

Politics and Society in Virginia, 1960-1969:

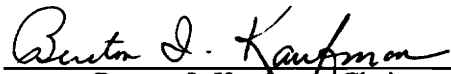
New Course for the Old Dominion

by

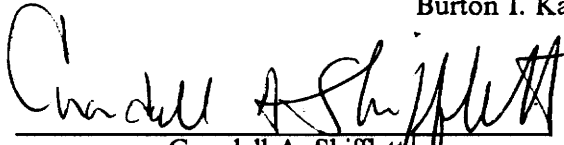
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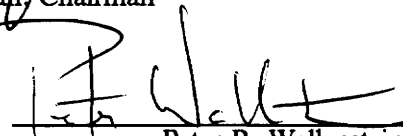
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New Course for the Old Dominion

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Burton I. Kaufman, Chairman

History

(ABSTRACT)

This study examines how, during the 1960's, national political events and regional demographic changes affected the fortunes of the Republican party in the South in general, and, in Virginia in particular. Chapter One examines the important political affairs of the nation in the early 1960's, particularly the sweeping civil rights legislation that changed the perceptions many Americans had of the major political parties and afforded the Republican party new opportunities among white voters in the South. The chapter also includes a brief history of the perceptions of the national parties by Southerners. Chapter Two looks at the effect the 1964 presidential election had on the 1965 gubernatorial election in Virginia. In addition, the chapter examines the economic and demographic changes that took place in Virginia during the first half of the decade. Chapter Three focuses on the 1969 gubernatorial election, examining how economic and demographic changes and the perceptions of the national parties affected the election's outcome. As this thesis concludes, national politics and demographic changes were instrumental in Republican Linwood Holton's 1969 gubernatorial victory.

Acknowledgements

First, I wish to thank my committee. Drs. Burton Kaufman, Crandall Shifflett, and Peter Wallenstein shared their knowledge, criticized when necessary, offered suggestions and encouragement, and displayed unwavering patience through a long and tedious revision process. Any institution of higher learning would be fortunate to have these fine scholars among its faculty. I would also like to thank Drs. David Lux and Neil Larry Shumsky for offering helpful suggestions during the early stages of this project. I am also grateful to the secretaries in the History Department. Jan Francis, Linda Harris, and Rhonda McDaniel were always there when I needed help (which was often). Special thanks to The Honorable Linwood Holton, whose thoughtful answers to a long list of questions proved invaluable to my efforts. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, who had the foresight to make the necessary sacrifices to enable me to complete my education. Their continual love and support have helped me throughout my life, especially over the past two years. This is for them.

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INTRODUCTION

The 1960's was a decade of great change throughout the nation, but in particular, the South, which can best be defined as the eleven states of the Old Confederacy. Political, demographic, and economic changes affected the region in many ways. One major consequence was the end of the political monopoly the Democratic party enjoyed in the South. This development influenced not only southern politics, but the rest of the nation as well.

Studies of the inability of the Democratic party to retain its traditional southern support are numerous. They include *The Emerging Republican Majority* by Kevin Phillips, *The Life and Death of the Solid South* by Dewey Grantham, *The Two-Party South* by Alexander Lamis, and *The Transformation of Southern Politics: Social Change and Political Consequence Since 1945* by Jack Bass and Walter DeVries. Detailed studies of both external and internal factors with regard to the surge of Republicanism in individual states, however, are few.

Many authors, such as Larry Sabato, Ralph Eisenberg, J. Harvie Wilkinson III, Andrew Buni, and Alexander Lamis have written about the topics that are examined in this thesis. But this thesis pinpoints certain events and individuals whose roles and importance have been underestimated. Specifically, these are: economic and demographic changes that occurred during the decade, the perceptions of the presidential candidates in 1964, the subsequent impact on Virginia's gubernatorial election in 1965, and the political developments at the national level which played a critical role in helping Linwood Holton capture the governorship in 1969.

Demographic changes had been occurring throughout the South since World War Two. These changes began to have major political ramifications in the 1960's as the Republican party garnered previously unimaginable numbers of southern supporters. Among the notable demographic changes were urbanization, industrialization, migration, and advances in education and personal income. All of these were evidenced in Virginia during the 1960's. As this study reveals, the Republican party in Virginia benefitted from the changing demographics.

Despite the strength of the argument concerning the link between demographic changes and Republican ascendancy, the reader should realize that demographic studies such as this contain limitations, and that entirely precise conclusions can only be drawn from research of a much more detailed nature.

As Kevin Phillips has noted, "American voting patterns are a kaleidoscope of sociology, history, geography, and economics."¹ Often, changes in the infrastructure of a society lead to political change. This was true with the South in the 1960's. As the region prospered, many southerners began to question their allegiance to the Democratic party, which was seen by many of these same people as one of the institutions that had delayed progress and prosperity.

Furthermore, the Republican party had always attracted white collar workers and persons associated with the business sector. As the South became more business-oriented and industrialized, Republicanism became more accepted. Migration and urbanization were also helpful to the G.O.P. in Virginia. Professor V. O. Key, Jr. foresaw the political change that urbanization brought to the South. Writing at mid-century, Key stated that "the growth of cities contains the seeds of political change for the South."²

The complexity and diversity of the South's urban areas created "socioeconomic cleavages" which made the erosion of the one-party system inevitable.³ As urban industries and businesses prospered, the numbers of white collar voters increased. In the Roanoke area, for example, the financial, insurance, and real estate sectors gained 21,800 jobs during the 1960's; this was a 50 percent increase over the 1960 total.⁴ It was not coincidence that many areas of northern Virginia and the city of Roanoke became Republican strongholds in

¹ Kevin P. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1969), 39.

² V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1949), 673.

³ Earl Black and Merle Black, *Politics and Society in the South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 24.

⁴ *Annual Report* (Richmond: Virginia Department of Labor and Industry), 11.

the 1960's. White collar workers, attracted to the Republican parties' pro-business, limited government positions, became some of the party's greatest supporters in the 1960's. Many of these individuals wielded an exceptional degree of political influence through their participation in chambers of commerce, transportation and communication businesses, and utilities.

Republicans had always fared better in the Old Dominion's urban centers than in the rural areas. This was true throughout the South, particularly at the national level. In the 1960's, however, Republican candidates at the state level, often running on "progressive" platforms, enjoyed unprecedented success in urban areas. In Virginia, progressive Republican Linwood Holton campaigned extensively in the state's urban areas, and won the governorship in 1969. More than 59 percent of the election's total vote came from the "urban corridor" and the two metropolitan areas just outside the corridor.⁵ Indeed, the Democratic party relied heavily on Virginia's rural areas to control the state's politics. But this stranglehold was eliminated with urban growth and migration.

In Virginia, urbanization brought higher levels of education and income, broadened the extent of state services, stimulated a state sales tax, and offered black Virginians a greater chance for political participation. All of these had been restricted or prohibited under the dominance of the Democratic party. Migration further weakened the once firm grip of the Democrats. Migrants from the North moved into the state, many of whom moved to northern Virginia, and the area became one of the nation's most urban. Many of these persons were

⁵ Virginius Dabney, *Virginia, The New Dominion* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), 576.

traditional Republican voters, and found their participation in the thriving Republican parties of the South a vehicle for assimilation into their new communities.

Equally important, the growth of Republicanism in the South was the result of political realignment. A sizeable number of southern white conservatives, formerly Democrats, became dissatisfied with the "liberalism" of the national Democratic party and began to question the logic of continued Democratic allegiance. Such "liberalism" included the commitment to civil rights by Presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, as well as an apparent lack of sympathy for state's rights. During the 1960's, the Democratic party called for an increased federal role in the economic affairs of individual states. Much of the increased federal role benefitted minorities. Many white southern conservatives perceived these policies as "socialistic" and "un-American."

One of the most important developments of the 1950's and 1960's was the civil rights movement, which affected blacks across the nation. Much of their opportunity depended upon voting rights. In the early 1960's, the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council began. Designed primarily to increase black voter registration in the South, the Project had a dramatic effect on southern voting patterns. Increased voting by blacks had a particularly significant impact on Virginia's gubernatorial contests in 1965 and 1969.

Many white southern conservatives felt that black gains translated into white conservative losses. Eminently satisfied with the racial status quo, these southern whites had long regarded the Democratic party, at least in the South, as an

organization that could be depended upon to protect white supremacy. As the national Democratic party intensified its commitment to civil rights, the national Republican party began to make serious efforts in the South. It was inevitable that the national G.O.P.'s efforts would facilitate those of state Republican parties throughout the South. Ironically, the same policies with regard to civil rights that enabled the Grand Old Party (GOP) to make inroads into some parts of the South in the early 1960's damaged the party's chances in Virginia throughout the decade. In Virginia, the Republican party had long called for repeal of the poll tax and was the moderate party on the issue of segregated schools. The Virginia G.O.P.'s leader throughout the 1950's, Ted Dalton, ran on a platform which included an end to massive resistance. Therefore, the Republican party of Virginia had sought and received black support in many elections. Changing perceptions of the national parties, however, led to modified voting patterns in the South.

National affairs were as important to Virginia politics as internal affairs. President Lyndon Johnson's policies prompted newly enfranchised black Virginians to align with the Democratic party. Although the Democratic leadership in Virginia had been as staunchly segregationist as any in the South, black Virginians' voting habits were largely determined by political affairs on the national level.

Politically, Johnson benefitted as much as any politician from the civil rights movement. This was especially true in Virginia. Johnson's overwhelming black support helped provide the deciding margin of victory in the state in the

presidential election of 1964. The following year, black Virginians refused to support the Republican candidate, Linwood Holton, despite the fact that Mills Godwin, the Democratic candidate, had spent much of his political life trying to preserve segregation. Meanwhile, Holton, who opposed segregation, promised a larger role for blacks in state government if elected. The primary reason for Godwin's black support was the 1964 presidential election. The two candidates, President Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater, were seen by many Virginians as outside the political mainstream. Members of both parties in Virginia perceived the Johnson-Humphrey ticket as having socialistic overtones while Goldwater was seen as a racist and extremist by many. The perceptions of the candidates, particularly Goldwater, proved more important than the reality.

Goldwater's candidacy represented a critical chapter in the history of southern Republicanism and had a direct affect on Virginia's 1965 gubernatorial election. This was due to Goldwater's position on civil rights. The Arizona Senator had cast the lone Senate vote against the Civil Rights Act in 1964, and was subsequently branded a racist. In fact, Goldwater had a respectable record on civil rights. His negative vote was cast because he felt two parts of the Bill (Titles II and VII) contained "no constitutional basis for the exercise of Federal regulatory authority" in the areas of employment and public accommodations.⁶

A member of the Urban League, Goldwater had contributed to the NAACP since the 1950's, and had voted for the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960. In organizing the Arizona National Guard in 1946, he acted alone in providing a

⁶ Barry M. Goldwater and Jack Casserly, *Goldwater* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 194.

desegregated unit, and he also helped to eliminate segregation in the Phoenix public schools and in his family-owned department store. The perception of Goldwater as a racist, however, was solidified by the media, liberal organizations, and civil rights groups. This perception had an affect on voting behavior, especially among blacks and southern whites.

The changes that occurred in the 1960's also gave rise to new, extremist political parties on the state and national levels. The most successful of these extremist parties was the American Independent party, led by Alabama Governor George Wallace. On the state level, the Virginia Conservative party, formed in 1965, played a significant role in that year's election. This thesis will show that the candidacies of Wallace and of William J. Story, Virginia Conservative party candidate for governor, hindered Republican efforts in Virginia in the 1960's.

Along with the dramatic impact that increased black voting had on Virginia elections, the impact of the national political parties and their changing agendas was particularly relevant to Virginia politics. The friendship of Linwood Holton and Richard Nixon makes Virginia a special case. As I will argue in this thesis, President Nixon's influence was critical to Holton's gubernatorial victory.

Although this thesis is concerned mainly with Virginia politics in the 1960's, a brief summary of the two parties' past is necessary. Until the 1960's, the most striking feature of Virginia politics in the twentieth century was the development and success of the Byrd organization. Under the guidance of State Senator Carter Glass and United States Senators Thomas Martin and Claude Swanson,

the Democratic party organization in Virginia solidified its already strong position in the state's politics. By the mid-1920's Governor (and later Senator) Harry Flood Byrd had become the leader of the party and the Byrd "organization" or Byrd "machine" became the most rigidly disciplined state machine in the United States.⁷ By competent management and firm control of a restricted electorate, the Democrats controlled all levels of politics in the state for four decades. The Byrd organization's stronghold was rural Virginia, particularly the "Southside," an area consisting of eleven counties in the southeastern part of the state just below the James River. The two main characteristics of the Byrd organization's ideology were fiscal responsibility and racial segregation. The Democratic party in Virginia, therefore, was particularly vulnerable given the economic changes and civil rights legislation of the 1960's.

Despite the dominance of the Byrd organization, the Republican party in Virginia was stronger than in any former Confederate state, except for Tennessee and North Carolina. Most of the Republican party's success in Virginia was on the presidential level. This was not uncommon in the border states. In addition to Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina also contained large numbers of "presidential" Republicans. Most Republicans in these states were found in the "mountain" or "highland" areas, due primarily to the fact that these areas had remained loyal to the Union in the Civil War and therefore saw the Democratic

⁷ Alexander Heard, *A Two-Party South?* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1952), 69.

party as responsible for an unwanted war.⁸ "Presidential" Republicans gave the party periodic success at the national level.

Virginia voted for Herbert Hoover in 1928, Dwight Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956, and Richard Nixon in 1960. As this thesis reveals, presidential Republicanism in many areas of the South was the forerunner of Republican success at the state and local level in the 1960's. Therefore, the surging Republicanism that occurred in the Old Dominion was not as surprising as it would have been in a state with a weaker Republican party.

In conclusion, although the Republican party in the South began the 1960's as a weak organization, significant political, economic, and demographic changes were critically important to Republican candidate Linwood Holton's gubernatorial victory in 1969. As is the case with any election, however, many factors must be recognized as making possible the election of the victor. The reasons for supporting a particular candidate are many and often varied. Although political, economic, and demographic changes certainly aided Holton's efforts, his victory was undoubtedly also due to some factors not presented in this thesis.

Regardless of the reasons for the victory, the election of a Republican governor was a significant development in the history of the Virginia G.O.P., as well as a dramatic one for Virginia politics.

