

# What Is Liberal Republicanism?

By Arthur Larson

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With this issue, SR begins a series of articles by leading national spokesmen outlining the positions of the major segments of American political opinion. Articles in the series will be published periodically during this Presidential campaign year. The author of the first article, who wrote the book *A Republican Looks at His Party*, has served as Under Secretary of Labor, director of the United States Information Agency, and Special Assistant to President Eisenhower. He is currently serving as director of the World Rule of Law Center at Duke University.

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WHO speaks for an American political party? This question must be squarely faced and clearly answered before an article—or a series of articles—on party positions can be meaningfully undertaken. No matter what I might write here, its relevance to the assigned topic, “The Republican Position,” might well be attacked by a chorus of comments to the effect that “these are all fine sentiments, but they are not Republicanism.” Some of my friends in the Democratic Party, intending to pay me the supreme compliment, may say, “You are really a Democrat.” Some of my critics in the Republican Party, intending to apply the supreme insult, will say exactly the same thing. Indeed, both have done so in the past.

The problem of “who speaks for the party” appears in its most acute form when the party controls neither the White House nor the Congress. If a party controls the White House, but not the Congress, the President speaks for the party, as President Eisenhower did from 1954 to 1960. If the party controls the Congress but not the White House, the Congressional leaders and the Congressional record of actions speak for the party, as in the case of the Democratic Congress from 1954 to 1960.

If the party controls both the White House and the Congress, the total record speaks for the party, although an articulate President can generally domi-

nate the process and give the party his stamp, as in the case of the Democratic Party for most of the period since 1932, with Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy.

If the party controls neither the White House nor Congress—as has been the plight of the Republicans most of the time since 1932 and is right now—there is no generally recognized voice that speaks for the party. There are former Presidents, Congressional leaders, defeated Presidential candidates, National Committee spokesmen, governors, and a few self-appointed ideologists.

THE position of a party, or at any rate its “image,” varies sharply according to these four variations in the control pattern and resulting identity of spokesmen. The reason is the product of two factors: the executive, by its nature, is more progressive than the legislative; and a legislative majority necessarily appears more progressive than a legislative opposition.

It follows that if the President speaks for the party, the party appears at its most constructive and enterprising. Similarly, if the legislative leaders speak for the party, the party will appear relatively cautious and conservative. Thus, in 1955 and 1956, I recall that we in the Republican Department of Labor had fourteen important progressive legislative proposals in the field of labor and social legislation. Of these, more than

half were never even scheduled for hearing by a Democratic Congress in two years, and only a couple were passed.

If the voice of the party is not only legislative, but legislative *and opposition*, the resulting “image” is one of negativism superimposed upon conservatism—and this has been the posture of the Republican Party for most of the past thirty years. As far as a party “image” is concerned, then, we may paraphrase Lord Acton’s dictum and say that power corrupts, and being out of power corrupts absolutely.

The Democratic Party was acutely aware of this problem during the Eisenhower Administration. It attempted to solve it by creating the Democratic Advisory Committee, to provide a more liberal Democratic voice to offset the conservative utterances and record of the Democratic Congress. More recently, the Republicans have made a similar attempt on a much smaller scale, with the creation of the Critical Issues Council under the chairmanship of Dr. Milton Eisenhower.

Since the executive is inherently more progressive than the legislative, the one point at which Republicans have recently been able to create a progressive position is in several major governorships. The chief executive of a state, like the chief executive of the United States, is by the nature of the office engaged in the formulating and promoting of creative action ideas—reforming constitutions, modernizing tax structures, improving roads and other facilities, improving social legislation, attracting industry, and stimulating economic progress. That is why, when a Presidential year rolls around, and when the spotlight focuses on such people as Governor Scranton, Governor Romney, and Governor Rockefeller, the Republican position suddenly begins to look

much more vigorous and constructive.

Against this backdrop, how does one identify the authentic Republican position in 1964? In one sense, since a party is ultimately its members, the most fundamental source is the position of rank-and-file Republicans as shown by opinion polls. These polls continue to show that an overwhelming majority of Republicans continue to favor the positions sometimes identified with Modern Republicanism, including strong support for the United Nations, Social Security, foreign aid, reciprocal trade, federal aid to schools, getting along with the Russians, arms reduction, and the use of such federal powers as necessary to uphold the law in civil rights cases. The Republican position also has a firm base in the programs of the Eisenhower Administration; these programs, having dominated eight of the past eleven years, are the best available index of what the Republican Party has in fact done at the national level when it was in a position to translate its policies into action.

