“What Can I, One Housewife, Do?”: Conservative Media and Movement Building

This paper is an excerpt of Chapter 3 of my dissertation, “Messengers of the Right: Media and Modern American Conservatism,” in which I argue that conservative media were central to the development of postwar conservatism in America. The dissertation examines the career of Clarence Manion, host of the Manion Forum, a nationwide conservative radio program that aired from 1954 through 1979. This paper picks up the story in the late 1950s and early 1960s, after Manion had severed the show’s network contract after the network refused to air an interview with an industrialist locked in a protracted, violent strike with the United Auto Workers. In 1958, when this paper begins, the Forum aired on over 100 independently-contracted stations.

The first two chapters of Messengers of the Right trace the emergence and struggles of early conservative media; Chapter 3 focuses on the relationship between conservative media and movement-building. The movement-building discussed in this chapter is organization-based rather than election-based. Those in conservative media were deeply involved in electoral politics during the late 1950s and early 1960s, a subject covered in Chapter 4.

As a note: college students played a vital role in conservative movement-building, particularly through Young Americans for Freedom and the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. I examine the role of college conservatives and the campus environment in Chapter 3, but that discussion has been omitted from this abridged paper.

"You know, Mr. Manion, after hearing all these startling, shocking things, a question comes to mind: What can I, one housewife, do?"[i]

"Please reiterate what one individual can do…I feel hypocritical simply being an irate armchair citizen; but I feel hopeless and powerless as an individual in the face of these objectives."[ii]

Less than half a year after the Manion Forum's launch, Clarence Manion spent a program going through mail from listeners. The letters expressed frustration with prevailing news coverage, with political blackout of their views, with liberal consensus. The writers felt isolated, alone. But this loneliness, Manion reassured them, was "only apparent: it is not real." That he received the tens of thousands of letters at a time when his coverage area was still small demonstrated as much. In reading their mail on air, Manion intended to show these letter-writers "that you are not alone. On the contrary," he said, "it is my conviction now, that you are in a great and powerful majority of our people."[iii]

Cutting through the sense of isolation felt by conservative-leaning people scattered across the country was a primary project of conservative media enterprises. And judging from the volume of mail from across the country, that project succeeded. Hearing and reading regularly about the dangers of liberalism and communism, however, created new demands among listeners. No longer satisfied with warnings, they wanted action. Alerted, they wanted to know what to do. Manion responded with action statements at the end of his broadcasts, but these were insufficient. People wanted activities and organizations, and they looked to familiar conservative media figures to guide them.

Conservative organization in the late 1950s and early 1960s included more actors than just those in media. Those in conservative media, though, played a critical role in the development, coordination, and promotion of new conservative organizations. They served as founders and sponsors, mentors and assessors, endorsers and partners. Because they took on these roles, conservative media and conservative organizations became tightly bound, and people like Manion who originally positioned themselves as heralds of a resistance found themselves leaders of a movement. Their work organizing conservatives had unexpected consequences. Organization generated a sense of conservative upsurge but also drew the

attention of both media and political opponents. Negative media coverage, rather than drawing conservatives together, created rifts in the movement that would divide conservatives throughout the 1960s. Meanwhile, political retribution by the Kennedy administration ignited new battles with the FCC that would both encumber conservative broadcasters and cement among conservatives the need for separate media.

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By the late 1950s, conservative media had emerged as a meaningful concept. Sharing national reach, overlapping coverage, and visible relationships, enterprises like the Manion Forum, *National* Review, Dan Smoot, *Human Events*, and Regnery Publishing were for many people the center of conservatism in America. Listeners and subscribers regarded them as part of the same project. But audiences did more than just listen and read. They turned to these broadcasters, editors, publishers, and writers as authorities on conservatism.

What sort of advice did they seek? Letter writers wanted to know which books and publications to read, what schools to attend, how candidates measured on the conservative yardstick. When William McVaugh, a fellow Hoosier, asked what colleges were suitable for conservative students, Manion pointed him to the recently-opened University of Dallas, a conservative Catholic institution with which Manion had close ties. Not just the rank-and-file turned to conservative media figures for advice. For instance, Representative John Rousselot, a conservative from California, wrote *National Review* publisher William Rusher to inquire after the reputation of the British *Intelligence Digest*, a conservative weekly. (Rusher: "it is not a bad little publication.")[iv] Such exchanges, short and often informal, played a role in defining the edges of conservatism, the relative values of various endeavors. As the source people looked to for such information, those in conservative media had a strong hand in shaping the meaning of modern conservatism.

Reading material and school choices, however, were not the most pressing issues for correspondents. The advice they craved concerned action. Calls for action—often invoking the question "What can I do?"—were a chronic feature of the mail Manion received, and he took these requests in

stride. He initially responded by adding action statements near the end of each broadcast. In the majority of these statements, Manion advocated individual action. “Action,” he maintained, “must begin with each of us personally.” It would take “*personal* effort” and “*personal* sacrifice”: working in political circles, writing representatives, alerting neighbors, getting—and staying—angry. Individual action did not preclude organization; Manion encouraged this as well, if not as prominently. Emphasizing action on the local level, Manion urged his listeners to start a study group to educate themselves on the problems and an “all-American pressure group” to influence legislators. After speaking about the need for revolution in Soviet countries, Manion proposed listeners go to whatever organizations they belonged to and ask them to pass resolutions in support of “captive nations” and their citizens. To sway more than just club members, listeners should then “flood the local newspapers and national press services with resolutions” and the reasons underwriting them.[v] Through the cumulative effect of his listeners’ personal and local efforts, Manion hoped to influence policy and public opinion.

Conservative writers echoed Manion’s call. Tom Anderson, editor of the mass-circulated *Farm and Ranch Magazine,* dedicated one of his popular *Straight Talk* columns to answering the oft-repeated question “What can I do?” His initial suggestions—to obliterate the income tax, peace time debt, and trade with communist countries—were outside the scope of his readers’ abilities. Some were within reach, however: subscribing to *American Mercury, National Review, Human Events,* and the like; contributing to Manion, Smoot, Fulton Lewis, and other commentators of a conservative stripe; and supporting advertisers for both. Looking to influence congressional action, *Human Events* unveiled a new section in 1960 called “What You Can Do,” a regular feature aimed at those “at the grass roots.” Each “What You Can Do” segment focused on a different piece of legislation, detailing not only its substance and impact but the “arguments to use in writing your Congressman,” “WHEN to do your letter-writing,” and “whom to write to.”[vi] Like Manion’s, these were calls to individual action. A movement required more.

An opening for action on a larger scale presented itself in 1959 when Eisenhower announced Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev’s visit to the United States. Conservatives had little use for Eisenhower—they considered little more than a “me-too” Republican willing to maintain New Deal

governance—but seldom had they been as opposed to the president as when he invited the premier to America.[vii] The possibility of Khrushchev setting foot on American soil outraged conservatives. Inviting him to the United States, they argued, gave the "butcher of Budapest" an air of legitimacy, of sanction. It undermined the show of support the country had just given the Soviet Union's satellite states during Captive Nations Week. And it continued a policy of co-existence that conservatives felt reeked of appeasement, an inability to stand up to the Soviet Union that could only lead to capitulation. This stance baffled conservatives: hadn't Khrushchev promised to bury them? On top of that, Eisenhower implored Americans to greet Khrushchev civilly, to withhold raucous protest and jeers. The audacity of this request led one *National Reviewer* to pen in "A Visit from St. Nik,"

> If he's tough and gruff and otherwise dismays you,
> Just count to ten and do not start a fight:
> He's coming here to bury you, not praise you,
> And he'd like to do the job and do it right.[viii]

Conservative media outlets buzzed with less poetic criticism of the impending visit. Manion hammered away at it in a series of four broadcasts, including one featuring Cardinal Cushing and another with Senators Barry Goldwater and Thomas J. Dodd. At *National Review*, editors excoriated the policy position such a visit advanced. "If our opposition to Communism is to mean anything," they insisted, "it must rest on the insistence that Communist rule is *illegitimate*," that Soviet regimes were "usurping tyrannies." In his earthier style, Thomas Anderson attacked Khrushchev directly: "You bloody, conniving, double-dealing, atheistic butcher, I assume you have a mother. When you get home, do me a favor, please: unleash her and toss her a bone."[ix]

The Khrushchev visit, however, required more than editorials and insults. Conservatives picked up on the example of the Scandinavians, who had faced their own Khrushchev visit in August. News of the visit roiled the press in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, generating plans of mass protest in Sweden. In the face of this opposition, Khrushchev canceled his visit, citing the "anti-Soviet" environment. If protestors in Scandinavia could overturn their governments' invitations to the Soviet premier, surely, conservatives insisted, the same could be done in the United States.[x]

Organization began immediately. Manion and William F. Buckley joined Goldwater, Manion-sponsor Spruille Braden, and others in forming the Committee against Summit Entanglements, an organization chaired by John-Birch-Society-founder Robert Welch. The roster of officers and sponsors listed a number of fellow conservative media figures, including Anderson, libertarian publisher J. H. Gipson, and *Independent American* publisher Kent Courtney, as well as major sponsors of conservative media enterprises. The organization ran an open letter to Eisenhower in major American newspapers, outlining ten reasons not to exchange visits with Khrushchev and urging the president to rescind his invitation to the premier. Ads included a petition for readers to circulate among their neighbors and send to the White House.[xi]

