

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY'S VISION FOR THE FAMILY:

THE COMPELLING ISSUE OF THE DECADE

By

ROBERT F. MCDONNELL
B.B.A., UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME, 1976
M.S.B.A., BOSTON UNIVERSITY, 1980

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degrees of Master of Arts in Public Policy
and Juris Doctor in Law

College of Law and Government

CEM University

Virginia Beach, Virginia

1989

RECENT UNIV. LIBRARY


APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment

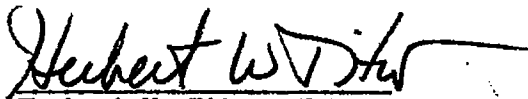
of the requirements for the degrees of

Master of Arts in Public Policy

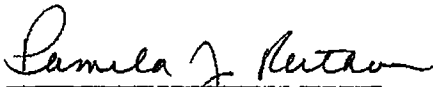
and Juris Doctor in Law


Robert F. McDonnell

Approved May, 1989


Herbert W. Titus, J.D.
Chairman


Paul J. Morken, J.D.


Pamela J. Ruthven, Ph.D.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my love and gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. John F. McDonnell, my mother and father, who first taught me the meaning and importance of family, values and love. It was my father who said:

"The family is like a tree. The family heritage is derived from the roots of the tree. The tree grows to be strong, and with energetic parenting, the fruit blossoms into a new generation."

I am deeply grateful to my wife Maureen, whose encouragement and expert clerical support turned marginally-legible scratch, into these finished pages, and whose steadfastness and love for our children provided me with the time to devote to this project.

I am indebted to Executive Director Bob Okun, and the staff of the House Republican Policy Committee, Frank Gregorsky, Flint Lewis, and David Ramey, for their keen insights and assistance in giving me an inside look at the formulation of Republican policy in the U. S. House of Representatives.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to my committee chairman, Dean Herbert Titus, and committee members, Professor Paul Morken, and Professor Pamela Ruthven, for their wisdom, probing critiques, and meticulous editing in the design and revision of this project.

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
I. INTRODUCTION: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	2
II. THE NATURE AND AUTHORITY OF THE FAMILY.....	11
III. THE REPUBLICAN VISION FOR FAMILY POLICY.....	18
IV. THE CONSISTENCY OF REPUBLICAN IDEOLOGY AND POLICY PROPOSALS...	30
V. THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AND FAMILY POLICY.....	50
VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	60
ENDNOTES.....	70
APPENDICES	
A. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CHOICES IN CHILD CARE ACT.....	82
B. CHARACTER EDUCATION.....	84
C. PROPOSED FEDERAL FAMILY IMPACT STATEMENT.....	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	87
VITA.....	93

REGENT UNIV. LIBRARY

ABSTRACT

The traditional family is the cornerstone upon which Western civilization has been built, but changes in demographics, ideology, and political philosophy during this century have resulted in the decline in the strength of the family institution. The model relationship among church, state, and family, based on history, law, and scripture, is presented as a framework in which legitimate public policy decisions must be made to facilitate family restoration.

Fundamental Republican Party principles concerning the family and the role of government are articulated, and recent federal legislative initiatives are analyzed for consistency. Political factors affecting family policy development are examined to determine why Republicans are not more successful. The paper concludes that Republicans must stay consistently committed to their principles, communicate more effectively with the American public, and take bold action to restore the family to a position of strength in modern society.

"Strong families are the foundation of society. Through them we pass on our traditions, rituals, and values. From them we receive the love, encouragement, and education needed to meet human challenges. Family life provides opportunities and time for the spiritual growth that fosters generosity of spirit and responsible citizenship.

Family experiences shape our response to the larger community in which we live. The best American traditions echo family values that call on us to nurture and guide the young, to help enrich the lives of the handicapped, to assist less fortunate neighbors, and to cherish the elderly. Let us summon our individual and community resources to promote healthy families capable of carrying on these traditions and providing strength to our society."

