



Faux Conservatism

Item: In the November 14 segment of its five-part series *The Right All Along: The Rise, Fall and Future of Conservatism*, hosted by Brit Hume, Fox News leveled a sustained blast at The John Birch Society, laying accolades on the late William F. Buckley for “expelling” the Birchers from the conservative movement.

Fox narrator Brit Hume informed viewers: “In the mid 1960s the loudest anti-communist voice in America belonged to Robert Welch, the candy mogul who invented the Sugar Daddy and who started the John Birch Society in 1958.” But, averred Hume, “the organization soon became labeled as kooks when Welch claimed that the U.S. was dominated by a communist conspiracy and that President Eisenhower was actually abetting it.”



The program then featured a video clip of William F. Buckley stating: “The John Birch Society was only, quote, conservative, in the sense that it was anti-communist, but it did the best that Mr. Welch could to discredit Conservatism.” Hume notes that in October of 1965, “Buckley dedicated an entire issue of his magazine [National Review] to savaging Welch and his followers.” Then, in succession, the program provided a series of bludgeons by Buckley’s fellow attack dogs. One of them, William Rusher, former publisher of National Review and sidekick of Buckley, states: “I think that Bill was right, that in the long run The John Birch Society was a foreign substance that simply had to be extruded from healthy conservatism.”

After more of the same from Rich Lowry, Norman Podhoretz, and others, narrator Hume opined: “By pruning the branches of conservatism, Buckley eventually helped the tree grow fuller.”

Correction: While Lowry, Rusher, Podhoretz, Hume, and company are positioning themselves as the new commanders of a seemingly ascendant conservative wave, the recent Republican landslide is anything but an affirmation of the philosophy and policies they have championed. In fact, the historic sea-change in this November’s congressional elections was a clear rejection not only of the Big Government policies of Obama and the Democrats, but also, in large measure, a continuing repudiation of the Big Government policies of George W. Bush and the *neoconservatives* roosting at Fox and *National Review*. Genuinely conservative Republicans, as well as Tea Partiers, Libertarians, and Independents of varied hues, have come to realize that George W. and his GOP enablers in Congress are but the latest in a long line of Republicans stretching back to Eisenhower and Nixon who talked the talk but never walked the walk when it came to fulfilling GOP campaign pledges and party platforms concerning rolling back the statist accretions that have been plaguing our Republic, eroding our freedoms, and destroying our prosperity since (at least) FDR’s New Deal. Through the past half century,



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on November 25, 2010

Buckley and *National Review* have been the chief enablers of this “revolution within the form” inside the Republican Party and the establishment-approved “conservative movement.”

In one of his earliest public essays, “A Young Republican’s View,” Buckley proffered a very unconservative (even anti-conservative) argument. Since America and the West were faced with a dire existential threat from the Soviet Union and communism, said Buckley, “We have to accept Big Government for the duration — for neither an offensive nor a defensive war can be waged ... except through the instrument of a totalitarian bureaucracy within our shores.”

In order to fight communist totalitarianism, according to Buckley, one must accept Big Government and adopt totalitarian ways. Which is precisely what Arthur Schlesinger and other members of FDR’s brain trust and the enlightened dons of Harvard and the *New York Times* had been arguing, albeit in a “liberal” idiom to liberal-Left audiences. This, of course, was *anathema* to the “Old Right” Conservatives as represented by Senators Robert Taft, Pat McCarran, and Joseph McCarthy, as well as intellectual pillars such as John T. Flynn, Garet Garret, Frank Chodorov, and Robert Welch.

Robert Welch was indeed an anti-communist, but contrary to Buckley’s statement above, that wasn’t the only attribute that qualified him as a conservative. Welch was more comfortable with the label “Americanist,” rather than “conservative,” since the conservative-liberal dichotomy was, and is, a nebulous and relative one that is constantly changing. Welch was passionately interested in conserving the United States Constitution, the American free enterprise system, morality, and, as he put it, “Christian-style civilization.”

He recognized that the external Soviet menace was not the only — or even the chief — existential threat to America; immorality, irresponsibility, and the steady promotion of Big Government — whether under the label of communism, socialism, fascism, New Dealism, etc. — presented perils as great as the Red Army or Soviet missiles.

Although Robert Welch has been the recipient of the most vicious and sustained attack from Buckley’s Politburo at *National Review*, other conservatives, including many of that magazine’s former top-drawer writers and editors — L. Brent Bozell, Ayn Rand, Medford Evans, M.E. Bradford, Sam Francis, Joseph Sobran, Paul Gottfried, Peter Brimelow, John O’Sullivan, Pat Buchanan, and Murray Rothbard — were similarly purged. They were replaced by *neoconservatives* (some of whom have migrated to the far liberal-Left) such as Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Midge Decter, Peter Rodman, Garry Wills, Michael Lind, Joan Didion, William Bennett, Karl Rove, Paul Gigot, Richard Lowry, Kate O’Beirne, Jonah Goldberg, and Ramesh Ponnuru.

For this service, as well as his support for key liberal positions and institutions (gay rights, “pro-choice” on abortion, gun control, the United Nations, the Federal Reserve, NAFTA, WTO, UN treaties, etc.), Buckley became the favorite “conservative” of the *New York Times* and the liberal-Left establishment in America. The Buckleyite neocons at Fox and *National Review* continue to serve in the same capacity.

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