972

On January 9, 1969, Rockefeller stood before the joint session of the legislature—both houses were Republican-controlled for the first time since 1964—and announced that New York faced a “grave fiscal crisis.”⁸⁴ The refrain of Rockefeller’s speech was that the cost of state programs had finally exceeded the state’s revenues, and it was time to cut back. As the 1960s progressed, the most drastic increase in state expenditures occurred in the field of the state’s Local Assistance Fund that went to financing locally delivered services. In 1958, social services totaled \$141 million and grew to \$1.337 billion fifteen years later in 1973. In the same period, social services began to dominate a

⁸¹ Hugh Morrow Interview of Alton Marshall, October 11, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 26, box 2, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

⁸² Marshall believed that revenue sharing could not fix New York’s “competitive disadvantage” because other states would not use the federal funds in the same way as New York. This would lead to different tax structures and New York would still be uncompetitive. Hugh Morrow Interview of Alton Marshall, October 11, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 26, box 2, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

⁸³ Hugh Morrow Interview of Alton Marshall, October 11, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 26, box 2, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

⁸⁴ Sydney H. Schanberg, “Governor Proposes Curb on Spending,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1969, 1.

larger percentage of funding for local assistance—it constituted one-seventh of the spending in this category and increased to one-quarter. Much of this growth was due to the state’s establishment of a broad-based Medicaid program, whose cost rose from \$606.7 million in its first year in 1967 to \$2 billion in 1973. Despite its increase, Medicaid was not the most controversial expenditure.⁸⁵ The social services expenditure that drew the most attention was the cost of public welfare, and the municipality that drew the most disapproval in this area was overwhelmingly New York City. One reason for the increased expense was that the number of eligible applicants for public assistance grew from 500,000 in 1965 to 1,250,000 in 1972 in New York City.⁸⁶ Increased spending attributed to factors such as a weakening economy, deindustrialization, and increased knowledge about eligibility rules, resulted in the expansion of New York’s welfare rolls.

Rockefeller decided to focus on the rising cost of welfare, declaring in early 1969 that the federal government needed to intervene to help states with the expense; his preferred solution was a federal takeover of all welfare costs. However, in the meantime, he proposed significant cuts to welfare benefits.⁸⁷ In March, of that same year, Rockefeller proposed a series of welfare bills that ranged from a 5 percent cut in “basic needs” to families to a 20 percent cut in fees to physicians and other medical personnel under the Medicaid program because of what he labeled the “most serious fiscal crisis” in

⁸⁵ Connery and Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York*, 204.

⁸⁶ By 1972, one in every six residents of New York City were on the welfare rolls. The majority of welfare recipients in the state—70 percent in 1973—resided in New York City exacerbating the traditional Upstate-Downstate divide in the state. There were whole neighborhoods in Bedford Stuyvesant, the South Bronx, and East Harlem, reported the *New York Times*, where half of all the residents were on welfare. Sol Stern, “The Screws are on the Welfare System,” *New York Times*, October 22, 1972, SM46; and Connery and Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York*, 205.

⁸⁷ Connery and Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York*, 284.

the state's history.⁸⁸ Despite criticism, including that of Bronx Democratic Assemblyman Edward A. Stevenson calling the bill “anti-Negro,” “anti-Puerto Rican,” and “anti-poor,” the reductions passed.⁸⁹ On March 29, the Republican-led legislature passed Rockefeller's \$6.4 billion budget, reduced from the original budget of \$6.7 billion. The legislature approved Rockefeller's proposals and included two additional measures intended to further curb welfare expenditures—a requirement that recipients report to state employment centers biweekly where they would have to accept any job offered to them and a requirement that anyone who lived in the state for less than a year and sought welfare benefits would have to prove they did not come to NY to seek benefits.⁹⁰ After six hours of debate, the Assembly passed the welfare cuts by a vote of 83 to 65 and the Senate 35 to 22—all but six of the 35 votes were from Republicans. The reductions would amount to \$128 million. A year after Rockefeller's 1968 campaign wherein he called for welfare reforms that focused more on the rehabilitation of welfare recipients than cutting costs, Rockefeller singled out welfare as the expense most in need of reduction. The Republican-led legislature, which needed no encouragement, followed his lead and passed additional restrictive laws that further stigmatized welfare recipients.

Rockefeller was not alone in his decision to look to welfare reform as a means to lessen budgetary strain. Nixon began his own effort to cut welfare costs only months after Rockefeller and his Republican-led legislature looked to cut welfare assistance to balance the state budget. Based on a Republican Party platform that pledged a mixture of largely inoffensive reforms and Nixon's acceptance speech that called for an end to Johnson's

⁸⁸ David A. Andelman, “Welfare Residency Law: Vetoed by Rockefeller in 1960, Advocated by Him in 1971,” *New York Times*, March 29, 1971, 48.

⁸⁹ David A. Andelman, *New York Times*, March 29, 1971, 48.

⁹⁰ Connery and Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York*, 284.

War on Poverty, it was unclear what—if anything—Nixon would do in relation to welfare reform if elected. Therefore, it was a surprise to many when eight months into his presidency on August 8, 1969, Nixon announced his intention to completely revise public assistance in America. Nixon's plan would completely revise welfare in America from a services approach through AFDC, Medicaid, food stamps, and school lunches to a system of direct cash payments for the "working poor" including households with a male breadwinner.⁹¹ With phrases such as "getting everyone able to work off of welfare rolls and onto payrolls" and assurances that "people receiving aid...[would] contribute their fair share of productivity," Nixon introduced the Family Assistance Plan (FAP).⁹² The FAP would guarantee all families with children a minimum of \$500 a year for a parent and \$300 per child, which totaled \$1,600 for a two-parent family of four. In an effort to combat welfare dependency, a poor family could keep the first \$60 per month of income without losing any government aid, and half of their wages earned up to specified maximums, when the family would then lose all benefits.⁹³ While the FAP resembled the plans favored by liberal reformers, Nixon approached welfare reform as a technocrat who sought to fix the "mess" that welfare had become rather than as a populist like Johnson.⁹⁴ He did not argue that it was the nation's responsibility to protect against technological unemployment or make the claim of many liberal reformers that a guaranteed minimum

⁹¹ When introduced to Congress, the Family Assistance Plan Act, called for a payment of \$1,600 a year for a family of four in 1969, but by 1971 Nixon raised that figure to \$2,500. States were expected to supplement the amount given by the federal government and all able-bodied heads of households other than mothers of preschool age children were to "accept work or training." If a parent refused the family would only lose the parent's payment. Joan Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 115, 128.

⁹² "Transcript of Nixon's Address to Nation Outlining Proposals for Welfare Reform," *New York Times*, August 9, 1969, 10.

⁹³ Patterson, *America's Struggle*, 192.

⁹⁴ Harrington, *New American Poverty*, 32.

income at the poverty level was the right of citizens of wealthy nations.⁹⁵ Instead, Nixon insisted that his plan did not constitute a guaranteed annual income and focused on the work requirements aspect of the plan; nonetheless, many contemporary commentators and historians have called it a guaranteed annual income.

The president found a receptive, although somewhat critical, audience among his most high-profile New York Republican peers. Rockefeller released an official statement that said it was a positive development for the nation as a whole, but criticized the proposal's ability to relieve the financial burden on New York. Nixon's proposed minimum payment of \$1,600 for a family of four was about half the amount a family of four received in New York. Furthermore, Rockefeller noted that the plan to have the FAP replace food stamps constituted "a sharp cutback in the Federal Government's commitment to assure adequate food for the needy."⁹⁶ Rockefeller praised the plan, however, as acknowledging that welfare was a national problem and attempting to establish national minimum standards. He also approved of giving welfare recipients more incentives to work and offering "the working poor" more assistance. John Lindsay, who was generally more approving of Nixon's plan, expressed a similar sentiment noting that New York City would only receive an additional \$20 million a year. The aid to New York City's taxpayers was "very disappointing" given that the city planned to spend \$1.5

⁹⁵ Robert Theobald, an English economist, in his book *Free Men and Free Markets* (1963) called for western societies to provide entitlements for poor citizens to protect them from technological unemployment thus providing sufficient resources for them to have freedom of choice. In 1966, the OEO drafted a five year plan that stressed the need for income maintenance and said the time was nearing when "the American people will accept a guaranteed minimum income at the poverty level as a right in a wealthy country, and we propose to start moving in that direction now." Patterson, *America's Struggle*, 188-189.

⁹⁶ "Governor's View of Welfare Plan," *New York Times*, August 11, 1969, 25.

billion on 1 million welfare recipients in 1969.⁹⁷ Nixon's plan called for \$3 billion in expenditures and New York City would receive 1 percent for the relief of local tax contributions to welfare. Nixon estimated that the total cost of the first year of his plan, including the cost for daycare centers and job training, to be \$4 billion dollars.⁹⁸

Nixon presented his welfare reform as an answer to what his advisers—Moynihan, in particular—convinced him was a welfare crisis that required a policy overhaul. He told Americans, “What began on a small scale in the Depression thirties and ha[d] become a monster in the prosperous sixties” was a tragedy that threatened to bring states and cities “to the brink of financial disaster.”⁹⁹ To appease conservatives, it was crucial to Nixon and his advisers that he present his program as workfare rather than welfare but it was difficult because many liberals had advocated for cash payments in the form of a negative income tax or child allowances. Although conservative experts like Milton Friedman had called for such a reform with work incentives, other conservatives feared that such a plan would eat away at the nation's supply of cheap labor, increase federal spending for welfare, and continue to reward a population that did not deserve assistance. While the FAP divided conservatives, it also drew mixed responses from liberals. Members of the NWRO, for example, approved of FAP's end of the man-in-the-house rule, but rejected its low annual payment, leading some to call it the Family Annihilation Plan.¹⁰⁰ The \$1,600 annual payment was substantially higher than welfare

⁹⁷ Maurice Carroll, “Lindsay Praises Nixon Proposal on Welfare Aid,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1969, 1.

⁹⁸ “Transcript of Nixon's Address to Nation Outlining Proposals for Welfare Reform,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1968, 10.

⁹⁹ “Transcript of Nixon's Address to Nation Outlining Proposals for Welfare Reform,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1968, 10.

