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## Chapter 6 The Formation of the New Right

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## The Formation of the New Right

“THE AMERICAN RIGHT WING is addicted to letter-writing.” In 1977, the AFL-CIO issued two special reports on the emergence of conservatism in US politics with particular emphasis on Richard Viguerie’s direct mail fundraising. Pointing to the impact of the 1974 Amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA), the report noted that the “master fundraiser” was parlaying the legal limitation on individual campaign contributions into “a big boom for New Right fund-raising efforts.” The labor union’s reports spelled out how Viguerie and other conservatives elaborately amassed funds with direct mail, which was premised on big data, ideological conflict, and offensive rhetoric. Conservative political consultants identified supporters from their computerized mailing lists of approximately ten million potential contributors. The right-wing messengers dispatched solicitation letters under the guise of an official congressional mailing, instead of using the names of generally unknown organizations or activists, so that voters took the message more seriously. The rhetoric of conservative appeals was usually threatening, stirring up emotions of receivers. “Their language is always extreme, literally shrieking: Doomsday is imminent, right around the corner,” the AFL-CIO report mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

By the middle of the 1970s, liberals became aware that a key reason for the success of conservative politics was the “ability of the right to establish control over the nation’s intellectual agenda” through not only “writing and research” but also “advertising and direct mail.”<sup>2</sup> A new generation of conservative activists were able to sell their ideology and political candidates by means of computerized direct mail more effectively than their counterparts. As right-wing mail campaigns vehemently attacked Democrats and labor unions throughout the 1970s, liberals realized that they faced conservatives distinctive from right-wingers of a decade earlier. AFL-CIO President George Meany pointed out the “hate merchants of the ’70s” who were “not little old ladies in tennis shoes.” The 1970s conservative activists were instead “Madison Avenue types, trained in mass psychology and propaganda techniques, who have a computerized mailing list, a

printing press and a government-subsidized mailing permit.”<sup>3</sup> Conservative direct mail was unpleasant even to many Republicans. Several Republican leaders bitterly complained that newly emergent conservative political action groups were “draining money from the GOP” and giving the funds to right-wingers who were ideologically pure with little chance of winning.<sup>4</sup> Conservative direct mail carved out political niches and raised vast amounts of money from small contributors, which was threatening to both liberal Democrats and moderate Republicans.

This chapter concerns the “New Right,” which created networks of conservative politicians and organizations during the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> The new conservatism built up a coalition of diverse political forces to turn American politics rightward, and ideological direct mail defined the movement. They relied on direct mail for fundraising and advertising, which incited negative emotions such as fear, anger, and anxiety by inflaming hostilities toward liberals and labor unions. At the same time, the New Right was a pragmatic movement as it made gains in new constituencies over the years. Viguerie’s direct mail successfully courted conservative Democrats and blue-collar Americans, who were discontented with political, economic, and cultural changes from the 1960s. During the 1970s when antielite populism rippled around the nation, the New Right movement carried out campaigns to defeat liberal Democrats and moderate Republicans in elections, assisting to bring about the Reagan Revolution in 1980.<sup>6</sup>

The basic strategy of the New Right was to capitalize on people’s discontent in the wake of the sixties by stirring up offensive emotions through social issues. “The 1950s-style conservatives,” a New Right figure called Paul Weyrich noted, did not “understand the politics of the average person.” He emphasized that the New Right movement was “more concerned with family, right-to-life, schools, neighborhoods.”<sup>7</sup> Instead of cohesive political issues, such as anticommunism in the early Cold War era, New Right activists narrowed in on single issues because computerized direct mail could identify those concerned with each issue. However, as a journalist succinctly observed, the New Right dealt with not only social issues, including abortion, gun control, and the Equal Rights Amendment, but also “emotional issues” that were not relevant with daily lives but generated fierce emotion, such as vehement patriotism and fears, among conservative Americans.<sup>8</sup> As Viguerie and other conservatives well understood that emphasizing emotional issues effectively raised funds, “emotionalism” characterized the New Right movement. “[E]motionalism, not facts, sway the Hill votes,” Weyrich said.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, Senator George McGovern stressed the characteristics when he debated the New Right with *National Review* publisher William A. Rusher at

Purdue University. McGovern described the New Right as “extremist,” “radical,” and “negative,” charging it with “substituting emotionalism for common sense.” Like Madison Avenue advertising agents who waged emotional and offensive campaigns, New Right activists utilized resentments for raising funds.<sup>10</sup>

A typical example of such emotional issues for the 1970s New Right was the Panama Canal. After a series of negotiations between the United States and Panama, the Panama Canal treaties put an end to US control of the Canal Zone. Whereas the ratification of the treaties never mattered to most of Americans in the late 1970s, the New Right implemented massive antitreaties drives by claiming that the withdrawal of the United States from the Panama Canal would bring a serious threat to American pride and national security. This chapter closely scrutinizes the process by which the New Right attempted to place the Panama Canal in the foreground of politics because it evidently demonstrates how the New Right movement used narrowly focused, narrowly minded single issues for appealing to public opinion. Despite the failure to block the ratification, the antitreaties campaign highlighted the New Right’s strategic use of irrationality as the movement increasingly emerged with their direct mailings that included misinformation, emotionalism, and populism.

The road to the conservative ascendancy was accompanied by political conflicts within the American right-wing movement. The New Right was frequently at odds not only with the Republican establishment, but also with conservative organizations that had been active since the 1950s and 1960s. Even prominent conservative politicians such as Ronald Reagan were not the perfect allies for the New Right. While many liberals and conservatives criticized the New Right for its extreme ideology and inconsistent arguments, over the course of the 1970s the New Right marshaled direct mail and modern technologies to grow and prosper. Yet by the end of the decade, many Americans, including AFL-CIO leader Meany, realized that a once laughable farce had become the driving force behind the transformation of American politics.

### The Birth of the New Right

One morning in August 1974, Richard Viguerie turned on his television to find out that the new president, Gerald Ford, had named Nelson Rockefeller as his vice president. For conservatives, Rockefeller was their last choice. In Viguerie’s words, the moderate Republican represented “the Eastern Liberal Establishment” of the Republican Party. Rockefeller had persuaded Richard Nixon to agree on the Pact of Fifth Avenue placing a liberal stamp on the Republican

platform in 1960, and furthermore, he had strongly challenged Barry Goldwater during the GOP primaries in the 1964 election.<sup>11</sup> Viguerie believed that Rockefeller was the leader of the liberal bloc of the Republican Party who had stymied conservatives' agenda for years. In *The Right Report*, the newsletter issued by the Richard A. Viguerie Co. (RAVCO), a writer mentioned that Rockefeller's nomination outraged many conservatives. "Most 'responsible' conservatives, especially William F. Buckley, Jr. . . . have rejected the conspiracy theory. . . . However, the nomination of Nelson Rockefeller as Vice President by President Gerald Ford has shocked some conservatives and even liberals into reexamining the conspiracy theory."<sup>12</sup>

The announcement of the new vice president marked the formation of the New Right in 1974. Viguerie immediately made calls to invite fourteen conservative friends to dinner the next night to discuss how to prevent Rockefeller's nomination. Although they failed to stop Rockefeller from becoming vice president, these conservatives, including political activists, Capitol Hill aides, journalists, and attorneys, became the core members of the new right-wing network.<sup>13</sup> Viguerie raised funds for several organizations established by his colleagues such as Paul Weyrich, Howard Phillips, and Terry Dolan, while also connecting with allies in Congress including Republican Representative Phil Crane and Senators Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond. New Right activists and politicians on Capitol Hill reorganized conservatism from the top down by reaching out to the "grassroots" via media.

