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The New Majority: The "Leave Us Alone" Coalition

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Grover Norquist is president of a 60,000-member organization of individuals, taxpayer groups, and businesses called Americans for Tax Reform. He also writes a monthly column for the *American Spectator* and co-hosts a monthly television show, *Ways and Means*, on National Empowerment Television. In the past, he has been an economist and chief speechwriter for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and executive director of the National Taxpayer's Union and College Republicans.



Mr. Norquist holds a B.A. and a M.B.A. from Harvard University. One of the key architects of the Congress's "Contract with America," he has been the subject of lengthy profiles in such sources as the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*. He is also the author of *Rock the House* (1995). ▲

Grover Norquist argues that we are in the midst of an historic shift in American politics away from liberalism and Democratic Party dominance and toward a conservative "Leave Us Alone" coalition that is led by Republicans but that is actually broader and more profound than any party label suggests. His remarks were delivered at Hillsdale College's Shavano Institute for National Leadership seminar, "The Future of American Business," in Sarasota, Florida in January 1996. The seminar and this month's issue of Imprimis were made possible by the Edward Lowe Foundation, a private nonprofit foundation devoted to free enterprise education.

On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall opened for the first time. That crack widened until the wall fell and the entire Soviet empire was overthrown within three years.

Five years later, almost to the day, we awoke to the news of another revolutionary change. On November 8, 1994, the American people went to the polls and for the first time in forty years elected a Republican majority in the House and Senate.

House Republicans campaigning on the promise of a 10-point "Contract with America" to reduce the size, scope, and power of the federal government elected 73 new Republicans and gained a net 52 House seats. Senate Republicans gained eight additional seats. Then five Democrat House members and two Democrat senators switched parties and gave the Republicans a 235-200 majority in the House and a 54-46 majority in the Senate.*

*Republicans gained one seat when Tom Campbell won the open seat vacated by Norm Mineta (D-CA) and lost one senate seat when Bob Packwood's seat vacated by resignation was won in a special election by Ron Wyden (D-OR).

The capture of Congress by those committed to reversing sixty years of growth and centralization of the national government was just the tip of a larger iceberg. The Republican Party gained 11 new governorships. Now, with the addition of the Louisiana governorship won in November 1995 by Mike Foster, Republicans claim 31 of 50 governors nationwide. Seventy-two percent of Americans live in states with Republican governors. In addition, Republicans won a net gain of 480 state legislative seats and literally thousands of local offices. After the November 1994 election, more than 200 elected officials switched from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party.

Real power changed hands.

Before the November 1994 election there were 17 states where the Democrats controlled the governorship and both houses of the state legislature. In those states all labor laws, taxes, regulations, all election laws, and all campaign finance laws were controlled by one party. The Republican Party had such complete control in only three states: Utah, Arizona, and New Jersey. (In 1993, New Jersey was won in the wake of an anti-tax revolt that swept former governor Jim Florio from office.)

In the wake of the 1994 election, the Democrats now control the executive and legislative branches in only seven states: Hawaii, Georgia, and the states on the rim of the old Confederacy—Arkansas, Missouri, Kentucky, West Virginia and Maryland. Republicans hold the governorship and both houses of the legislature in 15 states, including such large population centers as New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois.

The depth and breadth of the 1994 election changes demonstrate that the Republican Party is now the natural governing majority party in the United States. The old majority, the Democrat coalition—crafted by Franklin Roosevelt and comprised of Southerners, northern immigrants, union members, big city political machines, and leftist intellectuals—is no longer the force it once was.

Who Belongs?

The old Republican coalition of northerners, big business, farmers, and professionals has given way to a modern Republican coalition of individuals and groups who share a common political goal: They all want to be left alone by the government.

This “Leave Us Alone” coalition is made up of taxpayers who oppose higher taxes and farmers and property owners who don’t want the federal government making their property useless by

declaring it a wetland or endangered species habitat or by inventing some other regulation. The coalition also includes Westerners who resent being treated as a colony and having their water and land rationed by eastern bureaucrats. The 17 million small businessmen and women who fear taxes and regulation, the self-employed attacked by regulations and labor laws written for General Motors in the 1940s, and gun owners who do not want their guns stolen have joined as well. And the “Leave us Alone” coalition provides a haven for the one million parents who educate their children at home and the 12 percent of parents who send their children to private schools.

During the Cold War, Americans who were rightly concerned about the threat of Soviet imperialism were a strong part of the “Leave Us Alone” coalition. They wanted to be left alone from foreign aggression. Today, Americans with the same concern about predatory criminals are also part of the coalition. They know that the Left’s response to the Soviet Union—that it wasn’t hostile, that it wasn’t a real threat, and that it behaved badly only because we mistreated it—is also the Left’s response to crime and criminals. They also know that the Left’s solution to crime, which is gun control, mirrors its belief that unilateral arms control was the proper response to the Red Army.