News of other activities spread through conservative media in the weeks that followed. Manion detailed planned protests and actions in Chicago and across the country. Over at *Human Events*, an editor came up with the idea of skywriting a giant cross above Washington when Khrushchev's motorcade set out. *National Review* promoted protests on the East Coast and sold tens of thousands of "Khrushchev Not Welcome Here" bumper stickers. In Washington, D.C., L. Brent Bozell took time away from writing for *National Review* to direct efforts for the Committee for Freedom for All Peoples, primarily the distribution of black armbands for protestors to wear during the visit.[xii]

Efforts didn't stop there. Sensing pockets of resistance to the visit in New York, Buckley, who had threatened to dye the Hudson red to greet the "bloody butcher," seized on the idea of holding an anti-Khrushchev rally. He gave the project to *National Review* publisher William Rusher, insisting, Rusher recalled ruefully, that it would only take "a couple of phone calls." But the rally Buckley had in mind was a much grander affair than his workload promise suggested. Taking place in Carnegie Hall, the rally featured big-name conservative speakers: Manion, Buckley, Bozell, columnist Ruth Alexander, and *Reader's Digest* senior editor Eugene Lyons. Tickets sold for a dollar and went on sale the morning of the rally. Over twenty-five hundred people snapped them up and packed into the hall.[xiii]

Manion had been looking forward to the rally, but his highest hopes for it had been dashed two days earlier when Khrushchev's plane touched down at Andrews Air Force Base. Manion had been

convinced that with enough public dissent, the Khrushchev visit would be scotched. He sensed public opinion was on his side; he had been "bombarded with frantic protests against this unfortunate change of visits," and had faith that if that message could get through, Khrushchev would reconsider as he had with the Scandinavians. "I am sure you agree with me," he telegraphed sympathetic senators, "that Communism is no less distasteful to the American people than it is to the people of the Scandinavian countries."[xiv] But Khrushchev had come. In fact, as ticket holders crowded into Carnegie Hall that Thursday evening, the Soviet premier was just ten blocks away at the Waldorf-Astoria, calling for strengthened economic relations between the US and USSR.

The Carnegie rally may not have stopped Khrushchev from coming, but it still had a purpose: as Manion told the gathered, their numbers served "to underscore our continuing active open support and sympathy for the more than 20 captive nations." After a prayer and the singing of the national anthem, the evening progressed through a series of speeches decrying Khrushchev's visit "as a blow to American moral leadership and the cause of peoples enslaved by communism." Audience members, supplied with black flags and armbands, cheered condemnations of Eisenhower's reception of Khrushchev. They nodded as a former assistant counsel for the McCarthy hearings warned, "There is a murderer at large in New York tonight." And they listened closely as Buckley criticized not the crimes of Khrushchev but "the damage we have done to ourselves" in assenting to the visit. "I mind that Khrushchev is here," Buckley declared to no one's surprise, "but I mind even more that Eisenhower invited him." What bothered him even more than that was that the press had so roundly defended Eisenhower's actions, and that the American people had, with an all-too-familiar apathy (or worse, weak-mindedness), simply gone along with it. The great offense of the visit was not Khrushchev's bloody hands, Buckley argued, but that America had reached out for a handshake and stained its own.[xv]

The rally proved a great success: a packed house, memorable speeches, national press coverage. It had also taken a great deal of time and effort to pull off. Rather than a "couple of phone calls," Rusher reported, planning the event required "the entire junior staff of the magazine [to be] torn from their regular jobs and thrown into performing the innumerable tasks and errands that had to be performed."

Likewise, Bozell's attentions were entirely dominated by Khrushchev. Though planning a major project with Manion and Goldwater, Bozell believed Khrushchev's visit was more pressing. "I feel obliged to see this Khrushchev thing through," he explained apologetically to Manion as he placed the project on the backburner. "I have never felt as strongly about anything in my life – and consider all other duties secondary to this one." Manion consented to the delay, as organizing against Khrushchev consumed much of his time as well. [xvi]

The time seemed well worth the effort. Judging from bumper sticker sales, rally attendance, and audience feedback, the anti-Khrushchev organizing had tapped into a vein of discontent, a group ready to mobilize. But the rally had been a one-off event; could people be organized long-term to push for a larger agenda? Rusher seemed to think so; in fact, he thought it necessary. "As things stand," he complained to a friend, "we (the magazine) are forever being called upon to do things that are really outside our scope—run forums, stage rallies against Khrushchev, sell Khrushchev Not Welcome stickers, run a Conservative Book Club, etc." Rusher responded to these calls for action with exasperation—"you, sir, are a good example of why publishers get gray!" he chastised a writer who suggested the magazine organize a demonstration supporting the House Un-American Activities Committee. "*National Review* is a magazine, not a political party."[xvii]

Still, something had to be done. It seemed as though more and more people were awakening to the dangers of liberal governance and communism—the Manion Forum detected "a distinct turn to the Right" in America—and now they were, according to Rusher, "casting about for a suitable form of political organization." What was needed, Rusher concluded, was "some sort of conservative movement—a movement, not a party—marching along beside *National Review*." Yet as Rusher had noted, and as Bozell and Manion's experiences could confirm, organizing was a full-time job. To take it on might mean shortchanging or even giving up the media enterprises they had built. If not them, though, then who? As it turned out, despite Rusher's assertion that media enterprises should not be the leaders and organizers of a movement, they would take up the call.[xviii]

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In the depths of summer in 1961, Clarence Manion opened his program with a few lines of Shakespeare: "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." Political commentators, taking after the tragic characters in *Julius Caesar*, were "confused and uncertain," unable to make sense of the oncoming conservative tide. "They are not even sure about the meaning of the word 'Conservative," Manion scoffed. He, however, had a better sense of the upswell. Amid audience pleas for "continuous action," Manion saw the flood and announced the Manion Forum Conservative Clubs.[xix]

Manion's announcement came at a time when conservatism had achieved critical mass. On college campuses, students coordinated local chapters of Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), a *National Review*-backed organization. Barry Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative* overtook John Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Circulation and audiences were up for the Forum, *National Review*, and *Human Events*. "The conservative movement," author Russell Kirk crowed, "is going great guns right now."[xx] That Kirk could even talk about a "conservative movement" shows how much had changed in a few short years.

What had happened? Despite Rusher's protestations that media enterprises had no place organizing a movement, they did just that. Media figures oversaw the emergence of a mass political movement as they created, backed, promoted, and evaluated organizations in the early 1960s. That this was a *mass* movement matters: while a number of organizations since World War II had promoted agenda aligned with facets of modern conservatism, the organizations of the late 1950s and early 1960s were something new. National in aim, avowedly conservative in philosophy, and purportedly grassroots in nature, these new organizations attracted thousands of members and through their activism won conservatism a place on the national stage. The development of Manion's Conservative Clubs illustrates the possibilities and struggles associated with building such a movement.

Rising conservative sentiment had been good for the Manion Forum. By the time Manion announced his Conservative Clubs in 1961, his program could be heard over 235 stations, more than double his 1958 coverage. The staff had grown to eight people, who worked to transcribe broadcasts, organize fundraising efforts, run the Forum's press, and answer the 100,000 pieces of mail that reached

the office every year. Weekly costs ran well over $10,000, raised from corporate and individual donors; over 700 industrialists had written fundraising letters on behalf of the Forum. The extra staff and money made it possible for the Forum to print and distribute books, pamphlets, and starting just prior to the Club announcement, a biweekly newsletter.[xxi]

The newsletter served as an indication of the nature of the Forum's growth. Had Manion only been interested in growing his media coverage, broadcast reprints would have sufficed. But Manion had more in mind. The newsletters previewed upcoming guests, but they also announced news and activities, promoted conservative books, kept readers informed of Manion's in-person events, and carried reports of Conservative Club activism. Indeed, this last purpose was the impetus behind the newsletter and explained the timing of the launch; Manion needed a way for local Clubs to connect to the national project.