⁸ For a complete discussion of the historical and social reasons for Republican support in the South, see V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, Alexander Heard, *A Two-Party South?*, and Dewey Grantham, *The Life and Death of the Solid South* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1988). For the Virginia story, in particular, see Virginius Dabney, *Virginia, The New Dominion*, Allen W. Moger, *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), and J. Harvie Wilkinson III, *Harry Byrd and the Changing Face of Virginia Politics 1945-1966* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1968).

CHAPTER ONE

Changing Politics in the Changing South

"The Democratic party left us when it went off and became socialistic"⁹

"In the last analysis, the Republican party was more a result than a cause of the changing South"¹⁰

The American South in the 1960's was a changing society. One of these changes were the gains achieved by blacks in terms of civil rights. The perceptions among southerners, both black and white, of the changing role of the federal government in civil rights and race relations had a major political impact. Demographic changes and economic progress also affected many other elements of southern society, bringing opportunity and political conflict.

⁹ Anonymous southern conservative, in John H. Kessel, *The Goldwater Coalition: Republican Strategies in 1964* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 180.

¹⁰ Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd, 1945-1966*, 349.

Many of the technological, industrial, economic and social changes that characterized the South in the 1960's actually started during World War Two. American industry became aware of the advantages the region possessed for industrial development. These included a relatively plentiful labor supply and natural resources such as water and forests. Chemical, paper, and other high quality industries were thus attracted to the South. The 1950's witnessed further industrialization. This increase in manufacturing brought with it increased urbanization, as well as an increase in personal income.

Even in 1968, however, per capita income in the South, always the poorest region of the country, had risen from 68.8 percent of the national average in 1948 to only 77.2 percent of the United States average.¹¹ Overall population in the South, propelled by migration, also grew. Indeed, the 1960's was the first decade in the twentieth century in which the South experienced a net gain, rather than a loss, in population as a result of migration. Much of the increase in population was due to a rapid migration to the South by retired persons and young and white collar people directly or indirectly associated with the industrial growth of the region. Many of the migrants became city dwellers. Between 1950-1960, the urban population in states outside the South increased by 29.3 percent, while the urban population in the South grew by 40.1 percent.¹² Cities such as Dallas, Atlanta, and Richmond greatly benefitted.

¹¹ William C. Havard, ed. *The Changing Politics of the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 15.

¹² Reese Cleghorn, *Radicalism-Southern Style, A Commentary on Regional Extremism* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1969), 8.

As the decade of the 1960's began, the South was also on the verge of a political transformation which was also altering national politics. The region, long referred to as the "solid South" because of its longstanding affiliation with the Democratic party, remained solidly Democratic in terms of voter registration. But the demographic changes taking place had major political consequences. For the first time since Reconstruction, the Republican party attracted large numbers of voters and made significant electoral inroads in the region.

During the 1950's, Republicans failed to win even one seat in the Louisiana or South Carolina legislatures, and won only a few seats in Alabama, Arkansas, Texas, and Florida. Between 1952 and 1962, moreover, there were no Republican senators in the South, and a Republican was not elected governor in a southern state until 1966. During this period, Republican congressional candidates averaged only 20 percent of the total congressional vote.¹³ In 1960, Republicans won only 7 percent of congressional seats in the South. Furthermore, the G.O.P. held only 60 of 1800 seats, or 3 percent, in southern legislatures.¹⁴ The impact of the changes that had begun during the decade were clearly not yet felt. Homogeneity and the status quo remained the rule.

In contrast to the 1950's, the 1960's was a tumultuous and historic decade for southern politics. By this time, an increasing number of white voters in the South had already become dissatisfied with the Democratic party; their unhappiness

¹³ Bernard Cosman, "Republicanism in the South: Goldwater's Impact Upon Voting Alignments in Congressional, Gubernatorial and Senatorial Races," *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 48 (June 1967): 13.

¹⁴ Robert P. Steed, Laurence W. Moreland and Tod A. Baker, eds., *Party Politics in the South* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), 103.

escalated in the early 1960's, eventually appearing in changing party affiliations and voting patterns. By 1968, 41.8 percent of southern whites considered themselves Republicans.¹⁵ This represented a major shift from previous political tendencies. Prior to the 1960's, southern whites were some of the most consistent supporters of the Democratic party in what was considered a stable political spectrum.

Politics in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century followed relatively structured patterns. Nationally, the Democratic party appealed especially to minority groups and the lower middle class. In contrast, the Republican party garnered almost all its support from middle and upper class whites. Nationally, Americans commonly associated the party with business interests.

Southern perceptions, however, differed from those of the rest of the nation. In the South, the party faced numerous obstacles, both historically and organizationally. White southerners identified the party with Reconstruction and fears of black domination. Furthermore, the Democrats' success at restricting the size of the electorate through the poll tax enabled them to maintain their political domination of the region. Lastly, the Republican party lacked leaders, newspaper support, and money, and was often plagued by factionalism.

Because of their continued electoral failures in the South prior to the 1960's, most Republican voters and candidates were pessimistic about future political success. They made little effort, therefore, to appeal to the southern voter. As

¹⁵ Richard J. Trilling, *Party Image and Electoral Behavior* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1976), 155.

one southern Republican commented, "part of the problem lay with the national Republican party, which, in the control of the Northeastern bloc, had failed to present national level candidates making clear that Republicanism was the natural home of the southern vote."¹⁶ As early as 1952, however, Alexander Heard, in his classic study, *A Two-Party South?* identified several trends that he considered encouraging signs for the growth of the Republican party in the South. Among these were: the increasing diversification of agriculture, the growth of industry, population shifts, the rise of cities, the growth of union labor, and the political organization of blacks.¹⁷ These developments intensified social and economic differences within the South and eventually eradicated the traditional political domination by the Democratic party.

Much of the political and social turmoil in the South after World War Two concerned race relations. Race had been of critical importance in southern politics throughout the region's history. In 1954, the Supreme Court held in *Brown v. Board of Education* that the doctrine of separate but equal was unconstitutional. Following this decision, matters of race, particularly school integration, became the focus of southern politics. Soon after the *Brown* decision, political activity in the South intensified. While blacks organized to get out the vote, whites attempted to deny blacks the equal access the Supreme Court had determined to be their constitutional right. Their strategy was one of "massive

¹⁶ Philip E. Converse, Aage R. Clausen, Warren E. Miller, "Electoral Myth and Reality: The 1964 Election," *American Political Science Review* 59 (June 1965): 327.

¹⁷ Heard, *A Two-Party South?*, 247.

resistance." After 1954, "massive resistance to the *Brown* decision became the dominant theme of southern politics."¹⁸

But the racial issue was not the only one on which southern conservatives took issue with the national Democratic party. Since the New Deal, many other differences, such as opposition to the increasing role of the federal government, had surfaced that pushed conservative southerners away from the Democratic party. As Converse, Clausen, and Miller stated, "the South had no reason to be a Democratic bastion; by all of its affinities and traditions it should long since have become Republican."¹⁹

By 1960, the national Democratic party had solidified its position as the party of integration and minority rights. In the South, however, much of the Democratic party continued to be viewed in its traditional context, that of white supremacy and segregation. White southern Democrats overwhelmingly supported segregation. Not surprisingly, Paul Allan Beck found that, in 1960, "1/3 of all native white southerners saw party differences on the race issue, and of this group, more than 2/3 perceived the Democratic party as more segregationist."²⁰ The national Democratic party, however, adopted positions on several key issues which many white southern voters opposed. Many affluent, urban southerners as well as rural voters were concerned about the party's dedication to social welfare policies and federal government spending. As one

¹⁸ Numan V. Bartley and Hugh D. Graham, *Southern Politics and the Second Reconstruction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1975), 51.

¹⁹ Philip E. Converse, Aage Clausen, Warren E. Miller, "Electoral Myth and Reality: The 1964 Election," *American Political Science Review* 59 (June 1965): 327.

²⁰ Paul Allan Beck "Partisan Dealignment in the Postwar South," *American Political Science Review* 71 (June 1977): 489.

southern conservative said, "the Democratic party went off and left us when it became socialistic."²¹ Most important was the concern of many whites that the national Democratic party was too sympathetic to minority rights, particularly on the key issues of political participation and school integration, "the sharpest and most divisive conflict in American politics of that time."²²

Support for the Democratic party, nevertheless, was still overwhelming as the 1960's began. Roughly 65 percent of both southern whites and southern blacks identified with the Democrats, despite the fact that opinion on integration was divided almost entirely along racial lines.²³ As of 1962, only 6 percent of white southerners favored integration, compared to 80 percent of blacks in the South.²⁴ Political observers recognized this odd situation, as did the national Republican party. The G.O.P. commented, "the Democratic party in the South had the support of an unnatural coalition--Negroes demanding change in the pattern of race relations and those most strongly opposed to departure from the pattern."²⁵

A minor example of departure from the pattern occurred in 1948. That year, the homogeneity of the region was threatened by differences within the Democratic party. In opposition to President Truman's stance on civil rights, conservative southern Democrats had launched the Dixiecrat movement,

²¹ Kessel, *The Goldwater Coalition: Republican Strategies in 1964*, 180.

²² See Mathews and Prothro, "Southern Images of Political Parties" in Leiserson, ed., *The American South in the 1960's*, 86.

²³ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Research Division, Republican National Committee, *The 1962 Elections: A Summary Report with Supporting Tables* (Washington, D.C.: Republican National Committee, 1962), 38.

arguably a racist movement under the cloak of state's rights. In 1952, perceiving the conservatism of the South, Republican Presidential candidate Dwight Eisenhower appealed to the South's sympathy for state's rights. The nationwide "Democrats for Eisenhower" movement was also successful in the South. Eisenhower carried Florida, Tennessee, Virginia, and Texas in 1952 and added Louisiana to the same list of states in the 1956 election. Eisenhower carried the affluent white precincts in most southern cities in 1956, as well as the majority of southern black city dwellers.²⁶ Black support for Eisenhower was most likely a result of the Supreme Court's decision in the Brown case. Although Eisenhower did not endorse the decision, Chief Justice Earl Warren, who wrote the opinion for the unanimous ruling, had been appointed by Eisenhower, and thus, the President was rewarded in 1956 with substantial black support. This was the last Presidential election in which the Republican candidate received substantial black support.

In 1960, 1,414,052, or 29 percent of southern blacks of voting age, were registered.²⁷ But black voter registration varied throughout the South. As one government report concluded, "in 1960 there were numerous counties in the South where no Negroes were registered at all, as well as others where Negro registration reached over 60 percent."²⁸ In March 1962, a movement began in the South intended to increase voter registration. This was the Voter Education

²⁶ Bartley and Graham, *Southern Politics and the Second Reconstruction*, 87.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁸ A complete discussion as of 1960 with regard to southern black voter registration may be found in U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report, Vol. I, *Voting*, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960, 251-312.

Project of the Southern Regional Council. Along with financing voter campaigns across the South, the Project researched the causes and remedies for the extremely low black voter registration throughout the South. Several organizations participated, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Urban League, and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). From the spring of 1962 to the fall of 1964, 668,000 black voters registered across the South. By 1964, 41 percent of southern blacks of voting age were registered to vote.²⁹ The Voter Education Project played an important role in increasing black voter registration prior to the Voting Rights Act. The newly registered black voters soon became the Democratic party's most loyal supporters.

Although the Republican party had received sizeable black support in the 1956 election, in the 1960's, any chance the G.O.P. had of attracting black voters quickly faded. As earlier stated, by 1960 the Democratic party was seen by blacks as the party more sympathetic to integration and minority rights. The 1960 election was the first in which a Democratic candidate for the presidency received over 80 percent of the black vote; 80 percent being their usual percentage of support between the years 1936-1952.³⁰

In 1960, Republicans captured only three southern states, Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia. The southern vote was close, with the Republican ticket of Richard Nixon and Henry Cabot Lodge capturing 4.6 votes for every 5 Democratic

²⁹ Kenneth B. Thompson, *The Voting Rights Act and Black Electoral Participation* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Center for Political Studies, 1982), 11.

³⁰ See Robert J. Steamer, "Southern Disaffection with the National Democratic Party" in Allen P. Sindler, ed., *Change in the Contemporary South* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1963), 156.

votes.³¹ The three states won by the Republicans were rapidly becoming strongholds for southern Republicanism. Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia had voted for Eisenhower in both elections. Furthermore, Tennessee and Virginia were known for their relatively large numbers of Republicans, particularly “presidential Republicans.” In many parts of the South there existed large numbers of voters who voted Democratic in state and local elections but Republican in national elections. As an increasing number of white southerners became antagonistic to the perceived liberalism of the national Democratic party, however, it was inevitable that Republicans on the local level would eventually benefit from their disgruntlement as well.

White southern antagonism toward the national Democratic party was intensified in the early 1960’s. John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson were able to consolidate the Democratic position among minorities by their support of minority rights. President Kennedy integrated the University of Alabama and the University of Mississippi, banned discrimination in federally subsidized housing, and established the President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. He also asked Congress to grant the Attorney General authority to begin court suits to desegregate schools on behalf of private citizens who were unable to start legal action themselves.

Because of the national Democratic party’s position on civil rights, many observers felt that the Republican party’s future in the South looked bright. As one observer noted, “without emphasizing civil rights at all, the Republicans are

³¹ *Austin American Statesman*, December 4, 1960.

likely to make capital out of the issue and in all likelihood, as things stand now, the G.O.P. will carry the South."³² Republicans would also benefit from the demographic changes. Between 1960 and 1963, it is estimated that from one-third to one-half of all southern Republicans had been raised outside the South.³³

Urban growth and educational advances among southerners were equally important in enhancing Republican political fortunes. Republicans made their most significant gains in the 1960's in the metropolitan counties of the South.³⁴ It was the cities and suburbs, centers of the technological and industrial changes that were taking place, that provided the Republicans their greatest sources of support. Greater numbers of Republican legislative candidates ran for office, and some of these candidates won. As was the case with the entire United States, the 1960's saw an increase in the number of southerners attending college. By 1962, the region awarded 20.8 percent of the nation's bachelor's degrees and 11.6 percent of its Ph.D. and related doctoral degrees.³⁵ During this period, most college educated persons voted Republican.

The Republican party made significant gains in the South in the congressional elections of 1962. The total number of Republican votes cast increased from 606,108 in 1958 to 2,083,971 in 1962. In the deep South, the

³² *Newsweek* 64 (August 26, 1963): 26.

³³ Paul Allan Beck, "Partisan Dealignment in the Postwar South," *American Political Science Review* 71 (June 1977): 489.

³⁴ See Malcolm E. Jewell, "State Legislatures in Southern Politics," in Leiserson, *American South in the 1960's*, 186.