Ronald Reagan
Proclamation of National Family Week
November 15, 1984

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY'S VISION FOR THE FAMILY:

THE COMPELLING ISSUE OF THE DECADE

I

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One need not be a family research professional, nor an ideologue of any particular political philosophy, to acknowledge that profound changes have occurred in the fabric of American society in recent decades. While economic prosperity has been generally consistent since the end of World War II, the attendant consequences of that success have included a significant shift in American demographic patterns, a redefinition of societal norms, a decline in respect for authority and the importance of values, and an assault on the traditional family. Professor Peter Uhlenberg, University of North Carolina sociologist, has distilled the root cause of the problem, asserting that "increasingly, Americans are pursuing a selfish individualism which is inconsistent with strong families and strong communities."¹

Scholars disagree in their attempt to pinpoint the time and origin of the changes in traditional values and the role of the family in society. While cause and effect are often difficult to distinguish, many point to the events of the 1970's with tax reform, the "legalization" of abortion, the no-fault divorce revolution, and a leftward shift in majority party politics at the federal level.² Others assert that it was the 1960's, which brought the sexual revolution, the Vietnam War, and the Great Society vision of the Johnson administration.³ Still

others trace the ideological groundwork for social change to the new age of liberalism ushered in by John Dewey's 1935 work, Liberalism and Social Action, and the New Deal of the Roosevelt administration.⁴

Regardless of the genesis for the change, the current debate in America over which values and programs are best for the family and public policy in general, goes beyond the basic arguments of conservatism versus progressivism. According to Dr. Os Guinness of the Brookings Institution, the conflict centers on the clash of traditional morality and absolutism with the modern pervasive relativism of truth, ethics and justice.⁵ Whereas faith and family had provided the roots of culture in the past, the rise of modernity and liberalism have given America a legacy of relativistic hollowness, homelessness, selfish heartlessness, and the death of God and heroes.⁶ While changes in the family may be superficially attributed to technological advances, growing international influences, financial circumstances, or evolutionary progress, it is of profound importance to be cognizant that changes in ideology and religious beliefs preceded the contemporary breakdown of the American family.

Perhaps the most discernible empirical evidence of a changed view of family is the:

Massive shift of nurturing and care-giving tasks away from the family and into the hands of institutions. America is changing from a society in which the family was the basic provider of care and nurture, to a society in which institutions are basic and the family is marginal.⁷

Despite an estimated 20 agencies administering 260 federal programs aimed at helping children and families in 1981, and a five-fold increase in per capita social welfare expenditures from 1960 to 1980 (in constant dollars), many of the economic and behavioral indicators of family

stability had only worsened.⁸ As the 1986 White House Working Group on the Family observed, more than two decades of substantial federal intervention had fostered welfare dependency and undermined the authority and liberty of the family:

Everywhere the equation holds true: Where there are strong families, the freedom of the individual expands and the reach of the state contracts. Where family life weakens and fails, government advances, intrudes, and ultimately compels.⁹

The White House Group also noted the ominous historical reality that every totalitarian movement of the twentieth century has tried to destroy the family. The modern American experience can be seen as an ideological battle between the forces of democratic capitalism and socialism, with the latter's attempt to "substitute the power of the state for the rights, responsibilities, and authority of the family."¹⁰ The contemporary conflict between the presuppositions and programs of the Great Society and those of the Reagan Revolution show clearly the tensions expressed previously by Guinness.

Many would not be concerned about this shift in institutional power and a replacement of the Judeo-Christian ethic with the relativistic values of the "me generation" of the 1980's, were they not presented with quantifiable evidence of a breakdown in the family and society at large. A cursory survey of contemporary demographics and statistical behavior patterns provides the necessary proof.