The newsletter became one of the most important tools for Conservative Clubs because of the Clubs' decentralized nature. "Deliberately, we refrained from 'organizing' or attempting to control any of these groups," he wrote Birch-founder Robert Welch, arguing that should "the clubs stay small and unaffiliated, they will provide effective outlets for outraged energy." Small and unaffiliated: these features made the Clubs unusual. So Clubs could respond to local issues, there was no central leadership guiding the Clubs. The Forum tracked paperwork, sent out missives, and wrote a constitution, but no governance structure existed; there was no president or chair to direct and coordinate activities. Individual Clubs did not interact. They shared ideas through the newsletter, but no overarching organizational structure linked them. Manion had a reason for wanting to keep Clubs small as well: "For the purposes of political action," he explained to a friend, "100 clubs with a membership of 10 in each club is more potent than one club with a membership of 1,000." His experience in politics led Manion to believe smaller groups would have all the benefits of teamwork without the divisiveness larger groups tended to invite. To ensure clubs stayed small, the Clubs' sole structural requirement pertained to size: five members could start a club, and membership was limited to 25.[xxii]

Enthusiasm for Manion's Clubs came from all quarters. Rusher, who Manion informed ahead of time, called the plan "tremendously exciting" and a necessary corollary to his pet project, Young Americans for Freedom, offering a place for those who no longer fit the category "Young Americans." The *Knoxville Journal* firmly supported Manion's plan, and though the editors wondered if anyone could get Congress to take a more conservative line, they expressed "hope that thousands of conservative clubs will spring up at Dean Manion's call." It seemed as though the *Journal* would get its wish—the Forum received over 3,000 Club applications within three months of the announcement. "Responses are pouring in from all directions," he reported eagerly to a friend. "Here is a chance for the little guy to be President of something and in concert with his neighbors, to throw his weight around effectively for Constitutional government." Based on the rate of replies, Manion anticipated 10,000 Clubs would be up and running by the 1962 midterm elections. (The number settled at a much more modest 600.)[xxiii]

Through the newsletter, Manion directed these Clubs toward study, discussion, and political action. Some of these activities focused on turning Club members into "well versed spokesmen for conservatism," conversant in both conservative philosophy and current events. Thus reading and discussion topped the priority list; newsletters guided members on how to read ("with pencil in hand—to underline, take notes, to study what you're reading"), why to discuss ("it clears up your thinking on a subject and enables you to restate it in your own words"), and where to turn for help (enclosing booklists from Devin-Adair, a reading list by Phyllis Schlafly, and the address of Patriotic Education, Inc., a Florida company that peddled constitution study kits). This reading project served two purposes: promoting conservative publishing enterprises and chipping away at established media sources. In a memo to Club members, Manion attacked newspapers and magazines for publishing only liberal opinions. No doubt these periodicals would defend their right to publish such opinions, but what about conservatives? "What about the right to hear the *other* side?" Manion asked. To get this other side, Manion pointed Club members to a list of "excellent periodicals," ones that offered "the truth": the Manion Forum (naturally), *National Review, Human Events*, the *Chicago Tribune,* the *Dan Smoot Report*, and *American Opinion*, the official publication of the John Birch Society.[xxiv] In combining attacks on

liberal media outlets with promotion of conservative alternatives, Manion provided a rationale for reliance on conservative media sources.

Reading conservative publications informed Club members and served to counter their exposure to liberal opinions, but Manion had higher aspirations for the organization. For Clubs to make an impact, they had to do more than internal work—they had to exercise influence in their communities. One way of achieving this was through the "letters to the editor" section of local newspapers. Though this seemed like a small step, Manion saw it as part of a larger project, a way to add balance to newspapers and circulate conservative ideas locally. Some may dismiss letter-writing as "mere busy work, a fruitless task at best," Manion wrote Club members, but the letters-to-the-editor section "is probably the *most widely-read* section of your paper!" Certainly readers could relate to Manion's hypothetical letters page, in which "Mrs. A answers Mr. J's letter about the local PTA. And scores of spirited letters suddenly appear about chuck holes in the city streets." What if, Manion asked, the discussion swirled around something more meaningful than chuck holes? What if PTA debates could be replaced with debates about the role of government, about foreign aid or taxation?[xxv]

As 1962 approached and the midterm elections came into focus, Manion hoped to move Club activism beyond the editorial pages. To advance conservatism, Manion told Club members, meant they would have to switch gears: *"Now, there is one single thing that is more important than any other—to elect Conservatives to office."* Clubs should continue their regular activities—"write letters, distribute literature, invite speakers to lecture"—but now those activities should have one purpose: the election of conservatives. If just a dozen conservatives could replace liberal incumbents, Manion explained, "the Kennedy Administration's welfare-state, soft-on-communism policies would be stymied completely." Here was a chance to make a real difference.

Elections mattered to Manion. Changing the climate of consensus remained his central project, but it was a long-term goal, one that required reaching and persuading millions of people. In the face of such an ambitious scheme, influencing House elections in a dozen districts seemed much more concrete and achievable. Clubs were up and running in 167 districts; surely out of those, twelve could be swayed.

So Manion encouraged Clubs to find candidates and rally around them, to advise members and organize support. He sent out a list of manuals for public action put out by *Human Events,* the Conservative Society of America, and Americans for Constitutional Action, which rated representatives' conservatism. He even sent out sample press releases that required nothing more than penning in candidates' names and parties. (The Clubs were required to be nonpartisan; Manion did not care if they supported Republicans or Democrats, so long as the candidate was conservative.) Clubs responded with reports of rallies and volunteer activities. In doing so, they transformed from study group participants to political activists.[xxvi]

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"I think that the Conservative uprising on the campus is part of a general tendency in the Nation as a whole," M. Stanton Evans told the Manion Forum audience in 1962, pointing out that the "revolt on campus" was occurring in places far from the university scene.[xxvii] The growth of conservative media enterprises and conservative organizations in the early years of the 1960s created the impression of a general growth in conservative sentiment. Though by no means the dominant political outlook, modern conservatism seemed to have an ever-growing number of spokesmen, sponsors, and supporters. From within the movement, this trend was heartening. From without, it inspired both curiosity and concern. As the voice of conservatism to many Americans, conservative media enterprises, along with the John Birch Society and YAF, the movement's most prominent organizations, became the focus of outside attention. This attention, almost entirely critical, had profound consequences for conservative media, opening a schism within the movement and subjecting conservatives to new waves of political reprisal.

The developments in conservatism in the 1950s went largely unnoted in popular media sources. Academics took note: social scientist Daniel Bell collected a number of essays for *The New American Right* (later released under the more derisive title *The New Radical Right*). This book joined works like *The Radical Right: A Problem for American Democracy* and *Conservatism in America,* the latter of which sought to rescue conservatism from its modern practitioners, to move it toward the "vital center" rather than the rightward fringe. Senator Joseph McCarthy and his defenders prompted these works, whose authors found the senator and his followers a troubling expression of reactionary radicalism. Opposition

to McCarthy took root among many Americans, but the larger concern shaping these books—that not just McCarthy but McCarthy*ites* posed a danger to America—failed to penetrate the national consciousness.[xxviii]

Not until 1961 did stories about the "radical right" and "ultraconservatives" appear in major periodicals, but when they did, they quickly became standard. Article upon article piled up, creating an echo effect that made it appear as if suddenly the right was everywhere. Why the sudden interest? Conservative media efforts had been growing for several years; Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative* was in wide circulation. Yet neither of these developments had triggered inky paroxysms from journalists. So what had?

The answer: the John Birch Society. Though the organization had existed for over three years—Robert Welch founded it in 1958—it drew little notice, never appearing in the pages of *Time,* the *Nation*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, nary a mention in a single major newspaper. That changed in 1961, starting with "The Americanists," an article in *Time* magazine that coincided with a series of articles in the *Los Angeles Times*. These pieces, written as exposés, presented Birchers as part of a secret society under the "hard-boiled, dictatorial direction of one man." To demonstrate the group's extremism, *Time* pointed to *The Politician,* a 302-page book Welch maintained had been meant as a private letter. The book—which *Time* dubbed "Welch's Mein Kampf"—contained accusations that everyone from John Foster Dulles to Dwight Eisenhower were Communist agents. Seeing communist conspiracy everywhere, *Time* wrote, such a cloak-and-dagger group would normally be dismissed "as a tiresome, comic-opera joke." So why pay them any mind? Because the number of Birchers was growing—and fast.[xxix]

There was something titillating about the idea of a secret society and accusations of presidential conspiracy, and journalists pounced. Completely absent from news coverage the year before, the John Birch Society became all anyone could talk about. *Time* kept up coverage throughout the year, with the *Nation* quick on its heels. The *Los Angeles Times* series triggered a state investigation into the organization, keeping the Birch Society front-and-center; other papers joined the fray with coverage of their own.[xxx]

These stories brought the Society to the attention of readers across the country, many for the first time. Politicians were quick to denounce either the organization as a whole or the accusations of Eisenhower's disloyalty. After censuring the Society from the senate floor, North Dakota senator Milton Young inserted the *Time* article into the *Congressional Record* as evidence of his claims against the Birchers.[xxxi] Other denunciations offered more measured criticism. In response to the front-page editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* which capped its five-day series, Richard Nixon condemned the Society for attacking communists by applying "the same evil methods they employ." However, Nixon continued, the Birch Society appealed to so many people because it promised to do what so few organizations did: "to fight the great battle for preserving and extending American ideals." Attention from prominent politicians generated more press coverage, and articles on the Birch Society flourished throughout the spring.