¹⁰⁰ The “man in the house” rule was accepted by people on both sides of the issue, as a reason for the rising rate of single-parent homes, but studies have not shown that it broke up families. The NWRO first called

benefits in southern states, but was well below the payments provided in northern and more industrialized states. Other liberals rejected the emphasis on workfare and the conservative rhetoric Nixon relied on to advocate the plan.¹⁰¹ Although Congressional Democratic leadership originally hailed the FAP as the number one domestic priority, as time passed, many Democrats showed little interest in helping Nixon achieve what would have been a major feat for his administration.

In the fall of 1970, Rockefeller went on to win his fourth term in office, defeating Arthur J. Goldberg, the Democrat-Liberal candidate for governor, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, U.S. Secretary of Labor and Supreme Court Justice. Rockefeller promised New Yorkers he had “done a lot” and would “do more.” In its endorsement of Rockefeller’s reelection the *New York Times* stated that Rockefeller was a pioneer in the progressive wing of the Republican Party and a responsive leader who met the changing needs of urbanization. However, Rockefeller had “yielded to conservative pressures for cutbacks in welfare and Medicaid formulas” during the urban crisis of his third term in office. Despite this recent change, the governor’s overall record, particularly in relation to strengthening social services, convinced the publication that Rockefeller was still the best man for the position.¹⁰² During the campaign, Rockefeller had adopted a more liberal stance and called for a “work careers” program for welfare recipients to counter the increase in the welfare rolls, rather than focus solely on cutting present benefits. As Secretary of Labor under Kennedy, Goldberg defended the American

for a \$5,500 annual payment and then raised the figure to \$6,500. James Welsh, “Welfare Reform: Born, Aug. 8, 1969; Died, Oct. 4, 1972,” *New York Times*, January 7, 1973, 312.

¹⁰¹ Patterson notes that Nixon called for \$600 million to be set aside for offering work or job training, but that would only pay for 150,000 recipients when estimates said 1.1 million recipients would be required to work or enter training. Patterson, *America’s Struggle*, 193.

¹⁰² “Rockefeller for Governor,” *New York Times*, October 25, 1970, E14.

welfare system and its administrators from attacks, which he said tended to be groundless and unfairly critical of recipients who needed assistance due to no fault of their own.¹⁰³

During his bid for the governorship, Goldberg had been critical of Rockefeller's efforts to cut the 1969 state budget with "political gimmickry" that targeted welfare, education, and health, only to restore the funds the following year. Goldberg blamed the state's fiscal problems, instead, to patronage, the proliferation of unneeded state agencies, and tax increases that soaked middle-class and low-income families, while allowing the rich and businesses to slip through loopholes.¹⁰⁴

While campaigning, Goldberg said a major difference between himself and Rockefeller was that the governor believed "the American people are going to the right" and he disagreed. He cited Rockefeller's across-the-board support of Nixon as an example of this change.¹⁰⁵ Rockefeller's New York City campaign manager, Fiorvante (Fred) Perrotta, noted years later that Rockefeller's constituency shifted during the campaign to include working-class voters who had voted Democratic in the past, but were now moving rightward. This change allowed Rockefeller to get a better showing in New York City than he had in the past; he only lost the city by about 17,000 votes. Perrotta recalled Rockefeller receiving a wildly enthusiastic response during a campaign stop among low-income Italians in Astoria, Queens, which was 6 to 1 Democratic, for example, when many on his staff feared Rockefeller would not be welcomed there. Perrotta concluded, "That really won in '70, Nelson's constituency changed in 1970 and what he had...was the so-called new coalition, blue collar workers really were up in arms

¹⁰³ Emma Harrison, "Goldberg Assails Welfare Critics, Presses 4-Point Remedy," *New York Times*, November 30, 1961, 25.

¹⁰⁴ "A 'Crisis' Seen," *New York Times*, June 3, 1970, 30.

¹⁰⁵ Clayton Knowles, "Goldberg Says Governor Turns to Right," *New York Times*, September 14, 1970, 28.

as far as the Democratic Party was concerned and he won with the new constituency.”¹⁰⁶

Joseph Canzeri, a Rockefeller advance man, in upstate New York, described Rockefeller’s win more succinctly, “He was elected by the Irish and the Italians, who would not vote for a Jew and a black on the top of the ticket....I feel that there was a certain element that elected him because they put the wrong ticket together.” Canzeri said that Rockefeller did not use that racist sentiment to his advantage, but Canzeri did point out that he himself used it to Rockefeller’s advantage, saying “I found out that there weren’t any Goldberg and Paterson posters upstate.” Canzeri referred to Goldberg’s running-mate for Lieutenant Governor, Basil Paterson, the former state senator from Harlem. “I arranged to have a few thousand posted to trees in some of the little communities. Nobody told me to do this. They weren’t showing Paterson upstate. I felt that the people in New York State ought to have the opportunity to know who was running.”¹⁰⁷ In reference to the change in Rockefeller’s constituency, Perrotta concluded, “I’m not sure if he liked that or not but it made him win. His constituency stopped, the liberal constituency, and he went after a different kind of Democrat, your blue collar worker, your union worker and the rest and he won big.”¹⁰⁸

In his 1971 State-of-the-State Address, Rockefeller proposed a budget of \$8.45 billion that called for a \$1.1 billion increase in taxes, the highest in state history. Rockefeller discussed welfare as well, saying that New York’s objective was to “strengthen family stability,” “meet the humane obligations of a compassionate society

¹⁰⁶ Hugh Morrow Interview of Fiorvante (Fred) Perrotta, March 11, 1980, RAC, NAR, folder 46, box 3, Q.2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

¹⁰⁷ Hugh Morrow Interview of Joseph Canzeri, August 21, 23, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 3, box 1, Q.2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

¹⁰⁸ Hugh Morrow Interview of Fiorvante (Fred) Perrotta, March 11, 1980, RAC, NAR, folder 46, box 3, Q.2 Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

towards its least fortunate members,” and help recipients achieve the “dignity of self-sufficiency.”¹⁰⁹ He again offered support for the FAP, and, perhaps to illustrate further the need for federal assistance, with no additional comment offered, Rockefeller asked the state legislature to consider the State Board of Social Welfare’s request for a 7.2 percent increase in benefits to meet rising costs of living, saying that the state faced a difficult fiscal situation and its cities were in danger of fiscal collapse.¹¹⁰ The state’s problem, according to Rockefeller, was that it already gave sixty-three cents of every tax dollar back to local governments, but was unable to meet the need for increased revenue. While he said he had already denied state agency and department heads the \$4.3 million they had requested for new and desirable programs, he maintained optimism that the federal government would help the state meet its needs through a new revenue sharing program, rather than call for specific cuts.¹¹¹ A week later, on February 10, the chairmen of the Legislature’s two welfare committees expressed doubt that the cost-of-living increase, which equaled \$51 a year per person on relief, would be enacted when sentiment for sharp cuts was high. Welfare recipients soon learned that not only was their cost-of-living increase in danger, their current benefits were likely to be cut as well.

One day after Senate Republicans proposed more than \$200 million in cuts to Rockefeller’s proposed budget and five days after Reagan proposed to cut 300,000 people from California’s welfare rolls, reported the *New York Times*, Rockefeller changed course and proposed his own cost-cutting measures for welfare in New York. Sources from the administration told the press on March 9, that Rockefeller’s approach to

¹⁰⁹ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1971, 39.

¹¹⁰ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1971, 40.

¹¹¹ *Public Papers Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1971, 21-22.

welfare had changed because he wanted to ensure the cuts that were being proposed did not hurt the truly needy, his concern that welfare had quadrupled in the past twelve years and showed no signs of slowing, and the continued migration of poor southerners to New York. While Rockefeller sometimes said that the nation's poor came to New York for work, but stayed for the benefits, he had also told audiences that they came expressly for benefits. During a town meeting in Rome-Utica, New York, in the spring of 1969, for example, Rockefeller stated that not only had recipients come to the state for benefits, they were sent to New York by the governments of their home states. He said the state of Mississippi sent a family of eleven or twelve to New York to "get them off what little pittance they give them down there and to get on our welfare rolls."¹¹² The proposals reported to be under consideration included the strict enforcement of housing and health laws that could have the same effect as a residency requirement, and the enforcement of a previously unenforced 1969 law, which required welfare recipients to register with a job placement agency and risk losing their benefits if they refused a job.¹¹³ Alternatively, Democrats in the Assembly urged the governor to postpone \$250 million in payments to local governments for welfare to help avoid new taxes.¹¹⁴

Rockefeller first revealed his latest plan to revise welfare to his inner circle in a regular Sunday-night meeting at the Governor's Mansion. According to his speechwriter Joseph E. Persico, the governor explained that he planned to cut welfare recipients' benefits almost in half and create what the local press later called a "Brownie Point Plan,"

¹¹² Rome-Utica Town Meeting, March 21, 1969, RAC, NAR, folder 626, box 31, 25 Press Office, RG 15.

¹¹³ Frank Lynn, "Governor Weighs Drastic Changes to Curb Welfare," *New York Times*, March 10, 1971, 1.

¹¹⁴ Thomas P. Ronan, "Democrats Urge State Defer Aid," *New York Times*, March 11, 1971, 27.

which would use incentives to encourage them to earn the benefits instead.¹¹⁵ Welfare recipients were to “work off” their grants by completing neighborhood chores and laboring for local governments. One inducement that did make it into the official message to the legislature was a proposal to have teenagers whose families received benefits work in day care centers so that mothers could find work or attend job training.¹¹⁶ Rockefeller explained: “These people are going to have to earn their welfare. We’ll have the kids sweep the streets after school to earn points toward the family’s benefit.”¹¹⁷ One of Rockefeller’s advisers warned, according to Persico, that the plan would tarnish the governor’s humanitarian image and even touch off riots in Harlem. Rockefeller’s gaze hardened as the aide continued, until he interrupted, “One thing I can’t stand is a goddamned bleeding heart!”¹¹⁸

Rockefeller’s embrace of work requirements was a sharp break from his past positions. In 1960, for example, he had vetoed a residency requirement for welfare beneficiaries. And in 1964, running against Goldwater, he had filmed an advertisement in which he declared, “I emphatically do not believe that most of the nation’s poor are either stupid or lazy” and insisted that welfare recipients, like other Americans, wanted to “earn their own way.”¹¹⁹ Rockefeller’s commercial would not have been welcome by the governor at his staff meeting.