This is not to say that a Republican candidate should run on any past record, however impressive. He must and should run on his own record and policies and on a program that looks to the future, not the past.

**F**OR this reason, in a Presidential year, the Republican position will be primarily the position of the Republican Presidential candidate. Of the five most likely nominees, three are governors with aggressive and forward-looking executive programs to their credit—Romney, Rockefeller, and Scranton—and two are men who made distinguished executive records in the Eisenhower Administration: Nixon, as Vice President, and Lodge, as Ambassador to the United Nations. On the strength, then, of the momentum from the Eisen-

hower Administration, the views of rank-and-file Republicans shown by polls, and the known executive programs of the principal Republican candidates, one should be able to claim authenticity for the Republican position drawn from all these sources.

Now as to the statement of the Republican position itself: the Republican Party has its best opportunity here in convincing the American people that it is the party of principle rather than of improvisation and expediency. This opportunity is particularly conspicuous because the incumbent, President Lyndon B. Johnson, has a record that is long on expediency and short on principle. It would be difficult indeed for anyone to state a set of basic principles characterizing either his record in the Senate or his record in the White House. On civil rights, he has turned up on both sides of the question from time to time, voting against the poll tax amendment about a dozen times, for example, and then warmly making the constitutional amendment his own when it finally passed. In early 1957, he was trying to outdo President Eisenhower's program with his own "program with a heart"; but after his return from the Easter holiday in Texas, he gave the word to cut every appropriation in sight and launch no new programs whatever. His current proposals, which stress economy and spending in about equal proportions, are a magpie's nest of glittering bits and pieces gathered from everywhere, but adding up to no coherent pattern of principle, either domestic or international.

It is interesting to contrast with this display of feverish but patternless activity the habitual resort to principle that was one of President Eisenhower's most noticeable traits. Whenever he made a decision, you could almost watch him tracing it back into the depths of some



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guiding principle that he had worked out for himself over the years, and, if you asked him why he decided the matter in a particular way, he could immediately relate the particular application to the underlying principle. This observation struck me forcefully in the course of the first private conversation I ever had with him. In the spring of 1954, I had been watching, in a succession of cabinet meetings, the question of all-out American involvement in the Indo-Chinese war hanging in the balance. Eventually, the decision against such intervention was made, and, unsatisfactory as some of the consequences have been, at least a possible setting off of World War III was averted. Some time later, after a White House stag dinner, a clergyman and I were talking with the President, and the clergyman asked, "Mr. President, exactly why did you finally decide not to go to war in Indochina?" Eisenhower thought a brief moment and then replied, "Nobody asked us." After the incredible complications of the Indochina issue, the breathtaking simplicity of this resort to an elementary principle took me completely by surprise. The French had not asked us. The Indo-Chinese had not asked us. It followed that, if we had gone ahead anyway, we would have been subjecting a people and an area to death and devastation solely because *we* thought it was a good idea.

A man—or a party—that knows what

its principles are could not possibly make such a fantastic blunder as the Bay of Pigs invasion, which simultaneously violated the United Nations Charter, a number of inter-American treaties, one of America's oldest criminal statutes, one of the oldest and most universal principles of international law, and the deepest American principles rejecting the use of armed aggression.

Nor would a person who understood and acted on his principles have fatally hesitated at the time of the Panama riots, as President Johnson did. There was a long-standing international agreement, dating from the time of President Eisenhower, that Panamanian and United States flags were to be flown side by side in the Canal Zone. The moment that anyone on the United States payroll, from the government of the Zone on down, flouted that agreement and attempted to substitute his own foreign policy, President Johnson should have pulled every such offender out of the Canal Zone overnight and administered appropriate discipline. This at least would have put the United States, as far as was then possible, in the right and demonstrated clearly its determination to adhere to the principle that a nation must keep its international commitments. The effect could well have been to avoid most of the extremely damaging consequences to relations with Latin America that have ensued.

A good beginning point of principle, then, is an emphatic affirmation that the United States will honor its international agreements and set an example, through

its conduct and the way it settles its international disputes, of respect for law in international affairs. President Eisenhower stressed this theme in at least two State of the Union messages, backed by such specific proposals as accepting the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice fully in questions of international law, by repealing the Connally "self-judging" clause under which the United States can unilaterally defeat the Court's jurisdiction at will. This theme has not been heard since the accession of Lyndon Johnson.