A central figure of the New Right was Paul Weyrich. Born in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1942, he grew up in a blue-collar neighborhood. His father had migrated from Germany in the 1920s, firing the boilers at St. Mary's Catholic Hospital where he met and married a nurse of Norwegian descent. Paul was originally a Roman Catholic, but he switched to the Byzantine Rite Roman Catholic Church in response to liturgical reforms enacted by the Second Vatican Council. Influenced by his parents and by the ideal of Senator Robert Taft, young Weyrich was leaning to a conservatism that stressed religion and tradition. When the US Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional for state officials to sponsor prayer in public schools in 1962, Weyrich attempted to protest the decision. He called on Claude Jasper, the Republican state chairman in Wisconsin, to make a statement on the issue of school prayer, but Jasper refused. Despite his failure to foster widespread protest, the case had a great impact on the political life of Weyrich, directing him toward social conservatism.<sup>14</sup>

Weyrich began his career in journalism. While attending the University of Wisconsin, Racine, Weyrich worked part-time at the radio station WLIP and

also for the *Milwaukee Sentinel* from 1963 to 1964. When he was working as a news reporter, Weyrich confirmed his political identity as a conservative. He was a fervent supporter of Goldwater during the 1964 presidential election. After moving to Denver, Colorado, to work as a news director for the radio station KQXI, Weyrich encountered Senator Gordon Allott who invited the young journalist to Capitol Hill. During the six years he worked for Senator Allott, Weyrich gained access to political sources in Washington, socializing with other conservatives such as syndicated columnist George F. Will and Democratic Congressman William M. Colmer.<sup>15</sup>

Weyrich emerged as a prominent conservative organizer in the Washington Beltway during the 1970s. For example, in 1973 when he was special assistant to Republican Senator Carl Curtis of Nebraska, Weyrich along with Edward Feulner and conservative Representative Phil Crane established the Republican Study Committee. As the counterpart to the liberal Wednesday Group, the committee analyzed bills and issues, formulated electoral strategy, and refined political ideas. The Republican Study Committee of Weyrich organized about seventy members, including thirty of forty-four Republicans first elected in the 1972 elections. Observing that several conservatives entered national politics, but were more poorly connected with colleagues than liberal politicians, Weyrich played a role in supporting conservative lawmakers in DC.<sup>16</sup>

Weyrich's activities in Washington accelerated with financial aid from Joseph Coors, the beer magnate and conservative stalwart in Colorado. In 1966, Coors won a statewide election for regent at the University of Colorado, where he cracked down on student protesters on the campus and financed a conservative student newspaper. Some regarded Coors as a fanatical anticommunist because he supported the John Birch Society and circulated an article from the *American Opinion*, the JBS's magazine, to other regents. Weyrich met Coors at the 1968 Republican National Convention, which Coors attended as a Colorado delegate endorsing the candidacy of Ronald Reagan.<sup>17</sup>

As an ally in the business community, Coors established the centers of his activism in Washington, particularly the Heritage Foundation and the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (CSFC). Coors envisioned the Heritage Foundation, a tax-exempt think tank, to serve as the conservative equivalent to the Brookings Institution. With Coors offering the seed money to the foundation in 1973, and Weyrich as the first president, the Heritage Foundation began to assemble conservative intellectuals. The Heritage Foundation would later grow into a model for other conservative research institutions, influencing Reagan and other presidential administrations' policies by the 1980s.

The CSFC was a conservative political action committee established in southeast Washington. Funded by several wealthy conservative businesspeople, including \$1,000 from Colonel Harland Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken and \$5,000 from Coors and his relatives, the CSFC was created, in the words of Weyrich, "to elect conservatives."<sup>18</sup> Under the direction of Weyrich, the CSFC raised funds and contributed to conservative candidates across the nation to turn American politics to the right. Coors also poured his money into several other conservative groups, such as Television News, Inc. in New York, Mid-western Industries, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Committee of Nine, the National Federation of Independent Businesses, and the House Republican Study Committee.<sup>19</sup>

Howard Phillips was another leading New Right activist. A Jewish Bostonian, he was a Harvard graduate and one of the founding members of Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). Like congressional staffer Weyrich, Phillips began his political career on Capitol Hill, serving as an assistant to the chairman of the Republican National Committee, and later worked for the Nixon administration. As Phillips was frustrated with the Office of Economic Opportunity, established as part of Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty, he left the Nixon administration and joined Viguerie in organizing the Conservatives for the Resignation of the President. In 1974, with the assistance of conservative Republican Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, Phillips founded the Conservative Caucus that aimed to create "a conservative establishment" in the United States by supporting the election of conservative candidates. The founding statement of the caucus stressed social issues such as the "right to life," the "right of parents to define the conditions and content of their children's education," and the "freedom of individuals to pray to God."<sup>20</sup>

Morton Blackwell was a young conservative activist closely working with Viguerie. Raised in the countryside of Louisiana, he studied chemical engineering at Louisiana State University in the early 1960s. After he read a *Newsweek* article about Goldwater in October 1958, he began to devote himself to conservative politics and became a Republican. Blackwell cofounded a college Republican organization at LSU when the overwhelming majority of the student body were Democrats. He attended the 1964 Republican National Convention as the youngest delegate, and Blackwell's activism elevated him to the executive directorship of the College Republican National Committee in Washington, DC, in 1965. Blackwell was hired by Viguerie in 1972 and worked for him for seven years. While working as an editor of Viguerie's publication, he was well-known as a youth organizer in the New Right circle after 1979 when he established the

Leadership Institute to train young conservative journalists, policy makers, and political strategists.<sup>21</sup>

Terry Dolan, twenty-three in 1974, also played a key role in New Right politics. A YAF lawyer, Dolan formed the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC), which followed the model of the American Medical Association. Using Viguerie's computerized lists, Dolan's NCPAC raised millions over the course of the 1970s. While Dolan was enormously dedicated to the election of conservative candidates in many congressional districts, he was the most controversial leader of the New Right movement. He devoted the NCPAC to defeating liberals in any possible way, ranging from slander and blackmail, to attacks on their private life.<sup>22</sup> Even when Dolan campaigned to defeat a liberal candidate in the 1977 Virginia gubernatorial election, John Dalton, the Republican candidate, denounced Dolan for his campaign and disassociated himself with the New Right. Dolan symbolized the keys to the success of the New Right: fear and anger. A conservative journalist recalled Dolan's methodology of direct mail fundraising:

As Terry Dolan of the National Conservative Political Action Committee told me, his organization's fund-raising letters try to "make them angry" and "stir up hostilities." The "shriller you are," he said, the easier it is to raise funds. "That's the nature of our beast," he explained. The fund-raising letters of the New Right groups depict a world gone haywire, with liberal villains poised to destroy the American Way of Life.<sup>23</sup>

The rise of new right-wing groups was nothing new by the 1970s. But the newness of the 1970s New Right lay in their efficiency in attracting funds from small contributors. Prominent journalist Alan Ehrenhalt pointed out that the "important factor in the current 'new conservatism' is money."<sup>24</sup> In this sense, the New Right groups revolved around Viguerie's consulting firm, then many journalists and pundits paid attention to his direct mail, inquiring into the core of the newly emerging conservative movement. "In the rapidly evolving and growing nether world of conservative politics," another journalist observed, "a 'New Right' is emerging and Richard A. Viguerie is its godfather," adding that it was "difficult for other candidates to match."<sup>25</sup> Wyatt Stewart, a fundraiser for the Republican Party and former RAVCO executive, noted that Viguerie "established his own ball game" by wielding financial influence over the New Right organizations. "Without him, they don't exist," Stewart said. The NCPAC of Dolan, for example, was so dependent on the RAVCO that the organization gained approximately 90 percent of its funds from Viguerie.<sup>26</sup>



With his mailing lists and sophisticated computerized direct mail technique, Viguerie's fundraising was unrivaled in the 1970s. Conservative journalist Alan Crawford explained in detail how Viguerie's empire worked in the mid-1970s. Crawford was the first assistant editor of *Conservative Digest*, the magazine published by Richard Viguerie, while working on the editorial staffs of *Human Events* and YAF's *New Guard*, and as a speechwriter for Senate James Buckley of New York. The former associate described how the "virtuoso in the advertising medium" played a crucial role in the conservative movement. From his company with a staff of 250 nonunion employees in Falls Church, Virginia, Viguerie mailed out 50 million appeals every year from 250 mailing lists including the information of 10 million Americans. The RAVCO's client list was also growing. He raised \$6 million for George Wallace from 1974 to 1976. Other clients were political and religious right-wing organizations such as the National Rifle Association, Conservative Books for Christian Leaders, and No Amnesty for Deserters.<sup>27</sup>

Viguerie's direct mail financially supported and delineated those New Right groups, drawing a line from the old style of conservative activism. The ideology of the New Right was actually almost identical with the Old Right, both of which challenged the growth of federal government, interference with the personal enterprise system, and liberal permissiveness. Old Right groups, including *National Review*, YAF, and the American Conservative Union (ACU), and the New Right had the nearly complete overlap in their lists of candidates to support in elections. However, there were clear differences between the two conservative factions in tactics and strategy. M. Stanton Evans, a founding member of YAF and chairman of the ACU in 1977, compared the Old and New Right by saying that the "real difference between the two elements is fund raising."<sup>28</sup> Viguerie's capacity to amass large amounts of small contributions was obvious. When the Conservative Victory Fund, an affiliate of the ACU, played a central role in fundraising in the 1974 congressional elections, national conservative organizations raised about \$250,000. However, in 1976 when Viguerie and the New Right actively raised funds, conservatives collected about \$3.5 million.<sup>29</sup> The emergence of the New Right's fundraising caused some troubles with Old Right groups in the 1976 elections. "It's tougher to raise money this year," said Becky Norton, executive director of the Conservative Victory Fund in 1976. As the RAVCO and its associates raised and spent overwhelming amounts of money, conventional right-wing organizations attracted limited funds and felt that they were "taking a back seat to these other groups."<sup>30</sup>