On March 15, 1971, Rockefeller announced that he believed welfare in New York needed reform because of three significant changes over the past decade: First, New York

¹¹⁵ Persico, *Imperial Rockefeller*, 208.

¹¹⁶ March 29, 1971. *Public Papers of 1971*, 232.

¹¹⁷ Persico, *Imperial Rockefeller*, 208.

¹¹⁸ Persico, *Imperial Rockefeller*, 208.

¹¹⁹ Governor Rockefeller Commercial, taped January 18, 1964, RAC, NAR, folder 123, box 21, 17 Issue Books, RG 15.

had become a destination for southerners who came to find work, but stayed for the welfare benefits; Second, welfare recipients had learned to manipulate the welfare laws. Finally, the absence of work incentives discouraged people from leaving the rolls. Welfare, he said, threatened to destroy the fabric of the state's cities, and would spread to the suburbs as well.

A reporter promptly questioned Rockefeller's claim that new residents had driven up costs; in the past year, he noted, the number of welfare recipients in Westchester County increased 23 percent, but only 3 percent of those people were new to the community. Rockefeller was undeterred. "Twelve years ago there were about 6,000 out-of-work people. Now it's 80,000. That isn't just the birthrate from the 6,000."¹²⁰ While admitting that he did not have all the answers, Rockefeller insisted that welfare threatened to destroy the fabric of the state's cities, and the scourge would spread to the suburbs.

Rockefeller mentioned a variety of possible solutions. One was to create an environmental service corps, similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps of the New Deal Era, might help provide jobs. Another was to cease allowing welfare recipients back on the rolls if they failed to report twice weekly to the employment office. He also recommended after-school and summer jobs for young people because "the bulk of the welfare roll is—70 percent—aid to dependent children." In response to another reporter's question, off the record, he agreed with the description of his new policy as "the start of a

¹²⁰ News Conference of Nelson Rockefeller, March 15, 1971, RAC, NAR, Folder 1018, Box 47, 25, Press Office, RG 15.

move to get tough” in distinguishing “between those who really need [welfare], and those who enjoy it.”¹²¹

As his adviser had warned, the plans angered many minorities. Rockefeller’s longtime supporter Jackie Robinson, who had back Rockefeller’s 1970 reelection campaign wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Post*, which he also sent to Rockefeller privately, sharing his disappointments:

As much as I believe in Governor Rockefeller, as much respect and admiration as I have for him, I don’t agree we should support his welfare proposals without making sure that he is taking into account the facts. Most people on welfare would be happy to get off if there were jobs that would enable them to support their families. Blacks and Puerto Ricans on welfare are unskilled, as are other welfare recipients, because in more cases they had been denied the opportunity to get a skill...

Cutting back on welfare only indicates that we are not truly concerned about the needy. If we do it without another program, the problems confronting us will become much greater.¹²²

Such protests did not persuade Rockefeller to change his mind. As Persico wrote, he did not believe that his humanitarian convictions had failed, he believed that beneficiaries, “by going into the second and third generation of dependency, resisting work and even cheating, had failed him.”¹²³

On March 27, Rockefeller formally recommended to the state legislature “a complete reorganization, conceptually and structurally, of the welfare program for New York State.”¹²⁴ His proposals included a controversial (and possibly unconstitutional) year-long residency requirement, a voluntary resettlement program to help recipients

¹²¹ News Conference of Nelson Rockefeller, March 15, 1971, RAC, NAR, Folder 1018, Box 47, 25, Press Office, RG 15.

¹²² Michael G. Long, ed., *First Class Citizenship: The Civil Rights Letters of Jackie Robinson* (New York: Times Books, 2007), 306-308.

¹²³ Persico, *Imperial Rockefeller*, 208.

¹²⁴ Thomas P. Ronan, “Rockefeller Urges Year’s Residency in Welfare Cases,” *New York Times*, March 28, 1971, 1. “Special Message Recommending Complete Reorganization of the State Welfare Program,” March 29, 1971. *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1971, 229.

move to states where jobs and housing were available, and work incentives that included suspending local social services districts' authority to declare an individual unfit for employment. Rockefeller had vetoed a similar residency law in 1960. In 1969, the United States Supreme Court ruled in Shapiro v. Thompson that residency requirements for welfare recipients were unconstitutional unless the state had a "compelling state interest."¹²⁵ Although his legal counsel advised against a request for a residency requirement, Rockefeller hoped to get around the Supreme Court's decision by declaring a five-year fiscal emergency, in order to meet the court's "compelling state interest" requirement. Rockefeller claimed that in-migration was a major factor in the state's fiscal crisis, but only 11,000 of the state's 1.6 million residents who received welfare at the end of 1970 had lived in the state less than a year.¹²⁶ In addition to new rules intended to weed the rolls of recipients, Rockefeller proposed a reduction in the annual level of aid from \$4,000 for a family of four to \$2,400 unless the recipients were aged, blind, disabled, or unable to work; as indicated, recipients could increase their benefits by working. While Rockefeller announced his proposed welfare reductions, the Republican legislative leaders proposed their own plan to cut \$141 million from welfare spending for the coming year. This proposed cut, targeted New York City, which it would lose \$100 million from its budget; however, this decrease was smaller than the previous plan to cut 12 percent from all recipients' welfare payments.¹²⁷

Because Rockefeller's plan lacked specific dollar amounts, details would be fleshed out in the budgeting process. On March 30, Republican majority leaders proposed

¹²⁵ Ronan, "Rockefeller Urges Year's Residency in Welfare Cases," 1.

¹²⁶ Francis X. Clines, "The Welfare Tangle: Governor Seeks to Cut Both Abuses and Taxes, but Critics See Little Savings," *New York Times*, March 29, 1971, 47.

¹²⁷ Frank Lynn, "\$100-Million in City Aid Cut by Leaders in Albany," *New York Times*, March 28, 1971, 1.

a budget far more fiscally conservative than Rockefeller's. Besides cutting Rockefeller's spending initiatives, it also included a 10 percent income tax increase. The proposal also included a 10 percent decrease in welfare benefits for all recipients, excluding the aged, blind, and disabled—a move that would place New York in the ranks of many states, including those in the Deep South that paid less than the federally recommended standard. These welfare cuts appeared to make the GOP budget more popular. Many Republicans were still not satisfied with this budget proposal, however, because it only created a \$720 million reduction, about half of Rockefeller's original budget increase of \$1.35 billion.¹²⁸ While this budget only increased the cuts Republicans proposed the week before by \$15 million, it was reported that the cut to welfare benefits made it more popular. One conservative from New York City told the *New York Times* that the relief cut "sweetened" the budget for him. As a budget-reduction measure, however, these cuts trimmed only \$159 million from Rockefeller's proposed \$1.2 billion in spending.¹²⁹

On April 2, the Republican-controlled legislature passed a state budget estimated to total \$7.7 billion with a 10 percent reduction in welfare payments.¹³⁰ The budget was finalized a day after it was due, once Rockefeller and the majority leaders agreed to \$43 million in additional reductions. Republicans came to an impasse that posed Rockefeller and the majority of the state's Republican legislators against conservative holdouts from the Syracuse region who were adamantly opposed to new taxes. The additional cut came

¹²⁸ Frank Lynn, "Rockefeller Says State 'Must Tighten Its Belt,'" *New York Times*, January 7, 1971, 1.

¹²⁹ Francis X. Clines, "\$488-Million Rise in State's Taxes is Asked by G.O.P.," *New York Times*, March 31, 1971, 1.

¹³⁰ The Democrats were united in opposition to the budget except for Buffalo Assemblyman Stephen R. Greco, who voted for the one-cent-on-the-dollar increase in the sales tax. In response, Democrats barred him from their conferences that day. Erie County Democratic Chairman Joseph Crangle called Greco "a Judas Iscariot." William E. Farrell, "Budget Package Voted in Albany; Relief Cut 10%," *New York Times*, April 3, 1971, 1, 26.

from the Urban Development Corporation, which would now be required to pay back \$43 million in state loans during the fiscal year. To satisfy holdouts who had opposed Rockefeller's support of the liberalization of abortion laws in the state the previous year, he agreed to sign a bill banning Medicaid payments for abortions and to seek the release of all pending abortion bills from committee for floor debate.¹³¹ Lindsay called the previous week's budget fight "a tragic political spectacle" that ignored the state's cities.¹³² Democratic Legislator Guy R. Brewer of Queens accused "ruthless Republicans" of creating "taxes that exempt the powerful and soak the poor...[and who] would, if they could, repeal the 20th century."¹³³ However, Democrats were not unified in their opposition to the welfare reforms. On April 7, the state legislature passed, and Rockefeller signed, ten bills including a public works mandate or work incentive program that passed 110 to 33. The Republicans were unanimous in their support, but the Democrats were split 31 in favor and 33 against the bill that required employable adults on home relief or dependent-family aid to accept public works jobs to earn the amount of their relief payment. The bill included a stipulation that the worker could earn no more than the amount of his or her welfare check.¹³⁴

As part of its "Incentives for Independence" program, the state proposed, a "Brownie point" plan for West Harlem and Rockland and Franklin Counties, wherein welfare recipients' payments would be cut and they would be encouraged to earn the benefits back if they adopted behaviors deemed constructive by the state. Earlier in the

¹³¹ William E. Farrell, "New Trims Made in State Budget to End Deadlock," *New York Times*, April 2, 1971, 1.

¹³² David K. Shipler, "Lindsay Terms Spending Cuts by the G.O.P. Majority in the Legislature a 'Tragic Political Spectacle,'" *New York Times*, April 2, 1971, 45.

¹³³ William E. Farrell, *New York Times*, April 3, 1971, 1, 26.

