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8.20.80

The Storm Over Women's Rights

One of the slicker performances at the Democratic Convention was provided by a well-organized group of women who rewrote the party platform despite strenuous objections from the White House and without much help from the preoccupied Senator from Massachusetts. As a result, Democratic candidates are running on a platform totally opposed to the Republicans on the two big political issues facing women today, the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion rights. Republicans are pledged to do away with both. Democrats wholeheartedly support both.

What's most notable here is not the sudden potential for a referendum on so-called women's issues this fall, but the very fact that they have now achieved paramount political importance. There have been national battles in the past over abortion and equal rights, like the "three A's" charge in 1972 that Senator McGovern favored "acid, amnesty and abortion." But they were peripheral compared with the current debate. Not since women won the vote have their concerns raised such a political storm.

At the Democratic convention, women for the first time were entitled by formal rule to half the delegate seats. There were many fewer at the Republican convention. The issues were deeply fought at both. In Detroit, the strident Republican stand against what a majority of American women favor caused soul-searching

among the delegates. In New York, the Democrats' stand on women's issues was one of the few sources of real enthusiasm. Probably no moment won such cheers as when Senator Kennedy said that on E.R.A.: "We will not yield, we will not equivocate, we will not rationalize, explain or excuse."

The Republicans clearly seem to be on the losing side. Their positions represent a step backward at a time that women generally are moving forward, into the work force and into political consciousness. In fact, the call for a constitutional ban on abortion is so extreme that Ronald Reagan seems quickly to have muted his support for it. The morning after the nomination, he downplayed his opposition to abortion. And he observed that the G.O.P. favors equal rights for women, opposing E.R.A. only as the best or only way to reach that objective.

After years of being regarded as extremists and troublemakers, women proved at the Democratic convention that they can be a serious, effective political force. President Carter tried to appease them by sending out senior aides to explain his commitment and to tell how many women he has appointed to high office. But even he, once his renomination was secure beyond doubt, grudgingly endorsed the platform planks they had forced upon him.

The battle for women's rights, in short, is no longer lonely nor peripheral. It has moved where it belongs: to the center of American politics.

*precisely what we
want against in the
speech ..*

delivery on:
August 22, 1980
6:30 p.m. CDT

or
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or
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**ADDRESS BY THE HONORABLE RONALD REAGAN
THE ROUNDTABLE NATIONAL AFFAIRS BRIEFING
DALLAS, TEXAS**

Since the start of my presidential campaign, I -- and many others -- have felt a new vitality in American politics. A fresh sense of purpose, a deeper feeling of commitment is giving new energy and new direction to our public life.

You are a major part of the reason. Religious America is awakening, perhaps just in time for our country's sake. I have seen the impact of your dedication. I know the sincerity of your intent. And I am deeply honored to be with you today.

I'm told that throughout history, man has adopted about four billion laws -- but it has always seemed to be that in all that time, we haven't improved by one iota on the Ten Commandments.

Today, you and I are meeting at a time when traditional Judeo-Christian values, based on the moral teachings of religion, are undergoing what is perhaps their most serious challenge in our nation's history.

Nowhere is the challenge to traditional values more pronounced than in the area of public policy debate. So it is fitting that the topic of our meeting should be national affairs, for it is precisely in the affairs of our nation where the challenge to those values is the greatest.

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In recent years we have seen a new and cynical tactic on the part of those who would seek to remove from our public policy debate the voice of traditional morality.

This tactic seeks not only to discredit traditional moral teachings but also to exclude them from public debate by intimidation and name-calling.

We have all heard it charged that whenever those with traditional religious values seek to contribute to public policy, they are attempting to "impose" their views on others. We are told that any public policy approach incorporating traditional values is out of bounds.

This is a matter that transcends partisan politics and demands the attention of every American, regardless of party.

If we have come to a time in the United States when the attempt to see traditional moral values reflected in public policy leaves one open to irresponsible charges then the structure of our free society is under attack and the foundation of our freedom is threatened.

When I hear the First Amendment used as a reason to keep traditional moral values away from policymaking, I am shocked. The First Amendment was written not to protect the people and their laws from religious values but to protect those values from government tyranny.