³⁵ See Alexander Heard, "Introduction, The South Ahead," in Leiserson, *American South in the 1960's*, xii.

number of national House seats contested in 1962 was almost three times as great as the number contested in 1958, and the G.O.P. picked up new congressmen in Florida, North Carolina, Texas, and Tennessee.³⁶ Encouraged by the favorable results of the 1962 elections and increasingly aware of the growing hostility of southern conservatives, the Republican National Committee launched "Operation Dixie," designed to promote Republicanism in the conservative South.

Another reason, beyond the gains the Republican party made in 1962, for the party's new found optimism was its realization that the Democratic party's stance on civil rights was an electoral double-edged sword. As the Democrats attracted large numbers of southern blacks, southern whites became dissatisfied with the party or deserted it entirely. During the period from 1961 to 1964, southern perceptions of the two major parties changed. Donald Mathews and James Prothro have found that the proportion of southern blacks with strongly pro-Democratic images more than doubled from 24 percent to 52 percent.³⁷ The number of southern whites with strongly pro-Republican party images doubled, from 9 to 18 percent. Not surprisingly, the number of southern whites with pro-Democratic images declined from 62 percent to 52 percent. Unquestionably, race and ideological differences were the primary factors in the changing perceptions southerners had of the two major parties.³⁸ Indeed, the number of southern whites who said they disliked the Democratic party because it was "too

³⁶ See Samuel Dubois Cook, "Political Movements and Organizations," in Leiserson, *American South in the 1960's*, 149.

³⁷ Donald R. Mathews and James W. Prothro, *Negroes and the New Southern Politics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), 373.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 373.

liberal" increased from 18 percent to 37 percent and the percentage of those mentioning that the party was too "pro-Negro" increased from 9 to 17. Based on this data, it seems that, by 1964, many southerners perceived the Democratic party as standing more for government programs on behalf of blacks and the underprivileged.

One of the first tasks for southern Republicans was to organize the South on the state level. For this, new leadership was needed, and competent individuals soon stepped forward. As one observer noted, "as the surprising G.O.P. sentiment bubbled up, virtually without local leadership, the party began attracting a new breed of politician, furrow-browed, button-down, college-trained young amateurs who, one by one, took over control of the state parties from apathetic and aging professionals."³⁹ Two-party competition in the South seemed to them long overdue. As one G.O.P. state chairman said, "the young people were sick and tired of the one-party system in the South. It was just ridiculous, and the old people wouldn't change it. We can win. We've got a product and a sales force, just like a business. The product is conservatism in the South."⁴⁰

By this time, political analysts realized that serious changes were well underway in the South. Political scientist Samuel Dubois Cook wrote,

the best evidence of the changing political mind of the South is the surge of Republicanism. The G.O.P. is discovering the wonders and infinite possibilities of leadership, organization, permanent headquarters, attractive candidates, contested elections on every level, the exploitation of dissatisfaction with Democratic one-party politics, issues, all-out,

³⁹ *Time* 82 (July 12, 1962): 12.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

all-weather, and all-year efforts, and grasping the impact of vast changes on traditional habits, loyalties, and images of the South.⁴¹

Republican Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater launched an all-out campaign in the South in 1964. Many Republican leaders and strategists were confident when assessing Goldwater's chances. They felt Goldwater would do particularly well in the South, due to his negative vote on the Civil Rights Act. Their hopes rested with the belief that the South would combine with the West to form a grand conservative coalition, enabling Goldwater to receive just enough electoral votes needed for victory.⁴²

Goldwater had voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but he had pledged to enforce it. His negative vote, however, was seen by many as proof that Goldwater was a racist, and therefore many political observers were skeptical as to the real basis for the Senator's support. Seymour Martin Lipset stated, "enthusiasm for Goldwater in the South is due in large part to his position on civil rights."⁴³ Early in the campaign, many people believed that Goldwater would attract a large number of racist followers. According to Lipset, it was "apparent that the Goldwater camp was not discouraging racist support."⁴⁴ Similarly, political commentator Ralph McGill wrote, "racism and segregationist sentiment are a basic part of the 'Goldwater Movement'".⁴⁵ After the election, the Ripon

⁴¹ See Samuel Dubois Cook, "Political Movements and Organization," in *The American South in the 1960's*, 146.

⁴² For a complete discussion on the Goldwater campaign and ideology, see Milton C. Cummings, ed., *The National Election of 1964* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1966), and Kessel, *The Goldwater Coalition: Republican Strategies in 1964*.

⁴³ Seymour Martin Lipset, "Beyond the Backlash," *Encounter* 23 (November 1964): 22.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁵ *Atlanta Constitution*, May 5, 1963.

Society, comprised of Republicans searching for a successful combination of candidates and ideologies, published a report that was highly critical of Goldwater's campaign. The Ripon Report claimed that,

the campaign was based on the implicit racist appeal of the southern strategy. The Senator's objections to legislating morality, his criticisms of the Supreme Court, his advocacy of state's rights, all became the shorthand for an anti-civil rights appeal. An uglier aspect of the appeal was the not very subtle attempt to link lawlessness in the streets with the Negroes, and street riots with peaceful civil rights demonstrators.⁴⁶

In terms of the total vote, the 1964 Presidential election represented the biggest Democratic landslide in history. The Republican ticket carried only six states, Goldwater's home state of Arizona, Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Despite the electoral catastrophe, Goldwater became the first Republican Presidential candidate in history to run better in the South than in the North. Mississippi, traditionally the most Democratic state in the Union, voted more Republican than any other state in 1964. Republicanism became the new home for white southern conservatives. But Republican support in the Deep South had become in large part racially based. The Republican campaign of 1964 had driven almost all southern blacks out of the Republican party. Across the entire nation, Johnson captured 95 percent of the black vote.⁴⁷

Goldwater's ability to carry five southern states was seen by Republican party leaders as a sign of even better things to come. The Party credited Goldwater's limited government, anti-welfare stance for his appeal in the region, careful to avoid mentioning any issues with regard to race. Said Republican

⁴⁶ Ripon Report, Goldwater Campaign, *Time* 85 (February 19, 1965): 25.

⁴⁷ William Brink and Louis Harris, *Black and White: A Study of U.S. Racial Attitudes Today* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 75.

National chairman Dean Burch, "1964 may be remembered as the year in which the Republican party invaded the South and stayed there . . . in the future, our national strategy is going to be based . . . on the economic conservatism of the South."⁴⁸ Republicans fully realized the importance of the South, and understood that a serious effort had to be made to attract white southern voters. At the same time, they were anxious to attain the black vote. As Chairman Burch said, "you don't have to go down there and wave the Confederate flag, but we do have to take steps to see that Martin Luther King's followers don't just automatically register as Democrats."⁴⁹ At the time of Burch's speech only about 38 percent of southern blacks were registered to vote.⁵⁰

Although the issue of civil rights came to the forefront of national politics during the Kennedy administration, it was during Lyndon Johnson's administration that the most important developments occurred. The 24th Amendment, ratified in 1964, barred poll taxes for federal elections. In July of the same year, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act. The act required equal access to public accommodations and facilities, forbade discriminatory use of voter registration tests, barred discrimination by employers and unions, and provided for withholding government funds from federally assisted activities that failed to desegregate. As a result of the act, segregation by law in public places soon disappeared.

⁴⁸ Chairman Burch, speaking at a Washington, D.C. seminar, quoted in *Time* 85 (February 26, 1965): 24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁰ David Campbell and Joe R. Feagin, "Black Politics in the South; A Descriptive Analysis," *Journal of Politics* 37 (February 1975): 133.

Far more important politically, however, was the Voting Rights Act of 1965, "a law designed to eliminate illegal barriers to the right to vote."⁵¹ Signed by President Johnson on August 6, 1965, the Voting Rights Act suspended all literacy and other discriminatory tests. The act also directed the Attorney General to go to court to test the constitutionality of the poll tax in state elections. Furthermore, it extended civil and criminal protection to qualified persons seeking to vote. Finally, it provided for the assignment of federal examiners to conduct registration and observe voting. Signing the bill into law, President Johnson stated, "the vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls that imprison men because they are different from other men."⁵²

The conflicts surrounding the Vietnam War offered the Republicans yet another opportunity in the South. As prominent Democrats such as Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy spoke out against the war, conservative Democrats found themselves once again at odds with a position taken by many members of the party. Many conservative southern Democrats became disillusioned.

By 1966, southern Republicanism had become solidly established. The debate over foreign policy and the escalation of the war in Vietnam offered Republicans new opportunities in the conservative South. Circumstances looked inviting for the Republicans in the South in the elections of 1968.

⁵¹ President Johnson, quoted in *Newsweek* 66 (August 16, 1965): 15.

⁵² *Time* 85 (March 26, 1965): 21.

Segregation, however, now threatened to split southern Republicans into moderate and conservative factions. Although the Mississippi G.O.P. platform held segregation as absolutely essential to harmonious racial relations, many national Republicans sought to eliminate this plank from the Republican platform. Speaking at a \$100-a-plate Republican dinner in Jackson, Mississippi, Presidential candidate Richard Nixon said, "the Republican opportunity in the South is a golden one; but Republicans must not go prospecting for the fools gold of racist votes. Southern Republicans must not climb aboard the sinking ship of racial justice. They should let the southern Democrats sink with it, as they have sailed with it."⁵³ The crowd responded enthusiastically. As political analysts Stephen Hess and David S. Broder commented, "southern Republicans come in all varieties, from racist to progressive and all shades of in between, but, to a man, they crave the respectability of approval and acceptance by the national party and its leaders."⁵⁴

In 1966, Republican gubernatorial candidates found approval and acceptance among voters in Arkansas and Florida. In Arkansas, Winthrop Rockefeller, a native New Yorker and proponent of integration, won by promising progress and openly seeking black support in his race against James D. Johnson, an outspoken segregationist. The story in Florida was different. There, the Republican party made little effort to appeal to the black vote, opting instead to attract the state's large number of white collar migrants. It was the

⁵³ See David S. Broder and Stephen Hess, "What Keeps Nixon Running," *Harper's Magazine* 235 (August 1967): 65.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

liberalism of the national Democratic party, however, that enabled Claude Kirk to defeat his "ultra liberal" opponent.⁵⁵ Kirk sought to associate his opponent, Robert High, with Robert Kennedy, and, more importantly, President Lyndon Johnson. White conservatives flocked to the Republican candidate, giving him a slim victory. The Republican party of Virginia took notice. Eventually, the Virginia G.O.P. would use a unique combination of the strategies employed by Republican candidates in Arkansas and Florida.

Actually, the Republican party of Virginia had mounted a serious threat to the state's powerful Democratic party in the gubernatorial contest in 1965. Unfortunately for the G.O.P., there were still too many obstacles to overcome. The perceptions of certain candidates on the national level as extremists played a critical part in voter alignment, as the terms liberal and conservative came to have much more important connotations.

⁵⁵ *The Washington Post*, November 9, 1966.

CHAPTER TWO

The Extremist Niche in a Changing State

"The Negro citizen is needed, welcomed and wanted at every level in the Republican party"⁵⁶

"He could gut 'em with the bolo knife ... and the time has come in the Commonwealth to gut 'em low"⁵⁷

The period 1960-1965 was one of progress in Virginia. The demographic, economic and social changes that were underway in the South were apparent throughout the state, and would have political repercussions. Equally important, political developments on the national level had significant consequences on Virginia politics. Voter registration drives, together with the ban on the poll tax, enabled thousands of previously ineligible blacks to vote, thus significantly

⁵⁶ Clarence L. Townes, Richmond civil rights activist.

⁵⁷ Edward I. Silverman, platform committee chairman of the Virginia Conservative party.

increasing the number of Virginians voting in the presidential election of 1964. Black voting proved critical in Virginia's elections in the 1960's, as the new registrants formed a formidable voting bloc. Equally important to Virginia politics was the element of political extremism, both real and perceived.

Between 1960 and 1965, Virginia enjoyed the largest peacetime economic expansion in its history.⁵⁸ During this time, rapid increases occurred in population, personal and per capita income, and industrial growth. This period of impressive development followed the prosperous decade of the 1950's, when the Virginia economy grew by 38 percent.⁵⁹ The population grew by 19.5 percent during the 1950's, and personal income by 49 percent.⁶⁰ Most of the population increases were found in the state's five metropolitan areas -- Richmond, Roanoke, Newport News-Hampton, Norfolk-Portsmouth, and the Northern Virginia-D.C. area. Conversely, in the 1950's, Virginia's rural areas gained less than 2 percent in population.⁶¹ This trend continued in the early years of the 1960's, as Virginia's metropolitan areas expanded at an average rate of 16 percent.⁶² As a whole, the state recorded a 12 percent population growth from 1960 to 1965.⁶³

Economic expansion brought jobs to Virginia. Between 1960-1965, approximately 328 new plants located in the state, and more than one billion

⁵⁸ *Annual Report* (Richmond: Virginia Dept. of Labor and Industry), 40.

⁵⁹ Peggy M. Ware, "The Importance of Retail and Wholesale Trade in the Virginia Economy," *Virginia Economic Review* (January 1961): 5.

⁶⁰ Edwin E. Holm, "The Changing Virginia Economy," *Virginia Economic Review* (August 1962): 1.

⁶¹ Edwin E. Holm, "Virginia Grows Metropolitan," *Virginia Economic Review* (January, 1961): 6.

⁶² Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd, 1945-1966*, 244.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 243.

dollars was invested in Virginia by private industry in new and expanded plants, creating 177,000 new jobs.⁶⁴ Per capita income rose from \$1,894 in 1961 to \$2,573 in 1965, the highest of any southeastern state.⁶⁵ This represented an annual growth rate of 3.75 percent after adjustments for inflation.⁶⁶ Governor Albertis Harrison, who had defeated Republican challenger Clyde Pearson in 1961, was responsible for much of the industrial development. Unlike his predecessors, Harrison strongly encouraged economic progress. Ironically, the Republican party eventually reaped many of the political benefits of Harrison's efforts.

Although demographics and economics affected politics during the period, political occurrences on the national level had a far more significant impact on Virginia's future elections. As noted in Chapter One, the 1964 presidential election was crucial to the Republican party's future in the South. The party directed many of its efforts toward the region, and for the first time in history, fared better in the South than in the North. The election turned on ideological differences. Virginia Democrats had sometimes voted for Republican presidential candidates such as Herbert Hoover and Dwight Eisenhower because of religion, popularity, or their views on a specific issue. But in 1964, for the first time, many Democrats in the Old Dominion questioned the fundamental ideology of their party. Although most Virginians remained loyal to the Democratic party in state elections, many of them backed the national Republican ticket. This pattern became increasingly apparent in later elections, and there seems little doubt that

⁶⁴ Dabney, *Virginia, The New Dominion*, 550.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd, 1945-1966*, 245.

the 1964 election determined the guidelines for future party identification and voting.