¹³⁴ Francis X. Clines, "Rockefeller Signs Bills Reforming Welfare System," *New York Times*, April 8, 1971, 1.

week, Rockefeller had held a press conference during which he explained that an incentives program would make it possible for a mother on welfare to earn \$5 of her benefits that were cut if her child went to school. He also said he wanted to train the children to work three hours on Saturdays to gain “work habits.” His conclusion: “Why should we have a million 600 thousand people on welfare and have filthy cities with the kids having nothing to do?”¹³⁵ This proposal, in particular, drew great criticism from minorities, union leaders, and numerous organizations. Stephen Hill, president of Social Service Employees Union Local 371, called the plan “vicious, racist and inhumane” and said it could incite “violence in the street” because poverty in those areas was already extreme.¹³⁶ Jeanette Washington of the NWRO called Rockefeller “the slavemaster of New York State.”¹³⁷ Ultimately, Rockefeller had to abandon the program in November 1971, after it was rejected by the Federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare, but there remained a possibility that the state might be allowed to enforce other aspects of the work-incentive program.¹³⁸

The following year, during a Senate Finance Committee hearing meeting in February 1972, Rockefeller had a contentious exchange with committee member Senator Abraham Ribicoff of Connecticut, who accused Rockefeller of tainting the debate on welfare reform by repeating inaccuracies about welfare recipients. Rockefeller was in Washington, D.C. to testify before the committee, that was again considering options for a federal takeover of welfare. Both Ribicoff and Rockefeller were in agreement that

¹³⁵ Remarks of Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller at the Presidents’ Club, April 5, 1971, RAC, NAR, folder 1024, box 48, 25 Press Office, RG 15.

¹³⁶ “City is Studying ‘Incentive’ Relief Plans,” *New York Times*, October 10, 1971, 69.

¹³⁷ Kornbluh, *Battle for Welfare Rights*, 165.

¹³⁸ John Darnton, “State Confirms It Has Dropped ‘Brownie Points’ Welfare Plan,” *New York Times*, November 5, 1971, 37.

national standards were needed, but the Connecticut Senator accused Rockefeller of misleading the nation on the welfare issue. After a long exchange filled with aversion on the part of Rockefeller, he admitted that after a six-month investigation of the state's 1.7 million people on welfare investigators found only 152 cases of fraud, of which twenty-one were referred to the district attorney.¹³⁹ After additional questioning, Ribicoff told Rockefeller that the nation was embroiled in a "bitter debate" over welfare and that the problems could not be solved by spreading myths. "I followed your activities in welfare and your restrictive practices in the last 2 years," said Ribicoff, "and what you are doing to imply that 20 percent of the people are trying to cheat....I don't want the word to go out that every one of these people...were cheaters or they come to New York to get welfare. You may resent it or not resent it, Governor Rockefeller, but I want to present the facts as I see them here."¹⁴⁰

The welfare debate had dragged on for years in Washington, D.C. Nixon's Family Assistance Plan, born on August 8, 1969, died an unceremonious death on October 4, 1972. The House passed the "Family Assistance Act of 1970," which included a \$110 per person federal prescribed minimum for needy adults on state welfare rolls on April 16, 1970, with a vote of 243 to 155, but the Senate Finance Committee then rejected the bill. Ultimately, on October 17, 1972, both the House and Senate passed the now renamed "Social Security Amendments of 1972." The bill's passage was possible once the FAP was removed; it did, however, include a "workfare" proposal that would end welfare benefits when a mother's youngest child turned six years old, instead guaranteeing a job

¹³⁹ *Social Security Amendments of 1971*, United States Senate, 92nd Cong. 2162 (1971) (statement of Nelson A. Rockefeller, Governor of the State of New York).

¹⁴⁰ *Social Security Amendments of 1971*, (statement of Nelson A. Rockefeller).

at \$1.20 an hour. Additionally, this bill contained a new federal income guarantee for the aged, blind, and disabled, now renamed the Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which soon grew into an expansive federal benefit, albeit intended for the “deserving” poor.¹⁴¹

Public welfare and welfare reform proposals remained a significant issue throughout the presidential election of 1972. Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern proposed welfare reforms that he called “national income insurance,” but in the face of intense criticism—first from his Democratic opponent, Hubert Humphrey, and then from Nixon—he changed course adding work requirements and a job program to fend off charges of supporting what Humphrey called a “giveaway.” Welfare reform that did not promise savings for taxpayers or a decrease in the welfare rolls was, at best, politically risky. Like many other politicians during the perceived welfare crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Rockefeller reversed his longstanding liberal approach to aiding the poor to fall in line with what public opinion and the political environment seemed to demand.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ The Senate Finance Committee rejected the FAP in favor of the Long plan by a vote of ten to four. Long’s plan was a response to the House Ways and Means Committee’s introduction of the “Social Security Amendments of 1971” that included a revised FAP that raised the income floor to \$2,400 for a family of four to compensate for the elimination of recipients’ eligibility for food stamps.

¹⁴² Before winning the presidential nomination, McGovern proposed providing \$1,000-per-person for every man, woman, and child in America. McGovern criticized FAP for not providing enough assistance to the nation’s poor, many of whom received more in assistance under the current system. Once criticized for the cost of his plan, McGovern revised his plan and emphasized that most of the plan could be covered with the elimination of loopholes. William Greider, “The Politician as Pretzel: Where They Stand,” *Washington Post*, May 28, 1972, B1; Eileen Shanahan, “McGovern Calls for Tax Reform,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1972, 14; and George Lardner Jr. “Tax, Welfare Plan Unveiled By McGovern,” *Washington Post*, August 30, 1972, A1.

Conclusion

A letter, dated May 2, 1972, was sent by Robinson less than six months before his death, was one of many letters that expressed Robinson's great disappointment, frustration, and even sadness caused by Rockefeller's choices after 1968:

Dear Governor Rockefeller:

It is with the greatest difficulty that I write this letter. It's difficult because the one man in public life in who I had complete faith and confidence, does not now measure up to his previous highly laudable stand. It has not been easy taking a stand over the years, but when one believes, as I do, you fight back. I cannot fight any longer, Governor, for I believe you have lost the sensitivity and understanding I felt was yours when I worked with you. Somehow, it seems to me, getting ahead politically is more important to you than what is right. Perhaps you honestly feel you are doing what is right, but it certainly is not the way Governor Rockefeller used to function.

Frankly, if I were asked to give reasons for my feelings I could not pin point them. I am just confused and discouraged and feel a good friend has let me down.

Sincerely,
Jackie Robinson¹⁴³

Shortly after Rockefeller had signed the 1969 budget, which included significant cuts to welfare, Robinson had written another letter to Rockefeller to express his "grave concern" and belief that there was a "conspiracy between Republican and conservative legislators to write legislation," like that year's residency requirement, which Robinson called a "punitive measure for being poor in an affluent society."¹⁴⁴ Rockefeller's reply to that April 10, 1969, letter from Robinson provides insight into Rockefeller's understanding of his rightward shift in politics. Rockefeller wrote:

¹⁴³ Letter to Nelson Rockefeller from Jackie Robinson, May 2, 1972, RAC, NAR, folder 249, box 24, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

¹⁴⁴ Letter to Nelson Rockefeller from Jackie Robinson, April 10, 1969, RAC, NAR, folder 249, box 24, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

Dear Jackie:

I deeply appreciate your letter...especially your expression of friendship and your concern for the people of New York State.

I, too, have been much concerned by developments in recent weeks. Most of all, I regret the impression that somehow I have changed, or have been taken into camp by individuals with whom I have never heretofore been philosophically or politically identified.

The truth is that I have not change, but political circumstances in New York State have changed—and the change lies basically in the adamant, party-line stand taken by the Democratic leadership in the State Legislature....¹⁴⁵

Rockefeller's partisan reply in a year when Republicans controlled both bodies of the state legislature was unlikely to satisfy Robinson entirely. Rockefeller continued to say, however, that in the past he could count on Democratic votes when he needed them, but now that the Democrats had chosen to vote en masse, conservatives within his party had gained "disproportionate influence in setting the tone" of the legislative session.

Rockefeller concluded that the 1969 cuts were not his fault, but rather, the result of state Democrats playing politics in preparation for the 1970 gubernatorial race.¹⁴⁶ Two years later, Hugh Morrow sent Rockefeller a memorandum informing him that he had recently spoken to Robinson. Robinson had told Morrow that while he still believed Rockefeller was a good man, he had little "visible" evidence to cite when he was challenged to defend Rockefeller's record in light of "welfare reform, budget cuts, [and] Attica."¹⁴⁷ On

¹⁴⁵ Letter to Jackie Robinson from Nelson Rockefeller, April 25, 1969, RAC, NAR, folder 249, box 24, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Nelson Rockefeller to Jackie Robinson, April 25, 1969, RAC, NAR, folder 249, box 24, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

¹⁴⁷ Robinson referred to Rockefeller's decision to order a raid on Attica State Penitentiary in 1971, which ended as the nation's deadliest prison uprising. After Rockefeller refused requests from numerous parties to go to the scene to try to lower tensions or negotiate with the inmates, he ordered state troopers to retake the facility. The inmates, who were predominately black and Latino, had filed complaints with anyone who might respond for over a year before the uprising because of harsh treatment and poor conditions in the overcrowded prison. This decision resulted in the deaths of twenty-nine inmates and nine prison guards

this occasion, the defense of Rockefeller's rightward shift was that it was easy to be a "liberal when there's plenty of money, but when money is short there is a point at which you cease to be a liberal and just become a damn fool."¹⁴⁸ Regardless of Rockefeller's explanations to Robinson for the conservative welfare reforms he signed, and his insistence that he had not changed, there was indeed a rightward shift in Rockefeller's record and rhetoric on racially inflected issues.

During his time in public office, Rockefeller relied upon an ability to fuse together a diverse constituency that spanned the political spectrum. However, by the end of the 1960s, it became increasingly difficult to unify Democrats, independents, and Republicans with the promise of socially liberal policies and fiscal responsibility. After Nixon's election, Rockefeller shifted to the right on specific liberal domestic policies that applied to racially controversial issues like welfare reform. Nixon's adoption of conservative rhetoric not only on race but also on the purview of the federal government served him well during the 1968 presidential campaign, and Rockefeller followed suit. By 1969, when Rockefeller's political capital was running low in New York, he decided to accept and take advantage of the conservative answers that a substantial number of Republicans had hoped he would adopt from the days when he first accepted the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1958. The politician who had convinced Nixon that he must accept a liberal plank on civil rights in 1960, no longer had a vigorous liberal consensus to sustain him; it had fractured under the pressure of a slowed economy, rising

who were held hostage. As soon as the raid was over, when it seemed that only inmates were killed in the raid, Rockefeller called Nixon to declare victory. Sam Roberts, "Rockefeller on the Attica Raid, From Boastful to Subdued," *New York Times*, September 13, 2011, A24.