There is nothing so devastating to the American family as divorce. Currently, half of first time marriages end in divorce, while in 1960 the divorce rate was only 25%.¹¹ The consequences of the proliferation of marital dissolution provide a litany of woes for a once stable society, and probably represent the most profound social phenomenon of

this century. Children are involved in 60% of divorces, and 23% of children currently live in a single-parent family.¹² Single-parent families are growing at 20 times the rate of two-parent families.¹³

A closely related symptom of familial breakdown is the tremendous rise in teen-age pregnancy and illegitimacy. From 1970 to 1985, there was an increase of nearly 400% to 2.8 million in the number of children being reared by a mother who had never been married.¹⁴ Many attribute this tragedy in part to anti-family incentives in the federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, which in most states disqualifies a woman with a male financial provider living in the house. In fact, of the mothers receiving AFDC benefits in 1986, 46% had never been married, and 36% were separated or divorced.¹⁵ The rise in teen pregnancy and illegitimate births is even more shocking when understood that approximately 40% of these pregnancies have ended in abortion since 1973. Ironically, it appears that the recently-created school-based health clinics which dispense birth control information and products without parental consent, and the new values-neutral sex education programs in public schools, have contributed to increased promiscuity, rather than reduced illegitimacy.¹⁶

Recent decades have witnessed a tremendous increase in the participation of women in the labor force. While less than one-quarter of families had two-earner incomes in 1960,¹⁷ by 1982, almost two-thirds of all married women with children ages 6 to 17, and almost half of women with children under age 6, worked outside the home at least part time.¹⁸ While families were arguably in a better economic position with two wage earners in the home, the derivative problems of "latchkey children" and the "child-care crisis" have become among the most widely discussed

policy issues of the 1980's.

There is a continuing trend of young adults either postponing marriage or opting to remain single. This unique American demographic shift is evidenced by the doubling of never married adults age 25 to 29 from 1970 to 1984.¹⁹ Those who do marry are having fewer or no children. The changing views of the utility of children, the economic burden of raising them, the self-centeredness of modern individualism, and the wide acceptance and convenience of birth control and abortion, have reduced birthrates below that which is required to replenish the current population.²⁰ Increasingly, children spend less time with their parents and more time under institutional supervision, in front of a television, or on the streets with peers.

The unmistakable signs of social dysfunction linked to traditional family breakdown took on a fresh awareness in the 1980's. The scourge of rampant drug abuse by the nation's youth, and the widespread exposure of children as customers and victims of pornography were new indicia of trouble. Studies showed the great negative impact that toys, music, television and other media were having on children, as violence, sex and the occult were common themes in these vehicles of play and entertainment.²¹ Children have been further affected by reductions in child support and spousal maintenance awards in no-fault divorce decrees, and a national crisis in support enforcement.²² These represent yet further manifestations of a spirit of militant individualism and perversity which is gripping the culture.

The vast majority of American children have been educated in the public school system, in which textbooks and courses of instruction are increasingly oriented to humanist values and a secular philosophy.²³

The undermining of respect for parental authority in favor of state direction or individual autonomy, and the contemporaneous purging of religious influence in the public schools has impaired the development of healthy family members.²⁴ Values that had historically provided strength to the family, such as firm discipline and corporal punishment, patriotism, and academic achievement, were either attacked, or given token attention. Despite an increase in government spending on education from \$5.2 billion to \$25.3 billion from 1966 to 1981, scores on the benchmark Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) dropped about 6% in math and 10% in verbal during the period.²⁵

The Internal Revenue Code also wreaked havoc upon the traditional family. Dr. Allan Carlson, president of the Rockford Institute, blames heavy tax growth for giving the financial impetus for pressuring mothers into the work force. He reports that between 1960 and 1984, a two-parent family with four children saw its federal income tax liability increase 224%, while the social security tax increased 600%, to 7.15% of gross income.²⁶

The United States Supreme Court dealt among the harshest blows to the American family and traditional morality. A century ago, the Court demonstrated profound respect for the traditional views of marriage and family, stating in Maynard v. Hill that "marriage is the foundation of the family and of society, without which there would be neither civilization nor progress."²⁷ However in 1965 with Griswold v. Connecticut,²⁸ the Court embarked on dualistic path by attempting to create a view of liberty based on radical individualism, while facilitating statist control of select family issues. The Court postulated a new view of marriage by asserting that the "preservation of marital privacy"