The policies of President Lyndon B. Johnson had an immediate and lasting impact on Virginia politics. Elimination of the poll tax added an estimated 150,000 new voters in Virginia for federal elections.⁶⁷ The Voter Education Project proved as successful in the Old Dominion as it was throughout the rest of the South.

In Virginia, voter registration drives were led by the NAACP, the SCLC, and the Virginia Independent Voters League. In the early 1960's, an intense voter registration drive began. The drive canvassed the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Tenth districts, with the goal of adding 100,000 new black voters to Virginia's registration list.⁶⁸ As of 1960, only 100,000 blacks were registered to vote in Virginia. This represented 22.8 percent of those eligible.⁶⁹ A particularly successful registration period occurred between April, 1964 and October, 1964. During that time, 56,000 new black voters were registered. By the end of 1964, approximately 200,000 blacks, or 45.7 percent of those eligible, were registered.

The 1964 election showed an increase of 270,000 over the number of those who voted in 1960, making it the first Virginia election in which over one million persons voted.⁷⁰ Although the 8 percent increase in participation was impressive, Virginia still lagged far behind the nation in voter participation. Whereas 63.8

⁶⁷ Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd, 1945-1966*, 259.

⁶⁸ Andrew Buni, *The Negro in Virginia Politics 1902-1965* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1967), 221.

⁶⁹ Voter Education Project *News* IV, Nos. 1 and 2, January-February 1970.

⁷⁰ Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd, 1945-1966*, 259.

percent of all adults voted nationally, only 33.3 percent of Virginia's adults voted.⁷¹ As noted, elimination of the poll tax brought 150,000 new voters into the polls in 1964, most of whom were black. The fact that they voted as a bloc made their presence critical to the outcome in 1964. Ironically, the Republican party, which for years received black support in Virginia, called for poll tax repeal, and spoke out against massive resistance, was defeated in 1965 by the combined forces of black voters and an extremist party whose primary foe was Democrat Lyndon Johnson. The Virginia G.O.P's failure on the gubernatorial level was due mainly to national political events.

In 1964, Democrats throughout the country sought to depict Republican nominee Barry Goldwater as opposing civil rights. Eventually, Goldwater was also seen many voters as a warmongering red baiter. The Republican nominee often damaged his standing with voters by his unabashed remarks, such as his comment at the Republican national convention that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice."⁷² He continued to baffle many along the campaign trail. At one rally, he remarked, "I wish the Democratic party would change its name to socialist party, because that's what they are."⁷³ Democrats across the nation relied on Goldwater's own words to convict their opponent of extremism.

Goldwater's image as an opponent of civil rights proved both beneficial and damaging to his presidential bid, as well as to the surging Republicanism that was sweeping the South. Political commentator Roscoe Drummond noted,

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁷² Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), 260.

⁷³ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 9, 1964.

Senator Goldwater has both helped and hurt the cause of southern Republicanism. He has sharpened the conservative-liberal issue more than any previous G.O.P. presidential nominee. He is drawing many southerners away from their Democratic moorings on the issue of conservatism alone. But the die-hard advocates of racial discrimination have also flocked to Goldwater, even though the senator has a good record of fighting racial discrimination in public places in his own state.⁷⁴

Perhaps the most interested observers of the 1964 election were black voters, who strongly supported President Johnson because of the Civil Rights Act and their intense mistrust of Goldwater. The black press was particularly vehement in its attacks on the Republican candidate, falsely alleging that Goldwater accepted the endorsement of the Ku Klux Klan and Alabama Governor George Wallace.⁷⁵

Many observers, however, felt that the perception of Goldwater was incorrect. In an editorial endorsing Goldwater, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* called Goldwater "probably the most vilified and misrepresented man of his generation."⁷⁶ Goldwater was misrepresented, and the extremist label was the deciding factor in the 1964 presidential election. In Virginia politics, however, many felt that the extremist label was attached to the wrong candidate.

As the campaign of 1964 progressed, the Democratic party was extremely confident, in Virginia and throughout the nation. Opinion polls gave the incumbent President a comfortable lead in the Old Dominion. Nevertheless, some felt that the pattern of presidential Republicanism would continue. Most

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, November 3, 1964.

⁷⁵ Buni, *The Negro in Virginia Politics*, 220.

⁷⁶ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 18, 1964.

Virginia Democratic leaders expected a Johnson victory, and their cause for optimism was enhanced by the omission of Virginia on Goldwater's seven state southern campaign trip.⁷⁷ State Democratic Chairman Sidney S. Kellam predicted, "if we can get the people of Virginia to look at Barry Goldwater's record, they're not going to vote for him."⁷⁸ Many Democrats in Virginia who were more conservative than Kellam, however, disagreed. After considering Johnson's record on domestic politics they decided that it was he, not Goldwater, who they could not support. Most of these individuals were among the most outspoken southern conservatives, and often depended upon organization to achieve their goals.

The events of the early 1960's led to the formation of new political organizations in Virginia. These groups, such as the Virginia Conservative Council and the Conservative Virginia Voters, continued to support the Byrd machine and its candidates. They continually denounced the direction that the national Democratic party was heading and expressed concern that liberals on the state level would eventually assume control over the state party.

As southern conservatives displayed growing support for national Republican candidates while still supporting Democrats on the state and local level, Republican candidates were faced with an arduous task. Convincing conservative voters that cohesive Republican voting was the correct course proved highly unsuccessful throughout the 1960's. During the decade, only

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, October 4, 1964.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, October 3, 1964.

Florida, Arkansas, and Virginia elected Republican governors, and southern legislators remained overwhelmingly Democratic.

For his running mate in 1964, Johnson chose Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. If Lyndon Johnson's ideology was disliked by conservative Virginians, Humphrey's ideology was detestable to the same persons. Humphrey gained national fame in 1948 when he successfully led the fight for a strong party stand on civil rights. Later, as a Senator from Minnesota and Democratic whip, he was a leading spokesman for arms control, civil rights, medical aid to the needy, and aid to education. A Johnson-Humphrey ticket was simply unacceptable to conservative Virginians. They responded by forming the "Virginia Democrats for Goldwater and Byrd," with Clem D. Johnson as chairman. The new organization distributed bumper stickers with the slogan "Barry and Harry," and spent a significant amount of money on advertisements in which they characterized Humphrey as "socialistic," with "goals foreign to our traditional way of life."⁷⁹ Most of the advertisements asked the question: "how can any patriotic Virginian vote for this radical candidate?"⁸⁰ Another group, the Conservative Virginia Voters, ran advertisements focusing special attention on Humphrey's membership in the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). The ADA, the advertisements claimed, stood for spendthrift government, deficit spending, socialized medicine, the expansion of trade with the Soviet Union on credit, and the lifting of trade barriers with communist China.⁸¹

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, October 19, 1964.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

As opposition to the Johnson-Humphrey ticket gained momentum among conservative voters, Democrats in office also abandoned their party's candidates. On October 20, 1964, fifteen conservative Democrats in the Virginia General Assembly announced that they could not recommend or endorse the Johnson-Humphrey ticket. The Democratic nominees, they said, stood for an "extreme political philosophy, typified by the ADA and other left wing, socialist, and collective groups contrary to Virginia Democrats' principles and beliefs."⁸²

Nevertheless, most Democrats remained loyal to the party in November, and the President carried the state. The majority agreed with the editorial endorsement of the *Waynesboro News-Virginian* that argued, "Johnson serves all the people, not just the extremists of either left or right" and that the Goldwater ticket offered "a turn backward from the inexorable sweep toward solidarity, maturity, and opportunity."⁸³

When the votes were counted in Virginia, Johnson had won by a margin of 558,038 to Goldwater's 481,334 or 53.5 percent to 46.2 percent. The black vote was decisive. Dramatic shifts in black voting patterns took place in the 1964 election. In Richmond, for example, the Republicans had won 70.4 percent of the black vote in the 1956 presidential election, and a respectable 36.9 percent in 1960. In 1964, however, black support for the Republican ticket dropped to an astonishing figure of 0.7 percent.⁸⁴ Most newspapers and observers estimated that

⁸² *Ibid.*, October 21, 1964.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, October 20, 1964.

⁸⁴ Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 264.

from 100,000 to 160,000 blacks voted in the election, with almost all their votes going to Johnson. Clearly, their vote was critical in Virginia.

As blacks flocked to the Democratic party, many white Virginians deserted the Democratic party. This trend, most common in the Deep South in 1964, was evident in Virginia as well. As Professor Ralph Eisenberg stated,

the loss of conservative Democratic votes in rural counties and cities of the Southside preoccupied with the racial issue was not unlike similar behavior in comparable regions of the southern states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi which gave their electoral support to the Republican party.⁸⁵

Many white Virginians, convinced that the Democratic party had become too liberal, defected from the party. Unfortunately for the Republicans the white defections were offset by an increase in black voting, which was the primary reason for the large voter turnout. As stated earlier, voter participation was the heaviest in Virginia history. The greatest numbers of new voters, mostly black, were in the more heavily populated urban areas. These areas served as Johnson's base of support. He showed great strength in Arlington and Fairfax counties, as well as in the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church. The usual Democratic stronghold, the Southside and lower Tidewater areas, became the most strongly Republican section of the state in 1964. Of the 39 counties won by Goldwater, 27 were located there. Tidewater cities, however, proved to be solidly Democratic due to their large black populations.

Realizing the importance of the black vote to their success, Virginia Democrats were faced with a conundrum. For years they had relied on the Byrd

⁸⁵ *UVA News Letter*, April 15, 1965, 29.

organization, which supported segregation and voting restrictions that excluded large numbers of individuals, particularly blacks, from the political process.

Black support for Democrats on the national level was one thing; black support for Virginia Democrats was another. The Virginia Democratic party therefore had little reason to expect black support. Furthermore, they realized that much of the party's white support had recently defected.

Realizing this, and hopeful that recent Democratic defections in the Democratic stronghold of the Southside at the presidential level would continue at the state level, the Republican party had cause for optimism as the 1965 gubernatorial election approached. Unfortunately for the Republicans, they failed to realize the importance of national politics on state elections. They also failed to foresee the emergence of a third party into Virginia politics.

The Democratic nominee for governor in 1965 was Mills E. Godwin, Jr., Governor Harrison's lieutenant governor and a solid Byrd organization man. Godwin had made his political reputation as the "architect of massive resistance." Although he had been outspoken in the past in his aversion to labor unions, integration, and spending, political expediency called for a change in his positions. He worked hard to receive the endorsement of the AFL-CIO, and he appealed to blacks on the basis of his support of President Johnson and promises to put blacks in positions of power in the Virginia state government. Furthermore, Godwin pledged to support greater spending for public services and teachers' salaries. He also promised to continue to attract industry to the state

and to develop a larger tourist industry.⁸⁶ As one liberal Democratic supporter declared, "he had undergone a transformation as dramatic as Saul on the road to Damascus."⁸⁷

On March 1, Republicans at their convention unanimously selected A. Linwood Holton, Jr., a 41-year-old native of Big Stone Gap in Wise County. A graduate of Harvard Law School and a practicing attorney in Roanoke, Holton was a "progressive" Republican who advocated repeal of the poll tax in state elections and increased spending for state services. He was the leading member of the Republican party in Virginia and was seen by the party as its most able member and the best hope for the future. In addition, he was a tireless campaigner who relied on extensive personal contact to bolster his campaign efforts.⁸⁸ Running under the slogan "Make Virginia First Again," Holton hoped to win a majority of the moderate vote, particularly in the growing urban and suburban areas. Given Godwin's past and the Virginia Republican party's history of receiving sizeable black support, the upcoming election appeared to offer the Republicans an opportunity to build a winning coalition consisting of traditional Republicans and blacks. At the convention, Clarence L. Townes, Jr., a leader in Richmond's large black community and a special assistant to the State G.O.P. chairman, told delegates "the Negro citizen is needed, welcomed, and wanted at every level in the Republican party."⁸⁹ Holton and Godwin, therefore,

⁸⁶ Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd, 1945-1966*, 273.

⁸⁷ *The New Republic* 153 (November 13, 1965): 9.

⁸⁸ Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd, 1945-1966*, 270.

⁸⁹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 16, 1965.

were seeking basically the same constituency. Godwin's attempt to portray himself as a moderate disturbed Republicans. I. Lee Potter, the Republican national committeeman from Virginia, remarked,

Holton and Mills Godwin are vying for the middle ground. The difference in them is that Linwood has always been a sound thinker. Godwin is just a political opportunist who has turned against everything he used to espouse.⁹⁰

Equally disturbing for conservative Republicans was Holton's 'moderate' stance on the issues. Although he endorsed Goldwater in 1964, Holton was not the favorite of the more conservative members of the Republican party in Virginia. To placate the right wing of the party, he chose Richard D. Obenshain, an arch-conservative, as his running mate for lieutenant governor. Conservative Republicans were satisfied, but many conservative Virginians were not. These individuals, staunch Byrd Democrats, displayed characteristics similar to those of other whites in the Deep South who had bolted the Democratic party to support Goldwater. Had the Virginia G.O.P. nominated a candidate with views similar to Goldwater, the party could have expected their support. To "true" conservatives in Virginia in 1965, however, the Virginia Republican party was liberal. In fact, in a nation that was "being driven down the road to Marxism," as these persons alleged, the Virginia Republican party's candidates may not have been at the wheel, but they were definitely on board.⁹¹

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, July 5, 1965.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, July 11, 1965.

Reese Cleghorn, associate editor of the *Atlanta Journal*, once wrote that the South has a tradition of being vulnerable to nonsense.⁹² Much of Cleghorn's analysis was based on the South's history of race relations and its support for radical political parties, groups, and individuals. In the 1960's, the South once again demonstrated this by its periodical support of right wing extremist groups. Professor Seymour Martin Lipset explained the reasons for right wing extremism:

massive support for right-wing extremism inherently attests to the widespread existence of a sense of deprivation and alienation from the policy. Groups who have a claim to status and cultural influence as a result of past or present achievements, turn against existing political institutions when they feel that their claim is insecure, is under attack, or is actually declining.⁹³

In the South, right wing extremism was most often associated with the Deep South. Virginia and other border states were much less susceptible to extremist demagoguery. Yet the political behavior in some areas of the Old Dominion was similar to that of the Deep South.