And the pro-family, traditional values conservatives are an important part of the “Leave Us Alone” coalition. The so-called “Religious Right” did not organize in the wake of the Supreme Court decision banning school prayer, or even after *Roe v. Wade*. The development of a national grassroots conservative activism grew out of a self-defensive response to threats from the Carter administration to regulate Christian radio stations and to remove the tax-exempt status of Christian private schools.

In political terms, the pro-family movement can best be understood as a parents’ rights movement. Its members fight against government interference and spending (financed by their own tax dollars) that insults and attacks their values and their faith. Pro-family leaders fight for school choice and the right of parents to direct the education of their own children. They have led the fight to win a \$500-per-child tax credit so that parents can have the resources to take care of their own families rather than have their income laundered through Washington and returned in the form of day care centers, educational bureaucracy, and social engineering.

The good news for conservatives is that every part of this coalition is growing—in numbers and political sophistication. While the National Rifle Association has three million members and the Christian Coalition has one million members, when polled, fully 20 percent of Americans

believe they are members of the NRA and 19 percent of Americans identify themselves as members of the Christian Coalition. More than 600,000 businesses are members of the National Federation of Independent Business, and every year more Americans strike out on their own in the marketplace.

Also important for the future is the fact that the “Leave Us Alone” coalition is built around a single political principle consistent with American history and tradition—that government should be limited and the people free. As such, it is a “low maintenance” coalition. Conservative leaders can meet in a room, and the taxpayers can agree not to throw condoms at the children of Christians and orthodox Jews, the gun owners can agree not to raise everyone else’s taxes, the Christians can agree not to steal anyone’s guns, and they can all agree not to take anyone’s property. Everyone in the coalition can agree to keep out of the pockets and faces of everyone else. United, they can turn to do battle with the Left. In America, unlike Europe, traditionalists and supporters of limited government are allies, since America’s political tradition is one of ingrained distrust for centralized authority.

The “Takings” Coalition

The Left as embodied in the Democratic Party is a “Takings” coalition made up of groups that want the government to take things—usually money—from other Americans and give it to *them*. This coalition includes government workers, unions, government contractors, corrupt big city machines, federal grant recipients, left-wing intellectuals, and both wings of the “dependency lobby” (those locked into welfare dependency and those who earn a handsome living managing that deliberately never-ending dependency). A recent addition has been the new paymasters of the “Takings” coalition: trial lawyers.

Within these economically self-interested groups are the radical utopians who wish to use the power of the state to restructure society. They include the radical leaders of the feminist, homosexual, environmentalist, and animal rights

movements. (And don’t forget the anti-military pacifists, who would now have us surrender our sovereignty to the United Nations instead of the Soviet Union.)

The bad news for the “Takings” coalition is that each of its parts is shrinking and what remains is fractured and divided. Labor union bosses are having trouble forcing a younger, more independent workforce into the harness of paying union dues. In state after state, citizens are pushing trial lawyers’ litigious hands out of their pockets. Reduced federal spending, resulting from the Republican Party’s drive for a balanced budget, is forcing cutbacks in patronage hiring by corrupt big city machines. State by state, Republican governors are passing welfare reforms that require work, limit dependency, and displace parasitic social workers. And the radical utopians with their plans to remake society are finding that the new Congress is cutting back and threatening to ban the use of tax dollars for political advocacy.

When Bill Clinton was elected with 43 percent of the vote in November 1992, he knew that the “Takings” coalition that he led was no longer the governing majority. Just look at the numbers for Democrats in the last 30 years. In 1968, the liberal candidate for president received 42 percent in 1968 and 38 percent in 1972. In 1976, the Democrats promoted a more popular candidate who was a Southern Baptist, a naval officer, and an anti-Washington populist. The candidate was Jimmy Carter, but after he became president, he governed as a liberal and dropped to 41 percent in 1980. Walter Mondale won 41 percent of the vote in 1984 after promising to raise taxes, and Mike Dukakis won with the liberal high watermark of 46 percent in 1988.

President Clinton therefore, knew that he would have to spend all of his first term accomplishing two tasks: dividing the center-right “Leave Us Alone” coalition and increasing the number of Americans dependent on government who would become permanent fixtures in the “Takings” coalition. His drive for a government takeover of health care—fully 15 percent of the nation’s economy—thus has had nothing to do with health insurance and everything to do with power politics.