¹⁴⁸ Memo to Nelson Rockefeller from Hugh Morrow, November 10, 1971, RAC, NAR, folder 249, box 24, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

crime, integration, and an over-extended federal government. Liberal Democrats also felt the effects of changing public opinion, but racially liberal Republicans were especially vulnerable as the nation shifted rightward. Rather than risk his own career to defend positions that had lost popularity, Rockefeller embraced policies that degraded his relationship with the black community.

Rockefeller was accustomed to putting a new face on his politics and rhetoric to remain a viable candidate. He did so in 1964 when he tried to present himself as a conservative for the few precious months when he was the party frontrunner, and again, on the campaign trail in 1968, when he assured party delegates and leaders privately that he was a regular Republican whom they could trust, while making public appeals to optimistic and enthusiastic crowds who sought change and reform. When Rockefeller lost in 1964, he went back to New York relatively unchanged; he continued to rely upon the postwar liberal consensus, although he moderated his civil rights stance to avoid its most controversial positions. In 1968, Nixon, a fellow moderate Republican—stripped of the idealism that post-war growth could provide for the nation's privileged and poor alike—beat Rockefeller and became president. While not Rockefeller's polar opposite like Goldwater, Nixon represented a more racially conservative moderate Republicanism that was more palatable to the governor. Nixon's assurances that the nation had come far enough on racial equality and that African Americans only needed extra encouragement to take full advantage of American opportunity meant the majority of the nation could rest and stop worrying about the advancement of civil rights. Once in office, however, Nixon appointed relatively liberal domestic advisers such as Moynihan to act as stewards for domestic policy, and in an era when Washington was dominated by liberal

bureaucrats and great enthusiasm for policy innovation, Republican conservatives were often disappointed that Nixon's policies did not live up to his conservative rhetoric. Nixon did not reverse the social spending that Kennedy and Johnson set into motion, but he did not embrace it wholesale either, Nixon terminated the Office of Economic Opportunity and stripped funding from a clean water bill that passed over his veto, while emphasizing the limitations of government that appealed to Americans who wanted to terminate the largesse of the post-New Deal federal government.¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, in New York, Rockefeller targeted welfare programs for cuts to prove he could live up to a new racial and fiscal conservative standard. Journalists Michael Kramer and Samuel Roberts described the 1968 election as "a very special tragedy" for Rockefeller.¹⁵⁰ From that point forward, they contend that he vacillated between liberal stances during election years and conservative ones in off-years, particularly when it came to the state budget. Rockefeller had always been a pragmatic and adaptable politician, but if there was one special tragedy, or seismic shift, it was that he abandoned the racial liberalism that had been his and his family's most consistent attribute.

¹⁴⁹ Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow*, 312-337

¹⁵⁰ Kramer and Roberts, *Investigative Biography of Nelson Rockefeller*, 333.

Epilogue

The Legacy of Rockefeller Republicanism

Rockefeller was not the only moderate Republican of his era who was pulled between a commitment to progressive government, party affiliation, and increased social and budgetary crises. His rival John Lindsay, for example, who had challenged Rockefeller to support community overview of the New York City Police Department, became a Democrat rather than stay on the periphery of the Republican Party. Moderates and liberals within both major parties struggled to determine what positions they should adopt in relation to welfare, the rising cost of social programs in general, integration, and crime in the late 1960s and early 1970s, underscoring the difficulties inherent to American politics in this period. Lindsay, for example, faced major problems as mayor that included municipal strikes, anger over his support for busing black children to and building low-income housing in predominately white ethnic communities, and claims that he was an ineffectual leader at blame for rising crime rates, unemployment, and drug

addiction in New York City.¹ There was no perfect answer for politicians like Rockefeller and Lindsay.

The rising crime rate became a particularly troublesome issue for Rockefeller and his peers, an issue that could quickly tarnish one's record beyond repair. Rockefeller sought effective solutions within the field of criminal justice as the public's cries for action grew more intense and critics blamed permissive liberals for a seemingly out-of-control crime epidemic. The governor was pulled in numerous and somewhat contradictory directions throughout his time in Albany. While Rockefeller supported the public protests and civil disobedience practiced by civil rights activists and attributed urban riots to inequality and the decline of American cities, he advocated for strengthened police control and involuntary confinement of addicts who he, overtime, viewed primarily as a criminal threat. In an era when voters increasingly blamed liberals for rising crime rates, Rockefeller's frustration over a trend he did not know how to reverse made him inclined to look to calls for personal responsibility and harsher penalties as an answer to crime and increased drug use. It seems that Rockefeller sought some balance—or relief—in relation to these issues that made him more susceptible to criticism. Ultimately, he chose an answer that ushered in an era of unusually punitive laws for the time that filled New York's jails with low-level non-violent black and Hispanic drug offenders, while the crime rate continued to rise. During a recorded interview between Rockefeller advisers Hugh Morrow and Alton Marshall, the latter reflected upon a change he sensed in Rockefeller after 1969: "I believe he had...sort of a metamorphosis" once he realized he could not fix all of the state's problems. "I think he

¹ John Darnton, "He Began with a Major Problem and Learned to Live with Many," *New York Times*, December 16, 1973, 235.

was almost embittered by the fact that the shovel he had was not the tool that he needed...it caused him to overreact perhaps.” Marshall, who left Rockefeller’s staff in January 1971, recalled, “I remember reading with amazement...some of the things that were coming out in 1971....I think it started to blossom in ’71 and got to full bloom in ’72.” Morrow agreed and viewed the Rockefeller Drug Laws, in particular, as proof of that change.²

The Rockefeller Drug Laws

In his annual message to the legislature on January 3, 1973, Rockefeller explained that the state’s law-abiding citizens were terrorized by a “reign of fear” caused by crime and human destruction bred by narcotic addiction. In response, he had designed a program to address addiction, corruption in law enforcement that presumably had allowed it to continue, courts that were slow to bring justice, and a broken “revolving-door” criminal justice system.³ Rockefeller admitted that his previous drug programs that had focused on the rehabilitation of addicts had failed and that it was now time to deter the “pushing of the broad spectrum of hard drugs,” which included heroin, amphetamines, LSD, hashish, and “other dangerous drugs.”⁴ The keystone of Rockefeller’s plan was mandatory life imprisonment for all drug pushers age nineteen and older, without exception. Rockefeller planned to strip judges and juries of all discretionary power and forbid pleas for lesser charges, probation, parole, and suspension of sentences. In this effort to deter the sale and use of drugs through intensified penalties,

² Hugh Morrow Interview of Alton Marshall, October 11, 1979, RAC, NAR, folder 26, box 2, Hugh Morrow Interviews, RG 4.

³ State of New York, *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller Fifty-Third Governor of the State of New York, 1973*, 20-21.

⁴ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1973*, 22.

the governor also called for life sentences for addicts who committed murder, assault, burglary, robbery, rape, and other violent offenses. He likewise sought the suspension of youthful offender laws that reduced sentences for teenagers between ages sixteen and nineteen involved in illegal trafficking, although they would be eligible for parole after fifteen years of imprisonment. Finally, he proposed an incentive program that would pay \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of drug dealers; a 100 percent tax on all money earned and the seizure of all property gained from illegal trafficking; and increased support for the Narcotics Addiction Control Commission (NACC).⁵ In a broader effort to address the public's concern over crime, Rockefeller called for various reforms intended to address wide-spread corruption in the criminal justice system within the courts and police force.⁶

The previous fall, Rockefeller had informed his staff that he wanted life sentences for drug dealers, no matter the amount of drugs found in their possession. The immediate response from his inner-circle was hesitancy and concern that such a proposal would be too drastic, impractical, and even illogical, but Rockefeller insisted that anyone who disagreed must not understand the seriousness of the problem. When Howard Jones, the chairman of the NACC, heard of the proposal, he expressed concern, specifically, noting that courts would be unlikely to hand down such harsh sentences, that jails would soon be overcrowded, that dealers would recruit minors as carriers, and that there was no hope for rehabilitation for first-time offenders. Rockefeller listened in silence and when Jones

⁵ Rockefeller hoped to extend the authority of the Narcotics Addiction Control Commission to give it the authority to make civil commitments for the use of amphetamines, barbiturates, LSD, hashish and other hard drugs, which were not currently under its purview. He also called for the expansion of drug rehabilitation programs for inmates in state correctional facilities. This was to accommodate the governor's other proposal that addicts who were deemed uninterested in rehabilitation to be sent to prison rather than a NACC rehabilitation center. Rockefeller also wanted to increase the security in certain NACC facilities.

⁶ *Public Papers of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 1973, 22-27, 42-43.

finished, Rockefeller asked dismissively, “Is that all?” Once Jones, who was African American, left, Rockefeller remarked, “He’s just worried about his people.” “His people” was a reference to the black community, according to Rockefeller’s speechwriter Joseph Persico.⁷ Jones was not alone in his concerns; Rockefeller’s counsel Michael Whiteman also argued that the law needed to provide some leeway for young and first-time offenders. When Whiteman first told legislators Rockefeller’s plan, they shared in his original shock and some remarked sarcastically, “What’s he sending up next? Death for overtime parking?”⁸ Rockefeller, however, was not deterred, and some of his advisers encouraged him not to address critics as a means to bolster his position. Morrow and Ron Maiorana told him to ignore the *New York Times* and other critics because his current position on drug reform made him appear “tough, righteously indignant, and resolute;” if he responded to criticism, he would appear “quarrelsome” and “defensive.” Rockefeller should, instead, focus on action, not “further rhetoric or explanation...to get as much of [his] program passed as possible.”⁹

Persico attributed his own participation in Rockefeller’s drug laws to groupthink and the resignation that if he refused to write the speeches to aid Rockefeller’s plan, someone else would. Persico also writes that Rockefeller treated dissent as disloyalty and that a couple of staffers’ careers immediately slowed within the administration as a result.¹⁰ While Rockefeller’s proposal had an undeniable appeal to many New Yorkers

⁷ Persico, *Imperial Rockefeller*, 141-143.

⁸ Persico, *Imperial Rockefeller*, 141-143.

⁹ Memorandum from Nelson Rockefeller to Hugh Morrow and Ron Maiorana, January 9, 1973, RAC, NAR, folder 354, box 34, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

¹⁰ Persico, *Imperial Rockefeller*, 144-145.

who were frustrated by drug addiction in the state, studies from the era had not shown that life imprisonment would deter drug trafficking and related crimes.

