

The original documents are located in Box C28, folder “Presidential Handwriting, 9/29/1975” of the Presidential Handwriting File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

~~THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN~~

Don R

(9/19/75) SPECIAL SURVEY: ISSUES AND IDEOLOGY

There's nothing so elusive as issues and ideology. Even so, what's happening (and what's becoming hopelessly confused) is a central part of 1976-75 politics...

1. Recent Ideological Shifts: Aug. 14-27 polling by Sindlinger & Co. found a sharp gain in the number of self-identified political conservatives. During 1974 and early 1975, the number of conservatives had fallen because of Watergate and the Nixon scandals. Now the percentages seem to be returning to their 1972-73 levels.

SINDLINGER POLLS

	Jan. 1974	Jan/Feb 1975	Aug. 1975
Liberals	18%	23%	18%
Moderates	41	36	36
Conservatives	34	30	36
Radicals	1	2	2
Don't Know	6	9	8

(Note: for historical purposes, Sindlinger found almost twice as many liberals as conservatives during the early Sixties. This changed in the mid-Sixties, and by 1968-72, conservatives had a solid lead). The chart shows the Jan. 1974-Aug. 1975 shift.

2. Ideological Utility: The trouble seems to be that existing labels aren't much good. Polls by Patrick Caddell have found little difference in Wallace support or issue-outlook between liberals, moderates or conservatives. Other polls have found minimal difference in support for Ford versus Reagan based on liberal, moderate or conservative self-identification. In our opinion, the terms in question no longer relate to general operating political psychologies. We believe that the logic of these ideo-semantics (both words, "liberal" and "conservative", first came into political use with the French and Industrial Revolutions) is linked to a specific time in history -- the Industrial Era -- and does not serve effectively beyond it.

Specifically, we think that traditional conservatives are kidding themselves in seeing their brand of ideology triumphant in surveys like the above. Pollster Sindlinger says that many "conservatives" so identify themselves because of cultural issues and opposition to spending/taxation that helps the welfare class...but in other respects are populist, activist and anti-Establishment rather than of traditional conservative bent. Note, by way of evidence, that the two most recent statewide contests in "conservative" states -- Mississippi (Aug. 26 primary) and New Hampshire -- saw victories for populists who ran vociferous anti-elitist or anti-Washington campaigns. Part of the psychology they tapped calls itself "conservative" but is essentially responsive to populist and anti-elitist themes that traditional conservatives have trouble using.

3. Economic Policy Divisions: Both "conservatism" and "liberalism" have important splits that will complicate 1976 national coalition-building.

a) Traditional Liberalism: There's obvious obsolescence here. Big spending has hit the rocks of huge deficits and New York City insolvency. Even liberals are trying to look thrifty. But cocky conservatives are ignoring the other key facet of traditional liberalism -- economic activism (populist tactics, willingness to use government power for one's interest groups and against economic power structures, unwillingness to leave unemployment in the hands of business and the business cycle). This aspect of "liberalism" still commands widespread support.

b) Traditional Conservatism: Frugality looks good, but not inactivity. Refusal to use government power (or even populist rhetorical tactics) is still a voter negative. APR's guess is that only 20-25% of voters favor a traditional conservative approach of economic inactivity (except to favor business).

c) Synthesis: Look for a politics of budgetary restraint coupled with economic activism...under what banner remains to be seen. The chart overleaf attempts to show the economic policy and tactical divisions between ideologies.

Very interesting

ECONOMIC POLICIES: A CHART OF IDEOLOGICAL DIVISIONS

ECONOMIC ISSUE	TRADITIONAL CONSERVATIVES	POPULIST CONSERVATIVES	TRADITIONAL LIBERALS	NO-GROWTH LIBERALS
Excess Spending	Oppose high spending; emphasize economy in government; feel that longtime opposition to expansive fiscal policy is now about to be justified and rewarded; uncomfortable with idea of using spending programs to cement Middle-American constituencies.	Oppose high spending; favor or use of anti-spending themes; focus on cutting programs that benefit welfare-bureaucracy-research-big education, etc; favor using spending programs to bolster own constituency; dislike querying middle-class programs.	Now adopting anti-spending rhetoric, but still obliged to vote sustenance for pressure groups (minorities, welfare, bureaucracy, educators, etc); also now promoting idea that big spending has really been for middle classes, not liberal interests.	Some anti-spending rhetoric; less concerned with established liberal pressure groups; favor cutting defense.
Economic Activism	Frown on government intervention in the economy (except to promote business a la capital formation).	Favor private sector, also favor activism to reassure Middle Americans on jobs; favor using gov't to help allied interests.	Favor activist economics; favor intervention in economy to control corporations and energy.	Favor strong consumerist, anti-corporate federal economics.
Deregulation	Caught up in theories of deregulating business and decontrolling energy; favor managerial-type themes (a la revenue-sharing).	Favor reduced regulation, especially in new social-thrust bureaucracies (EPA, EEOC, CPSC, OSHA et al); downplay pure business deregulation as major theme.	By and large, support existing regulatory framework (including new agencies) with some small modification.	May accept some change at ICC or CAB; strongly favor consumerism and environmentalism.
Unemployment	Not a principal focus; say "only business creates jobs."	Favor more activism and concern.	A major focus of rhetoric and spending program demands.	Not very concerned with labor.
Economic Growth	Favor economic growth; oppose environmental extremism; favor capital formation measures.	Favor growth and capital formation; favor rousing blue-collar liberals against no-growth liberals.	Favor growth, but also favor environmentalism; lukewarm to tax changes for capital formation.	Refer to "grosser and grosser" national product.
Politicians	Ford, Reagan, Goldwater	Wallace, Connally	Humphrey, Muskie, Jackson, Bayh	Udall, (McGovern)
Antecedents	Elitist, Whig-Republican.	Jacksonian, latter-day conservative Democrat; GOP "New Majority".	Jacksonian, latter-day liberal Democrat.	New Elite.

SEP 29 1975