The issue of party loyalty also contrasted the Old and New Right. While conservatives since the 1950s had been close to the Republican Party and worked

with Republicans, New Right activists frequently endorsed conservative Democrats. “The old right does not like to associate themselves with Democrats,” Viguerie noted. “They just can’t identify themselves with Democrats, which I think is important for conservatives,” he added.<sup>31</sup> After he raised funds for the Wallace campaign in the 1972 presidential campaign, Viguerie’s mailing lists increasingly grew with many Democrats filling his computers. Tom Winter, editor of *Human Events* and a vice chairman of the ACU, believed that “most of the people on Viguerie’s lists . . . are Democrats.”<sup>32</sup> The New Right placed the top priority more on conservative causes, supporting and financing candidates whether they were Republicans or Democrats. As the Trends Analyses Division of the American Jewish Committee stated, “[loyalty] to issues take precedence over loyalty of political parties” for the New Right.<sup>33</sup>

The ability to raise money, the importance of social issues, and the lack of party loyalty led the New Right to new relationships with business and blue-collar workers. Whereas several Old Right organizations had been financed by large contributors and built a close relationship with big business, most of the New Right organizations did not work so intimately with the business and industrial political action committees. It was partly because the New Right was able to draw money for themselves, but also because antielitism distanced New Right activists from business magnates with the notable exception of Joseph Coors. In his book *The Establishment vs. The People*, Viguerie demonstrated his hatred against something big including big government, big labor unions, big media, as well as big business. Viguerie claimed that business magnates, such as Rockefeller, Ford, and Carnegie, constructed a “system of government monopolies that would prevent the untimely rise of the ‘little guy,’” and also blamed big banks for making “big profits for the insiders at the expense of everyone else.” Viguerie criticized the intimate relationship between the government and big businesses in favor of a capitalism for ordinary Americans. Although the New Right movement endorsed business’s agenda, including low taxes, reduced regulations, and antiunionism, it used the language against business giants.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, the New Right approached the working class to form a new political coalition. New Right activists were never hesitant to reach out to Democrats if the voters could be interested in conservative causes. They even supported an activist federal government in terms of economic issues so that the New Right activists could construct a constituency that contained blue-collar workers and ethnic groups who shared conservative values. Although Viguerie emphasized that he believed in economic conservatism, such as *laissez-fair* and minimum government interference, he mentioned that Americans needed to use

the federal government to stimulate the economy. Viguierie stated that he was able to be friendly to federal government in order to seize power in election. "I'm willing to compromise to come to power," he said.<sup>35</sup>

There have been controversies among pundits and researchers over the nature of the New Right. Kevin Phillips, a former 1968 Nixon campaign staffer credited with the "southern strategy" and unofficial theorist of the New Right, highlighted the populism of the new conservative activists. "It's inaccurate to call the New Right truly 'conservative,'" Phillips said. "On the contrary, it represents traditionally populist constituencies, espouses anti-establishment politics, focuses on lower-middle-class social, cultural and nationalist themes, and utilizes organizational tactics of the sort associated with past populist-radical movements here and abroad."<sup>36</sup> Placing the New Right in the tradition of American populism, Phillips also wrote that "the 'New Right' descends not from Hamilton and Taft but from Andrew Jackson, William Jennings Bryan, Franklin Roosevelt, Truman and Wallace."<sup>37</sup> The populist impulses created the protean and contradictory characteristics of the New Right, extending to southern Democrats and blue-collar workers.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, conservative journalist Alan Crawford stressed that the New Right was radical populism. Drawing on Richard Hofstadter's concept of "entrepreneurial radicalism," Crawford held that American populism was not that of the peasants because North American had no European-style class structure. But American populism, he went on, generated from a class of commercial farmers who lived in a world where a bustling capitalist life was coupled with a small-town way of life. According to Crawford, the New Right of the 1970s was a neopopulist movement in the American tradition. Raising millions of dollars in small donations from housewives and blue-collar workers, the newly emerging conservatives fanned class hostility among lower-middle-class Americans. Lacking the intellectual backbone and philosophical discipline, the 1970s conservatives fed on insecurity, discontent, and backlash politics of the "average" Americans. The New Right was "anything but conservative," Crawford concluded.<sup>39</sup>

If the New Right was analyzed as populism, it was not surprising that the New Right activists and other observers regarded the New Right as a "grass-roots" movement. Weyrich, for instance, asserted that while the Old Right had been engaged in political education, New Right activists aimed at developing political action. He claimed that the New Right pursued "building a grass roots base of activists and contributors who would constitute a participatory majority to achieve the election of conservative leaders and the implementation of conservative policy."<sup>40</sup> Direct mail, a medium collecting small contributions from

many citizens, also colored the New Right as a grassroots movement. When many observers understood that the power of the New Right lay in “grass-roots mailings” in the 1970s, they saw the New Right force as a movement building on the large base of grassroots discontents.<sup>41</sup>

Despite their grassroots aspiration, the grassroots nature of the New Right was dubious. As historian Allan Lichtman maintained, most New Right figures were active inside the Beltway, forming study groups and political action committees for an echelon of conservative activists and legislators. The New Right attempted to make an alliance with blue-collar workers, but they did not socialize with them at union halls. The conservative activists rallied conservative movements in electoral campaigns yet organized few local chapters or voluntary associations on the local level. Weyrich, Phillips, and Dolan established organizations for political action without large membership. If the John Birch Society and antifeminist activist Phyllis Schlafly believed in American associational democracy when they actively organized grassroots conservatives beginning in the 1960s, the New Right of the 1970s was a mass movement that had few rank and file.<sup>42</sup>

The fundraising activities provoked controversy when the New Right juggernaut loomed large in the 1970s, bringing to the fore the moral issue of money in politics. Several activists and pundits complained that the New Right fundraising operation was extraordinarily expensive. Journalist Alan Ehrenhalt mentioned that New Right groups such as the CSFC, NCPAC, and Gun Owners spent much money for their fundraising campaigns and the expenses far exceeded contributions sent to candidates. Ehrenhalt reported Old Right critics charged that these New Right organizations were “wasting the contributors’ money.”<sup>43</sup> Tom Winter of the ACU claimed that Viguerie’s direct mail was too costly, adding that there was also an ethical question about Viguerie’s fundraising as his direct mail firm leased its mailing lists to clients, which other direct mail companies usually did not.<sup>44</sup> Herbert E. Alexander, director of the Citizen’s Research Foundation and the political scientist who had played a crucial role in campaign finance reforms, also held, “Much of the money is literally being wasted—and is making Viguerie a millionaire.”<sup>45</sup>

New Right activists and their allies made their case that money was used for building up the conservative base. William Rusher, publisher of *National Review*, claimed that the New Right’s political action committees required seed money for their various activities, including distributing research materials, direct or indirect lobbying on key issues, and formulating the strategies in legislative battles.<sup>46</sup> However, when asked if the contributors comprehended that most of the funds would not be sent to the candidates, Weyrich answered no. “I don’t

think they did.” Weyrich asserted that his CSFC spent money not merely on political campaigns but many other tasks. “We spent money to recruit candidates to train campaign managers, to analyze every vote cast in the House and the Senate, to publish newspaper and weekly reports, and none of this is reflected in the financial reports.”<sup>47</sup>

Other reasons for the criticism of the New Right’s direct mail was ideology or its absence. As New Right activists launched miscellaneous programs, rather than principled issues, several conservative critics considered the tendency “apparent indifference to ideology.” Daniel Joy, legal counsel to Republican Senator James Buckley of New York, said, “The Viguerie people address only those issues which tend to stir up hostilities among lower-middle-class whites,” focusing on busing, abortion, and gun control. Joy argued that New Right activists dismissed more important problems to the majority of Americans, such as a stagnant economy, turning public attention to sensational but narrower single issues.<sup>48</sup> William Brock, chairman of the Republican National Committee, similarly remarked that the New Right emphasized the wrong issues and menaced the GOP: “You can’t build a party around those emotional social issues. . . . The New Right groups are competitive not only in that they draw away money from us but they draw away attention in Congress from the broad issues of tax reduction, job creation, health care, housing—the American Dream issues.”<sup>49</sup>

Alternatively, some critics analyzed the effect of direct mail in turning the New Right more ideological. David Keane, a former aide to Senator Buckley and to California Governor Reagan, noted that “direct mail has made conservative organizations both more ideological and more accountable.” In Keane’s view, the New Right became more ideological because ideological direct mail was the best way to generate responses from constituents, and the movement became more accountable because it needed to answer to thousands of contributors who sent money in exchange for the achievement of campaign promises.<sup>50</sup> An article in the *Wall Street Journal* quoted Viguerie as saying that he was willing to help candidates in both major parties, but adding, “I don’t take on candidates I don’t agree with.”<sup>51</sup> Because he institutionalized ideological direct mail that highlighted partisanship and conservative causes during the 1960s, Viguerie recognized that ideology was the key to effective fundraising and financed philosophically pure candidates regardless of political parties. If he was to be successful in the direct mail business, Viguerie was required to go to the extreme on the political spectrum.