The black community was divided on Rockefeller's proposals. C. Gerald Fraser of the *New York Times* reported mixed opinions in central Harlem, the community understood to have been affected the most by drug addiction and crime. Some residents expressed wariness because the laws could be an excuse for "snatching brothers off the street," while others feared that the laws would only affect addicts, not drug bosses. Lillie Cain, a woman interviewed for the article, commented: "To catch these young boys around here and give them life. Life is a long time."¹¹ These views were intermixed with support for Rockefeller from Harlem residents who argued that no punishment was severe enough for drug dealers, who they referred to as murderers. A group of black ministers, organized by Reverend Oberia Dempsey, a longtime activist against narcotics, volunteered themselves to refute criticisms that the drug program was anti-black.¹² Rockefeller's staff decided to hold a press conference with Dempsey and his colleagues in the Red Room in Albany, with Rockefeller in attendance, to ensure maximum media exposure on January 22, 1973. The conference would then be condensed to a half-hour tape to be shown at public meetings by the women's division of the Republican Party.¹³

In the Red Room, Rockefeller stated that this was an unusual press conference with three ministers, one civic leader, and one medical doctor, who were there to offer support for the new drug laws; all persons in attendance but one were members of the African American community. Dempsey referred to hard drug pushers as slave masters

¹¹ C. Gerald Fraser, "Harlem Response Mixed," *New York Times*, January 5, 1973, 1.

¹² Memorandum from Hugh Morrow to Nelson Rockefeller, January 15, 1973, RAC, NAR, folder 354, box 34, 21.2 Hugh Morrow General Files, RG 15.

¹³ Connery and Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York*, 132.

who made Harlem the “number one dumping ground for the entire world.” Non-addict drug dealers, he said, were “cruel, inhuman, and ungodly” and filled his community with the living dead—drug addicts—who formed mobs in the streets and terrorized the innocent.¹⁴ Reverend Earl Moore standing in for Reverend Sandy Ray, spoke in biblical terms that compared his own community to the enslaved Israelites of Egypt; the new laws were not too harsh; rather, they were appropriate and necessary: “I come from a land to report that all of the programs that have come down from Egypt, all of the sympathy that has come down from Egypt, has left us wandering and wasted.” Glester Hinds, head of the Peoples Civil and Welfare Association in Harlem, called for the death penalty for drug dealers in addition to more police to walk the streets of the underserved neighborhoods of Manhattan, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, Bushwick, South Bronx, and Harlem. Reverend George Weldon McMurray was in agreement and spoke in equally dramatic terms about the descendants of slaves becoming slaves to drug dependency. He acknowledged that the law may not be perfect, but it was a start, and it could be amended as needed. The final and most colorful speaker was Dr. Robert Baird, who had a practice in Harlem. He spoke of the urban drug crisis spreading to the suburbs, and warned against sympathy for drug dealers who sold drugs to feed their own habit because they were the ones who convinced children to try drugs and used clever tactics to burglarize homes and assault pedestrians to take their valuables. With Baird’s pithy conclusion of

¹⁴ Press Conference with Nelson Rockefeller, January 22, 1973, RAC, NAR, Folder 886, Box 80, 21.4 Morrow Transcripts, RG15.

“so just put that in your pipe, make sure it’s got no pot, and smoke it,” Rockefeller opened the question and answer session.¹⁵

The reporters in attendance were skeptical and sought clarification on the new law that made almost no distinctions for the application of life sentences. As usual, Rockefeller defended his plan and insisted that the severity of the punishment would deter the sale and use of drugs.

Reporter: For example, can my giving someone else a drug be considered [the act of] a pusher if I don’t make any profit out of it?

Rockefeller: You got it. And maybe if that were the case you wouldn’t even consider giving a little something to your friend because you wouldn’t want to take the risk of going for life.¹⁶

The governor was confident in the most controversial aspects of his plan that treated all drug dealers alike, regardless of the amount of drug involved or if the person was sharing the drug with a friend or selling it to support his own habit. Many people wanted a quick and resolute answer to increased drug use in America. Rockefeller encouraged such thinking and codified knee-jerk responses to rising drug use despite a lack of evidence that strict sentencing had ever deterred crime. Furthermore, Rockefeller was not averse to using scare tactics and inflated statistics to try to sway the hesitant. Baird’s final contribution to the event punctuated this point when he told the reporters that if the law was not passed by 1975, they would not be able to report on stories because addicts

¹⁵ Press Conference with Nelson Rockefeller, January 22, 1973, RAC, NAR, Folder 886, Box 80, 21.4 Morrow Transcripts, RG15.

¹⁶ Press Conference with Nelson Rockefeller, January 22, 1973, RAC, NAR, Folder 886, Box 80, 21.4 Morrow Transcripts, RG15.

would steal their camera equipment and everything else when they stepped on the street.¹⁷

The public remained unsatisfied with the state's response to narcotics addiction and illegal narcotics trafficking despite the passage of Rockefeller's program that took effect in 1967 for compulsory treatment of drug addicts and the establishment of the NACC. Public support for stricter sentencing and more emphasis on crimes related to the drug trade and addiction had increased as previous laws failed to curb drug use and the crimes related to it. While Rockefeller conceded that the NACC had been less than successful, there was a growing sentiment among New Yorkers that not enough was being done when the New York City Police Department Narcotics Division reported that in 1971, 20,762 people had been arrested for narcotics, while only 418, or 2 percent, had gone to prison. A commission study of the period between September 1972 and March 1973 found that no jail term had been imposed on over 59 percent of those sentenced for drug felonies.¹⁸ There were some positive indicators in relation to crime, however; addict-related crimes declined in the first eight months of 1972, and the number of incarcerated criminals who required detoxification had fallen.¹⁹ Any positive statistics were lost, however, in a deluge of reports and news stories about rising rates of drug addiction, particularly in New York City. For example, a *New York Times* article from March 21, 1972, reported that the "city's army of addicts" numbered 150,000, while the Medical Examiner's Office stated that 1,259 persons died of narcotics-related causes the year before. The police department reported that 30,351 of the total 196,662 people

¹⁷ Press Conference with Nelson Rockefeller, January 22, 1973, RAC, NAR, Folder 886, Box 80, 21.4 Morrow Transcripts, RG15.

¹⁸ Connery and Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York*, 269.

¹⁹ Connery and Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York*, 271.

arrested for felonies and misdemeanors admitted they were drug users.²⁰ New Yorkers struggled to understand and respond to drug use in an era when the nation was involved in an on-going campaign to reinstitute “law and order” and numerous headlines focused on increased drug addiction. In June of 1971, Nixon declared a war on drugs a month after a report was released that the heroin epidemic had spread to the U.S. servicemen in Vietnam. Rockefeller’s focus on the increased criminalization of drug use and stricter sentencing fit within this broader trend.

During a public appearance a couple of weeks after his initial announcement, Rockefeller reflected on a conversation he had had with a constituent concerned that New York’s new laws would cause drug dealers to leave the state to sell their wares elsewhere. Rockefeller agreed that the laws might be successful enough to chase drug dealers into neighboring states, but the governor said the solution was for the entire nation to follow New York’s lead. Rockefeller’s hope was to influence the nation’s drug policy or at the very least to reinvigorate his reputation as the nation’s politician who took the toughest stand against illegal narcotics and crime.²¹ The penalties under consideration in New York were far less discerning than Nixon’s proposals for the nation. Nixon recommended life sentences be reserved for “major dealers” convicted of a second offense with no right for parole. Hoping to maximize his political gain, the President relied on common conservative criticisms that attributed rising crime to liberals’ “permissive philosophy” that attributed crime to social injustice rather than the criminals themselves. Nixon also

²⁰ “City Drug Statistics Grim,” *New York Times*, March 21, 1972, 31.

²¹ Rockefeller remarks before the Association of Districts Meeting, February 6, 1973, RAC, NAR, Folder 894, Box 80, Series 21.4, Morrow Transcripts, RG 15.

criticized “soft-headed judges and probation officers,” who showed more concern for criminals than victims.²²

By the spring of 1973, half the states in the nation were considering reinstituting the death penalty and by June, thirteen states, including Connecticut, enacted new death penalty laws. The previous summer, the United States Supreme Court, in a split 5-4 decision, had ruled that capital punishment, according to the most limited of the five majority decisions written, was unconstitutional “cruel and unusual” punishment because it was applied in a capricious and irrational manner. Only two of the justices said that capital punishment, however, was inherently unconstitutional. Chief Justice Warren E. Burger suggested in his dissenting opinion that the death penalty could be reinstituted if states rewrote the laws to give judges and juries minimal discretion, such as mandatory sentencing for specific crimes, which would make application of the law more uniform. The Supreme Court’s decisions spared the lives of 631 sentenced inmates in thirty-two states. There had been no executions in the United States since June of 1967, and its use had been infrequent for several years.²³ At the time of the decision, some believed that there was a possibility that the era of capital punishment had passed in America, but they were quickly proved wrong as legislators in state after state sought to reinstate the practice for various crimes. Nixon also expressed support for mandatory death sentences for specific crimes, which reflected the popular sentiment of the nation that capital punishment would deter crime.

²² Warren Weaver Jr., “Gives Drug Plan,” *New York Times*, March 11, 1973, 1.

²³ Lesley Oelsner, “Governor to Seek Death Sentences,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1973, 13; Jerry M. Flint, “States on Move,” *New York Times*, March 11, 1973, 1.

By March of 1973, Rockefeller inserted himself in the capital punishment debate when he suggested that he was giving “very serious consideration” to proposing the death penalty for convicted drug dealers involved in organized crime.²⁴ The *New York Times* called Rockefeller’s latest suggestion “bizarre” and said it reflected his tendency to dramatize the issue of increased drug use in the state without offering reasonable solutions.²⁵ Like much of the nation, New York was also reconsidering its position on capital punishment. In 1965, the New York Legislature voted to confine the death penalty to those convicted of murdering on-duty peace officers and to convicts serving life sentences who murdered prison guards or fellow inmates. Before the 1965 restriction, convictions for murder, treason, or kidnapping could result in capital punishment. In June 1973, the New York State Court of Appeals overturned the state’s death penalty, saying that the state’s juries had too much discretion to decree death. Rockefeller promised to restore the state’s death penalty for murderers of peace officers and prison guards, only to revise his position again in September.²⁶ During a public appearance in Los Angeles, he said if the legislature passed a bill reinstating the death penalty, he would sign it, but if no such bill were passed, he would not propose it.²⁷ Rockefeller embraced a conservative “law and order” stance on most occasions, but there were moments, like his reversal in Los Angeles, and his nominating speech on behalf of Nixon, where glimmers of his previous self shone through.

