

Republican Elected Leaders

Bill Leonard

CPR's discussion of conservatism's future in California perfectly illustrates our problem. Some are seeing ghosts where there are none. Simply, some conservatives have lost confidence for no reason at all. I ask you, which Party has changed the state's, and the nation's, political landscape? On virtually all significant issues, which Party has enjoyed the greatest political victories over the last 20 years? Which Party's long held philosophical views are increasingly the political norm, rather than the exception? And which Party's political principles are increasingly embraced by pretenders as their own? The answer is simple — it is the Republican Party, and only the Republican Party.

More importantly, something other than the dominance of our philosophy separates us conservatives from liberals and Democrats. It is our abiding faith in God. It's not that we believe in God and Democrats do not. We all know liberals of faith. Rather, it is that we recognize the lasting value and need for a spiritually- and morally-based politics. While we celebrate religious freedom and understand the need for secular governance, we place our faith not in the institutions of man, but in God.

Liberals, in their headlong rush to create utopia on earth, have placed so much faith in secular government that they have scrubbed our governance clean of any spiritual basis. Conservatives recognize that trying to govern without grounding our public pol-

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CONSERVATIVES' UNFINISHED MISSION - PART II

THE TASK BEFORE US



Responses to *CPR's* William Rusher, Tom McClintock, John Kurzweil November/December colloquay on conservatives' present and future

featuring

Bill Leonard, Rob Hurtt, Bruce Thompson, Howard Ahmanson, Larry Arnn, Arnold Steinberg, Harold Johnson, Joseph Farah, Geoff Metcalf, Daniel J. Grimm, and John C. Gardner, with closing remarks by John Kurzweil

icy on a moral or spiritual basis is like a ship at sea with no navigator. The crew doesn't know where it's been, where it is now, where it's going, or why it is at sea. Liberals have removed the moral compass from the ship of state. Conservatives want to return it.

This is leadership's most important role. Our faith must sustain us. Change not only comes slowly, it also frightens people. As leaders, elected Republicans must be sensitive to the concerns of the electorate while keeping our goal in mind. After all, this is a republic and we are their representatives.

We cannot advance our agenda without due consideration of their concerns. For if we do, no matter how high our principle, they will surely punish us at the ballot box. This is where good policy is good politics. I have every confidence that with our faith, our principles, our vision, and our future, we can and will continue to lead.

Rob Hurtt

CPR's feature "What Ails California Republicans" patterns an

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ongoing national debate among conservatives over the present state of the movement and the Republican Party. What is surprising about this discussion is its predominantly negative tone, reminiscent of a time when our ideals and policies were not ascendant but ignored.

If there is any truth to the "Conservative Crack-Up," as the *Weekly Standard* called it, it is the extent to which "movement conservatism" is still in its adolescent stage: a self-conscious teenager unable to see his many attributes beyond his faults. The view that the Republican resurgence has been a failure does not recognize our many successes, as well as the limits of sweeping policy change within American democracy.

In California our principles have been more triumphant than ever before: tax reduction that has spawned a vigorous economic recovery, the end of affirmative action, reform of welfare, criminal justice reform leading to record crime drops, to name a few. Ten years ago none of this would have seemed possible.

We must remember that California's history until recently has been an aggressive march towards socialism. California Republicans are now turning the tide, without legislative majorities or an impartial media.

Finally, as senate Republican leader I should address the criticism directed at Party leadership. While I am open to criticism and debate over the handling of certain issues, I cannot accept the accusation that a lack of leadership is "the bane of the Republican Party in California." California's Republican leadership is more committed to Republican principles than ever, and our leadership in the senate — Ray Haynes, Ross John-

son, John Lewis, and Jim Brulte — I doubt has ever been finer.

Some critics may resolve to lambaste the present leadership and wait for "another Reagan," but I doubt Reagan himself would share that view. Not only does it contradict his famous 11th Commandment "Thou shalt not speak ill of another Republican," but also his personal experience. Many of his Republican colleagues in California were looking for better leadership in 1966, doubtful that an ex-movie actor and political newcomer could beat Governor Pat Brown. We do not so much need Reagan himself as we need a renewal of his spirit and optimism, from *everyone* involved!

Bruce Thompson

I appreciate the important dialogue *California Political Review* has initiated about how the state Republican Party should govern. But before we jump into a deep policy debate about the direction of our state and Party, I think we should focus on the immediate task before us: November 4, 1998. With reapportionment in 2000 and the historical success of the Party opposite the president's in off-year elections, it is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of the 1998 general election.

Whatever electoral plan we as conservatives adopt will demand organizational unity, so I appreciate the dialogue *CPR* has instigated. I hope conversations like this bear fruit soon, however, for it is well past season for Republicans to grow beyond our current adolescent tendencies. So let me turn now to the nuts-and-bolts of what I consider a winning strategy for

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the upcoming election year.

To transcend the liberal press and speak directly to voters in this important election year, I think the state Party needs a no-nonsense leader that appropriately personifies Republican ideals. By default, the governor has always assumed this role for his Party. Hence, I think it is imperative that in 1998 conservatives rally behind the next governor of California, Dan Lungren. The indisputable reality of this state's political hierarchy means we must actively support the top of the ticket.

As a businessman, I know all successful organizations have a powerful individual at the helm. It is the same with political organizations — and probably more so. Although I am advocating strong allegiance to our presumptive leader, I do not expect Mr. Lungren to be a "political boss." It is incumbent upon the leader to work with the state Party in developing a qualified reservoir of elected officials to act as a board of directors in advancing Republican policies and supplying future Party leaders. These should include all Republican statewide constitutional officers and GOP leaders of both Legislative Houses.

I do not want to detract from the role of our current Party chairman, but because chairmen are limited to one, two-year term and that real political power resides in the state Capitol, Party activists must look to Sacramento for leadership. Witness the tremendous inertia gathered behind Propositions 187 and 209 with Governor Wilson's leadership; and watch the anti-union initiative take flight, now that it is one of the governor's own issues.

I know a few will criticize this as blind allegiance, citing problems between the current governor and