The frustration that so often accompanies helplessness and change inspired the formation in the summer of 1965 of a new political party in Virginia. Disillusioned with the endorsement of Lyndon Johnson by the Virginia Democratic leadership and the "liberalism" of the Virginia G.O.P., a group of conservative Virginians met in July, 1965, to form a political party that would offer "true" conservatives a home in the political affairs of the Old Dominion.

On July 11, 1965, at the Hotel Jefferson in Richmond, 300 delegates gathered to nominate candidates. In just over three hours, the convention, acting

⁹² Cleghorn, *Radicalism-Southern Style*, 6.

⁹³ Seymour Martin Lipset, "George Wallace and the U.S. New Right" *New Society* 314 (October 3, 1968): 477.

unanimously and without debate or dissent, transacted its business and adjourned.⁹⁴ The new party called itself the Virginia Conservative party. The delegates selected William J. Story, Jr. of Chesapeake as its nominee for governor. A 56-year-old member of the John Birch Society, Story had been a teacher and football coach before becoming the superintendent of schools for South Norfolk. For lieutenant governor, the new party chose Reid T. Putney, a forestry consultant and former Republican from Goochland County. For attorney general, it turned to John W. Carter, 44, a lawyer from Danville, who became the party's most colorful and controversial speaker.

During the convention, party spokesmen espoused an ideology similar to Senator Goldwater's the previous year. Carter warned that "this nation is going down the road to Marxism with such rapidity it is frightening."⁹⁵ The Conservatives also displayed a flair for historical analogy, as Carter drew parallels between the tyranny of King George III and the current United States government, and Story likened the new Virginia Conservative party to the outnumbered Greeks who won the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. The primary concern of the convention, however, naturally concerned state politics. On this topic the Conservatives offered unique theories.

Carter's candidacy was particularly notable. Edward J. Silverman of Lunenburg, who served as platform committee chairman, said of Carter's military experience, "he could gut 'em with the bolo knife ... and time has come

⁹⁴ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 11, 1965.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

in the Commonwealth to gut 'em low."⁹⁶ Carter certainly gave it his best try. Calling the Virginia Conservative party a "new and refreshing movement," Carter denounced the "duplicity" of the two major parties. The Democrats and Republicans, Carter argued, were "moving the state down the primrose path to destruction and slavery."⁹⁷ Furthermore, he described Godwin and Holton as "intellectual prostitutes," with no political principles but expediency. He added that Holton was "Rockefeller's fair-haired boy," backed by the Rockefeller fortune pouring money into Virginia, while Godwin was "Lyndon's fair-haired boy," backed by federal war on poverty funds pouring into Virginia out of taxpayers' pockets. Carter said that neither of the two possessed any "intestinal fortitude," and that both dealt only in "pious platitudes."⁹⁸

Candidate Story, who was described by a Norfolk area delegate as "looking like Robert E. Lee and acting like George Washington," preferred a soft spoken, low key appeal. A former member of the state board of education, he called for steadiness and sturdiness in fighting the dangers posed by liberalism. "We are soldiers fighting the battle for what is right and true," he said. "We must endure. We cannot abandon this great hope ... we must struggle against this great evil."⁹⁹ By great evil, Story was referring to the legislation of civil rights, including social and welfare programs, an increase in federal spending, and the overall growth of

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

federal services. During his campaign, conducted informally from his home in Chesapeake, Story referred to the Great Society as the "Great Sucker Society."¹⁰⁰

The platform of the Virginia Conservative party was as extensive as it was provocative. The Conservatives frowned on "free-spending relief policies," denounced federal control of the school system, and advocated fiscal responsibility, or pay-as-you-go policies. The party also championed individual liberty, state sovereignty, free enterprise, constitutional government, and the promise of law and order. More specifically it called for making sterilization a prerequisite for relief payments to unwed mothers after the birth of a second illegitimate child. It also took the position that Virginia should not "indulge in extravagance through the vehicle of painless taxation," such as the sales tax, but if necessary should "put a head tax on every adult to collect his share of government costs."¹⁰¹ Lastly, it argued that the state should "investigate and expose subversive influences including educational and religious institutions."¹⁰²

The Conservatives approached their political rallies with the same enthusiasm as they had displayed at their convention. They always began with a band playing "Dixie," followed by a string of invectives, usually from the outspoken Carter, who did not limit his personal criticisms to state candidates. Lyndon Johnson, Carter argued, resorted to chicanery, trickery, blackmail and

¹⁰⁰ Buni, *The Negro in Virginia Politics*, 235.

¹⁰¹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 11, 1965.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

bribery. The Virginia Republican party was referred to as "the illegitimate offspring of the union of Marxism and the national Republican party."¹⁰³

The Conservatives concentrated their campaigns on Southside Virginia. They received support from the Ku Klux Klan, long absent from Virginia politics, but now trying to re-organize in response to the changing South they feared and opposed. The Virginia Conservative party, the KKK assumed, could restore the white supremacy doctrine to Virginia government. During a Klan rally, Virginia's Grand Dragon, Robert Kornegay, endorsed Story by saying, "if you see a white man among them [the candidates] you'd better vote for the white man."¹⁰⁴ Lt. Governor Godwin disassociated himself from the Klan, calling their activities "repugnant," and saying that the state "will not tolerate, condone, or permit any unlawful activities by the Klan in the state."¹⁰⁵ Republican candidate Holton also disassociated himself from the Conservative party, despite the fact that Virginia Conservative members had pledged to support him if he adopted a more right-wing stance on the key issues. On one occasion, Holton even associated the Virginia Conservative party with Nazism. After the Conservatives proposed the formation of a state militia, Holton wrote John Carter a letter, stating, "we would be unalterably opposed to the establishment of any state militia as proposed by some persons who may be members of your group. This smacks of the Gestapo and police methods which we could not condone in any way."¹⁰⁶ The Republican

¹⁰³ Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd, 1945-1966*, 271.

¹⁰⁴ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 24, 1965.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, September 25, 1965.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, September 26, 1965.

candidate for governor, therefore, rejected the backing of extreme conservatives, even though that might have cost him political support. Unable to attract black voters and unwilling to take politically beneficial positions contrary to his own beliefs, Holton found his support limited to traditional Republicans and moderates; certainly not enough to win.

As a result, Mills Godwin won the 1965 election with 269,526 votes, or 47.9 percent, thereby becoming the first Virginia governor in the twentieth century to be elected by less than a majority of the popular vote.¹⁰⁷ Holton received 212,057 votes, or 37.7 percent, with a surprising 75,307 voters (13.4 percent) supporting Story. Godwin proved to be the better coalition builder, receiving overwhelming support from blacks and organized labor, as well as the majority of Virginia Democrats. In contrast, Holton fared only slightly better than Republican candidate Clyde Pearson who, in 1961, had captured 36.1 percent of the vote. Holton, however, succeeded in gaining urban and suburban support. He did significantly better than the previous Republican candidate in the heavily populated counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Henrico and Roanoke, as well as in the cities of Alexandria and Roanoke. In Richmond and Norfolk, however, Holton's totals were less than those of Pearson in 1961. This was due to the heavy black populations in those cities. Two of the major features of the election were the existence of a third party in Virginia politics and the critical role played by black voters.

¹⁰⁷ Weldon Cooper and Thomas Morris, eds., *Virginia Government and Politics* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), 82.

On November 6, the Virginia Conservative party met to assess its performance. The meeting, which was attended by the party's candidates and 450 delegates, was held at the Hotel Jefferson, where a large banner reading "Virginia Conservative party -- Here-to-Stay, Join Now," hung in front.¹⁰⁸ John Carter predicted a realignment of parties in which the Conservative party would be pitted against the combined forces of the Republican and Democratic parties. Carter quipped, "we're through trying to influence the Republican or Democratic parties -- they're beyond hope. From now on, we're in business for ourselves."¹⁰⁹ Story summed up the Conservatives' goals by saying, "the big thing we want to assure is a conservative choice, regardless of party labels."¹¹⁰ In 1965, the "big thing" the Virginia Conservative party helped to assure was that the frustrations of the Virginia Republican party would continue.

The surprising support for the Virginia Conservative party attracted much attention. Most observers attributed the party's support to the aversion many people felt to the sweeping changes taking place in American government. As a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorial stated,

the more than 70,000 Virginians who voted for Story were saying, in effect, that they want no part of what they feel to be governmental trends in America away from basic constitutional principals.¹¹¹

Despite their extremist positions, the Virginia Conservative party's impact on the election cannot be discounted. Given that the "governmental trends"

¹⁰⁸ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 7, 1965.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, November 5, 1965.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, November 4, 1965.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, November 3, 1965.

mentioned above were associated with the Democratic party, there seems little doubt that a large percentage of Virginia Conservative party supporters would have supported Holton in 1965 had the Republican not taken the progressive positions that he took. The root of their frustration centered around the changes concerning domestic policy within the Democratic party. Political realignment in the 1960's demonstrated that white conservatives did not hesitate to cross party lines in cases where they perceived a candidate or party as being too liberal. In Virginia, resentment over Johnson's politics extended to the state level and was re-enforced by personal contacts with the national party. As columnist James Latimer wrote,

the Conservative vote reflected resentment of President Johnson's civil rights and economic policies -- resentment that embraced Godwin for having ridden the Lady Bird Special campaign train through Southside Virginia last year.¹¹²

As noted, the leadership of the Virginia Conservative party subtly offered Holton their support in exchange for a more conservative stance on several issues. John Carter evaluated Holton's missed opportunity when he stated that Holton could have won the election had he ran as a "constitutional conservative." As table 1-A indicates, counties that supported Goldwater in 1964 were likely to continue to reject Democratic candidates in 1965. Had Story's entire constituency supported Holton, Holton's total vote would have been enough to win the election.

Although it is unlikely that all of Story's supporters would have voted Republican, based on the conservatism of these counties and their almost

¹¹² *Ibid.*, November 4, 1965.

Table 1. 1-A Counties Godwin Lost

Counties won by Holton		Counties won by Story	
Arlington	*Highland	*Amelia	*Sussex
*Augusta	*Montgomery	*Charlotte	
Botetourt	*Page	*Chesterfield	
*Carroll	*Roanoke	*Lunenburg	
Fairfax	Rockingham	*Mecklenburg	
*Floyd	Russell	*Nottoway	
Grayson	Scott	*Powhatan	
*Greene	Smyth	*Prince Edward	
*Henrico	Washington	Surry	

*Denotes won by Goldwater in 1964

Source: Ralph Eisenberg, *Virginia Votes, 1928-1969*.

unanimous support for the Republican presidential candidate the previous year, it is likely that the existence of a third party damaged Republican chances for victory. For the G.O.P. to have received the support of these individuals, however, it would have needed a more conservative nominee. Had this been the case, the slight support given the party by blacks would have been forfeited.

Holton reflects,

it is true that Governor Godwin received only a plurality of the votes cast in 1965. I would have had to receive substantially all of Story's votes, however, in order to have defeated Governor Godwin in that election. I was not conservative (racist?) enough ever to have obtained all of that vote. Also, a large number of people who did vote for me did so because they viewed me as a more progressive candidate than Godwin. Thus, if I had taken a more conservative stand (which was not my nature), I probably would have lost some of the more progressive thinking voters.¹¹³

Circumstances, therefore, were not conducive to a Republican victory in 1965.

Equally problematic for Holton was the attempt to attract black voters only one year after Goldwater's candidacy. Despite the two parties' past positions, national politics took precedence insofar as black voters were concerned. As a *Roanoke Times* editorial stated,

both Democrats and Republicans quietly wooed Negro voters, but Mr. Holton was less successful in that, no doubt because most of the Negroes saw him as the candidate of a party which had as its presidential candidate last year Senator Goldwater.¹¹⁴

The Republican candidate is now fully aware of Goldwater's impact. As Holton reflects,

¹¹³ The Honorable Linwood Holton, letter to the author, April 20, 1991.

¹¹⁴ *Roanoke Times*, November 4, 1965.

Goldwater's 1964 race, appealing specifically to the old Byrd Democrats with emphasis on opposition to various current 'civil rights' proposals, surely made the blacks shy away from any Republican nominee. If that single element had been removed, the blacks would have been more inclined to support me.¹¹⁵

According to Holton, most black voters believed his chance of winning was slim, and therefore, backed Godwin, hoping that he would reward them for their support after becoming governor. Holton remarks, "it is likely that the 'Godwin is going to win -- let's go with a winner' argument would have prevailed even without memories of Goldwater's recent performance."¹¹⁶ Many black leaders admitted that this was one of the reasons that they supported Godwin.

Anticipating a Godwin victory, they trusted Godwin would remain loyal to his promises to meet black needs, and to give blacks a voice in the party. One such leader, the Reverend L. Francis Griffin, supported Godwin as a matter of practical politics and the lesser of two evils. Griffin backed Godwin in hopes that blacks could "[make] inroads into the party. . . . If you support a party, sooner or later, you'll have a voice in the party."¹¹⁷

In addition, southerners, both black and white, were becoming certain that southern Democrats were going to follow the lead of the national party, a fact that further damaged Holton's chances of garnering the black vote. As John Carter argued, "Holton was naive enough to think he could win the Negro vote away from Godwin just because of Godwin's 'massive resistance' stand. But the

¹¹⁵ Holton, letter to the author, April 20, 1991.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Buni, *The Negro in Virginia Politics*, 243.

Negroes knew that Godwin was going to dance to the tune that Lyndon played."¹¹⁸

An estimated 70,000 black voters cast ballots in the election.¹¹⁹ Support for Godwin was estimated to be at least 75 percent.¹²⁰ Moses Riddick, Jr., executive secretary of the Virginia Independent Voters' League, felt that the actual number was closer to 100,000, with support for Godwin between 70 and 80 percent.¹²¹ If this estimate is correct, black support for Godwin was crucial to his effort. In any case, the black vote was very important to the outcome of the election. Had Holton received the support of the Crusade for Voters, Virginia's largest black political organization, he may have won the election. As Holton states,

the way I could have won in 1965 was for the Crusade for Voters to have endorsed me. Getting the black vote would have been consistent with my other support, but the Crusade endorsed Godwin because they felt I had no chance to win.¹²²

The Virginia Democratic party was rewarded for having supported the national ticket in 1964. Equally important was the distrust of the G.O.P. that blacks across the nation felt for the Republicans because they had nominated Goldwater.¹²³ Godwin swept black areas in Richmond and Norfolk. As recently as 1961, these areas had overwhelmingly supported Republican candidates.

¹¹⁸ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 5, 1965.