²⁴ Francis X. Clines, “Governor Weighs Wider Drug Step,” *New York Times*, March 6, 1973, 1.

²⁵ “Now, the Death Penalty,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1973, 42.

²⁶ Oelsner, “Governor to Seek Death Sentences,” 13.

²⁷ “Rockefeller Says He Would Not Veto Death Penalty Bill,” *New York Times*, September 12, 1973, 31. In November 1973, the Supreme Court refused to overturn the New York Court of Appeals decision that the state’s death penalty law was unconstitutional. On May 17, 1974, Governor Malcolm Wilson, Rockefeller’s longtime lieutenant governor, who assumed the governorship after Rockefeller resigned, signed a bill to restore the death penalty in cases where policemen and prison workers were murdered, or when prisoners with life sentences killed another inmate.

Despite initial expressions of disbelief and criticism that Rockefeller's new drug laws were impractical and unworkable, Rockefeller's revised drug laws were popular, and state legislators soon fell in line. Suburban communities, particularly those in Westchester County were in favor of the laws. Although not a perfect indicator, it is notable that the letters Rockefeller received regarding his proposed drug laws were in favor, ten to one. On April 12, 1973, Rockefeller reversed his initial refusal to compromise and revised the initial plan to modify some of the penalties for drug dealers. The state senate passed the legislation on April 27 by a vote of 41 to 14. On May 3, the assembly approved an amended version of the bill by a vote of 80 to 65—the minority Democrats dissented—and on May 7, the Senate passed the amended bill.²⁸ In response to the senate vote, the ACLU reiterated its opposition and called the bill “one of the most ignorant, irresponsible and inhumane acts in the history of the state.”²⁹ Unfazed by the criticism of district attorneys, judges, civil libertarians, the Association of the Bar of the City of New York and Lindsay, Rockefeller claimed that if the law failed, it would be the fault of his critics in the judicial system who had did not enforced it “vigorously and effectively.”³⁰ The amended bill signed by Rockefeller on May 8, 1973, included sentencing distinctions that the governor first refused to consider. For example, a first-time offender, caught distributing a small quantity of a drug would be liable to a class D felony and a maximum of seven years in prison. Calls for this amendment were the most popular during the legislative debates; numerous legislators discussed a need to save the

²⁸ Connery and Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York*, 272.

²⁹ William E. Farrell, “Revised Narcotics Measure is Voted 80-65 in Assembly,” *New York Times*, May 4, 1973, 1.

³⁰ William E. Farrell, “Governor Signs His Drug Bills and Assails the Critics Again,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1973, 1.

hypothetical dieting housewife who was caught giving a friend a dieting pill that contained amphetamines. The new law also made a drug dealer who gave evidence for the prosecution eligible for life probation without a mandatory prison sentence. Hashish, a concentrated version of marijuana, was also removed from the list of dangerous drugs. These changes did not satisfy the majority of Rockefeller's critics, but they convinced numerous Republican legislators to support the bill.³¹ Thanks to Rockefeller's influence in Albany, New York State now had the nation's toughest anti-drug program.

“Political Hysteria” and the New Punitive State

In August 1973, the state launched a \$500,000 advertising campaign, including full-page newspaper advertisements and television and radio commercials warning against “getting caught holding the bag.”³² In the weeks after the law took effect in September, there were immediate results. Blatant drug sales on the street fell into decline along with a sharp reduction in felony arrests, but these reversals soon evaporated. Rockefeller did not have to answer for his new program for long, however, because he submitted his resignation on December 18, 1973 in order to chair both the Commission on Critical Choices for Americans, which he had founded earlier in the year, and the National Commission on Water Quality. The Critical Choices Commission, which Nixon encouraged Rockefeller to make national in scope, would release numerous reports over a two year period, reminiscent of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund Report that the governor oversaw in 1958 and ultimately produced position papers that John Kennedy consulted during his 1960 presidential campaign. This second study was as wide-ranging as the first, but its tone was more subdued with its goal of helping America deal with coming

³¹ Farrell, “Revised Narcotics Measure is Voted 80-65 in Assembly,” 1.

³² Connery and Benjamin, *Rockefeller of New York*, 273.

crises in an era of contracting finances, energy, and other resources.³³ The commission was widely understood as the beginnings of what would be Rockefeller's fourth presidential bid in 1976. In November 1974, the *New York Times*, which had maintained its opposition to the drug laws, calling them "political hysteria," reported that felony arrests in New York City and in upstate New York were on the rise again—and approaching previous levels.³⁴ Several of the initial 209 people sentenced to life sentences for felonies in the first fourteen months appealed the decisions, but New York appellate courts rejected the cases.

Twenty years after the passage of Rockefeller's drug laws, the get-tough legislation proved to be most successful at filling New York's prisons with non-violent drug offenders, who often had no criminal records, and changing the way the drug trade was conducted on the streets. Between 1973 and 1993 the prison population swelled from 18,000 to 65,000. In 1973, 10 percent of the population—around 2,000 people—was incarcerated for possession and sale of narcotics, twenty years later that percentage exceeded one-third.³⁵ Major drug dealers did not leave the state as Rockefeller suggested; instead, they avoided conspicuous drug sales and used low-level couriers—even sometimes unsuspecting women who did not know what they were transporting—to handle the drugs for them. As the twentieth anniversary of the Rockefeller drug laws approached, Joseph R. Lentol, Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Codes, held

³³ The panel included thirty-five participants from across the political spectrum in business, politics, and government such as Secretary of the Treasury George Schultz, Daniel P. Moynihan, former Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen Jr., historian Daniel J. Boorstin, agronomist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Norman E. Borlaugh, Chairman of CBS William S. Paley, and publisher of the *New York Amsterdam News* Clarence B. Jones; and Francis X. Clines, "Panel on Choices for U.S. is Named," *New York Times*, November 18, 1973, 45.

³⁴ Peter Kihiss, "209 Convicted Under Strict Drug Law," *New York Times*, November 10, 1974, 1.

³⁵ New York State Legislature, Assembly, Standing Committee on Codes, *Public Hearing on the Rockefeller Drug Laws—20 Years Later* (Albany, NY: M. F. Emsing, 1993), 6-7.

hearings to examine their efficacy. When the legislature had passed the laws in 1973 during Lentol's first year in office, the Democrat had voted against the bill; and in 1993, he hoped that holding hearings on the laws' failure to incarcerate drug kingpins or reduce drug addiction would begin the process of reform, although there was little interest among his legislative colleagues. Get-tough approaches were just as, if not more, politically enticing in 1993, as they had been twenty years earlier. While Lentol hoped the state would seek alternatives to the failed drug program, Republican New York City mayoral candidate Rudy Giuliani called for the arrest of more low-level drug dealers, saying that the city's decision to shift its focus from the lowest levels of the drug trade to concentrate on major drug dealers sent the wrong message.³⁶

In 1973, Rockefeller argued that his previous focus on rehabilitation had failed, and, as a result, he would focus on removing drug dealers from the street, but the hearings revealed that his law was best-suited to send drug addicts, rather than dealers to prison. Thomas Coughlin, Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services testified on June 8, 1993, that on average, addicted inmates spent twenty-four months in prison treatment centers, which cost \$100,000 to build the cell/prison bed and \$25,000 a year to maintain; while treatment in a community rehabilitation center cost \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year. The day that Coughlin testified he said that 1,750 people were waiting to enter the New York State prison system, 45 percent were non-violent drug offenders.³⁷ Other critics noted that the Rockefeller drug laws had not reduced drug related crimes. Joe Hynes, District Attorney of Kings County, testified that in 1971, 15 percent of crimes

³⁶ In 1993, there were 65,000 arrests related to drug dealing in comparison to 95,000 in 1989. Todd S. Purdu, "Rudolph Giuliani and the Color of Politics in New York," *New York Times*, July 25, 1993, SM24.

³⁷ New York State Legislature, *Public Hearing on the Rockefeller Drug Laws—20 Years Later*, 11-12.

processed were drug related, and, in 1975, the percentage had already begun to rise. In 1990, drug related crime reached 80 percent. Even worse, according to Hynes, murders in New York City regularly exceeded 2,000 and were often drug related. When Lentol asked Hynes whether the drug laws were successful, his response was resolute: “The answer for me is quite simple: [Have] the Rockefeller Drug Laws worked? Absolutely not. Surely it did not work the way Governor Rockefeller intended.”³⁸

In an era when the unemployment rates for teenagers soared and when many of the unemployed sought illegal means of generating income—sometimes to support their drug habits—the Rockefeller drug laws sent them to jail to rid the community of their criminal activity. The laws were found to target poor and minority offenders while exempting the wealthy, and as a result, the overwhelming majority of those imprisoned for drug offenses were black and Latino. Rockefeller’s demand for mandatory sentences was a notion that was growing in popularity as states sought ways to limit judicial discretion when many believed liberal judges had begun to put criminals’ interests before victims. This was also the period when states reestablished the use of capital punishment by imposing mandatory sentences to meet the standard suggested by the Supreme Court. As of 2004, blacks and Latinos constituted on average 85 percent of the people indicted for drug felonies and 94 percent of those sent to prison.³⁹ In 2004 and 2005, Governor George E. Pataki signed two bills into law that began the process of chipping away at the mandatory sentencing demanded by the Rockefeller drug laws. The first reform gave prisoners convicted of Class A-2 felonies the opportunity to petition for resentencing and

³⁸ New York State Legislature, *Public Hearing on the Rockefeller Drug Laws—20 Years Later*, 26-30.

³⁹ Edward J. Maggio, “New York’s Rockefeller Drug Laws, Then and Now,” *New York State Bar Association Journal*, September 2006, 30-34.

early release. The second, made it possible for those convicted of Class A-1 felonies to petition for a reduction in their mandatory sentences. At the time Pataki signed the bills, 986 inmates were eligible for reduced sentences.⁴⁰ Some leniency would be shown to those who faced the harshest of sentencing in comparison to their crimes, but Rockefeller's laws still prevented judges from having the discretion to send drug-addicted dealers to treatment, rather than to prison.