Along with the moral issue revolving around raising money, as several others pointed out, a fundamental problem lurked in the direct mail market. If

an American citizen answered Viguerie's solicitation letter, the recipient's name would be recorded on Viguerie's master list, then would receive appeals for other causes. Furthermore, as Viguerie leased his lists to other organizations and candidates, the contributor would face a torrent of direct mailings from these groups. Bruce W. Eberle, another leading fundraiser in conservative politics, was seriously concerned over the future of political direct mail. As duplication among the mailing lists of right-wing organizations ran at "about 30 per cent," Eberle said that conservative fundraisers needed to reach out beyond the closed circle.<sup>52</sup> Republican fundraiser Wyatt Stewart suggested the market was being saturated, supposing that "probably the same names get mailed 35 to 40 times a year." He added that "this system won't work forever"<sup>53</sup>

### The 1976 Elections

In 1976, the New Right poured its energy into electing conservatives in congressional elections, which demonstrated both the impacts and limitations of Viguerie's direct mail. New Right groups successfully raised and spent a large amount of money for conservative candidates in order to change Congress. But the result of the congressional elections proved that money did not directly lead to political power that year.

Despite the fact that the New Right was formed just two years earlier, the groups most successfully amassed funds via direct mail during the campaign period. The Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (CSFC) of Paul Weyrich spent \$2,034,156 in 1975 and 1976, while Terry Dolan's National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) spent \$2,334,426 over the years, and the Gun Owners of America (GOA) spent \$2,015,632. Yet, as a newspaper article reported, most of the funds did not go to candidates. If the CSFC spent 11.5 percent of its expenditures for candidates, the NCPAC sent 9.6 percent and the GOA gave 6.7 percent to conservative candidates. As many criticized, the New Right drew funds away from the GOP and other conservative groups. But the money obviously influenced several congressional elections that year.<sup>54</sup>

Viguerie's direct mail brought about several surprising victories, such as the election of Stan Burger in the Montana state primary in 1976. When Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield announced his retirement, Viguerie and other conservatives persuaded Henry Hibbard to run for the Senate. But Hibbard, who had lost a close election to Montana Senator Lee Metcalf in 1972, declined. Instead, Burger visited Viguerie's office in Falls Church to raise funds for his campaign. Burger was a complete novice in politics as he had been executive

secretary of the Montana Farm Bureau. Viguerie took the first step by collecting money. Within a few days, he obtained more than \$20,000 from his political allies: \$5,000 from the CSFC, another \$5,000 from GOA, \$3,500 from the Committee for Responsible Youth Politics, \$1,500 from the Conservative Victory Fund of the ACU, and other funds from conservative PACs and business magnates such as Joseph Coors. Viguerie's next step was a massive direct mail campaign. He targeted 110,000 potential contributors with a fundraising letter signed by North Carolina Republican Senator Jesse Helms, which stressed that "your contribution in a sparsely populated state such as Montana goes a lot further . . . a budget of \$20,000 can elect a Senator in Montana." The solicitation generated \$40,000 that was immediately used for another direct mail drive. By the primary on June 1, Burger received contributions from 4,500 individuals who lived in every state; 550 conservatives in California contributed more funds than Burger received from Montana itself. The Burger campaign spent \$128,000, an extraordinary sum for a Montana primary, winning a close election by five thousand votes.<sup>55</sup>

More significantly, Viguerie raised funds for the 1976 George Wallace campaign, which was a breakthrough for Viguerie's direct mail business as well. Wallace, who had lost the 1968 presidential election, sought to run again in the 1976 election. Although the Wallace campaign already had contributor lists from prior elections, the campaign attempted to widen the supporter base in order to win the race. The campaign committee planned to develop the name lists in search of a consulting firm adequate for this task. Charles S. Snider, manager of the Wallace campaign, said that he approached Viguerie because religious conservative Billy James Hargis recommended the political consultant. Snider explained that "we found that Viguerie was involved with conservative individuals and organizations and involved with religious groups like Rev. Billy James Hargis' Christian Crusade. We got good reference on Viguerie from Rev. Hargis."<sup>56</sup> Viguerie agreed to finance Wallace. The cooperation indicated a difference between the Old and New Right because several writers of *National Review* did not accept the Alabama governor as a respectable conservative. In the May 1967 issue, for example, Frank Mayer described Wallace as "the radical opposite of conservatism," being worried that his candidacy in 1968 would "poison the moral source of its strength."<sup>57</sup>

In June 1973, the Wallace campaign committee employed Viguerie for direct mail solicitation, bringing benefits to both the candidate and the conservative consultant. Viguerie began with Wallace's mailing lists of one million contributors, which he trimmed to 750,000. Then, he obtained other mailing



lists possessed by the RAVCO, other conservative groups, subscribers to the *Saturday Evening Post*, and police and firefighters to build the list of “salable supporters.” Viguerie’s computers organized these names by zip code, occupation, and income. By September 1974, Viguerie dispatched three mailings for Wallace, including a presidential preference poll, a general solicitation, and a commemorative coin solicitation. Snider proudly remarked, “In 1976, if the governor runs, we’ll have the largest, most sophisticated mailing list in the business.” Indeed, Viguerie’s work was satisfactory to the Wallace campaign as the RAVCO amassed \$6 million for the Wallace campaign from 1974 to 1976. On Viguerie’s side, the engagement with the Wallace campaign provided a great opportunity to expand his mailing lists. After gaining Wallace contributor lists and involving with direct mail operations, the RAVCO gained access to more conservative Democrats in the South. Armed with lists containing many conservative southern Democrats, Viguerie accelerated his strategy of reaching out beyond the Republican Party.<sup>58</sup> Yet the marriage of Viguerie with Wallace concluded unhappily because of the expensive direct mail operation. The Wallace campaign committee paid nearly \$800,000 to the RAVCO between August 1973 and September 1974. Snider noted Viguerie’s fundraising was “totally satisfactory,” but also complained that “he made a hell of a lot of money off us.”<sup>59</sup>

While the Democratic governor of Alabama signed the contract with Viguerie, Ronald Reagan, the Republican governor of California in 1976, did not want to use Viguerie’s ideological direct mail when he ran for president in 1976. John Sears, the campaign manager for Reagan, said he swore off direct mail because, as a great orator, Reagan was able to raise funds on national television. “The first time we did it we raised \$1.3 million at a cost of \$100,000. It was cheaper, and easier.” Viguerie later said, “If they’d used me, they wouldn’t have run out of money when they needed it most.”<sup>60</sup> Although Sears rejected Viguerie’s expertise, the manager of the Reagan campaign understood direct mail was essential for fundraising in the post-Watergate period. He stressed the necessity to tap many people for political contributions via direct mail, saying that “in earlier times relatively few wealthy men could provide the finances for this kind of effort. Under the federal election laws, however, no person can give more than \$1,000 before the primary elections. This means we must turn to many persons for their help.”<sup>61</sup>

The Citizens for Reagan, a citizen committee to support Reagan, actively employed direct mail. With Senator Paul Laxalt as chairman, the Citizens for Reagan was formed to nominate Reagan as the Republican presidential candidate in 1976 and set out a fundraising drive to conduct the electoral campaign.