Another principle of profound importance to world peace is the principle that the United States must not leave potential aggressors in any uncertainty about our willingness to resist aggression with force. This was the key to the foreign policy of John Foster Dulles. It is one of the great paradoxes of modern history that this principle, which gave us eight years without war and which Dulles formulated largely to avert the mistakes that were made during Democratic administrations prior to World War I, World War II, and the Korean conflict, should have drawn down on the head of Dulles the loudest cries of scorn by his Democratic critics. I heard Dulles expound this line of thought a number of times: that World War I was partly due to the Kaiser's conviction that the United States would never become involved; that World War II was similarly due in considerable measure to Hitler's confidence that the United States would never fight; and that the Korean war was due in part to the be-

lief of the North Koreans that the United States had made a policy decision that South Korea was not within the orbit of areas for which it would fight. "At least," Dulles would always conclude, "no one is going to make that kind of mistake about us again."

Nor did they, so long as his policies were in force. But when the Administration changed, it was not long before Khrushchev, apparently in some doubt about how firmly the United States would react, made his lunge with missiles into Cuba. Fortunately, there was just time to turn the lunge back without bloody conflict, but the fact that it was attempted at all only serves to confirm the importance of the principle here discussed.

One more example from the international field: President Eisenhower followed the rule—and the Republican Party should make this one of its central themes: when other measures fail, do it through the United Nations. The most notable example was his insistence that the Congolese government get its help, not from the United States, which would have precipitated a cold war showdown in Africa, but from the United Nations—with the fullest support of U.N. actions by the U.S., of course. Moreover, he constantly turned to the U.N. as the logical organization to implement such creative proposals as the open skies program, atoms for peace, and the monitoring of propaganda broadcasts. In spite of some appropriate pro-U.N. utterances, it is difficult to see any such principle operative in the actual handling of international affairs by the present Administration.

SINCE this discussion of principles is intended to be only illustrative, not definitive, it may be sufficient to add merely one more example, this time from domestic affairs. There is a quotation from Lincoln, almost unknown before the Eisenhower Administration, which virtually became the motto of the Republican Party. The "Lincoln formula" states that the proper role of government is to do for people what needs to be done, but what they cannot of themselves do at all or do so well. Implicit in this formula is the best working test on how far a government, in a private enterprise economy, should go in such matters as social security, business regulation, housing, health, and dozens of other governmental services and activities.

No such guiding principle was visible, for example, during the Truman Administration. Thus, in his enthusiasm for federal aid to housing, President Truman ultimately was pushing a program even for federal aid to middle-income housing—at a level of income, in

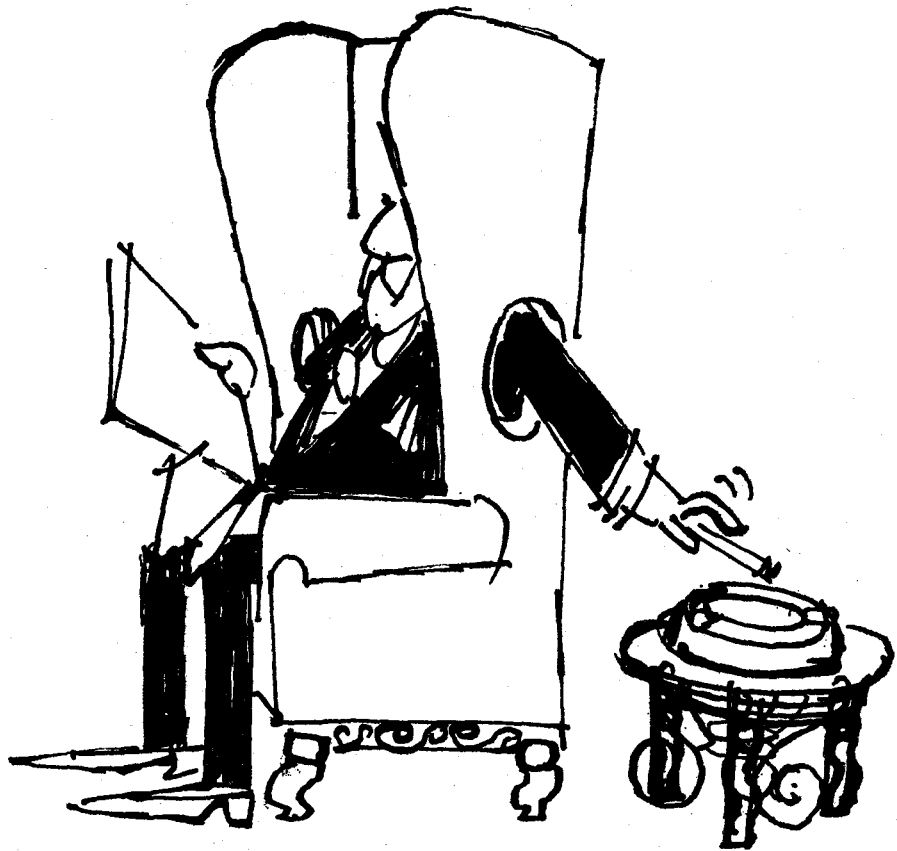


"I know I was destined for greatness. I just couldn't find my category."