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Clinton has tried to turn the United States into a social democracy where the government is in control of not only our health care but our education, our retirement, and 40 percent of our jobs. He knows that socialized medicine is the key to controlling other aspects of our lives. If it were introduced in America, it would be here to stay.

The "Takings" coalition almost won on health care in 1994. Moderate Republicans expected to "make a deal" that would allow a gradual expansion of state power in health care if the President approached them. But Clinton never did. His hubris saved us from nationalized health care.

Having failed to turn America permanently down the path of social democracy, Clinton has hoped to divide the "Leave Us Alone" coalition by attacking social conservatives as those who would impose their morality on others. This effort has also failed. Home schoolers do not wish to force other parents to home school. Gun owners do not insist that others buy guns, or that hunting be promoted as an alternative lifestyle. It is not the National Rifle Association out lobbying to have government schools read books entitled *Heather Has Two Hunters* to preschoolers.

It is, in fact, the Left that now strives to use state power to impose its morality by forcing all taxpayers to pay for abortions and public "art" that mocks people of faith. It is the Left that forces parents to pay for government schools where they do not wish to send their children.

Four Steps Toward Freedom

The "Leave Us Alone" coalition has now consciously embarked on a four-part strategy to defeat the Washington establishment and the old Democratic majority. It is the same strategy that successfully broke the back of the Soviet empire.

The first step is containment. During the Cold War, Ronald Reagan made the promise of containment a reality. The Soviet Union ceased to expand and was challenged at its outermost colonies in Angola, Nicaragua, Afghanistan and Cambodia. Containment in the struggle against Washington translates into the commitment to oppose any and

all tax increases. Today, 206 representatives and 32 senators have taken the Taxpayer Protection Pledge against raising taxes. Denied additional tax revenues, the members of the "Takings" coalition have begun to turn against each other. Like gangs of muggers finding the streets empty of tourists, they begin to look at each other as funding sources.

The second step is ending the Left's sense of inevitability. The communists really did believe that their victory was historically and scientifically inevitable. Many anti-communists also believed this. When Whittaker Chambers left the Communist Party and became a conservative, he commented that he believed he was joining the

"losing side of history." In the 1950s, William F. Buckley said that the job of conservatives was to stand athwart History and yell, "Stop." Imagine how difficult it was to recruit people to a movement where they were required to stand on the train tracks and be run down by "History." It might have been the virtuous position, but it was a tough sell.

Ronald Reagan and Newt Gingrich have promoted an optimistic and forward-looking conservatism. Reagan told the communists they would be swept into the ashbin of history. During the 1980s, the idea of an inevitable Soviet victory faded. What became inevitable was the breakup of the empire. Today, devolution of power to the states, a private Social Security system, school choice, and welfare reform are viewed as inevitable.

The third step is seizing the moral high ground. Communists used to argue that they would do great things for humanity. Yes, there always seemed to be a great deal of blood on the floor and walls, but these sacrifices, these "broken eggs," would one day make a glorious omelet. Eventually, however, even once enthusiastic proponents of communism lost their faith that all the blood would result in progress. At the end, the border guards in East Berlin did not believe strongly enough to pull the trigger.

Today, in Washington, D.C., no one believes in the moral superiority of statism. Even liberal politicians know that welfare does not help the poor. They know that every day the welfare state destroys the futures and even the lives of individuals. But they claim that they are powerless to stop

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the monster they have created. The dependency managers of the welfare state dominate their political conventions and the mindless destruction goes on just as the Soviet Union went on, without believers at the helm. Conservatives know and can articulate that their opposition to welfare spending is not based just on concerns about wasted money but on a principled opposition to the welfare state's destruction of lives. The "Leave Us Alone" coalition has the moral high ground, and the Left knows it.

The fourth step is defunding the opposition. Reagan cut off loans and strategic trade with a Soviet empire unable to create wealth and technological progress. Conservatives are beginning to cut off the flow of taxpayer funds and coerced labor union dues to the Left. When Republicans succeeded in cutting the Legal Services Corporation (a government agency that funds left-wing lawyers) by as little as \$100 million, it was the equivalent of the Left burning down five Heritage Foundations in terms of denying resources to the other side.

In fact, every \$1 billion cut from the budget ends the funding for 20,000 government workers receiving an average pay and benefits package of \$50,000. Should the Republicans succeed in reducing government spending by \$200 billion a year from projected trends, in 2002, some four million Americans who would have been dependent on government spending, loans, or jobs will be in the private sector. As the Marxists say, these four million who would have "objectively" become members of the "Takings" coalition will now become members of the "Leave Us Alone" coalition.