Eventually, though, explorations of the Birch Society had reached the point of exhaustion; there seemed to be no secrets left to extract from the presumably secret society. So journalists cast a wider net, and out came the articles and books on conservatives more generally, labeled the "radical right," "ultraconservatives," "superpatriots," "extremists," and in time, just "the ultras." These articles extended to conservatives the criticisms of the Birch Society. Calling them "the Rampageous Right," Alan Barth outlined the "lowest common denominators of philosophic outlook" that bound these "aginners" together: conspiracy-minded, uncomplicated, anti-democratic. Despite these qualities, though, Barth saw little to fear in an organized right. "The Right may make itself a nuisance, but it will not make itself into a government," he insisted. "It is not a wave of the future; it is a voice of frustration and despair, a wail from an irrecoverable past."[xxxii]

Most journalists and authors took little care to separate factions of conservatism, jumbling organizations and enterprises together with little concern for distinctions. A free-wheeling *New York Times* article ranged from the Birch Society to the Manion Forum to the American Nazi Party to *National Review*, noting no differences. Even those that took the time to delineate between a "Respectable Right" and a "Radical Right" cautioned "that on many essential elements of creed the two are inseparable and indistinguishable." The sins of the radicals tainted them all, a 43-page article in the *Nation* maintained, for

respectability and radicalism were inseparable for conservatives; one provided political cover, the other roused the grass roots. Thus to talk of one was to talk of the other.[xxxiii]

The rush of new literature on conservatism provoked responses from those in conservative media. Manion dedicated a broadcast to "gaudy little books about so-called 'Right Wing extremists,'" calling them a "big comic-opera chorus of bad print and cheap paper" designed to destroy conservatism. Having aired these epithets, Manion turned his attention to the motives behind this concerted attack on conservatives. He pointed to the midterm elections as the tactical impetus, but to get caught up in the electoral cycle was to ignore a grander scheme. The authors, Manion pointed out, all admitted that dissatisfaction with liberal governance stirred conservative agitation. Where he believed they went wrong was in assuming such dissatisfaction was irrational. These writers argued conservatism was a psychological problem, "some sort of mental illness that begins with a harmless twitch six inches to the right of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and merges into madness as you approach the political location of people like General Walker [a conservative military hero]." Manion countered conservatism was instead "the logical reaction to the failure of liberal policies." After all, no matter how much power these writers assigned to the "Radical Right," it was not conservatives who controlled the government; the Bay of Pigs, the fall of China—these could not be laid at conservatives' feet.[xxxiv]

General rebuffs like Manion's joined responses to specific attacks. Buckley fired off a letter to the *New York Times* after their piece bracketing *National Review* with the American Nazi Party, equating the remarks to someone calling the *Times* "the most notable daily of liberals and Communists." After *Look* magazine published an article on Kent and Phoebe Courtney's *Independent American* and its associated organization, the Conservative Society for America, Phoebe Courtney sent subscribers a report dissecting the article's content. Courtney saw the article as part of a concerted effort by "Liberal-Socialists" to "throw the full spotlight of publicity on the Right Wing, with the hope that careless statements, or intemperate actions by members of the Right Wing would discredit the entire Conservative movement." While she cared little about the characterizations of the Courtneys' enterprise—they proudly claimed membership in the "Far Right," which they believed preferable to the "Far Wrong"—she took issue with

the article's statements about their finances. (She quickly assured readers the *Independent American* was quite poor.)[xxxv]

Statements defending conservatives against attack belied a more troubled atmosphere within conservative media circles. Whatever one thought of the flurry of writings about conservatism, they seemed to be effective. Debate swirled around the John Birch Society. As the voices of conservatism, leaders to whom audiences and organizations looked to define the movement, what should conservative media figures do? Some, like Manion, argued they should embrace the Society and attack the established media for their efforts to discredit conservatism. Those in Buckley's camp chose to heap ridicule on the Society and read it out of the movement, while others—*National Review* publisher William Rusher chief among them—preferred to keep a cautious distance and allow events to set the course.

Such decision-making was complicated by the relationships people in conservative media had with the Birch Society and with one another. Welch owned shares in Regnery Publishing and had a long-standing business relationship with Regnery, who published Welch's 1952 pamphlet *May God Forgive Us*, distributing over 100,000 copies.[xxxvi] It was through Regnery that Welch and Buckley met (Buckley later tweaked Regnery for this role: "You, you scoundrel, introduced me to Bob!"). For its part, *National Review* had offered favorable if limited coverage of Welch prior to 1961, calling Welch "an amazing man" and "as conservative as they come." Buckley, who would later avoid appearances with Welch, shared a podium with him as speakers at the *Independent American* Forum in 1959 and served (along with Manion, Bozell, Goldwater, and others) on the Committee against Summit Entanglements, which Welch chaired.[xxxvii] While Buckley fervently contested many of Welch's beliefs, not the least that Eisenhower was a communist, he pronounced those disagreements out of public view. With the sudden spotlight on the Society, however, Buckley began to wonder if the time had come to make a public break.[xxxviii]

In navigating this question, Buckley had to consider the opinions of Clarence Manion. Manion had in 1959 accepted a position on the National Council of the Birch Society, a leadership group designed to "show the caliber of men" supporting the organization. Manion too had concerns about the Birch

Society in light of the effective negative attention it was receiving. In fact, Manion's Conservative Clubs, launched in August 1961, were in part a response to this atmosphere. He explained to Welch, "I found that many of my correspondents were not ready for the John Birch Society. They would join the infantry, but not the commandoes." The praise Rusher heaped on the Clubs came from this same concern; Rusher had hoped the Clubs would serve as "an alternative lightning rod down which the accumulating static electricity of conservatism might run safely to the ground, in preference (and perhaps in some artfully-contrived rivalry) to that constructed by Br'er Welch." Despite these concerns, Manion believed the Society's members were a vital part of the conservative movement and that conservatives should present a united front. Infighting should be kept behind the scenes. Manion also served as a founding board member of National Weekly, the corporate entity behind *National Review*, a position from which he could exercise some influence at the magazine. From his position at the fulcrum, Manion played a critical role in the developing rift between the two organizations.[xxxix]

Opinions were divided at the magazine. The promotions consultant immediately wanted to break ranks publicly with the Society. "The writeup *Time* gives the John Birch Society now makes it a nationally known, rather than a parochial embarrassment," he wrote Buckley. Certainly there would be repercussions—"some of the rank and file in this group probably read the magazine"—but it would have to be done for *National Review* to have any influence on the national scene. Buckley seemed to agree, and a group of editors drafted an editorial criticizing the Society. [xl]

The draft provoked concern in publisher William Rusher, who responded with a thoughtful, lengthy memo dissecting the Welch problem. Setting aside financial issues of possible losses of subscriptions and donations, Rusher tackled the question of "what an injudicious editorial will do to NR's position *as a leader of conservative opinion* in this country." Rumors were already swirling that the magazine would attack Welch, prompting a deluge of letters and phone calls that all seemed to say the same thing: more than just piling on, as a conservative publication *National Review* would be harming the movement far more than the established media had.[xli]

While these objections mattered to Rusher, he was far more concerned with what he saw as an underlying attitude behind the editorial: "Who cares what the simplistic Right thinks?" Why should *National Review* care about the opinion of a less erudite crowd of conservatives? Rusher argued that it mattered a great deal: *National Review* did not exist just so its editors could be as correct as possible—"we can be right without even getting out of bed in the morning." In putting out a magazine, the staff hoped to sway public opinion. Distancing the magazine from Welch would help with "borderline conservatives," and therefore should be done; but bashing Welch and the Birch Society would cripple the magazine in the eyes of the "organized Right," which Rusher maintained accounted for "the great bulk of our readership, of our support, and of the war bodies available for us to lead in any desired direction."

The problem with *National Review*, Rusher continued, was that the editors misunderstood their importance to this organized right. Oh, the organized right delighted in the magazine's witty takedowns of liberals, but they were far less keen to anoint *National Review* "as a spokesman and leader of the Right." Rusher considered this a good thing—some distance from the organized right allowed the magazine more independence. "But it is one thing for us to be independent of the organized Right," Rusher warned, "and quite another for us to incur its enmity." The Birch Society, at any rate, would no doubt wither and fade under the concerted attacks of others; there was no need for *National Review* to pile on. Otherwise, the magazine may well "inadvertently talk itself into a colorful, followerless eccentricity, or (almost as bad) into the only other thing left: bondage to the main line of the Republican Party."

Rusher's memo revealed much about his understanding of the relationship between conservative media and the movement. It reflected his hopes for the journal's power and his recognition of its limitations, arguing in one sentence that the organized right could be "lead in any desired direction," and in the next, asserting that they viewed *National Review* "only secondarily and far less readily" as a movement leader. Moreover, given the wide range of adherents attracted to the movement and their necessity for conservative activism, Rusher argued that to remain influential, the magazine would have to choose between ideological purity and organizational pragmatism. Just as it had been unwise for Robert

Welch to accuse the president of treason, it would be impolitic for the magazine to attack Welch and his organization.