The organization chose Bruce W. Eberle, instead of Viguerie, to handle direct mail solicitation for Reagan. Since the early 1960s, he had been active in Young Americans for Freedom, first as president of the Missouri YAF and elected to the national board of YAF in 1967. Eberle founded his direct mail firm, Bruce W. Eberle & Associates, Inc., in a Washington suburb in May 1974. The young consultant shortly became among the most successful direct mail fundraisers in conservatism. Conservative political consultant Marvin Liebman wrote, "Bruce Eberle . . . seems to be the 'new' Richard Viguerie, who used to be known as the 'new' Marvin Liebman."<sup>62</sup>

The Citizens for Reagan launched a series of solicitation letters as it signed a contract with Eberle to use his mailing list six times a year. According to a staff member of the Citizens, fundraising, both by direct mail and personal solicitation, passed the half-million-dollar mark by October 1975 before Reagan's announcement of his bid for president boosted the campaign effort.<sup>63</sup> The Reagan campaign sent out several direct mail packages with each appeal stressing a specific issue. A direct mailing emphasizing gun control, for example, began with, "The time has come when a price must be paid if you want to keep your right to own a firearm." Pointing to the rise of crimes, such as "murders, rapes, and robberies," in the United States, the letter concluded, "The dues—the prices—can be paid with a check in support of Ronald Reagan's presidential election. For there is no doubt where Ronald Reagan stands on the issue of gun control."<sup>64</sup> Many farmers also received Reagan's fundraising letters. The appeal highlighted American farmers' "economic and social freedom is in serious danger," while it put forward antielitist populism when it described the farmer as "a victim of Washington bureaucrats."<sup>65</sup> Still another fundraising letter targeted Americans who were concerned over foreign affairs. The letter mentioned the threat of communism looming large on the globe, including Angola and Panama. The appeal simultaneously combined anticommunism with the growth of the federal government in the United States, noting, "Some of this growth has been brought about by temporary catastrophic events: wars, depressions, and extraordinary problems. While this was at times unavoidable, there is *no reason why it should be permanent*."<sup>66</sup>

Many conservatives replied to the direct mail drive by sending checks and letters. Wilbert Hallock of Elmwood Park, New Jersey, recommended that Reagan lay stress on social issues and foreign policy rather than economic issues. Hallock thought that the two Republicans in the race sounded similar in their economic policy, and wondered whether Reagan's emphasis on economic matters would undercut his position. "But you are drastically different," he continued. "You are

in favor of the restoration of the inalienable right to life for all human beings regardless of age, as solemnly guaranteed by the heart of our Declaration of Independence. . . . Mr. Ford is in favor of death for the youngest, most innocent, and most defenseless of our fellow human beings.” Hallock also suggested that Reagan emphasize foreign policy, which was Ford’s “particular disaster area.” He enumerated several problems, such as “the Communist movement toward world domination” and “the loss of South Vietnam and Cambodia.” After he was disappointed by the results of the first three primaries Reagan lost, Hallock still strongly supported the conservative candidate.<sup>67</sup>

Some Republicans did not endorse the nomination of Reagan. Frank Gard Jameson of Beverly Hills, California, received a solicitation letter from the Reagan campaign, but he did not support Reagan’s candidacy. Though he said that he admired the California governor, he was worried about the division of the GOP. “To me the worst thing we can do today is to divide ourselves when we have a Republican President whom all the polls indicate will be a winner.” Instead, Jameson wrote that he would support Reagan if he became the vice presidential candidate in place of Nelson Rockefeller, suggesting that he was a conservative Republican rather than moderate.<sup>68</sup>

The efforts to nominate Reagan as the Republican presidential candidate evinced the tensions of the New Right with the Old Right and Republican conservatives. Reagan had emerged among conservatives since giving his speech “Time for Choosing” on behalf of Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential campaign, and many right-wing activists expected him to be a leading politician of conservatism. Older conservative groups, such as the ACU and *Human Events*, were supportive of Reagan in the Republican primary, while the New Right looked askance at him.<sup>69</sup> In a confidential memo, Weyrich showed his distrust in the California governor: “Reagan may abandon us at the crucial moment when we need him most. I am convinced that some of the leadership we are looking for comes not from traditional Republican sources but from Democrats and Independent ranks.”<sup>70</sup> Viguerie similarly remarked, “I don’t think you can come to power in America with the Republican Party.”<sup>71</sup> Viguerie was searching for another candidate as a truly conservative president. “I, along with most conservatives, want Ronald Reagan to win the Republican nomination and to be elected president this November,” Viguerie mentioned in his magazine *Conservative Digest*. “But,” he went on, “if this does not happen we must have an alternative plan.”<sup>72</sup>

After winning the nomination at the Republican National Convention on August 18, Ford marshaled direct mail for fundraising. Because the new election

laws provided federal funds for presidential candidates, Ford did not collect money for his own campaign. But he gave his signature to many solicitation letters for Republican congressional candidates. For instance, Republicans in states such as Tennessee, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Connecticut received an appeal that highlighted Ford's achievements by saying, "Something wonderful happened to this country of ours over the past two years." This letter simultaneously charged the Democrat-controlled Congress with cutting down the defense budget that Ford requested, and with passing a succession of bills that would lead to "bigger government, increased inflation, more taxes, larger deficits, higher unemployment." Ascribing many challenges that the United States faced in the mid-1970s to Democrats, Ford's letters called on voters to support Republican candidates.<sup>73</sup>

Direct mailings over the signature of Ford reflected his fiscal conservative philosophy. As a proponent of small government, Ford approved solicitation letters stressing "a limited government and unlimited opportunity." One letter pointed to several goals that the Ford administration attempted to attain, including "the line of government spending to reduce inflation, a strong national defense, less government regulation, and a national energy program to prevent us from being at the mercy of foreign energy suppliers." Another appeal also claimed that Congress promoted the growth of the government by giving up important authority to "faceless bureaucrats who have become an unresponsive and unchecked fourth branch of government."<sup>74</sup>

However, Ford's direct mail could not summon up enthusiasm when anti-establishment populism swept through the nation. As *Newsweek* called 1976 the "Year of the Outsider," the election witnessed the rise of candidates, such as Reagan and Carter, who challenged the authority of Washington, DC. In the post-Watergate years, many Americans were suspicious of politicians boasting their Washington experience, seeking a new leader who emerged outside of Capitol Hill. The populist atmosphere undermined the Republican Party and Ford as the incumbent president in favor of Carter. During the campaign, Carter criticized Ford, arguing that he preferred a slow economic recovery with low inflation and vetoed bills that would have increased federal funding to decrease unemployment. Such remarks by the Georgian peanut farmer struck a chord with many working-class and middle-class Americans, while southern evangelicals endorsed Carter as a born-again Christian.<sup>75</sup>

Viguerie and other New Right activists pursued the realignment of the American political system by establishing a third party of populism. Conservative political analyst Kevin Phillips described the new constituency as the "New

Majority,” including blue-collar workers, urban ethnics, and disgruntled Republicans, in favor of policies such as defending American tradition, middle-class welfare, and further government intervention in the economy.<sup>76</sup> At first, Wallace was the first option for the leadership of the conservative party. Viguerie attempted to run himself for vice president on the American Independent Party ticket, but he bowed out when the party nominated Lester Maddox in the primary. Disappointed by the Republican Party and the American Independent Party, Viguerie announced that he was planning to establish a new political party called the Independent Party, inviting conservatives to a national meeting in Chicago in December 1976. “We should make plans at the December 1976 meeting to run candidates for Congress in all 435 congressional districts. And for all 34 U.S. Senate seats in 1978. . . . Then in 1980 we will be one of the two major political parties and will be in position to elect a conservative Congress.”<sup>77</sup>

Looking back at the 1976 election, the New Right fell short of their grander ambitions. Indeed, New Right organizations with which Viguerie was associated indicated they had the ability to amass vast funds, but they had just a slight impact on the results of the congressional elections. The CSFC tallied only 30 winners out of 143 candidates it supported; the NCPAC did a better job with 130 winners out of 208 because the organization contributed to statewide races along with congressional campaigns. And most of the conservative candidates whom Viguerie wanted to elect lost on election day. Titled “Why the ‘New Right’ Isn’t Doing Well at the Polls,” a *Business Week* article analyzed the reasons of the New Right’s failure. It ascribed the fiasco to the ideological rigidity of the 1970s conservatives. Steven F. Stockmeyer, executive director of the National Republican Congressional Committee, charged that the New Right political action committees caused party leaders to support candidates with slim prospects for victory. “In 1976, these PACs picked 20 target districts and tried to get a hard-line conservative nominated in all of them,” Stockmeyer explained. “They got only two nominated—and we lost both.” The New Right also dedicated their energy to “purifying” politics through their efforts in ousting Republican moderates, rather than developing new candidates.<sup>78</sup>

In this sense, direct mail proved both lucrative and problematic as a political device in the 1976 elections. The individualized medium enabled the New Right to move beyond the Republican Party, carving out political niches and gaining financial support from individuals such as Democrats and working-class White people, a political field older conservatives had not explored. However, if direct mail solicitation worked well when it was emotional and ideological, the New Right had little space to make compromise with nonconservative forces. As a

result, Viguerie and his associates needed to be purely conservative and launch offensive mailings, speeding up partisan conflicts in American politics.