This is what Madison meant when he drafted the Constitution and that precious First Amendment. This is what the state legislatures meant when they ratified it. And this is what a long line of Supreme Court decisions

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have meant. But over the last two or three decades, the federal government seems to have forgotten both "that old time religion" and that old time Constitution.

The results of this gradual but profound change in official attitudes are all about us. As our schools have tried to educate without ethics, we have seen the mounting evidence in crime rates, drug abuse, child abuse, and human suffering.

As government has become morally neutral, its resources have been denied to individuals professing religious beliefs and given to others who profess to operate in a value-free environment. Many of you, I'm sure, remember the controversy over the federally-funded textbooks known as MACOS (Man, A Course of Study), which indirectly taught grade school children relativism, as they decided which members of their family should be left to die for the survival of the remaining ones. I don't recall the government ever granting \$7 million to scholars for the writing of textbooks reflecting a religious view of man and his destiny.

The Federal Communications Commission has shown greater interest in limiting the independence of religious broadcasting than it ever did in limiting the drug propaganda poorly concealed in the lyrics of some recorded songs.

The Department of Labor and the National Labor Relations Board have tried to exert regulatory control over church employees, to have federal agencies decide which church workers are engaged in secular activity, and which have religious jobs.

Fully backed by the White House, the Internal Revenue Service was prepared to proclaim, without approval of the Congress, that tax-exemption constitutes federal funding. The purpose was to force all tax exempt schools -- including church schools -- to abide by affirmative action orders drawn up by -- who else? -- I.R.S. bureaucrats.

On that particular point, I would like to read you a line from a certain political platform, written in Detroit about a month ago. It goes like this:

"we will halt the unconstitutional regulatory vendetta launched by Mr. Carter's IRS Commissioner against independent schools."

To that I want to add: if I am successful, the next Administration will base its policies -- and again I quote my party's platform -- "on the primacy of parental rights and responsibility."

The office of the presidency must ensure that the awesome power of government respects the rights of parents and the integrity of the family. If a President can propose taxes, regulations, controls and embargoes, he can propose, as well, ways to keep big government out of the school, and the neighborhood, and above all -- the home.

I don't ask you to "trust me" to do all that. I ask you to go back to an older American vision of where trust should be placed. You see it written on a dollar bill. In fact, about the only thing about a dollar that's worth more today than it was four years ago are the words, "In God We Trust."

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By using our own powers, while trusting in a power greater than ours, we can do everything that really needs doing.

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We can exert America's moral leadership in the world again.

We can have a foreign policy which understands the danger we face from governments and ideologies that are at war with the very ideas of religion and freedom.

And most important we can get back to the idea that in a struggle against totalitarian tyranny, traditional values based on religious morality are among our greatest strengths.

If we have learned nothing else in the course of this century, we have learned that tyranny no matter how brutal can not stamp out the spirit of freedom and liberty. And that brings me to the tragedy of Poland.

For 40 years the Polish people have lived under first, the Nazis and then the Soviets. For 40 years they have been ringed by tanks and guns. The voices behind those tanks and guns have told them there is no God. Now with the eyes of all the world on them, they have looked past those menacing weapons and listened to the voice of one man, Pope John Paul, who has reminded them there is a God and it is their unalienable right to freely worship that God. Will the Kremlin ever be the same again? Will any of us for that matter? Perhaps that one man -- the son of humble farm folk -- has made us aware that the world is crying out for a spiritual revival and for leadership.

..... The pages of Alexander Solzhenitsyns' Gulag Archipelago are filled with stories about the strength of believers in the face of Soviet Communist inhumanity. Solzhenitsyn writes about the religious believers...

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"...they went off to camp to face tortures and death -- only so as not to renounce the faith. They knew very well for what they were serving time and they were unwavering in their convictions. Who will count those millions? They died unknown, casting only in their immediate vicinity a light like a candle."

In a world where many forces seek to extinguish forever this holy flame, we have never needed friends more than today.

We need them because the great challenges we face in the world require us to work together with others to defend our heritage and our liberty. And they need us because the United States is a nation which, in defense of its own spiritual values, has unselfishly sacrificed to help others in times of danger and need.