¹¹⁹ Pat Watters and Reese Cleghorn, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder, The Arrival of Negroes into Southern Politics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), 354.

¹²⁰ Havard, *The Changing Politics of the South*, 59.

¹²¹ Buni, *The Negro in Virginia Politics*, 244.

¹²² Holton, letter to the author, April 20, 1991.

¹²³ Louis Seagull, *Southern Republicanism* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), 133.

The mid-point of the decade thus concluded with the G.O.P. winning 37.7 percent of the vote in the gubernatorial election, an increase of only 1.6 percent over 1961. Both blacks and conservative whites were, for the time being, alienated and non-supportive. The future success of the Republican party in the Old Dominion depended upon a combination of factors. The list included continued factionalism in the Democratic party, increased urbanization, and economic growth. The most important factor, however, would be how Virginians perceived the national parties.

CHAPTER THREE

The Transformed Dominion

"What is good for Virginia is good for the Republican party"¹²⁴

"Kennedy Democrats in Virginia? That's as bad as Yankees in Georgia"¹²⁵

Perhaps no other state reflected changes in the South in the 1960's more than Virginia. What was once an agriculturally based state was rapidly becoming an industrialized, predominantly urban one, and the dominance the Democratic party had long enjoyed was quickly fading. Of all the southern states, possibly the most dramatic political changes occurred in Virginia. The surging Republicanism that characterized the region as a whole was evidenced in the election of a Republican governor.

¹²⁴ H. D. "Buz" Dawbarn, Republican candidate for lieutenant governor, 1969.

¹²⁵ Reverend Beverly McDowell, Virginia Conservative party candidate for governor, 1969.

In the 1960's, the Republican party made its greatest gains in areas of the South where economic and demographic changes were most evident. Factors such as population shifts from rural to urban centers, gains in personal income, industrial growth, and economic progress all translated into Republican success. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Republican party in Virginia was particularly successful.

In 1960, the population of Virginia was 3,954,429; in 1970, it was 4,648,494. This represented a growth of 17.6 percent.¹²⁶ Virginia's annual growth rate for the decade was 30 percent above the national average.¹²⁷ Natural increase accounted for a gain of 531,998, while 162,067 was the result of net migration into the state.¹²⁸ Urbanization also continued throughout the decade, so that by 1970, 63 percent of Virginia's population lived in urban areas.¹²⁹

Virginia's labor and income statistics were particularly impressive. Unemployment remained low, between 3.5 percent and 3.8 percent in the years 1965-1969.¹³⁰ The labor force itself increased by 28 percent.¹³¹ Industrial growth was the economy's most striking feature. Employment in agriculture continued to decline while manufacturing employees and white collar sector workers

¹²⁶ Cooper and Morris, eds., *Virginia Government and Politics*, 5.

¹²⁷ Edwin E. Holm, "Virginia's Third Straight Decade of High Employment Growth," *Virginia Economic Review* (October 1972): 1.

¹²⁸ Cooper and Morris, eds., *Virginia Politics and Government*, 7.

¹²⁹ Edwin E. Holm, "Factors Behind the Changes in Virginia's Geographic District of Population," *Virginia Economic Review* (December 1971): 1.

¹³⁰ Mark R. Kilduff, "Prospects for Manufacturing Growth in Virginia during the 1970's," *Virginia Economic Review* (May 1972): 1.

¹³¹ Holm, "Factors": 1.

dramatically increased. From 1960 to 1970, the number of agricultural workers decreased from 103,000 to 53,000.¹³² At the same time the number of those employed in manufacturing increased by 22.3 percent, compared to 7.8 percent for the nation.¹³³ Furthermore, the number of professional and technical workers grew at an annual rate of 5.9 percent.¹³⁴ Whereas 34.8 percent of all working males in the state held white collar jobs in 1960, by 1970 the figure was 41.7 percent. The number of females in the white collar sector also increased. At the start of the decade, 55.9 percent of working females were in the white collar sector; by 1970, the figure had risen to 61.6 percent.

The technical and industrial progress seen in the work force translated into increases in income. The median income of Virginia families in 1960 was \$4,964; by 1970, it had jumped to \$9,049. This represented an increase of 82.3 percent, or 39.4 percent adjusted for inflation.¹³⁵ Adjusted for inflation, personal income rose at a rate 42 percent higher during the 1960's than that of the nation.¹³⁶ On this basis, Virginia ranked as the eighth most rapidly growing state in the 1960's.¹³⁷

As noted earlier, educational advances, urban growth, and migration were important factors in enhancing Republican fortunes during the 1960's. Virginia

¹³² Holm, "Virginia's Third Straight Decade of High Employment Growth," *Virginia Economic Review* (October 1972): 3.

¹³³ Edwin E. Holm, "Comparing Occupational with Educational Trends for Virginia," *Virginia Economic Review* (August 1974): 1.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹³⁵ Cooper and Morris, eds., *Virginia Politics and Government*, 12.

¹³⁶ Holm, "Virginia's Third Straight Decade of High Employment Growth": 1.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

witnessed all these developments during the decade. In 1960, the average Virginian had completed 9.9 years of education. By 1970, the average had jumped to 11.7 years, an increase of 18 percent.¹³⁸ Furthermore, only 8.4 percent of Virginians had completed four or more years of college in 1960, compared with 12.3 percent in 1970. Urban areas of the state experienced major growth during the decade. The Richmond area grew substantially during the period 1965-1969, increasing its population by 37,000, a 7.6 percent gain.¹³⁹ Northern Virginia, the Norfolk-Portsmouth area, and the Roanoke metropolitan area grew at even faster rates. During the decade, the population of Northern Virginia soared from 316,000 to 918,026. Over the same time, the Norfolk-Portsmouth area's population grew from 578,507 to 681,521, a growth rate of 17.8 percent. The Roanoke metropolitan area's population increased by 22,633 over the decade, a 14 percent growth rate.

Lastly, Virginia welcomed a large number of migrants during the 1960's. In 1960, 14 percent of all whites in Virginia were born outside the South.¹⁴⁰ By 1970, this figure had risen to 18 percent. These demographic changes, combined with the increasing hostility many white conservative Virginians felt toward the national Democratic party, allowed the Virginia Republican party to achieve unprecedented success in the latter part of the decade. By 1966, the conservatism of the national Republican party was firmly established, a fact that could only help Republicans on the state and local level in Virginia and the rest of the South.

¹³⁸ Cooper and Morris, eds., *Virginia Politics and Government*, 13.

¹³⁹ *Annual Report* (Richmond: Virginia Department of Labor and Industry), 11.

¹⁴⁰ Black and Black, *Politics and Society in the South*, 17.

By the 1966 state elections, the conservative movement in the Republican party was well underway. Although in the two statewide Senate contests that year the more liberal Republican Lawrence Traylor did better against Senator Harry F. Byrd, Jr. than Republican James P. Ould did in his conservative-oriented campaign against William B. Spong, conservatism was becoming an established trait of the Virginia G.O.P. In the congressional races of 1966, conservative Republicans Joel Broyhill and Richard Poff were re-elected. Republican William Scott won with a bipartisan coalition of conservatives, while William Wampler defeated Pat Jennings, the state's most liberal congressman. As one leading Virginia Republican said, "it was inevitable that the Democratic party would realign itself more in line with the national Democrats and the Republicans would do the same."¹⁴¹ The future of the Democratic party in Virginia seemed insecure, threatened by dissension and desertion.

Realignment of Virginia Democrats with the national party put local Democrats out of step with their home constituencies. But for Virginia Republicans, realignment with the national party meant unlimited opportunity.

By 1968, the national Democratic party faced numerous problems. The party was split into conservative and liberal factions, and one of its leading candidates, Robert Kennedy, was fatally shot while campaigning in Los Angeles. By this time, too, many Americans perceived the Democratic party as being too liberal. Continued defections to the Republican party seemed likely. Kevin Phillips put forth this argument in his classic study, *The Emerging Republican*

¹⁴¹ *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1966.

Majority. Phillips listed several reasons for future Republican success. Among these were global diplomacy, Asian warfare, domestic economics, social and welfare policy, and law enforcement.¹⁴² Phillips anticipated that the two most conservative regions of the country, the West and the South, would soon serve as catalysts for the Republican party to be the majority party. In the South, dissatisfaction with the Democratic party did not always translate into support for the Republican party, however. In 1968 an extremist candidate, Governor George Wallace of Alabama, formed the American Independent party and launched a serious presidential campaign. The independent movement posed a threat to southern Republicanism.

George Wallace's 1968 presidential bid was similar to Barry Goldwater's in 1964. Wallace criticized President Johnson's handling of the Vietnam war, criticized the growth of the federal bureaucracy, and spoke out against increased crime and creeping socialism. Because of his opposition to civil rights, his candidacy generated strong support among whites in the South, where civil rights legislation was unpopular. For Republicans, Wallace's candidacy was yet another obstacle in their attempt to win the region. Although most Wallace supporters were Democrats, most observers felt that Republican Richard Nixon was more damaged by Wallace's candidacy than was the Democratic candidate, Vice President Hubert Humphrey. White southern conservatives had two choices, Nixon or Wallace. Half of Wallace supporters had supported

¹⁴² Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 33.

Republican Goldwater in 1964.¹⁴³ In Virginia, Nixon's 43.4 percent of the vote would most likely have been closer to 65 percent had not 23.6 percent of the electorate voted for Wallace. Goldwater had won eight of the seventeen counties won by Wallace in 1968. Nixon would certainly have won these counties had Wallace not been running.

Governor Godwin correctly observed that Nixon had "received many votes" from Virginians who normally voted Democratic in state elections. These voters, he also noted, "went according to their philosophies rather than party labels."¹⁴⁴ This helped state Republican candidates. In the 1968 elections, Virginia Republicans outpolled the Democrats in the congressional districts contested by a total vote of 457,500 to 430,300. The Virginia G.O.P. was ecstatic. Linwood Holton said, "nobody could be any prouder of Virginia than I am. We've vindicated the two-party system in the state, carried it for Nixon, and picked up another congressional seat . . . two years from now we'll gain some more."¹⁴⁵ The Virginia G.O.P. had reason to be optimistic. As a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorial stated, "it can be argued that it makes sense for Virginians to align themselves in like fashion on the state scene. Otherwise, in supporting state Democratic candidates, Virginia conservatives are indirectly giving aid and comfort to the ideological enemy, the liberal national Democratic party, while slapping in the face the national Republican leadership, with whom these

¹⁴³ Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, Jerrold G. Rusk, and Arthur C. Wolfe, "Continuity and Change in American Politics: Parties and Issues in the 1968 Election," *American Political Science Review* 93 (December 1969): 1101.

¹⁴⁴ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 7, 1968.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

conservatives should be aligned."¹⁴⁶ The "enemy," the liberal national Democratic party, had temporarily lost the vast majority of its support by white southerners.

Kevin Phillips estimated the white vote for the Democratic ticket in the South at less than 20 percent in 1968.¹⁴⁷ As a result, Humphrey carried only Texas in the South. Clearly, 1968 signaled the beginning of the end of white support for the Democratic party at the national level. The disregard of party labels in favor of political philosophy diminished traditional Democratic support and legitimized Republican affiliation. But while on the national level the Democratic party's stance in the South was tenuous, on the state level it was still by far the majority party. The ability to capitalize on the unpopularity of national Democrats would be the key to the success of southern Republicans.

The impact that national political affairs was having on the state and local level in the South was particularly evident in the Old Dominion. As columnist Joseph Kraft noted, "in Virginia, as in not a few other parts of the South, state politics have tended to merge with national politics."¹⁴⁸ This bode well for Republican candidates in Virginia. Convincing Virginians that the state G.O.P.'s views were in line with the national Republican party became one of their most important tasks. Equally important was convincing Virginians that the state Democratic party's leadership had fallen into the hands of "national" Democrats.

In Virginia, the Byrd organization had lost control of the Democratic party, due to the death of Harry F. Byrd, Sr., and the subsequent weakening of the

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, November 2, 1969.

¹⁴⁷ Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 238.

¹⁴⁸ *The Washington Post*, October 30, 1969.

staunchly conservative base that the party had depended upon. Many Virginia Democrats agreed with the policies advocated by President Johnson and other liberal Democrats. The party was split into conservative, liberal, and moderate factions. The factionalism that plagued Democrats throughout the country, therefore, also plagued the party in Virginia. As a result, the race for the Democratic nomination in 1969 was a bitter one that ultimately aided the Republican candidate.

Three Democratic candidates vied for the nomination. The Byrd organization's candidate was Lt. Gov. Fred G. Pollard, a staunch conservative. State Senator Henry Howell represented the left wing of the Democratic party. He received support from blacks, labor, and the "little man." Lastly, William C. Battle, whose father had been governor from 1950-54, ran as the representative of the moderate forces. Although Battle had never held elective office, he had been John Kennedy's Virginia campaign manager in 1960, and had served as ambassador to Australia during the Kennedy presidency. Battle's association with Kennedy linked him to the left wing of the Democratic party, while his father's governorship linked him to the Byrd organization. Both ties would prove to be liabilities.

In the July primary, Battle finished first with 38.9 percent, followed by Howell's 37.8 percent and Pollard's 23.3 share. Now Battle faced Howell in a runoff and Governor Godwin came out in support of Battle. With Godwin's help, Battle defeated Howell by a margin of 52.1 percent to 47.5 percent. Disunity became a problem for the Democrats. Many Howell supporters were

angered over Godwin's intervention, as well as disenchanted with the Democratic nominee. The disunity that plagued Virginia Democrats was one of a number of factors that eventually allowed the Virginia G.O.P. to capture the governorship. More important, the Republican party offered an attractive candidate who ran a skillful campaign.

At the state convention in Roanoke on March 1, Republicans again nominated Linwood Holton. He then began what the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* correctly described as "the longest, most vigorous, most elaborate, best organized and most expensive campaign in [Virginia] Republican [party] history."¹⁴⁹ Organization was critical to the development of southern Republicanism. Holton hired a professional campaign manager, Marvin Collins, a 35-year-old self described "political pragmatist" who was a partner in an Austin, Texas, firm that specialized in Republican campaigns.¹⁵⁰ To coordinate the campaign, he also hired John Ritchie, Jr., a Charlottesville attorney.