It took thirty-six years for the mandatory sentencing component of the drug laws to be repealed. Opposition to the laws persisted throughout that period, but critics were up against what had become a national trend of mandatory sentencing for drug crimes and the creation of what is now known as the prison industrial complex that is disproportionately populated by African Americans and Latinos. In that time, the laws had gained the reputation for being ineffective as the number of those convicted for drug related crimes soared as the crime and murder rates rose and fell irrespective of the drug laws. While district attorneys opposed the laws before they were passed, by the 2000's prosecutors and district attorneys were among some of the most vocal opponents of reform. Bills aimed at reforming the drug laws routinely passed the Democratic-led assembly in New York, but died in the senate, which remained in Republican control until 2009, the year the laws were finally reformed. Democratic Governor David A. Paterson and the state legislature came to an agreement in March 2009, a month shy of the thirty-sixth anniversary of the passage of the Rockefeller drug laws. The new law repealed mandatory minimum prison sentences for lower-level drug felons with no previous records, expanded drug treatment programs, widened the reach of drug courts,

⁴⁰ Michelle O'Donnell, "Pataki Signs Bill Softening Drug Laws," *New York Times*, August 31, 2005, B6.

and allowed people already in jail to apply to have their sentences commuted. Paterson, however, limited the number of prisoners who could apply for commuted sentences and did not request that the legislation be made retroactive, a change that would have made 2,000 prisoners eligible for resentencing. These measures were intended to help the law pass the senate, which was split 32-30 between Democrats and Republicans.⁴¹ Ultimately, the drug laws, and the quick-fix method to crime control that they reflect, remained in 2009 as controversial—and politically enticing—as they had been when Rockefeller first proposed them.

The Problem with Labels

Date: August 23, 1972

Dear Mr. Governor,

Eight years ago I wrote to thank you for your courageous effort to prevent the nomination of a very dangerous man as the Republican candidate for the Presidency of the United States. You failed at the convention, but fortunately the electorate vindicated you at the polls.

For years you have represented a liberal and progressive hope in the Republican Party. For years you have worked against the extremism of the Right Wing.

Tonight, when you made a nominating speech for Richard Nixon, my heart was sad. “How are the mighty fallen!” I felt. I feel like some of the anti-slavery people felt in 1850 when the great Daniel Webster spoke in favor of compromise with the forces of slavery.

Richard Nixon doesn’t need your help. The Republicans who booed you when you tried to appeal for reason eight years ago, were very faint in their applause tonight. You did not rise in their esteem. You dropped in the esteem of a few of us who would like to remain members of the Republican Party, but seeing the continuing slaughter

⁴¹ Although Republicans did receive some concessions, they were angered by Paterson’s decision to reduce the amount of notice communities received when a prison was set to be closed from one year to ninety-days. Prison closures were expected as a result of the new reforms and Republicans, who represented the rural upstate communities that hosted prisons, had blocked such closures for decades. Jeremy W. Peters, “Paterson is Said to Seek Narrower Overhaul of Drug Laws,” *New York Times*, March 11, 2009, A26.

in Vietnam are getting to the point where conscience will not allow us to support Richard Nixon.

Why, O Why did you do it?

Sincerely yours,
Eugene K. Nelson⁴²

Eugene Nelson, of Lindsborg, Kansas, turned on the Republican National Convention on August 22, 1972, and was dismayed to see Nelson Rockefeller take the podium to deliver Richard Nixon's nominating speech. Rockefeller's speech may have disappointed moderate Republicans whose fondest memories of the governor were of him challenging his party at the 1960 and 1964 conventions, but anyone who had paid attention to his activities since Nixon's inauguration was unlikely to be surprised. Rockefeller had become an unfailing supporter of the president, including his record on Vietnam. Earlier in the year, for example, Rockefeller offered public support for Nixon's proposed moratorium on busing, despite calls from the New York State Board of Regents—the state's highest education policy-making body—to implement the practice in New York to realize the goal of integration set by the Supreme Court's 1954 Brown v. Board of Education ruling.⁴³ If one listened to Rockefeller and set aside the fact that he was delivering a speech to nominate Nixon—and his own rightward shift in recent years—it sounded as if the governor was describing the progressive presidency that he

⁴² Letter to Nelson Rockefeller, August 23, 1972, RAC, NAR, folder 1878, box 89, 24 Political Files, RG 15.

⁴³ The state legislature in New York passed an antibusing bill in 1969, which Rockefeller signed, but it was declared unconstitutional by federal courts a year later. Despite Rockefeller's support of a moratorium, he vetoed a new anti-busing bill passed by the state legislature in May 1972, because it was similar to the bill that was ruled unconstitutional. The *New York Times* noted that the ban held little substantive significance because no more than 35,000 students were bused in the state and all did so on a voluntary basis. William E. Farrell, "Rockefeller Backs Nixon on a Busing Moratorium," *New York Times*, March 22, 1972, 1; "Regents Discuss Issue of Busing," *New York Times*, March 24, 1972, 46; and William E. Farrell, "Governor Vetoes Antibusing Bill; Cites 1970 Ruling," *New York Times*, May 15, 1972, 1.

had always sought for himself. Rockefeller praised the president as a forward-thinking leader who had deescalated the war in Vietnam, improved the nation's international standing through diplomacy, protected the nation's environment, restructured the federal government to make it "more responsive to human needs," and doubled the "human resources budget" to achieve human dignity through civil rights, equal opportunity, education, and health. According to Rockefeller, Nixon had also achieved balance between the provision of progressive programs and fiscal responsibility by initiating federal revenue sharing to improve government services for the people, reforming welfare to help those in need and protect taxpayers, and cutting waste and red-tape from the bureaucratic federal grant-in-aid system.⁴⁴ Rockefeller may have sounded like he did ten years prior, but he no longer challenged his party to be more progressive, he fell in line and praised it.

Frank Lynn of the *New York Times* wrote that Rockefeller's appearance in support of his former rival "seemed to complete the transformation of Mr. Rockefeller from a liberal maverick to a mainstream Republican."⁴⁵ Rockefeller, however, refuted such conclusions. In his reply to Eugene Nelson's letter, Rockefeller stated that while he understood and appreciated the letter writer's sentiments "I do not feel the issue is ideological." Rockefeller said that he supported Nixon because it was obvious that he would do a better job as president than George McGovern.⁴⁶ Rockefeller's praise of progressive policies and active government—à la Richard Nixon—suggest that his

⁴⁴ Republican National Convention, *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Thirtieth Republican National Convention held in Miami Beach, Florida, August 21, 22, 23, 1972 resulting in the nomination of Richard M. Nixon, of California, for President and the nomination of Spiro T. Agnew, of Maryland, for Vice President* (Washington, D.C.: Republican National Committee, 1972), 316-318.

⁴⁵ Frank Lynn, "Rockefeller Names Nixon, His Old Rival," *New York Times*, August 23, 1972, 1.

⁴⁶ Letter from Nelson Rockefeller to Eugene K. Nelson, September 22, 1972, RAC, NAR, folder 1878, box 89, 24 Political Files, RG 15

values may have been unchanged at his core, but budgetary battles, declining political prospects, and increased conservative pressure changed the way he governed and led him to reserve his most liberal notions for ceremonial speeches.

Rockefeller spent his entire political career looking to evade, reinterpret, or deny the labels associated with him, particularly when he sought acceptance from fellow Republicans. After his shift away from the forefront of the struggle for black equality, Rockefeller adopted a similar practice of evasion and denials when people questioned his decisions that placed him at odds with minorities and undermined efforts to end segregation and economic inequality during his third and fourth terms in office. Rockefeller's final years in office left him with a muddled and conflicted legacy in the post-civil rights era North. Rockefeller was a firm believer that good government—that is, good governance—improved people's lives. As a result, he had entered public life with the goal of becoming president primarily because it would enable him to effect the most positive change. He chose the Republican Party because historically the GOP had been the party of noblesse oblige; it was the natural home for him as the Party of Lincoln, his father, and his grandfathers. After three failed attempts to win the Republican presidential nomination, Rockefeller chose a more conservative path that would no longer put him in the vanguard of his party on the major racial issues of the day, even when his new stance on welfare, for example, contradicted his previous assertions that the nation was duty-bound to provide such assistance.

Rockefeller's shifting positions were not the result of any one impetus. His declining political prospects were undoubtedly always a concern, but he also expressed frustration when he believed the people he had tried to aid in his earliest years in office

had somehow reneged on the social contract he had made with them. There was also the issue of continuing to build cross-party alliances when voters grew weary of the spending necessary to keep social programs apace with the growing needs of the citizenry. These tensions only strained race relations and created divisions that conservative Republicans would soon use to help them lure working-class whites away from the Democratic Party. One might believe that the problems of New York State were simply too complex or persistent for Rockefeller to solve, but his difficulties were experienced by numerous politicians across the nation. Rockefeller and moderate Republicans never had all the answers, but they were a vital part of American politics and the New Deal consensus and in the best of times were able to help build bonds and form compromises between Republicans and Democrats. Without them, the political landscape became more polarized and there were fewer politicians willing to argue for bipartisan support for a responsive government that provided a safety net for Americans. Labels always posed a problem for Rockefeller, but his greatest troubles arose from a waning postwar consensus and the polarization of the American political landscape.

Nelson Rockefeller's political career reveals that the passage of 1960s federal civil rights legislation was a major victory in America, but also the beginning of a new era of racial politics that many politicians were unprepared to navigate. The New York governor who had always seen himself as a friend to the African American community found himself at odds with its interests. Rockefeller insisted that he had not changed, only the circumstances in which he found himself. While the question of whether he changed at his core is debatable, it is undoubtedly true that times had indeed changed. The budget battles, welfare debate, focus on crime, and integration efforts in the North challenged

Rockefeller to find new answers, some of which explicitly contradicted his previous positions. Rockefeller was not in a vacuum, however, he had to attend to an electorate that at first largely supported the civil rights movement, but grew weary and resentful when it was told that equality of opportunity was as important as equality under the law. The racial tension of the 1960s complicated and intensified numerous debates that were not explicitly about race. The racialization of welfare and crime encouraged people to focus on stereotypes and recrimination rather than remedies for inequality in America, and in 1970, unlike 1960, Rockefeller did not encourage the public to look beyond its discomfort and advance equality first and foremost, he focused on political necessity and the immediate challenges of public office.

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