Earlier this week I had the occasion to speak to two important themes directly linked to our friendship with other nations: those themes were "Peace" and "Strength."

Clearly, the pursuit of peace must remain the fundamental objective ^{of} our foreign policy. The peace we seek must be one based on principles which we hold in common with our friends abroad. And the underlying guarantee for the pursuit of peace must be a reservoir of American strength which will serve as a deterrent to war and a shield for our friends.

The friendship of which I speak often finds concrete expression in formal alliances with other nations.

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But I am troubled by the state of our alliances today. The Administration in Washington appears incapable of formulating and executing a clear, principled, consistent, long-range policy designed to protect our interests.

Our allies are frequently not even consulted when positions are taken in Washington.

When trust and confidence -- the vital ingredients of friendship -- erode, the very basis of friendship is undermined.

We need a new foreign policy, one which the American people can understand and support. It must stress our great economic strength, and will seek to rebuild our competitiveness in world markets, which has been shackled by government intervention, regulations and hostility to the private sector. And it will require the careful, measured renewal of our military strength, so that we can restore that vital margin of safety which kept the peace for so many years.

Our friends depend on that margin to maintain peace and to preserve their liberty. The price of leadership is that we must, together with those good friends, assure that the margin of safety is both effective and credible.

But as we do these necessary things in foreign policy, we must remember that our first and most urgent task begins at home. Against the despair and pessimism that tells us we must accept a condition of national "malaise", we must offer a positive and optimistic vision.

In our own country, we can get our house back in order.

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The drugs that ravage the young, the street crimes that terrorize the elderly -- these are not necessary parts of life. Despite some intolerable court decisions, we do not have to forever tolerate the pornography that defaces our neighborhoods or the permissiveness that permeates our schools.

We can break the yoke of poverty, by unleashing America's economic power for growth and expansion, not by making anyone the perpetual ward of the State.

We can cherish our aged, helping families to care for one another, rather than driving their members into impersonal dependence upon government programs and government institutions.

When I made the decision to seek the presidency, I quoted one of those early colonists who landed on the Massachusetts shore telling the little band with him that the eyes of all mankind were on them and that they could be as a shining city upon a hill. Well, the eyes of all mankind are still upon us, pleading with us to keep our rendezvous with destiny; to give hope to all who yearn for freedom and cherish human dignity.

We have God's promise that if we turn to him and ask his help, we shall have it. With his help, we can still become that "shining city upon a hill."

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I've always believed that every blessing brings with it a responsibility. The responsibility to use that blessing wisely, to share it generously, and to preserve it for those who come after us.

If we believe God has blessed America with liberty, then we have not just a right to vote, but a duty to vote. We have not just the freedom to work in campaigns and run for office and comment on public affairs. We have a responsibility to do so.

That is the only way to preserve our blessings, extend them to others, and hand them down to our children.

If you do not speak your mind and cast your ballots, then who will speak and work for the ideals we cherish? Who will vote to protect the American family and respect its interests in the formulation of public policy?

Who, if not you and millions more like you, will vote to defend the defenseless and the weak, the very young and the very poor and the very old.

When you stand up for your values when you assert your civil rights to vote and to participate fully in government, you are defending our true heritage of religious liberty. You are standing in the tradition of Roger Williams, Isaac Backus, and all the other dissenters who established for us the rights of religious conscience.

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Much has changed since the Constitution guaranteed all Americans their religious liberty, but some things must never change. The perils our country faces today, and will face in the 1980's, seem unprecedented in their scope and consequences. But our response to them can be the response of men and women, in any era, who seek Divine guidance in the policies of their government and the promulgation of their laws.

When the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, they were told that their government and laws must be models to other nations, showing to the world the wisdom and mercy of their God.

To us, as to the ancient People of the Promise, there is given an opportunity: a chance to make our laws and government not only a model to mankind -- but a testament to the wisdom and mercy of God.

Let it be said of us, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

May I close on a personal note. I was asked once in a press interview what book I would choose if I were shipwrecked on an island and could have only one book for the rest of my life.

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I replied that I knew of only one goal that could be read and re-read and continue to be a challenge: the Bible — the Old and New Testaments.

I can only add to that, my friends, that I continue to look to the Scriptures today for fulfillment and guidance.

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