Unlike in his previous campaign, Holton received professional help from the Republican National Committee. Furthermore, the Virginia G.O.P. was in a much stronger financial position than it had been four years earlier. Whereas Holton had spent only \$80,000 in 1965, in the early stages of the campaign in 1969 he was prepared to spend as much as \$500,000.¹⁵¹ In contrast to the Democratic party's factionalism, the Republican party of Virginia was united.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, August 31, 1969.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Said Republican state chairman Sam Carpenter, "there is not a bit of disunity anywhere in the state Republican party . . . we are very united."¹⁵²

The focus of Holton's platform was the modernization of state government, which depended upon an increase in government spending. Republican candidate for lieutenant governor, State Senator H. Dunlop "Buz" Dawbarn, promised, "when Linwood Holton is elected, we will push for an annual budget, set up a general accounting office in the state, start long range planning, and ask businessmen and others to help make a survey to bring good business to our state government."¹⁵³ Holton's platform also included extensive road construction in the Southwestern part of the state and a nine dollar annual food tax refund per person. For Virginia, the Republican platform offered a stark contrast to the fiscal restraint of the Byrd organization, but, ironically, it also represented a continuation of the programs Governor Godwin had enthusiastically supported over the past four years. Indeed, in his inauguration speech on January 15, 1966, Godwin focused on progress. Godwin stated,

It is my duty as Governor to offer a positive plan of action. This I will do Monday, first in the field of education, then in highways, and in other areas of opportunity and of need, for we must move Virginia forward everywhere.¹⁵⁴

Additional money was also needed for other important state services, which required raising additional revenues. Raising these revenues became Godwin's primary goal for the 1966 General Assembly.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, July 19, 1969.

¹⁵³ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 29, 1969.

¹⁵⁴ Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd, 1945-1966*, 286.

Although municipalities had begun levying local sales taxes in 1964, as of 1966 Virginia still had no general statewide sales tax. Through deft political maneuvering, Godwin persuaded the General Assembly to approve a two percent statewide sales tax, with localities retaining the option to impose local sales tax of an additional one percent. Virginia's urban centers benefitted most from the sales tax, and therefore Holton's 1969 platform was particularly attractive to urban voters, many of whose main concern was continued economic progress. To these voters, Battle's repeated calls during the campaign for fiscal restraint evoked memories of the Byrd organization's pay-as-you-go policies; the same policies that had hindered Virginia's development for far too long. Battle praised fiscal responsibility, and called Holton's platform "totally unresponsive to the needs of Virginia today."¹⁵⁵ According to the Virginia G.O.P., however, the real need of "Virginia today" was two-party competition.

The advantages that two-party competition offered the state became a major theme in 1969. "The purpose of the Republican party," "Buz" Dawbarn said, "is to give the voters of Virginia the choice of a two-party system, where one of them is interested in the good of the state . . . what is good for Virginia is good for the Republican party."¹⁵⁶ The Democratic party, Virginia Republicans argued, had neglected the needs of the state by focusing all of their efforts on maintaining power. The Republican candidates were outspoken on the issue. Dawbarn stated, "their first objective is to maintain power and if that turns out to be good

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, November 3, 1969.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, July 17, 1969.

for the state, all fine and good.”¹⁵⁷ Holton concurred, adding that the Democrats’ attitude had proved detrimental to the state, and that the election of a Republican governor would put an end to the lack of concern in state government. Holton said that real two-party competition would mean that neither party could afford to be laggard in meeting state needs “because its rival will be right there to sound the alarm. That is why the election of a Republican governor is not a party victory, it is a victory for Virginia.”¹⁵⁸ Concentrating on the advantages of two-party competition rather than taking stands on controversial issues, the Virginia Republican party avoided alienating voters.

As a result, no one was certain which end of the political spectrum Holton was on. A lifelong “progressive” who advocated what could only be described as liberal reform for Virginia, Holton was, nonetheless, outspoken in his support of national Republicans, particularly those like President Nixon. Democratic candidate William Battle was himself unsure of Holton’s position. Battle stated, “he [Holton] ran to the left [of the Democratic ticket] four years ago. This time he may do a little hop, skip, and jump off to the right.”¹⁵⁹ Because no critical issues divided the candidates, the most striking feature of the campaign was Holton’s efforts to associate himself with the national Republican party, while associating his opponent with the national Democratic party, particularly the Kennedy family.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, August 22, 1969.

¹⁵⁹ *The Roanoke Times*, August 21, 1969.

As noted in chapter one, Holton pursued a unique strategy of mixing state and national politics. His affiliation with President Nixon was critical to this strategy. Having been the border state coordinator for Nixon during his 1968 campaign, he realized the extent of Nixon's popularity in Virginia. As one observer noted, "Holton ... had studied the Virginia election results for 1968. He reached his own conclusion: this is Nixon country."¹⁶⁰ State G.O.P. chairman Sam Carpenter agreed, stating, "there is tremendous feeling for the Nixon administration in Virginia."¹⁶¹ Holton claimed that Nixon's popularity in Virginia was based on the administration's "moral leadership, its Supreme Court appointments, its proposals to change the welfare program, its reversal of our commitment in Vietnam, the whole tone of things."¹⁶² The G.O.P.'s candidate understood the opportunity this created. As a *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, stated,

this year Holton chose a basic strategy that no other G.O.P. gubernatorial candidate has followed so intensely. He deliberately and emphatically tied himself to the President's coattails, and sought to make the most of the apparent Nixon popularity among conservative Virginians disenchanted with the national Democratic party.¹⁶³

Much of Holton's chance of winning, therefore, depended upon his association with Nixon, just as his ability to stay at the forefront of the Virginia G.O.P. was.

As Holton states,

my association with Nixon, particularly during the period from early 1967 (when I joined the 'Nixon for President Committee') to 1969, when I was elected, was certainly helpful to me. Nixon was very popular in

¹⁶⁰ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 19, 1969.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, July 19, 1969.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, August 21, 1969.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, November 2, 1969.

Virginia, my open support of him as part of his campaign team received very general approbation and Nixon's first year in office had many successes which enhanced his popularity even beyond that which existed when he was elected in 1968.¹⁶⁴

Holton's involvement in the Nixon campaign also helped Holton to stay in touch with Republican party leaders, organize the Virginia G.O.P., and to "stay in the public eye."¹⁶⁵

Holton stressed the advantages that his close ties to a Republican administration could offer the Old Dominion. For Virginia, Holton argued, advances could best be achieved "through a good working relationship with the federal government and the state of Virginia, and that's something Virginians can look forward to with a Republican administration."¹⁶⁶ He claimed he could offer Virginians "advantages no Democrat can match" through his close personal ties with President Nixon. "Never in this century," Holton declared, "has Virginia had a governor who could work in partnership with the president for progress in the state."¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, Holton said his election "would give Virginia a voice in national affairs it has not had."¹⁶⁸

Virginia Democrats tried to make light of Holton's Washington connections. "No person should be elected on the basis of how much he can get from Washington," the Democratic candidate for attorney general, Andrew Miller,

¹⁶⁴ Holton, letter to the author, April 20, 1991.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 13, 1969.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, August 22, 1969.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, August 21, 1969.

argued.¹⁶⁹ "Virginia is going to elect a governor not on the basis of who he knows, but what he stands for," he also maintained.¹⁷⁰ But they were unsuccessful.

Time and again during the campaign, the candidates clashed over Holton's reliance on "outside political figures" to assist in his race. Holton's strategy of tying his campaign to the national Republican party relied heavily on visits to the state by national Republican figures, including Vice President Spiro Agnew, Republican National Chairman Rogers C. B. Morton, Kansas Senator Robert Dole, Kentucky Governor Louie B. Nunn, and California Governor Ronald Reagan. Visiting the state in October, Reagan attacked the Democratic party, claiming it had betrayed the South. "There comes a time," he said, "when a man either has to change principle for party or party for principle."¹⁷¹

The Democratic party responded by attacking the intrusion of "outsiders" into the political affairs of Virginia. "They know nothing of Virginia's problems," Battle said, "they have no more interest in Virginia than a fly-by-night butterfly."¹⁷² Governor Godwin added, "Virginia is not now and never will be in the hands of national politicians."¹⁷³ The Democrats' campaign, Battle also remarked, would not seek outside help. "I think the people of Virginia want a Virginia campaign, and that's the way we're going to run it."¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ *The Roanoke Times*, August 22, 1969.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1969.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, October 23, 1969.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, October 29, 1969

¹⁷⁴ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 21, 1969.

Nonetheless, Battle's connections with the prominent national Democrats became a critical issue in the campaign. As previously noted, Battle had been John Kennedy's Virginia campaign manager in 1960 and had served as ambassador to Australia under Kennedy. He had also supported Adlai Stevenson during Stevenson's first presidential bid in 1952. He had emphasized his connections to prominent Democrats while attempting to win the nomination for governor. It was no wonder, then, that Holton emphasized Battle's connections with the national Democratic party. He was confident that linking Battle in this way would enable him to receive enough crossover votes to win the election.

Indeed, Republican candidates for state office stated over and over again that the national Democratic party had gained control of the state party. "The Virginia Democratic party doesn't exist anymore," Holton argued, "it's the national Democratic party."¹⁷⁵ According to Holton, a "national" Democrat such as Battle would be unfortunate for Virginia, because "the national Democratic party is in a shambles. The party has kicked the South in the teeth since 1952."¹⁷⁶ Richard Obenshain, Republican candidate for attorney general, added, "the Democratic party you and your neighbor knew is gone. The Republican party is the only party that believes in limiting the power and the size of the federal government."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, August 29, 1969.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, October 19, 1969.

¹⁷⁷ *The Roanoke Times*, August 31, 1969.

In response, Battle openly acknowledged his support of Stevenson and Kennedy, but argued that his ideology and that of the national Democratic party were not one and the same. Speaking at a debate, Battle agreed with Holton's assessment of the national Democratic party, but argued that there was hope for the party's future. Battle stated,

it is my party, but I still believe that the national Democratic party is pretty much of a shambles. I think it is absolutely essential for us to work to bring that [national Democratic] party more in line with what our thinking is. I think it is essential that we work to see that the nominees of that party are more acceptable to the people of Virginia.¹⁷⁸

Republicans continued, nevertheless, to stress Battle's affiliation with national Democrats. As a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorial stated,

Holton sought to pin the 'national Democrat' label securely to Battle, thus to link him with a leadership deemed by many conservative Democrats to be too liberal.¹⁷⁹

Holton emphasized Battle's link to the Kennedys, describing Battle as "being pretty much in the Kennedy camp, although he swears there is no Kennedy money."¹⁸⁰ The Virginia Conservative party's candidate, Beverly McDowell, made the same point, calling the Democratic ticket "Kennedy Democrats." At a political debate involving the candidates for governor, McDowell asked rhetorically, "Kennedy Democrats in Virginia? That's as bad as Yankees in Georgia."¹⁸¹ Battle's ideology became the focal point of his candidacy.

¹⁷⁸ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 19, 1969.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, November 5, 1969.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, July 21, 1969.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Holton criticized the Democrats for their lack of vision and creativity, calling it “nothing but lip service and empty slogans.”¹⁸² Although Battle stressed the importance of internal affairs, he spent most of his time on the campaign trail denying his own ideological similarity to national Democrats, while arguing for fiscal restraint. This proved to be a weak position in an economically growing state such as Virginia, which was enthusiastic about further growth. The Kennedy link was equally detrimental in a still politically conservative state. Unlike 1965, Virginia Democrats were hurt, rather than aided, by the positions taken by the national parties.

Indeed, the 1969 gubernatorial race was different from the 1965 race in many respects. In 1965, conservative Democrats deserted the party to form the Virginia Conservative party. In 1969, the Virginia Conservative party split. Although the party nominated McDowell for governor, many party members joined George Wallace’s American Independent party and nominated Dr. William A. Pennington for governor. With the fervor over the Voting Rights Act subsiding, enthusiasm and support for either candidate was scant. This increased Republican chances for victory. Sensing a conservative split similar to that which occurred in 1968, state G.O.P. chairman Sam Carpenter stated, “I hope it [The Virginia Conservative party] will slide into the Chesapeake Bay.”¹⁸³ The Virginia Conservative party and the American Independent party were non-factors in the election; together they garnered less than 2 percent of the total vote.

¹⁸² *The Washington Post*, October 18, 1969.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, July 19, 1969.

The party's demise, however, did not translate into Republican gains in 1969. Of the eleven counties won by the Conservatives in 1965, Battle won eight in 1969, with Holton taking three. The rural areas of the Southside still clung to their Democratic traditionalism, most likely because of Battle's connection to the Byrd organization and Godwin's endorsement. It was in the urban areas that the Virginia G.O.P. made its greatest gains.

Without question, migration aided Holton's efforts in 1969. As Holton has reflected, "there were certainly a substantial number of 'migrants' who participated in Republican party activities in Virginia in the 1960's. These were concentrated in Northern Virginia."¹⁸⁴ He has also stated correctly, "urbanization and economic growth clearly had a significantly helpful effect on the growth of the Republican party during the 1960's."¹⁸⁵

Early in his 1969 campaign, Holton promised, "to concentrate a major part of our campaign on the cities."¹⁸⁶ His efforts were rewarded. Holton did better than any earlier Republican in the urban centers, carrying Northern Virginia by a sizeable margin, sweeping the Richmond suburbs of Chesterfield and Henrico, and running away with the Tidewater suburbs of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, he did well in suburban precincts of Newport News and Hampton. With the exception of Northern Virginia, the urban corridor had been

¹⁸⁴ Holton, letter to the author, April 20, 1991.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *The Roanoke Times*, August 31, 1969.