other words, where private financing could do the job just as well or better. Similarly, the Truman health services plan carried governmental involvement in medical and hospital services far beyond what was necessary to deal with those specific areas, such as old age, where the job apparently could not be done by private insurance.

A good example of the Lincoln formula applied to this specific problem is the Javits bill on hospital and medical care for the aged. His bill is based upon a study and recommendations by a private nonpartisan group of citizens, under the chairmanship of Arthur Flemming, former Republican Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, including another former Republican Secretary of HEW, Marion Folsom, a former Republican Under Secretary of Labor, and a number of distinguished representatives of the medical profession, insurance, and other interested groups. The distinctive feature of the bill is that, following the Lincoln formula, it clearly assigns not only the governmental position of the task—Social Security provision of hospital and other institutional costs for the aged—but also the task of the private sector: provision for the remainder of the job, including surgical and general medical costs, through a consortium of private insurers authorized by law and aided by special tax, antitrust, and other legislative adjustments. Because of this feature, the bill effectively answers the principal argument against previous bills—that is, the argument that the provision of Social Security hospital benefits is only an entering wedge, to be followed by complete governmental takeover of medical, surgical, and other insurance for retired persons. Since the Javits bill, once and for all, through legislation earmarks the entire field exclusive of hospital and institutional benefits for the private sector, there is no further unclaimed territory to be occupied by future federal encroachment. This piece of legislation, because it deals with one of the potentially most important issues of 1964, is something that any Republican candidate could proudly hold forth as a complete and not merely piecemeal approach to the health needs of retired persons.

Finally, in addition to such matters of principle as these and their concrete expression in sound action proposals, the Republicans have an intangible but enormous possible advantage in their opportunity to convince the American people that they are better qualified to be entrusted with the Presidency as a matter of sheer competence in government. This factor has been operative in Great Britain for a long time and helps to account for the fact that the Conservative Party seems to be in office



most of the time in a country living under policies that strike Americans as anything but conservative. Americans are far too inclined to judge Presidents by some sort of box score on their success in driving legislative programs through Congress. This tends to obscure the most direct Presidential responsibility, which is to carry on the international relations and executive operations of the United States. In the international function, the responsibility is entirely the President's, except at a few points where ratification or legislation is needed. If this job is badly done, the President can-

not shift the blame to Congress—as he can always try to do if Congress blocks his legislative program. The same can be said about the President's primary responsibility for administering the vast executive branch of government, with its multifarious operating agencies.

A reputation as the party that can be depended upon to carry on these crucial international relations and wide-ranging governmental operations at home with the highest standards of competence and rectitude can be an important if not decisive element in the 1964 Presidential campaign.

## Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

### CAREER WOMEN REMINISCE

American women who have pursued a variety of callings have frequently set down accounts of their careers for the delectation of their fellow-citizens of both sexes. The group below has been assembled by Helen Nitzsche of Maquoketa, Iowa, who asks you to assign the right autobiographies to the right autobiographers. Identifications are made on page 41.

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|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Lilly Daché        | ( ) <i>My Lord, What a Morning!</i> |
| 2. Hedda Hopper       | ( ) <i>Talking through My Hats</i>  |
| 3. Janet Scudder      | ( ) <i>Glow of Candlelight</i>      |
| 4. Mary Richmond      | ( ) <i>From Under My Hat</i>        |
| 5. Mary Sullivan      | ( ) <i>Unending Journey</i>         |
| 6. Theresa Helburn    | ( ) <i>Modeling My Life</i>         |
| 7. Patricia Murphy    | ( ) <i>My Crystal Ball</i>          |
| 8. Marion Anderson    | ( ) <i>A Wayward Quest</i>          |
| 9. Elizabeth Wallace  | ( ) <i>My Double Life</i>           |
| 10. Elisabeth Marbury | ( ) <i>The Long View</i>            |