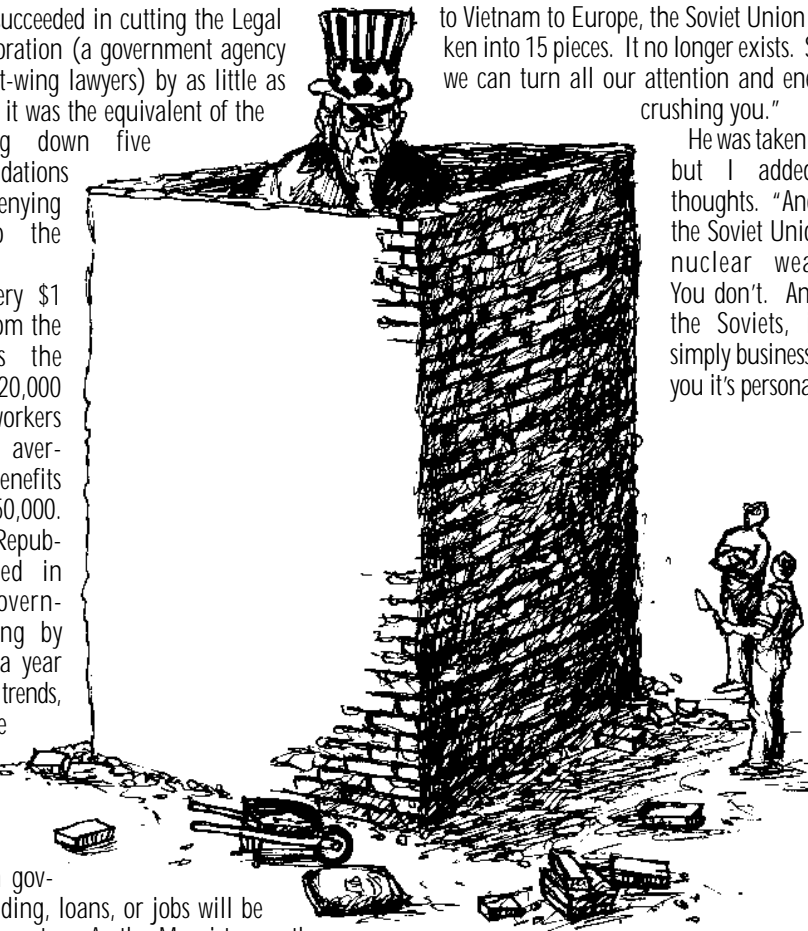
Defunding the Washington establishment is defunding the Left and cutting off its supply lines. This is especially important since more than 75 percent of the American Left lives off our tax dollars.

Freedom Is on the March

Let me close with an anecdote from a reunion meeting of my liberal college newspaper that took place in 1991. A now prominent liberal writer came up to me and said, "Grover, you conservatives must be so unhappy now that Bush has betrayed you on taxes."

"Nick," I replied, "for 40 years American conservatives had to fight a two-front war against Soviet imperialism abroad all the while domestic statisticians were gnawing at our legs. Today, thanks to the leadership of Ronald Reagan and the sacrifice of millions of American servicemen from Korea to Vietnam to Europe, the Soviet Union is broken into 15 pieces. It no longer exists. So now we can turn all our attention and energy to crushing you."

He was taken aback, but I added two thoughts. "And Nick, the Soviet Union had nuclear weapons. You don't. And with the Soviets, it was simply business. With you it's personal."



Freedom is on the march around the globe. There is a great deal of work to be done, but the imperial city of Washington will fall to the forces of freedom just as Moscow did. It is as hollow, as brittle, and as bereft of self-confidence. The "Leave Us Alone" coalition is growing, and it is fighting on the winning side of history. ▲

A Call to Action for the Future of Small Business

Hillsdale College's Shavano Institute for National Leadership held a seminar in Sarasota, Florida on January 28-29, 1996 called "The Future of American Business." This program was sponsored by the Edward Lowe Foundation.

Darlene Lowe, chairman of the board, president, and chief executive officer of the Edward Lowe Foundation, urged more than 600 business and community leaders attending the Shavano Institute for National Leadership conference to destroy the governmental barriers standing in the way of success.



Shavano brought together nationally-recognized figures to discuss "The Future of American Business." Gathering for the conference were (from left to right), U.S. Representative Dan Miller, (R-Florida); George Roche, president of Hillsdale College; Darlene Lowe, president of the Edward Lowe Foundation; and Robert Novak, syndicated newspaper columnist and political commentator.

In Sarasota, Dr. George Holladay and President George Roche formally announced the establishment of the Holladay/Armey Scholarship for Hillsdale College students majoring in economics, political science, political economy or journalism.





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