Manion joined Rusher in working to prevent Buckley from breaking publicly with Welch. Upon hearing rumors of the *National Review* editorial, Manion called Buckley and offered a compromise: if the magazine would curb its criticisms—if it would chide but not break with Welch—Manion would use his position on the National Council to rein in Welch. No one could undo Welch's accusation against Eisenhower, which even Welch now doubted ("Eisenhower," the Birch leader admitted, "may be too dumb to be a Communist."), but the Birch Society remained a font of conservative strength and should be protected. Buckley, despite his reservations, agreed.[xlii]

Thus in April, the editorial, appropriately titled "The Uproar," appeared under Buckley's byline. Set in a question-answer format, the editorial dismissed the current tumult surrounding the Society, arguing that it was an attempt on the part of the press "to anathematize the entire American right wing." While rejecting the charges that the Society was totalitarian and secretive, Buckley admitted that the magazine disagreed with Welch's analytical framework. *National Review* agreed "the Communist conspiracy is a deadly serious matter," but did not hold that it was in control of the American government. The editorial stressed this was not just a difference of degree but a difference of kind: "The point has come, if Mr. Welch is right, to leave the typewriter, the lectern, and the radio microphone, and look instead to one's rifles." Buckley, of course, did not believe it had come to that. All the same, he expressed hope that, if it curbed some of its excesses, the Birch Society would flourish.[xliii]

The editorial did not provoke a mass defection from *National Review*, nor an uproar of its own. Manion, who had come out in defense of the Society a few weeks earlier, provided cover for Buckley, telegramming as soon as the editorial appeared. "Congratulations on 'The Uproar," he wrote. "Impregnable logic intellectually honest entirely fair eminently constructive. Hurrah for *National Review*." The magazine staff used this telegram to fend off critics, publishing it in the next issue and including it in responses to angry letters. Welch pitched in as well, writing Buckley to commend the editorial as "both objectively fair and subjectively honorable. And I want you to know it is deeply

appreciated." Not everyone was appeased—Phoebe Courtney wrote Manion to voice her strenuous disagreement—but the crisis seemed averted.[xliv]

Buckley had kept his end of the deal: the editorial had not severed relations between *National Review* and the Birch Society. Now Manion had to fulfill his part of the bargain, a much harder task. Welch, after all, was not a man willing to be handled. With the help of other members of the National Council, Manion prevailed upon Welch to submit his writings to an executive council (on which Manion sat) for review. From that position, Manion could raise questions about potentially libelous statements before they went out, a useful way of keeping Welch from indulging in his habit of "naming names." Preventing Welch from naming *more* names, however, did little to heal the damage done by the Eisenhower accusation.[xlv]

As established media turned their attention from the Birch Society to conservatism in general, the reputation of the organization began to present a bigger problem. Tarred by association with Welch, now everyone was suffering from his excesses. Manion believed the Birch Society as an organization had become a powerful organizational tool, but Welch now hindered both the abilities of the Society and of the wider movement. The answer, seemed to be, to remove Welch, a tricky proposition in any case, but more so when the man in question was known for his near-dictatorial governing style.

In a carefully-worded letter, Manion broached the subject. Pressure, he noted, had been mounting for "big defections and critical denunciations." The editorially-conservative *Wall Street Journal* had just laid out a defense for "genuine conservative thinking," excising the Society from such conservatism by dismissing "authoritarian secret societies" and "strident, indiscriminate accusations of Communism." Could the *Chicago Tribune* and Pulliam papers be far behind? And if the papers all turned on the Society, would prominent conservatives follow suit? Goldwater had recently defended the Society when the attacks first started, but as pressure mounted, he too could defect. To prevent the Society from crumbling under such desertions, Manion argued, the public face of the organization would have to change. They would have "to provide another public image to convince the public *and* our membership, present and prospective, that the John Birch Society is not a man but a movement, not a person but a principle." "I am

sorry to say this, Bob," Manion continued, "but the Society cannot play this vital role unless and until you gracefully retire into the editorial room." Welch, however, had no intention of retiring, gracefully or otherwise, and the matter was dropped to Manion's frustration.[xlvi]

Manion's lack of headway coincided with Buckley's increasing irritation with the Welch issue. Buckley had not gone after the Birch Society, but at year's end, he was back in a fighting mood. Manion had corralled but not unseated Welch, and as long as Welch represented the organization, Buckley believed it could do no good. So Buckley decided on an editorial praising the Society but damning Welch, understanding that publishing the piece would mean breaking publicly with him. An editor raised this point when discussing the issue, raising objections from Rusher. What did it mean, he asked, to develop a break? Break off official connections with Welch? Social ones? ("Not," Rusher quickly assured him, "that I have ever had any, or want any!") Did it mean ending contact, professionally and socially, with those on the National Council and their organizations? In raising these questions, Rusher hit upon the larger consequences of taking the Welch feud public. Conservatives—particularly movement and organization leaders—were so tightly intertwined that it was nearly impossible to cut out one part without injuring others. And Rusher had no intention of taking part in "a widening war upon nationally-known conservative personalities for whom I have feelings of friendship and respect."[xlvii]

Manion once again stepped—or rather, was invited—into the breach. Having made up his mind on the editorial, Buckley called Manion to Indianapolis in early January 1962. With Rusher and other *National Review* staffers at his side, Buckley announced he had reached the breaking point with Welch. They debated the issue for five hours, at the end of which Buckley told Manion he would wait for Manion to come up with another solution. Desperate to avoid a public battle, Manion hurried off a letter to Roger Milliken, who had poured funds into the Manion Forum, *National Review*, and the Birch Society. (The Milliken family donations, in fact, paid off about 40% of the magazine's yearly deficit.) Manion was at a loss for what to do. He had no counterproposal, but he firmly believed that should Buckley proceed "to exorcise Welch and all of his works through the columns of National Review, the damage to his magazine

and to the conservative cause will be irreparable." Milliken had no suggestions; a month later, the editorial was published.[xlviii]

Covering six pages, "The Question of Robert Welch" dissected Welch's writings and assumptions, pronouncing them "false counsels." The editors spared the Society and its members but cautioned that chapters would be effective inasmuch as they were able to "dissipate the fog of confusion that issues from Mr. Welch's smoking typewriter." Unlike a year earlier, this editorial provoked a hailstorm of letters. A few praised the magazine for its stance. Bozell, who had since moved to Spain, applauded the editors: "Bravo on the Welsh blast. It makes one feel clean again." A more even-handed friend acknowledged the difficulty involved but thought on the whole, "if a truly effective conservative movement is to be developed, its leadership must be kept out of the hands of the Rabble Rousers who are most vulnerable to attack."[xlix]

These, however, were the exceptions; the bulk of response indicated that Rusher may well have gotten his unwanted "widening war." Milliken reproached the staff while chalking the editorial up to a fit of temper. Now that they had gotten it out of their system, Milliken sought assurance that they would get on with more useful ventures. (To mitigate the harms of the editorial, Milliken quadrupled his donation to the Birch Society.) Other donors were equally unimpressed, as was the National Weekly board, who Buckley failed to inform beforehand. Manion, distressed over the decision to come out fighting, resigned his board position.[l]

Subscribers reacted angrily, resulting in a torrent of cancellations and admonitions. Surveying the letters, one editor described them as coming from "decent, earnest, committed people…in the warfare of ideas these are the peons, not the officers. But they are sturdy peons." Over a third of them "thought NR was playing into the hands of the Communists, or at least was unpatriotic or non-conservative." More importantly, the non-Birch members who wrote in response to the editorial—and non-Birchers comprised a large majority—echoed Manion's concerns about splintering the conservative movement. "I am aware that the few subscriptions you lose by your recent attack on another conservative group will gain you many subscriptions from northern liberals," wrote a South Carolinian reader upon canceling her

subscription, “but I shall not enjoy reading wisecracks about how you so successfully turned the knife in Welch’s back.” Phyllis Schlafly, who had begun to make a name for herself as an anticommunist activist, canceled her subscription as well, reasoning, “I cannot support a magazine which joins the pack of anti-anti-Communists in their organized campaign…to divide and destroy the anti-Communist effort in America.”[li]

The consequences of the *National Review*-Welch conflict stretched beyond a few hundred cancellations and lost revenue. Whatever his intentions, Buckley had opened a breach in the movement. As Rusher pointed out to Buckley, “The Welch editorial has never been a ‘caper’…; it has been a wrenching break with a simplistic segment of *National Review*’s, and your own personal, following.” This break exposed the complications organization had brought to conservative media. With organization came greater attention, with greater attention, more pressure to delineate the boundaries of conservatism. With definitions being forced upon them from without, conservatives had to respond. Manion and Buckley represented two possible paths: tightening ranks or expelling troublemakers. Such delineation, however, came at a price. The Welch editorial frayed the connections that had built the closely-knitted worlds of conservative media and the conservative movement and opened gaps that would only grow wider over time.[lii]

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The attention from outside journalists triggered significant changes in the conservative movement, helping spur *National Review*’s editors toward a split with the Birch Society, and causing others to consider the potential consequences of certain associations. But it did more than prompt conservative soul-searching; it triggered political action. In November 1961, as journalists began writing more broadly about the “radical right,” President Kennedy spoke to a group of Democrats in Los Angeles about “the discordant voices of extremism.” Though he made no mention of conservatives or any organization, the *New York Times* declared Kennedy “left no doubt who he meant.” Kennedy may not have singled out the Birch Society, but the *Times* had no problem doing so for him.[liii]

Conservative media response to the speech was limited, except to point out how the major news media walked in lock-step with the administration. But Kennedy's heightened awareness of and irritation with conservatives would have more substantial consequences for conservative media than just a few speeches. Hints of how these consequences might be made manifest came in August 1962, when the *Wall Street Journal* ran what the Manion Forum, in a histrionic mode, called "a little squib…which should cause every Manion Forum supporter to dash for the sleeping pills." The piece reported broadcasters' concerns that Kennedy would "pack" the Federal Communications Commission so its head could enforce "tougher regulations." Having had his run-ins with FCC regulations, Manion saw nothing to cheer in this news.[liv]