### The Panama Canal Treaties

Immediately after the 1976 election, the New Right focused on several single issues to gain public support. One of the central affairs was the ratification of the Panama Canal treaties in 1977. In actuality, the Panama Canal was not a major issue among Americans. Nevertheless, New Right activists vehemently opposed the US withdrawal from the Canal Zone. Their purpose was not to keep economic and military interests, but rather made use of emotional patriotism to garner support through such a narrowly minded issue. The antitreaties movement indicated again the nature of the New Right's emotional direct mail, and simultaneously widened the schism between Old and New Right activists.

The Panama Canal was not a new item on the agenda in US diplomacy. America's negotiations with Panama had begun with the Dwight Eisenhower administration and continued throughout six presidencies. The treaty talks took long as riots and military coups in Panama and public objections in the United States affected the negotiations. Following an anti-American riot that killed four Americans and twenty-four Panamanians on January 9, 1964, the Lyndon Johnson administration started to take into consideration an idea of withdrawing from the Panama Canal. Panama's President Roberto Chiari asked President Johnson for a revision of the 1903 treaty, and on March 21, Johnson stated that he wanted talks regarding "every issue which now divides us, and every problem which the Panamanian Government wishes to raise." New treaties were agreed on, under which US control would end no later than 2009 and a new canal would be built at sea level. However, because of opposition in both Panama and the United States among Republicans, Johnson did not submit the treaties to the Senate. On the Panamanian side, the 1968 presidential election in Panama selected Arnulfo Arias who criticized the new treaties. The negotiation was thrown into greater confusion as a military coup that year drove out Arias and put Lieutenant Colonel Omar Torrijos Herrera in power. Torrijos survived another coup, and he rejected new negotiations with the United States because he thought that American government backed the counter coup.<sup>79</sup>

The Nixon and Ford administrations both faced the Panama issue. Considering issues such as Vietnam, Russia, and China more seriously, Nixon gave little attention to Panama during his administration. His first secretary of state, William P. Rogers, and national security adviser Henry A. Kissinger were concerned

that the tensions between the United States and Panama might foster wider anti-American sentiments throughout Latin America. They resumed negotiations with Panama in April 1971. Signed on February 7, 1974, the delegates promised to replace the 1903 treaty with one that would provide a prompt end to US control of the Canal Zone, a greater share of Canal profits to Panama, and commitment that Panama would participate in the administration and defense of the Canal. It guaranteed the US use of lands, water, and airspace necessary to operate and defend the Canal.<sup>80</sup> But these treaties provoked vehement oppositions by both Democrats and Republicans. Democratic Representative John Murphy of New York told the House that Kissinger was undertaking “a course of action which borders on insanity.” Senator Strom Thurmond told his colleagues the principles “invite disaster,” and he introduced a resolution “in support of continued undiluted United States sovereignty over the United States-owned Canal Zone on the Isthmus of Panama.” Although Ford faced many important issues, such as inflation, the tensions with the Soviet Union, and fallout from his predecessor’s resignation, Thurmond demanded the Ford administration address the Panama issue.<sup>81</sup>

During the 1976 election, several conservative candidates attacked the negotiation with Panama. Samuel I. Hayakawa, Republican senator from California, claimed that the United States deserved to keep the canal since “we stole it fair and square.”<sup>82</sup> While Ronald Reagan focused closely on foreign affairs, especially the relationship with the Soviet Union, he also touched on the Panama issue by calling Panamanian President Torrijos a communist dictator. “Apparently everyone knows about this except the rightful owners of the Canal Zone, you, the people of the United States. General Omar Torrijos, the dictator of Panama, seized power right years ago by ousting the duly elected government. . . . Torrijos is a friend and ally of Castro and like him is pro-communist.”<sup>83</sup>

Conservative citizens were worried over the Panama Canal as one of the critical foreign issues the United States faced. In reply to the Reagan campaign’s solicitation letter, Frank McDonald wrote to Paul Laxalt, chair of the Citizens for Reagan. McDonald was a motion picture and television director. Although he had few opportunities to work with Reagan, McDonald was an admirer of the conservative politician and complained that his conservative words and actions had been “shunned” by liberal colleagues. In his letter, McDonald criticized foreign affairs such as SALT I and Henry Kissinger’s strategies, then put heavy emphasis on the Panama Canal issue by writing, “The Panama Canal Belongs to the United States. Let’s keep it that way!!!!”<sup>84</sup>

Even Jimmy Carter opposed the new treaties during the presidential election. In an interview with *Newsweek*, Carter commented, "I am not in favor of relinquishing actual control of the Panama Canal or its use to any other nation, including Panama," although he was sympathetic to Panamanians.<sup>85</sup> However, after he assumed the presidency, Carter reversed course. Prior to his inauguration, Carter read the report of Sol Linowitz's Commission on United States-Latin-American Relations, which stressed the importance of creating a new, equitable treaty and argued that the Panama Canal was the most urgent issue in the Western Hemisphere. Carter gave top priority to the Panama issue, saying, "I think the Panama treaty ought to be resolved quite rapidly. That's almost uniquely our responsibility."<sup>86</sup> Carter's national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski hired political scientist Robert Pastor as a member of the National Security Council Staff on January 8 and asked him to prepare a memorandum on Panama by January 21, the first working day of the new administration.<sup>87</sup>

Carter and Torrijos agreed on two new treaties on September 7, 1977. The first was the Treaty Concerning the Permanent Neutrality and Operation of the Panama Canal, or the Neutrality Treaty, which guaranteed that the United States could use its armed forces to defend the Panama Canal against any threats to its neutrality, and allowed American perpetual usage of the Panama Canal. The other agreement, the Panama Canal Treaty, stated that the Canal Zone would cease to exist on October 1, 1979, and that Panama's sovereignty over this territory would be fully restored on December 31, 1999. It was a conclusion of the negotiations between the United States and Panama, and a beginning of heated debates over the ratification of the treaties in the Senate.<sup>88</sup>

The Torrijos-Carter Treaties of 1977 immediately sparked a wave of protests among conservatives. Phyllis Schlafly, a conservative activist and founder of the Eagle Forum, had paid attention to the Panama issue in the 1950s, warning that Alger Hiss in his opening address to the United Nations in 1945 had called for the internationalization of the Panama Canal. And the first issue of her political newsletter, *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, in 1967 vehemently criticized Lyndon Johnson's treaty to turn over the canal to the Republic of Panama. In the campaign against the 1977 treaties, Schlafly used the anticommunism theme when she claimed, "Torrijos is part of a Marxist military junta operating in close collaboration with Communist Cuba and the Soviet Union." This anticommunist message was a typical strategy among conservatives. Furthermore, Schlafly took the Panama issue beyond communism by accusing the Carter administration of being in bed with multinational corporate interests. In the October 1977



issue of the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, she charged that “ten of the largest banks in the United States joined with several foreign banks in lending \$135 million to Panama.” She pointed out that Linowitz was a director and member of the executive committee of Marine Midland Bank in New York, which had loaned money to Torrijos. Schlafly’s rhetoric of anticommunism and distrust of eastern financial elites showed a conventional right-wing ideology that had existed since the 1950s.<sup>89</sup>

A coterie of conservative intellectuals in *National Review* looked at the Panama issue differently. Immediately before the treaties were signed, an article in *National Review* pointed to the significance of the Panama issue for conservatives. “Clearly, the Panama Canal is an object of national pride and rightly so. It is a part of our historical patrimony as much as it is of Panama’s. For those ashamed of our past, the treaty poses an easy downhill decision—one that can even be worn as a penitential hair shirt. For conservatives, it presents a personal spiritual crisis.” But at the same time, this article maintained that the new Panama treaties revised no national security concerns. “In fact, given the state of warfare in 1977, our own military men support the treaty on the ground that the Canal can be better defended with the treaty than without it. In case of external attack, it can be defended only by air and sea and, in the treaty, Panama agrees that we should continue to defend it.”<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, James Burnham argued in *National Review* that the Panama Canal was no longer important militarily and that the debates over the treaties were merely “nostalgia politics.” He noted, “To view the Panama issue clearly, we must adjust our perspective to take account of the fact that in itself the Zone is a relatively minor matter, no longer of any great importance to our security or interest. The feelings many of our citizens have about the Canal are nostalgic; they reflect outmoded ideas of both its strategic and its economic importance.”<sup>91</sup> Similarly, William F. Buckley asserted that “it was very difficult to criticize that treaty.”<sup>92</sup> As a consequence, he distanced himself from other conservatives who adamantly opposed the new treaties.