¹⁸⁷ *The Washington Post*, November 6, 1969.

a "disaster area" for Holton just four years earlier.¹⁸⁸ Throughout Virginia, Holton won 56.5 percent in the suburbs, 54.4 percent in the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, and 50.9 percent in the central cities. Political scientist Larry Sabato attributed Holton's victory, primarily, to the candidate's ability to win large numbers of urban voters.¹⁸⁹

Large numbers of white migrants, most of whom were middle class and upper middle class professionals, were not the only reason for Holton's victory. He received substantial support from blacks. Just as he had done four years earlier, Linwood Holton assured black Virginians that their support was welcome, and that a Republican administration would be responsive to their needs. Although most black organizations supported Battle, including the Peoples Political and Civic League, Inc. and the Concerned Citizens for Norfolk, black support was an integral part of Holton's electoral success in the November election. The state's largest black political organization, the Crusade for Voters, backed Holton. Many blacks who had supported Democratic candidate Henry Howell also switched to Holton. Blacks made up a good proportion of the newly formed "Democrats for Holton-Reynolds-Miller." Some probably agreed with Dr. Milton Reid, a Norfolk minister and civil rights leader who had been an active Howell supporter. The "Holton-Reynolds-Miller trio," Reid argued, "would be more responsive to the needs and concerns of the people in general and the neglected

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Larry Sabato, *Virginia Votes, 1969-1974* (Charlottesville: Institute of Government, Univ. of Virginia, 1976), 16.

black community in particular.”¹⁹⁰ The primary reason that they believed that Holton would be more responsive to their “needs” was that anything, except for the Virginia Conservative party, would be more welcomed by blacks than the Byrd machine. It seems unlikely that blacks possessed a strong enthusiasm for Republicanism in Virginia. Democratic nominees for lieutenant governor and attorney general, both of whom had no connections to the Byrd machine, carried roughly 92 percent of the black vote (based on an analysis of selected precincts by Professor Ralph Eisenberg.)¹⁹¹

Many blacks, therefore, saw the election of a Republican as an opportunity to forever rid the state of the Byrd organization. At one Norfolk debate, blacks paraded outside the building with signs reading “Bury the Byrd Machine” and “Bury de (sic) Byrd.”¹⁹² Political commentator Helen Dewar explained the reasoning behind the black support. Dewar wrote,

both the AFL-CIO and the Crusade, acknowledging no great political passion for Holton or his party, endorsed him largely on the theory--valid or not--that to defeat Battle and drive the Democratic party out of power was to ‘kill the Byrd Machine,’ or at least provide a fitting eulogy.¹⁹³

Holton carried the black precincts in Richmond and won 40 percent of the black precincts in Roanoke. Although the black vote was not as critical as it had been in 1965, it clearly was one of many factors that enabled a Republican candidate to be elected governor of Virginia.

¹⁹⁰ *The Roanoke Times*, August 30, 1969.

¹⁹¹ Reg Murphy and Hal Gulliver, *The Southern Strategy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), 236.

¹⁹² *The Washington Post*, October 26, 1969.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, October 16, 1969.

Defections from the Democratic party were also critical. According to *The Washington Post*, most defectors to Holton were people who, in the past, voted Republican in presidential elections but Democratic in state elections.¹⁹⁴ Most of the people, the *Post* argued, were 30-40 year olds afraid of being too closely identified to the national Democratic party. Holton agrees, adding that many were also interested in two-party competition. He states,

these efforts were supported also by a lot of native Virginians who were interested in an alternative to the liberal Democratic candidates (nationally), but these folks still considered themselves as Democrats. Similarly, a large number of Independents and Democrats among native Virginians supported Republican candidates because they hoped to help create a true two party system in the state.¹⁹⁵

These voters, many of whom had business interests, were a prime source of financial support. Holton continues, "the 'big money' (a total of 750,000!) came from the Richmond area -- from the 'new Republicans' who were former Byrd Democrats."¹⁹⁶ Many of these Democrats were former supporters of Fred Pollard.

Holton also received support from Howell backers. As a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorial noted,

the Democratic primary struggle left some bitterness among both Pollard and Howell supporters. Pollard and Howell honored their pledges to support their party's gubernatorial nominee, but some Richmond area conservatives who had supported Pollard defected to the entire Republican ticket, and some pro-Howell groups, including Negro and union labor votes, defected to Holton.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, October 11, 1969.

¹⁹⁵ Holton, letter to the author, April 20, 1991.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 5, 1969.

Despite the large numbers of defections, many observers saw little differences in the two candidates. Although Virginia's daily newspapers endorsed Battle by a ratio of nearly four to one, the state's largest paper, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, offered no endorsement. The paper claimed there was no significant differences between the two candidates, either personally or on the issues. Also, the paper was uncertain of the political ramifications of a victory by either man. With little difference between the candidates, national political figures and affairs were sure to play a greater than usual role in determining the election's outcome. The Republicans were optimistic that this was in their favor.

On October 16, G.O.P. national chairman Rogers C. B. Morton, campaigning in Virginia, predicted a Holton victory. "This is not a political freak or fluke," Morton claimed, "but the beginning of a renaissance. It is a sense of maturity that is coming to this great state and nation."¹⁹⁸ In the waning days of the campaign, however, it appeared that Holton's efforts would be unsuccessful. Professional public opinion polls commissioned by the Republicans in June and August both showed Battle leading Holton. A poll taken October 15 by Oliver Quayle and Co. of New York, one of the best known political polling organizations in the country, concurred with previous polls. The Quayle poll showed Battle leading Holton 46 percent to 37 percent, with 15 percent "not sure."¹⁹⁹ Columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak stated, "Holton's task, if not impossible, is formidable. His effort to combine the country club and the

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, October 17, 1969.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Negro slums against the county court house, as Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower did nearly two decades ago, seems to be falling slightly short."²⁰⁰ With 15 percent of the electorate "not sure," however, there was still sufficient time for Holton to make one last surge. For this, he would receive some notable help.

President Nixon's announcement that he would visit the state to campaign for Holton came as no surprise. There had been tremendous speculation that Nixon would do so for months and, when questioned about the possibility, Holton was optimistic. As a private citizen in 1965, Nixon had campaigned for Holton, and for the national leadership to appear to help raise money for candidates was "customary," said Holton.²⁰¹ Furthermore, Nixon had made efforts throughout the summer to give Holton needed attention. On July 20, Holton received an invitation from President Nixon to attend special religious services at the White House on account of the Apollo landing. Following the astronauts' return, Nixon invited Holton and his wife to a dinner honoring them in Los Angeles. Although a Nixon trip to the Old Dominion seemed likely, Battle seemed unworried, remarking that, "it is much easier for a president to transfer his weakness to a candidate rather than his strength."²⁰² But the Virginia G.O.P. realized the impact that an appearance by the president could have on the governor's race. "The President carried the state by 140,000," Holton said, "and he's substantially more popular than he was the day he was elected."²⁰³

²⁰⁰ *The Washington Post*, October 22, 1969.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, October 23, 1969.

²⁰² *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 21, 1969.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

On October 28, the President and an elated Holton appeared before an audience of 5,000 people at the Salem-Roanoke Valley Civic Center. Calling Holton "a man for the future of Virginia," Nixon urged the state to "set the example for the whole Southland by making two party government a reality."²⁰⁴ Nixon's visit to Virginia was the culmination of Holton's "Nixon strategy," that of presenting himself as a "national Republican," in agreement with the policies of a president who was popular with the majority of Virginians. As a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorial stated,

the Nixon-Agnew visitations were calculated as living demonstrations of the basic Holton strategy, to present himself as the Virginia extension of Nixon-style Republicanism and thus capitalize on the President's apparent popularity in Virginia.²⁰⁵

President Nixon's visit was critical to Holton's election bid. Holton reflects,

the Nixon visit itself was a most important event; it occurred one week before the election. The momentum had been building in my favor throughout the campaign. That rally attended by President Nixon in Salem was the best political rally I have ever attended. Excitement was extremely high. Unquestionably, that 'fever' spread and enabled my campaign to 'peak out' exactly on election day.²⁰⁶

While in Virginia, Nixon also made several one-minute television spots for Holton, which Holton's campaign staff broadcast on stations in four major areas two hours before a nationally televised presidential address concerning the war in Vietnam.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ *The Washington Post*, October 29, 1969.

²⁰⁵ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 4, 1969.

²⁰⁶ Holton, letter to the author, April 20, 1991.

²⁰⁷ *The Washington Post*, November 4, 1969.

Holton expressed confidence as the election drew close, remarking that “the national Democratic party can no longer take any Southern state for granted. The days when a Democratic primary winner was tantamount to election are gone with the wind.”²⁰⁸ Despite the polls, Holton predicted victory. “We’ll take it because Virginians want something other than what they have always had. And all they’ve ever had is Democrats.”²⁰⁹ He was right on both counts. Holton succeeded in convincing a majority of Virginia voters that the stagnation of the past could at last be forgotten with the election of a Republican governor. Holton reflects, “people were fed up with the neglect of public schools particularly ... they wanted a change.”²¹⁰

As it became apparent that Holton had defeated Battle, President Nixon called to offer congratulations and to invite Holton to the White House for lunch the following day. Holton accepted the invitation. One hour after Nixon’s phone call, Battle sent a telegram of congratulations to Holton. Shortly thereafter he and his wife appeared at the Holton victory celebration at the Hotel John Marshall to congratulate the winner in person. The two shook hands, and Battle was heard to say “the best to you, old boy, the best to you.”²¹¹ Something that only ten years earlier had seemed impossible was now reality. Virginia had elected a Republican governor. The final vote showed Holton with 52.5 percent to Battle’s share of 45.4 percent.

²⁰⁸ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 22, 1969.

²⁰⁹ Murphy and Gulliver, *The Southern Strategy*, 233.

²¹⁰ Holton, letter to the author, April 20, 1991.

²¹¹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 5, 1969.

Holton's campaign tactic of promising change and progress had been welcomed by voters, and his relationship with a popular president had given him the crossover support he needed in the last days of a tight race. This coalition of conservatives, liberals, blacks, and union labor was too much to overcome. As the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* noted, "in Southside Virginia he [Holton] was supported by some voters who found him more conservative than Battle, while in Northern Virginia, he was supported by some voters who found him more liberal."²¹² As Governor Godwin sadly reflected, "he was cut from both sides."²¹³

More importantly, Holton's victory can be attributed to his association with President Nixon and the perceptions of the national parties. As one observer stated,

there was a 'silent majority' -- Nixon's 'silent majority,' that identified Holton with the national administration's drive for order and stability, a change, in essence, from the problems associated in the minds of many citizens with national Democratic administrations.²¹⁴

The importance of Nixon's visit to the state cannot be underestimated; in fact, it was a crucial factor in a close race. As one observer said, "both Democrats and Republicans yesterday suggested that the Nixon visit was perhaps the pivotal point in the campaign."²¹⁵

The gubernatorial election in Virginia was only the beginning of a political realignment in the state. With the election of Linwood Holton, Republicanism

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*, November 6, 1969.

²¹⁴ *The Washington Post*, November 6, 1969.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

in Virginia was a reality. Holton proclaimed, "we are seeing a realignment of parties in Virginia . . . the door to the Republican party is open . . . if we can do anything to relieve their [Democrats] insomnia, we'll be glad to do so."²¹⁶

Politics in the Old Dominion, it seemed, had been forever changed. As an astute observer for the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* concluded, "conceivably, the pattern of voting will never again be what it was prior to Nov. 4, 1969."²¹⁷

²¹⁶ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 6, 1969.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, November 5, 1969.

CONCLUSION

Before the 1969 election, a reporter asked a Danville farmer if he planned to vote for the Republican candidate for governor. "Well I don't know," the farmer replied. "Been a Democrat a long time. But, I'm shore tempted. What those damn [Virginia] Democrats have done is gone down Lyndon Johnson's road."²¹⁸

Certainly, the election of a Republican governor was, in large part, due to the dissatisfaction many former Democrats felt with the national Democratic party. In a memo prepared for the White House, Kevin Phillips assessed the election. He attributed Holton's victory almost entirely to crossover voting by conservative Democrats.

Yet this was not the whole story. Although crossover voting was an important factor in Virginia's gubernatorial election (and in the development of the Republican party throughout the South), Holton's victory had other sources. Compared to the rest of the South, Virginia had always contained a relatively

²¹⁸ *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1969.

large number of Republicans, and the demographic changes that occurred in the South were especially apparent in Virginia. Furthermore, Holton was a skillful campaigner who offered a moderate, yet progressive, platform. Black support was also critical to Holton's victory. Lastly, Holton benefitted from his close personal relationship with President Nixon.

A fair amount of analysis of the 1969 election has emerged in the literature concerning southern politics. In *The Two-Party South*, Alexander Lamis rightly attributes much of the Republican party's success to the breakdown of the Byrd organization. This, he argues, was due to the influx of black voters, who consistently voted for the Byrd organization's opponent, therefore creating true competition in the Democratic primary. The subsequent factionalism resulted in the realization of Virginia Republicans that the dominance which the Democratic party had maintained was fading. This encouraged the G.O.P. to make serious efforts to win. Lamis thus attributes Holton's victory in large part to Democratic dissension. He therefore concurs with much of Larry Sabato's analysis.

Two of the best studies of the 1969 gubernatorial election are found in *Virginia Government and Politics* by Thomas R. Morris and Larry Sabato, and *Virginia Votes, 1969-1974*, by Larry Sabato. Sabato acknowledges several reasons for Holton's support (as well as the support Republican candidates received in subsequent elections). Among these was the state Democratic party aligning itself with the national Democratic party. Sabato also supports the "crossover" theory, but he also correctly credits Nixon's visit, black support, and

the increased numbers of white-collar professionals as being important factors in Holton's success.

As Sabato points out, Democratic efforts in Virginia were hindered by the fact that black registration was usually low in the Old Dominion, labor unions were notoriously weak, and white ethnic groups, which normally supported Democrats, did not constitute a large bloc in Virginia's electorate. All of these facts helped in the development of the G.O.P. in Virginia.

The election of Linwood Holton, nevertheless, was unique. Although he campaigned against the national Democratic party's policies and accused his opponent of favoring liberalism, he was ultimately supported by many who backed these very policies and rejected Holton's characterization of his opponent as a liberal. Also, Holton owed much of his success to black voters, despite the fact that blacks were the Democrats' strongest supporters in the South by the end of the decade. Lastly, although the Democratic party's position in the South was damaged by its advocacy of extensive domestic spending, the Democratic candidate for governor rejected this policy, while Holton strongly encouraged it. Holton, nonetheless, won the support of many fiscally conservative Virginians.

Although Holton's election in 1969 was a major breakthrough for the G.O.P., the party remained the minority party in Virginia. Republican candidates for lieutenant governor and attorney general were both soundly defeated, and Democrats retained overwhelming control of the state legislature. Holton's victory, nevertheless, was the beginning of a true two-party system in the Old Dominion.

Holton completed his term in 1974. But the Republican party continued to gain in strength and support throughout the 1970's. In fact, Virginia was the only state which did not elect a Democrat to the governorship or U. S. Senate from 1966 to 1981. It should be noted, however, that Independent Senator Harry Byrd, Jr. was strongly affiliated with and involved in Democratic party politics. Virginians supported Republican presidential candidates in 1972 and 1976, and Republican gubernatorial candidates were victorious in 1973 and 1977. So many Virginians continued to defect from the Democratic party that, in 1973, Richard Obenshain was elected Republican state chairman on a platform to establish a coalition of Republicans and former Byrd Democrats. The Democratic party suffered from such factionalism that the party offered no gubernatorial candidate in the election that year. Ex-Governor Mills Godwin was elected in 1973, defeating Henry Howell, who ran as an Independent. Godwin had become a Republican.

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