It took a while, but a July 26, 1963 memo from the FCC confirmed Manion's fears. Sent to all broadcasters, the memo reiterated "stations' responsibilities under the Fairness Doctrine as to controversial issue programming." Specifically, the FCC wanted to call attention to three situations the Fairness Doctrine covered: personal attacks, speeches pertaining to political candidates, and issues "of current importance." The memo, though, did more than reiterate responsibilities; it created new ones, requiring broadcasters to contact any person or organization attacked on their stations with offers of equal or—if they could not find a sponsor—free time. What struck many as peculiar about this memo, however, was not that it imposed new and potentially costly obligations, but that it used specific examples. When outlining broadcasters' responsibilities in cases "of current importance," the memo continued: "such as racial segregation, integration, or discrimination…In particular, the views of the leaders of the Negro and other community groups" had to be both "considered and reflected." Clearly this passage aimed at white southern broadcasters who had been doing everything in their power to keep statements supporting the civil rights movement off the air.[lv] Following this injunction, the memo advised broadcasters that the FCC "looks to substance rather than to label or form" when assessing Fairness Doctrine compliance. "It is immaterial," the memo apprised broadcasters, "whether a particular program or viewpoint is presented under the label of 'Americanism,' 'anti-communism' or 'states' rights'"; if stations aired one position, they had to make an effort to air the opposition.[lvi]

This singling-out of Americanism, anticommunism, and states' rights seemed an ominous portent to conservative broadcasters. The FCC had conservatives in its sights. And then another blow: a month later, the AFL-CIO's public relations director appealed to "all union members to be on guard against radio and TV attacks against labor," citing the FCC memo. The AFL-CIO believed the memo strengthened the Fairness Doctrine, and gave union members the opportunity to act as radio police. The *Machinist*, a national union publication, outlined how union members could make use of the Fairness Doctrine in order to generate equal-time requests for labor. To aid members in this task, the magazine listed "16 propaganda programs known to be hostile to labor and to labor's objectives." Topping that list: the Manion Forum.[lvii]

The final blow—the one that tied everything together—came in September, when word circulated in conservative circles about a memorandum written by Walter and Victor Reuther for the Kennedy administration. The memo had traveled from Robert Kennedy to a man called John Rhoads, and then on to Edgar Bundy of the Church League of America and conservative leaders far and wide. Written in 1961, the memo addressed "the radical right in America today." Citing Kennedy's remarks on the right and a "spate of articles in responsible newspapers and periodicals," the memo warned that in recent years "radical right organizations have sprung up like weeds," presenting a real problem for the administration and for America as a whole. The administration had to take action against this threat or risk losing any hope of effective governance. To that end, the Reuthers laid out a plan of action to cripple conservative organizing and propagandizing. The administration, the memo argued, had institutional weapons that it should now employ, among them the IRS and the FCC, to stop the tax-exempt flow of funds to conservative groups and to tighten regulations on conservative broadcasting.

For conservatives, the memo provided evidence of what they had suspected all along: the collusion of labor and government to silence their critics on the right. Now it all made sense. The upswing in conservative strength demonstrated by their growing organizational power had alarmed Kennedy, who turned to the Reuthers and to the institutions of the federal government to fight back. Thus the FCC memo; thus the AFL-CIO list of "propaganda programs."[lviii]

When Manion learned of the Reuther memo in September, he was ready to fight back. The Fairness Doctrine memo was already affecting stations that carried the Forum. The Democratic National Committee and NAACP had filed requests for free time to rebut Forum broadcasts, and in many cases stations granted these requests. Note that this was not just equal time but *free* time. Stations could not continuously do this, as an unsympathetic Pennsylvania station warned Manion after giving free time to the DNC in response to Forum broadcasts on urban housing. If Manion did not begin including both sides on the Forum, "we shall be compelled to cancel this program." Indeed, the Forum already had lost seven stations since the new FCC guidelines came out.[lix]

Manion made his case on the air. In an October broadcast, he attacked the FCC guidelines as "a dangerous blackout on our freedom of speech." As long as it was "decent and decorous," Manion argued, what appeared on air should not be dictated by the government but by individuals, who could "censor" a program by turning their dials. If a program failed to find an audience, sponsorship would dry up and the station would discontinue it. The law of supply-and-demand, he contended, applied to radio and television broadcasting; indeed, it constituted "local self-government" in its finest form. (An interesting argument for someone whose program was carried on a sustaining basis—that is, without cost—on some stations to fulfill their public interest requirements.)[lx] Up until the recent guideline changes, Manion contended that the FCC had been living by this rule. Broadcasters could determine what they wanted to air, with the FCC only stepping in for review every three years.[lxi]

The new guidelines uprooted that system. Manion argued that in place of "local self-government," the FCC had inserted the means for "complete Federal control." Personal attacks now required stations to send notice to the target with arrangements for air time. Manion enjoyed arguing this *ad absurdum*: should the Forum attack Castro, the 300 stations carrying the program would have to track the Cuban dictator down and give him free air time. Likewise, should some announcer proclaim the Cardinals better than the Dodgers, the Dodgers would have cause for an equal-time claim. Less-farfetched examples followed. After the Manion Forum had aired a number of programs in August opposing the Test Ban Treaty, a citizens' group supporting the treaty demanded and received time to respond, despite the

fact the treaty "had been praised, plugged and defended on radio and television almost hourly by a bevy of its supporters, including President Kennedy." The Forum broadcasts, Manion protested, had been an attempt "to make at least a token reply to the roaring volume of pro-treaty broadcasting that had reverberated on the Nation's air waves for weeks." And therein was Manion's real point: if established media were all liberal, conservative media could never trigger equal-time requests. Conservatives were the ones whose side went unheard, who injected balance into a station's programming.

In Manion's eyes, the FCC guidelines completed the Kennedy administration's control of the news. Throughout Kennedy's presidency, Manion had lambasted "managed news," a twist on his earlier cries of censorship and liberal control. "Managed news" alleged the administration controlled coverage of the president and his agenda. Earlier that summer, before the FCC memo, Manion had invited M. Stanton Evans on the program to discuss news management. Evans claimed that the administration, in seeking to protect the image of the New Frontier, had clamped down on information coming from the White House, "so much so that even newspapermen normally friendly with Kennedy have been protesting." Listeners echoed this concern back to Manion. "The trouble is every newspaper echoes the Kennedy line," wrote a Seattle listener. "I take *Newsweek,* but it is awful, and I only read it to see how terribly it has changed. The same is true of *Saturday Evening Post*, and I suppose of almost every publication in America. Verily," he concluded, "evil days have come upon us." Manion agreed, now that the managing of news was aided by new attempts to silence the administration's opponents. The new guidelines would have no effect on the "approved 'liberal line' that flows in constantly over the three big networks," and the president would always be able to address the nation without rebuttal. "This," Manion declared, "is centralized censorship in its most reprehensible form."[lxii]

Manion's broadcast riled his audience, and letters mounted in response. Several listeners included copies of their letters to the FCC, in which they used the broadcast as a template for their complaints of "news management" and the "radio news blackout." One correspondent even offered to sponsor the program on his local station, declaring that if the station refused the program, "I will know the extent of the FCC control and I will then gird for battle." In attacking the FCC for censorship, Manion offered his

listeners a specific target for their grievances. In the months that followed, their letters laid blame on the FCC for station losses resulting from the Forum's decision to cancel, not censorship. Once again, Manion saw how effectively charges of censorship rallied his audience.[lxiii]

Attacking the ruling on air was not enough to satisfy Manion. So he turned to his friends in Congress to fight back against the FCC. Texas Senator John Tower promised to soon take the Senate floor to publicize the situation. "It is my hope," Tower wrote, "that we can cause the F.C.C. to pull in its horns, just a little if not a lot." Robert Dole, then a representative from Kansas and a former guest on the Forum, pledged to a correspondent that Manion had his full support in the matter. "As you indicate, this is a low-down method," Dole wrote, referring to the use of the FCC to attack conservatives. "Believe me, the Kennedy brothers are at their best when operating in this fashion." By mid-November, Manion could report that over a hundred members of Congress had been in touch with the FCC over the new guidelines. Of these, Manion brought five onto his program to blast the FCC and the administration for this "abridgement of freedom of speech through bureaucratic harassment."[lxiv]

Despite appeals to (and from) Congress and letters to the FCC, the new guidelines stood. Though broadcasters now had a clearer statement of their responsibilities, Manion worried about the chilling effect these regulations created. For one, they added to broadcast expenses by requiring broadcasters to spend time monitoring programs and contacting possible subjects of attack and arranging for equal or even free time. The regulations also left broadcasters with little incentive to tackle controversial issues—and for conservatives, who felt they had been tagged *de facto* controversialists, this was an especially unwelcome development. Even Manion occasionally weighed the new guidelines when designing programs. In considering an interview with one of Regnery's authors, Manion mused whether it might not be too much "for air-jittery radio stations who are now more than ever worried about the F.C.C." When one correspondent urged him to call upon conservatives to fight back and demand free time of their own, Manion expressed doubts that the guidelines could do anything more than suppress speech generally because of the financial burden they created for stations. "[I]f such a drive was successful," Manion predicted, "the local stations would simply throw in the sponge and play records."[lxv]

The counter to this chilling effect lay with the stations which simply refused to offer free time. An Idaho station dismissed a request from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, arguing that it was not an official request since it was just a letter and not a public notice. The real issue—the guidelines, not the request—came out at the end of the program director's note to Manion: "We ask, what is 'Fair' about one man paying for a program, and another man expecting an answering program 'free for nothing.'" In Birmingham, a station refused free time in response to a test-ban treaty broadcast, rationalizing that Kennedy had already explained the pros of the treaty. Neither station lost its license.[lxvi]

In the end, the tussle with the FCC and the revelation of the Reuther memo reaffirmed conservatives' belief in entrenched liberal control of the media. The events also provided new evidence for these claims, buttressing the logic underlying conservative media enterprises. While the attention brought by conservative organizing created new problems for conservatives as a whole—and some developing problems for conservative media in particular—it also helped cement conservative media's central place in modern American conservatism.

