

Immoderate Moderates

here is a *jihad* going on inside the Republican Party in California. The ayatollahs of this movement, however, are not the conservatives who dominate party offices at the state and local level, but, rather, the "moderate" insurgents whose rhetoric and agenda are anything but moderate. Indeed, in county GOP central committee races across the state that will be decided in the March primary, various moderate groups are pouring tens of thousands of dollars and barrels of vitriolic ink into campaigns to unseat incumbent conservatives.

In the Central Coast, for example, an organization called the Mainstream Republicans of Monterey County recently mailed brochures exhorting the party faithful to "Liberate our Party from the Radical Right!" In this case, "Radical Right" translates to conservatives who are anti-abortion-rights. The group seeks to elect a slate of so-called "mainstream Republicans" to the county central committee in order "to unite, not divide the party." Yet, the moderates have a curious notion of the ingredients for a unifying strategy. The group's literature also warns that, "The extremists we oppose are organized and determined" and, "If you don't turn out to vote, those extremists may win by default." Even if successful, this rhetorical hyperbole can hardly promote unity.

Next door to Monterey, in Santa Cruz County, the same scenario is being played out. The leader of the moderates is political consultant Vic Marani, formerly an aide to Democratic state Senator Henry Mello. Marani claims that he is only interested in "nuts and bolts" issues, such as increasing GOP registration, candidate recruitment and fund raising. Yet, conservative central committee chairman Stanley Monteith notes that despite historical Democratic dominance in the region, the central committee has had remarkable recent success in helping elect Republicans to congressional and state legislative offices. Further, says Monteith, central committee members "have worked to elect Republican candidates regardless of how they feel about their political views." Indeed, among the area's elected Republican officeholders are moderates such as state Senator Bruce McPherson.

Nevertheless, Santa Cruz moderates have labeled the conservatives as "extremists," leading

central committee member Jack Ward to say, "This campaign of slurs and innuendoes is clearly an attempt to incite division among Republicans."

The biggest offensive being waged by moderates is occurring in Orange County. A moderate group called the New Majority Committee, including Irvine Company head Donald Bren and his right-hand man Gary Hunt, plus developers George Argyros and William Lyon, has built up a war chest of more than \$500,000 for the purpose of taking over the county central committee and dumping its conservative chairman, Tom Fuentes. During Fuentes' successful 15-year tenure, Republicans became dominant at all levels of government in the county. As in the other counties, Fuentes' record isn't the real issue. Despite their superficial emphasis on party building, the moderates are strongly motivated by their pro-abortion rights views. They want any reference to abortion deleted from party manifestos and see Fuentes as an impediment. For his part, Fuentes has attacked the pro-tax positions of his big-business/moderate adversaries. The New Majority Committee states that its members are "fiscally conservative and socially moderate." However, according to Fuentes: "They want to [pass Proposition 26 and] roll back the state's two-thirds vote requirement to pass bond issues and increase property taxes." Fuentes warns that the New Majority Committee "is neither conservative socially, but more important, they're not conservative economically."

In a crowning piece of chutzpah, the GOP moderates claim in their literature that they want to return to the principles and beliefs of Ronald Reagan. In reality, what they want is a return to Gerald Ford, the quintessential status-quo moderate who nearly destroyed the Republican Party. Reagan's dynamic blend of libertarian economic philosophy and championing of conservative social issues was anathema to the moderates but was hugely popular with voters. Regardless of the big bucks the GOP moderate elite is throwing around, if Republicans must choose between a Ford or a Reagan future, is there any real question what their choice should be? 🏛️

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by Lance T. Izumi



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letters

The Latino Century

I enjoyed your January 2000 issue on the Latino Century. But as an American of Portuguese descent, I must point out that Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo was Portuguese, not Spanish. Also, this spelling of his name is the Spanish way, not the Portuguese way.

**Clyde Marsh
Hollister**

Regarding Hispanics in California, a Portuguese sailor, Joao Rodrigues Cabrilho, discovered California in 1542. Mr. Cabrilho was sailing for the Spanish crown – much as Christopher Columbus, an Italian, was sailing for the Queen of Spain when he discovered the “new world” in 1492. But his nationality was indeed Portuguese.

It is unfortunate that the unusual spelling of his name has been corrupted over the years, leading to the erroneous conclusion that Mr. Cabrilho was a Spaniard. Please inform your readers.

**Roger A. Fontes
Sacramento**

I greatly enjoyed your insightful issue on the rise of Latino political power. My one quibble is the absence of Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera on your “People to Watch” list. As the highest-ranking Californian in the Clinton administration, an original leader in the California charter school movement, a centrist New Democrat and the head of a 2.6 million-person organization, Caldera is clearly a rising star both in California and around the country.

**Andrei Cherny
Valley Village**

The “no-party” system

Having been an elected official and taught political science for almost 30 years (and a Journal subscriber for most of that time), I read with interest Steve Scott’s article, “The no-party system.” What impressed me most, frankly, was how little fundamental change has taken place in terms of partisan loyalties and party leader/follower distinctions since my Berkeley graduate days.

Sure, party loyalty has diminished over the past 30 years, but over four out of five voters still rely on their party identification as a guide when

voting. And those who follow political events, even modestly, can easily note important policy differences between the leadership of the two major parties based not on their rhetoric but on their actions (votes and vetoes).

Sure, voters are more moderate (centrist) in their policy views than are their party leaders. What else is new? These leaders have vested interests in the “us vs. them” policy battles and elections, and as a result, party leaders have always been more polarized than their respective followers.

Polls over the past 20 years have consistently shown that 60 to 70 percent of the voters are moderates, constituting what’s called the political mainstream.

Does Scott’s data and discussion validate the article’s title? I think not. Are moderate voters “politically homeless” in California? Hardly! Certainly not those of us who pay enough attention to cut through the election-year puffery and who choose to get off our sidelined butts to make our concerns known on the political playing field.

**Lance Widman
Political science professor
El Camino College
Torrance**

Generation X plays politics

I really appreciated *California Journal*’s coverage of Generation X. Noel Brinkerhoff’s article, “Gen X: the Unknown Quantity” ranks right up there with Michele Mitchell’s book “A New Kind of Party Animal,” as well as the ground-breaking *Time* magazine article “Twentysomething” published in July 1990. Thank you for not forgetting the importance of Generation X.

**Gamaliel “Gamie” Gamboa
San Diego**

Lance Izumi’s view

Thank you for publishing the great article by Mr. Izumi (“A view of education spending,” December 1999.) It is a relief to be able to compare apples to apples. In the past, it has been apples to oranges.