Several politicians also changed their postures on the Panama Canal. In 1976, Senator Hayakawa from California criticized treaties that the United States would give up sovereignty over the Panama Canal. Yet in his statement in October 1977, he was in favor of the Torrijos–Carter Treaties. While admitting that “the treaties have become a highly emotional issue,” Hayakawa simultaneously foresaw the impact of the new treaties, remarking that “it is all too clear that ratification will be interpreted in many quarters as ‘America on the run.’ We therefore ought to be prepared for new pressures to abandon Guantanamo,



Cuba, and to evacuate Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay in the Philippines.” But he was anxious about the results of failing to ratify the new treaties when he said, “An important byproduct of such action would be the warning to the rest of the world that the United States not only is unwilling to give up the canal, but also is prepared to defend its rights regardless of consequences.” Unlike the senator in 1976 who had said “we stole [the canal] fair and square,” he warned in 1977 that “[it] is our political leaders’ task to alert the America people and to make it clear that, contrary to their expectations, the Senate’s verdict will not dispose of the issue.”<sup>93</sup>

Even if the Torrijos-Carter Treaties stirred up emotional reactions among the public, conservatives were not monolithic concerning the Panama Canal issue. Some conservatives considered the new treaties a serious threat to American national security and economic interest, while others did not think the Panama Canal was that important for the United States any longer. Nevertheless, the Panama treaties offered an opportunity for the New Right to gain momentum in the late 1970s. Reacting to the issue immediately after the Carter administration announced the terms of the treaties in August 1977, the New Right in tandem with conservative groups created a coalition of the antitreaties campaigns. The Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (CSFC), the Conservative Caucus, the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC), the American Conservative Union (ACU), and Citizens for the Republic, which was founded by Reagan, cooperated to oppose the Panama Canal treaties.

For Richard Viguerie and his allies, the Panama Canal treaties were a critical issue through which the New Right could legitimate their “grassroots” activism. “This is a cutting issue,” said Viguerie. “It’s an issue the conservative can’t lose on” because “it’s a sexy issue. It’s a populist issue.” Viguerie raised the treaties as a significant issue not only because he believed the withdrawal from the Canal Zone undermined US national security, but also because he was able to connect the issue with his antiestablishment populism. “These treaties as much as anything else are a bailout for big New York bankers with loans in Panama,” Viguerie remarked, adding that “here’s a populist President who’s going to bail out David Rockefeller.” Gary Jarmin, legislative director of the ACU, also comprehended the significance of the issue for the conservative movement. “It’s not just the issue itself we’re fighting for. This is an excellent opportunity for conservatives to seize control of the Republican Party.” Whereas the Carter administration stressed direct appeals to the Senate and to opinion leaders across the nation, conservatives attempted to stop the ratification of the treaties by approaching the public. Viguerie carried out direct mail drives, calling for funds and petitions, which

highlighted the New Right's focus on populist persuasion. "We'd doing some direct lobbying, but not so much as the White House. Our strength is not in Washington. Our strength is in Peoria and Oshkosh and White River Falls."<sup>94</sup> Despite the fact that his operations were primarily based on the Washington area, Viguerie was able to arm the New Right with populist persuasion by gathering small contributions and petitions from the American public.

Other New Right activists indicated that the movement against the Panama treaties was a people's uprising so frequently that journalism took notice of the protest as "the groundswell of popular opposition." Howard Phillips of the Conservative Caucus stressed that the Panama issue was important not merely for conservatives and anticommunists but Americans in general, seeing the issue as "a symbol of their country's policy of appeasement." Paul Weyrich also asserted that the antitreaties campaign was a bipartisan movement, emphasizing, "We don't care how we do it, as Republicans and conservatives or whatever, but we have the American people on our side now and we will win in the end."<sup>95</sup>

For Reagan, the Panama Canal issue turned out to be a critical topic as he aimed at the 1980 presidential election. After he failed to be nominated in the 1976 Republican National Convention, Reagan was required to distinguish himself from Ford through his hardline foreign policy posture. The difference between Reagan and the Republican establishment was obvious over the canal issue. In October, the Republican National Committee mailed out five hundred thousand solicitation letters signed by Ford. The package enclosed a "critical issues survey" that asked for recipients' opinions on ten questions. Five of the questions concerned foreign and defense policy but did not mention the Panama Canal.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, RNC Chairman Bill Brock exasperated right-wing Republicans when he refused to invest \$50,000 of party funds in a national congressional caravan against the ratification, which was proposed by Reagan and Senator Paul Laxalt of Nevada.<sup>97</sup> On this battle line, Reagan was willing to go hand in hand with the New Right activists.

Viguerie launched an immense direct mail campaign, which vividly demonstrated the New Right's populist and emotional aspects. In the fall of 1977, the RAVCO sent out five million copies of a fundraising letter with Reagan's signature. The letter was designed to appeal to patriotism. "I need your immediate help to prevent our country from making one of the most serious mistakes in its 200 year history," the fundraising letter began, emphasizing the treaties' negative impacts on American diplomacy. The letter introduced readers to the terms of the treaties, such as the duty of the United States to pay millions of dollars to Panama, while mentioning that the Panamanian government might raise prices on goods

shipped through the canal. "This is not a partisan issue," the letter stressed, claiming that the overwhelming majority of Americans opposed the canal "giveaway."<sup>98</sup>

However, mixing true and false stories on the Panama Canal treaties, Viguerie's letter depicted the consequences of the ratification in his usual menacing language. The letter noted that "one of our most vital shipping and defense waterways will be in the complete control" of General Torrijos. This description was wrong because the Panama Canal Treaty granted the United States operating control of the waterway and the right to defend it until December 31, 1999, while granting Panama general territorial jurisdiction over the Canal Zone and the use of portions of the area not required for the canal operation and defense. Furthermore, this direct mailing charged both Panamanian and American leaders. It called General Torrijos an "anti-American, pro-Marxist dictator," and condemned Carter for not "consulting Congressional leaders." Actually, the Carter administration had lobbied senators and congressional committee staffs before they reached the final agreement. As many other direct mailings of Viguerie, this appeal was aimed to fan popular fury by demonizing political opponents and implying that political decisions were made behind the scenes.<sup>99</sup>

Direct mail was part of the New Right's multimedia campaign against the ratification of the treaties. The main goal of Viguerie's fundraising letter was to send the millions of signatures to US senators prior to the Senate vote in January 1978. For the purpose, the letter continued, they needed to raise a minimum of \$2 million for the advertising to generate the petitions. At the same time, the ACU premiered a half-hour television film critical of the Panama Canal treaties in early November 1977. Conservatives expected that the film would provoke antitreaty sentiments and raise funds for the movement.<sup>100</sup>

The Carter administration received many letters from conservatives who protested against the treaties. A fifteen-year-old boy bitterly accused Carter, "You have made as many intelligent decisions so far as a frog has." Emphasizing that the building of the Panama Canal had been accompanied with American casualties and millions of money, the young conservative said that Carter's decision affected national security and hurt American citizens. "Before you make another decision," the letter concluded, "think about all the people and the kids that will be voting in the 1980 Presidential Election."<sup>101</sup>

Another conservative from Pasadena, California, sent a long letter to the White House, making a similar case as Viguerie's direct mailing. "Do you realize that [you] are giving away taxpayers' money and valuable property of the United States?" asked the eighty-five-year-old Californian, blaming the Carter administration for signing the treaty that required the United States to pay millions

to Panama. As many other conservatives, the writer of the letter opposed the Panama Canal treaties partly because she considered the Panama leader a treacherous communist dictator. The Californian asserted, "It is a known fact that communistic Russia of which both Castro and this Trujios [*sic*] are so-called pals. It is also known that the commies have never kept faith with one treaty except that it was all in their favor." Furthermore, like Viguerie, this letter took on antielitist populism when it believed in the bankers' conspiracy. Pointing to Panama's debt, the writer asserted, "This is money which the international babbers [*sic*] have lent to this despot and so we, the taxpayers have to repay these millionaire bankers, among them the Rockefellers, as well as Messers."<sup>102</sup>

The New Right targeted US senators who were undecided over the Panama Canal treaties. Several public opinion polls indicated that the majority of southerners opposed America's retreat from the Canal Zone, but thirteen Democratic senators from southern states remained uncommitted. Conservatives assumed that these southern senators were undecided because, in Weyrich's words, "The he-is-our-President argument is strong." The New Right attempted to pressure senators with the petitions from Americans who did not want the new treaties, suggesting that the senators would lose support in their next elections if they were to vote for the ratification.<sup>103</sup>

However, the New Right's massive media campaigns against the treaties failed to achieve its goal. The US Senate ratified the Neutrality Treaty on March 16, 1978, and the Panama Canal Treaty on April 18 by a vote of sixty-eight to thirty-two. As the Senate was controlled by Democrats and sixteen Republicans voted for the ratification, the New Right and their supporters lost their struggle to stop the two treaties. But they were lost just by two votes, keeping Democrats on guard in the years to come.