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[i] Olive Marcom to Manion, Sept. 20, 1964, CMP 15:6.
[ii] Joan Erman to the Editor of the Indianapolis Star, [Jul. 1963], Jameson G. Campaigne Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, 11:June 1 to June 30, 1966. The *Star* was an editorially conservative paper owned by Eugene Pulliam, who also owned the *Arizona Republic.*
[iii] Broadcast #22, "A Program for Patriots," Feb. 27, 1955.
[iv] Rusher to Rousselot, Aug. 9, 1961, WRP Mcrflm, reel 28.
[v] Broadcast #22, "A Program for Patriots," Feb. 27, 1955, emphasis added; Broadcast #24, "Why Not End the Cold War?," Mar. 13, 1955.
[vi] Thomas J. Anderson, "Straight Talk," July 1959, Thomas J. Anderson Papers, University of Oregon, 84:12; "Coming Soon: What You Can Do," *Human Events* 17 Nov. 1960, Herbert A. Philbrick Papers, Library of Congress, 114:5.
[vii] On Eisenhower's centrism and embrace of "modern Republicanism," see for instance Gary W. Reichard, *Politics as Usual: The Age of Truman and Eisenhower*, 2d ed., (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 2004).
[viii] Morrie Ryskind, "A Visit from St. Nik," *National Review*, Aug. 29, 1959, 294.
[ix] Broadcast #255, "Khrushchev Visit—The Voice of Jacob but the Hand of Esau," Aug. 16, 1959; "Mr. Eisenhower Falls to the Summit," *National Review*, Aug. 15, 1959, 262-265; Anderson, "Straight Talk," Oct. 1959, TAP 84:12.

[x] Polyzoides, "Scandinavia Hostility to Khrushchev Seen," *Los Angeles Times* 21 Jul. 1959: 9; Werner Wiskari, "Khrushchev Calls Off Plan for a Visit to Scandinavia," *New York Times* 21 Jul. 1959: 1; "'Spit in Face'" Canceled Trip, Says Nikita," *Los Angeles Times* 22 Jul. 1959: 8.
[xi] "Americans Exhorted to Greet Khrushchev with 'Civil Silence,'" *New York Times* 24 Aug. 1959: 2. Ads ran in the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, and *Chicago Tribune*, among others.
[xii] Broadcast #257, "Khrushchev Visit a Symbol of Death," Aug. 31, 1957; "Khrushchev," *Human Events* 23 Sept. 1959: News 1; "For the Record," *National Review*, Sept. 12, 1959, 315; Peter Kihss, "Anti-Red Groups Here Press Protests against Khrushchev," 11 Sept. 1959: 8. A *Chicago Tribune* article later claimed that DC was facing a shortage of black cloth because of the manufacture of armbands. "Black Cloth Selling Fast," 12 Sept. 1959, 1. N.R. Forum, Sept. 17, 1959, WRP Mcrflm, reel 6.
[xiii] On dyeing the Hudson, see Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up* (originally quoted in Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.*); N.R. Forum, Sept. 17, 1959, WRP Mcrflm, reel 6.
[xiv] Manion to Senators Andrew F. Schoeppel and Thomas Dodd, telegram, Aug. 12, 1959, CMP 5:6.
[xv] *National Review* underlined this point with a cartoon labeled "Courtship: The Year of Our Lord 1959," which showed a blood-soaked Khrushchev kissing the hand of Columbia. This ran with Buckley's reprinted speech from the rally. "The Damage We Have Done to Ourselves," *National Review*, Sept. 26, 1959, 349-351. For coverage of the rally, see Peter Kihss, "2,500 Anti-Communists Rally; Mayor and President Scored," *New York Times* 18 Sept. 1959: 18.
[xvi] William A. Rusher, "Now It Can Be Told," *National Review* Jan. 27, 1989; Bozell to Manion, Aug. 17, 1959, CMP 68:4.
[xvii] Rusher to Ferdinand Lathrop Mayer, Feb. 22, 1960, WRP Mcrflm, reel 10; Rusher to Thomas Stalker, Jun. 9, 1960, WRP Mcrflm, reel 27.
[xviii] Reardon to supporters, Mar. 1, 1958, CMP 98:61; Rusher to Edward V. O'Brian, May 8, 1961, WRP Mcrflm, reel 12; Rusher to Mayer, Feb. 22, 1960, WRP Mcrflm, reel 10.
[xix] Broadcast #358, "Conservative Clubs All Over America Can Save This Nation from Slavery," Aug. 6, 1961.
[xx] Kirk to Regnery, Dec. 4, 1961, HRP 40:1 Russell Kirk (2 of 5, 1960-1964).
[xxi] Seventh Anniversary Progress Report, 1961, CMP 85:7.
[xxii] Manion to Welch, Aug. 3, 1961 CMP 62:1; Manion to Talbert, Aug. 16, 1961, CMP 56:4.
[xxiii] Rusher to Manion, Jul. 25, 1961, WRP Mcrflm, reel 11; "'Conservative' Better Hurry," *Knoxville Journal* 8 Aug. 1961, clipping in Manion Forum Ephemera, Folder 1, WC; MF Newsletter, Nov. 1961, V1N8, CMP 85:2; Manion to Rev. Richard Ginder, Aug. 10, 1961, CMP 6:1; Seventh Anniversary Progress Report, 1961, CMP 85:7; Manion to Hub Russell, Sept. 12, 1961, CMP 68:8; Reardon to sponsors, Jul. 20, 1962, CMP 99:31.
[xxiv] Memo to Conservative Clubs, News from Conservative Clubs, n.d., MF Ephemera, Folder 1, WC; Memo to Conservative Clubs, Your Reading Program, n.d., MF Ephemera, Folder 1, WC; Memo to Conservative Clubs, You *Can* Beat the Managed News Game, n.d., MF Ephemera, Folder 2, WC.
[xxv] Memo to Conservative Clubs, Influencing Public Opinion: What a Conservative Club Can Do," n.d., MF Ephemera, Folder 2, WC.
[xxvi] Memo to Conservative Clubs, Top Priority for Conservative Club Agenda: The Elections!, n.d., MF Ephemera, Folder 1, WC; Memo to Conservative Clubs, Conservative Clubs: Time for Action, n.d., MF Ephemera, Folder 1, WC; Sample press release, n.d., MF Ephemera, Folder 1, WC.
[xxvii] Broadcast #381, "Conservative Upsurge Indicates Growing Anti-Communism," Jan. 14, 1962.
[xxviii] Daniel Bell, *The New American Right* (New York: Criterion, 1955); Seymour Lipset, *The Radical Right: A Problem for American Democracy* (New York: Columbia University, 1954); Clinton Rossiter, *Conservatism in America* (New York: Knopf, 1955).
[xxix] "The Americanists," *Time*, Mar. 10, 1961. The *Times* series, written by Gene Blake, ran from March 5-9, 1961.
[xxx] Hans Engh, *Nation*, Mar. 11, 1961, 209-211; "State Probing Birch Society, Brown Says," *Los Angeles Times* 15 Mar. 1961: 2.
[xxxi] "Senator Scores Group Calling Eisenhower a Red," *New York Times* 9 Mar. 1961: 12; "Richard Nixon Advises Caution in Combat against Subversives," *Los Angeles Times* 18 Mar. 1961: B4.
[xxxii] Barth, "Report on the 'Rampageous Right,' *New York Times Magazine* 26 Nov. 1961: 25. Among the articles on the right: "The Ultras," *Time*, Dec. 8, 1961; Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The 'Threat' of the Radical Right," *New York Times* 17 Jun. 1962: 176; Cushing Strout, "Fantasy on the Right," *New Republic*, May 1, 1961, 13-15. Books included reissues of Bell's *The New American Right*, updated with the title *The Radical Right* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963); and Rossiter's *Conservatism in America* (New York: Vintage, 1962); as well as new books: Arnold Forster and Benjamin Epstein, *Danger on the Right* (New York: Random House, 1964); Ralph E. Ellsworth

and Sarah M. Harris, *The American Right Wing: A Report to the Fund for the Republic* (Washington: Public Affairs, 1962).

[xxxiii] Peter Braustrup, "Now Birch Society Polarizes the Right," *New York Times* 9 Apr. 1961; Fred J. Cook, "The Ultras," *Nation*, Jun. 23, 1962, 565-606; "Who's Who in the Tumult of the Far Right," *Life*, Feb. 9, 1961. Strout's article "Fantasy on the Right" also creates a conservative hodge-podge.

[xxxiv] Dan Smoot was likewise unimpressed with the epithets thrown at conservatives, particularly the designation "super-patriot." "'Super-patriot,' if it has any meaning at all, means *having too much patriotism*," he wrote incredulously. "Is that possible?" *The Dan Smoot Report*, No. 52, 1961, The Dan Smoot Report, WC. Broadcast #425, "Beware of Left Wing Extremists Who Now Run Our Government," Nov. 18, 1962.

[xxxv] Buckley, "National Review's Position," *New York Times* 16 Apr. 1961: E10; "Confidential Behind-the-Scenes Report," Independent American Ephemera, Folder 1, WC.

[xxxvi] In a letter that would later be laden with irony, Welch congratulated Regnery for curbing excesses: "you have exercises sufficient restraint in your crusading, subordinating it to the necessities of sound business principles, to avoid becoming so easy a target for the smear artists as young Devin Garrity, whose Devin-Adair Company has also published many books to which the influential opinion-molders of the last few years have objected so violently, and who has therefore become labeled in the book world, however unfairly, as a propagandist rather than a publisher." Welch to Regnery, Dec. 1, 1952.

[xxxvii] Goldwater would later come to regret this, as the press tagged the Committee a "Birch front group" during the 1964 presidential election. "Goldwater Denies Knowing He Joined Birch Front Group," *New York Times* 10 Oct. 1964: 16.

[xxxviii] Information Concerning Henry Regnery Company, HRP 81:16A; Regnery to Robert E. Wood, Aug. 28, 1953, HRP 80:1; Buckley to Regnery, Feb. 1, 1962, HRP 10:14 WFB, Jr. (3 of 3, 1956-66); "Notes and Asides," *National Review* Jan. 25, 1959, 79; Independent American Forum Ad, *National Review*, Oct. 10, 1959, 405.

[xxxix] Welch to Manion, Nov. 25, 1959, CMP 62:1; Manion to Welch, Nov. 30, 1959, CMP 62:1; Manion to Welch, Aug. 3, 1961, CMP 62:1; Rusher to Bozell, Sep. 26, 1961, WRP Mcrflm, reel 28. Rusher expressed frustration that *National Review* editors refused to publicize Manion's Clubs because they believed he "was personally ambitious" and a member of the Birch Society. Rusher was not an enthusiastic Manion supporter—"Manion is no particular hero of mine" but he believed the Clubs could be useful.

[xl] McCaffrey to Buckley, Mar. 9, 1961, WRP Mcrflm, reel 11.

[xli] Rusher memo to Buckley, Bozell, James Burnham, Willmoore Kendall, Frank Meyer, and Priscilla Buckley, Apr. 3, 1961, WRP Mcrflm, reel 4.

[xlii] Manion to Thomas J. Davis, Feb. 26, 1964 CMP 61:1; Manion to Milliken, Jan. 12, 1962, CMP 6:3; Welch quoted in James E. Clayton, "John Birch 'Antis' Point Unwelcome Spotlight," *Washington Post* 26 Mar. 1961: E1.

[xliii] Buckley, "The Uproar," *National Review*, Apr. 22, 1961, 241-243.

[xliv] "Charges Reds Began Attack on Birch Group, *Chicago Tribune* 2 Apr. 1961:17; Manion quoted in Rusher to Harry L. Bradley, May 8, 1961, WRP Mcrflm, reel 4; Welch quoted in Rusher to Kenneth D. Robertson, Jr., May 1, 1961, WRP Mcrflm, reel 12; Courtney to Manion, May 11, 1961, CMP 5:12.

[xlv] Manion to Milliken, Jan. 12, 1962, CMP 6:3; Manion to Welch, Jul. 14, 1961, CMP 62:1.

[xlvi] Manion to Welch (confidential), Sep. 27, 1961, CMP 61:4; "Conservatism—Real and Unreal," *Wall Street Journal* 14 Aug. 1961: 10; "Warn Birch Quiz Can Backfire," *Chicago Tribune* 6 Apr. 1961: 4.

[xlvii] Rusher memo to Buckley, Burnham, Meyer, William Rickenbacker, and Priscilla Buckley, Jan. 30, 1962.

[xlviii] Manion to Milliken, Jan. 12, 1962, CMP 6:3; Rusher memo to Buckley, et al., Apr. 3, 1961, WRP Mcrflm, reel 4.

[xlix] "The Question of Robert Welch," *National Review*, Feb. 13, 1962, 83-88; Bozell to Rusher, Feb. 23, 1962, WRP Mcrflm, reel 3; Thomas A. Stalker to Rusher, Feb. 19, 1962, WRP Mcrflm, reel 13.

[l] Milliken to Rusher, Mar. 12, 1962, WRP Mcrflm, reel 9; Milliken to Welch, Feb. 12, 1962, CMP 6:3; James Lewis Kirby, Jr. to Rusher, Mar. 19, 1962, WRP Mcrflm, reel 8; Rusher to Buckley, Feb. 28, 1962, WRP Mcrflm, reel 4; Rusher to Buckley, Feb. 26, 1962, WRP Mcrflm, reel 4; Rusher to Buckley, Feb. 20, 1962, WRP Mcrflm, reel 4; Rusher to Arnold S. Anderson, Mar. 28, 1962, WRP Mcrflm, reel 3.

[li] William Rickenbacker memo to Bozell, Buckley, Priscilla Buckley, Burnham, Kendall, Meyer, and Rusher, Apr. 14, 1962, WRP Mcrflm, reel 12; Virginia Gourdin to Buckley, Mar. 12, 1962, WRP Mcrflm, reel 8; Schlafly to Buckley, Feb. 8, 1962, CMP 6:3.

[lii] Rusher to Buckley, Feb. 20, 1962, WRP Mcrflm, reel 4.

[liii] Tom Wicker, "Kennedy Asserts Far-Right Groups Provoke Disunity," *New York Times* 19 Nov. 1961: 1.

[liv] "Washington Wire," *Wall Street Journal* 17 Aug. 1962: 1; MF fundraising letter, Aug. 31, 1962, CMP 99:29.

[lv] Kay Mills, *Changing Channels: The Civil Rights Case That Transformed Television* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2004). Credit to Stephanie Rolph for this citation.
[lvi] "Broadcast Licensees Advised Concerning Stations' Responsibilities under the Fairness Doctrine as to Controversial Issue Programming," Federal Communications Commission, Public Notice-B, Jul. 26, 1963, HPP 96:4.
[lvii] "New Guide to AFL-CIO Radio & TV," *The Machinist*, Aug. 22, 1963, 7, HPP 96:4.
[lviii] Wilda Parnell, a secretary at the Forum, linked these three events in a letter to Al Hill, Oct. 14, 1963, CMP 11:5; as did *National Review* in "Coincidence or Not," *National Review*, Nov. 5, 1963, 382-284.
[lix] Richard Creitz to Martin E. Firestone, n.d., CMP 67:1; Wilda Parnell to Larry Wilson, Oct. 22, 1963; Wilda Parnell to Al Hill, Oct. 14, 1963, CMP 11:5
[lx] The "free market" argument caused endless consternation for those in conservative media, who by and large failed to make profits and had to appeal for funds year after year. Most handled this problem by arguing that ideological products were an exception to the free market.
[lxi] Broadcast #474, "Do You Want Federal Censorship for Your Local Radio Station?," Oct. 27, 1963.
[lxii] Broadcast #454, "The Menace of Managed News," Jun. 9, 1963; G.H. Thompson to Manion Forum, Oct. 6, 1963, CMP 11:5; Broadcast #474.
[lxiii] Edward Ahrens to FCC, Nov. 13, 1963, CMP 12:3; Blanche Horan to Chairman of the FCC, Nov. 18, 1963, CMP 12:3; Robert T. Stevens, Jr. to Manion, Dec. 10, 1963, CMP 12:5. On FCC blame, see, for instance, Mrs. John I. George to Manion, Jan. 8, 1964, CMP 13:2; R. O. Tame to Manion, Sep. 26, 1964, CMP 15:6.
[lxiv] Tower to Hobart K. McDowell, [n.d.], CMP 12:3; Dole to John Cavanaugh, Oct. 29, 1963, CMP 12:1; Manion to Rogers Follansbee, Nov. 13, 1963, CMP 12:3; Broadcast #478, "Congress Versus the FCC," Nov. 24, 1963.
[lxv] Manion to Regnery, Feb. 4, 1964, CMP 13:4; Manion to Owen Ayres, Nov. 13, 1963, CMP 12:3.
[lxvi] Al Nelson to Manion, Jun. 4, 1964, CMP 67:1; Parnell to Al Hill, Oct. 14, 1963, CMP 11:5.