Nevertheless, liberals could not dismiss the threat of the New Right. According to conservative commentator Kevin Phillips, President Carter cited the New Right as a political menace in a 1977 fundraising letter for the Democratic Party.<sup>104</sup> DNC Chairman Kenneth M. Curtis also warned that "millions of dollars . . . will fund a vigorous nationwide effort against progressive Democratic representatives and senators in 1978," strongly criticizing the New Right movement for their "shrillness, stridency and superficiality." Yet liberals simultaneously imitated the methods of intimidating direct mail. The National Committee for an Effective Congress (NCEC), the left-wing counterpart to Weyrich's CSFC, oftentimes denounced the conservative organization in its appeals. An NCEC solicitation pamphlet began with a bold headline, saying, "There's a new 'enemies list' and some of your best friends are on it." A *Congressional Quarterly*

article pointed out, "NCEC and CSFC frequently use each other's claims to stir up concern among their own supporters over the threat from the other side."<sup>105</sup> Efficient but gloomy direct mail fundraising was contagious and swept through American politics in the late 1970s.

Over the course of the antitreaty campaigns in 1977, the New Right showed its presence in the conservative movement. As Viguerie received funds from conservatives in response to his direct mail, he collected names and addresses of more conservatives across the nation. Enlarging the naming lists of possible supporters and evolving his direct mail techniques, Viguerie and other New Right activists were ready for another midterm election in 1978 and the 1980 presidential election in pursuit of a conservative revolution in American politics.

### The 1978 Elections

As the New Right geared up for the 1978 congressional elections, Viguerie prepared for an enormous assault on liberal and moderate incumbents. The New Right's objective in the year was to defeat "the Watergate babies," liberals who had been elected in the wake of Nixon's resignation in 1974, while also attacking Republican moderates, including Senators Clifford P. Case of New Jersey and Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts. Viguerie was so convinced that he said his direct mail campaign would be "many, many times more effective" in 1978 than it had been two years earlier.<sup>106</sup>

The campaigns against Representative John Anderson and Senator Thomas McIntyre indicated how strong and effective the New Right's blitz was. Anderson was a representative from Illinois and a moderate Republican. When the Illinois primaries were held in March 1978, the New Right targeted him as an early test. Paul Weyrich's Committee for the Survival for a Free Congress (CSFC) encouraged a fundamentalist minister, Rev. Don Lyon, to run for the House. Whereas Viguerie launched direct mail fundraising drives, Terry Dolan's National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) sent "coalition-builders" to work for Lyon, and the Gun Owners of America (GOA) also dispatched several staffers who "play[ed] on the fears of people," said Anderson. On the last weekend, the Conservative Victory Fund, a political arm of the American Conservative Union, ran newspaper ads against Anderson. "The Far Right resorts to primal passions," the Republican moderate later recalled. "There is real danger that they can so totally focus on relatively narrow issues and dominate the political dialogue." Despite his nomination in the primary, Anderson keenly realized the threat of the New Right movement.<sup>107</sup>

Senator Thomas McIntyre was another target of the New Right. A Democrat, McIntyre had been a New Hampshire senator since 1962, the first Democratic senator from the state since Fred H. Brown in 1932 as well as the first Democratic senator in the state's history to win a third term. In 1978 when he ran for reelection for a fourth term, New Hampshire was divided over the ratification of the Panama Canal treaties. New Hampshire Governor Meldrim Thomson, a conservative Republican, looked for a Democrat to run against Senator McIntyre. And if McIntyre would vote in favor of the Panama Canal treaties, Governor Thomson suggested running against the senator himself. The New Right instead supported Gordon Humphrey, a politically unknown airline pilot, in his bid for the Senate. Backed by the national wave of conservatism and with the help of the New Right, Humphrey surprised many political observers as he narrowly defeated the veteran senator.<sup>108</sup>

Immediately after he was defeated, McIntyre published his book *The Fear Brokers* (1979) to warn against the extremism of the New Right. Accusing the New Right of "the blandishments and fear-mongering," McIntyre wrote that New Right activists were "eager to prey upon the frustrations and anxieties" of the public, and the movement "would ease anxieties with absolutes and certainties, with the promise of decisive action and magic elixirs. And they would do all this in the name of 'real Americanism.'" McIntyre grasped the central role played by Viguerie and his direct mail in mobilizing conservative Americans. He made his case that the technique of computerized direct mail "changed not only the face but the very character of the American political process." As computer technologies developed and dominated American politics, McIntyre thought, direct mail solicitation swept through US politics. Republican national organizations and business political action committees actively utilized the medium for collecting money. But conservatives were the forerunners among political direct mail users. McIntyre wrote that the right could "carry its message to between six and seven million people," while the conservative movement diffused its messages exclusively via elitist publications such as *Human Events* and *National Review* only a decade earlier.<sup>109</sup>

But few right-wing politicians demonstrated the capacity to organize nationwide conservatives more clearly than North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, whose 1978 campaign was regarded as "a textbook example of organizational and technical competence."<sup>110</sup> Helms's electoral campaign owed its success to his powerful political machine, the Congressional Club. After developing his career as a radio host, congressional aide, lobbyist, and television broadcaster, Helms won the US Senate race in 1972. To pay off a \$150,000 debt of the campaign,

the Congressional Club was established in 1973 with Senator Helms as an honorary chair and Tom Ellis, a longtime Helms confidant and attorney, serving as a political adviser.<sup>111</sup> Shortly, combining conventional and modern methods, the Congressional Club came to play a major role in raising funds, broadcasting political messages, and mobilizing support for Helms and other conservative candidates. The Congressional Club sponsored a series of dinners and receptions as forums to which it invited many conservative speakers. The club also founded Jefferson Marketing, Inc., a production company to produce Helms's television ads. Helms used these vehicles to disseminate his messages against inflation, arms limitations, and liberal politics, bypassing the mainstream media. Ellis said, "I think we know how to get conservatives elected, how to put the nuts and bolts together to go over the heads of the liberal editors and TV commentators and get the conservative message out there to the people on TV."<sup>112</sup>

Helms built an intimate relationship with the New Right during the 1970s. When Charlie Black, a member of Young Americans for Freedom, introduced Viguerie to the club, Helms and Ellis doubted that direct mail worked to amass funds. But Viguerie proved the efficacy of his direct mail fundraising when the Congressional Club mailed out an appeal to the constituency in the summer of 1975. As letters with checks flooded his office, Ellis was astonished, and the Helms campaign was able to pay the remaining debt of the 1972 campaign. Ellis also realized that Viguerie's direct mail not merely brought political contributions to Helms's coffer, but also a database of a national constituency for ensuing campaigns. Now with mailing lists of conservatives, the Congressional Club constructed a national network of supporters across the country, transforming itself from North Carolina's local political group into a national PAC. Helms also helped found Washington-based organizations of the New Right such as Howard Phillips's Conservative Caucus and Terry Dolan's NCPAC in 1974. Riding the wave of the New Right movement, Helms emerged as one of the towering conservative senators in the 1970s.<sup>113</sup>

The Congressional Club was involved with the campaign to nominate Reagan as the Republican candidate in the 1976 presidential election. At the request of Helms and Ellis, Reagan withdrew his campaign staff from North Carolina so that the Congressional Club could take on the primary campaign in the state. Carter Wrenn, a twenty-seven-year-old executive director of the club, and Ellis focused on key foreign policy issues such as the Panama Canal treaties and a "one way" détente with the Soviet Union. Their strategy worked so well that Reagan upset President Ford by winning the North Carolina primary after three earlier defeats.<sup>114</sup>



In 1978, the Congressional Club waged an extensive campaign for Senator Helms's reelection race. When the club organized volunteers in every precinct across the state, the organization took the New Right's strategy by depending heavily on Democrats and Independents as well as Republicans. Several New Right activists were engaged in the Helms campaign. In the early stage, the Congressional Club held a series of lectures for over eight hundred young conservatives on a Raleigh college campus. The "crash campaign school" featured lectures by conservative political consultants, such as youth organizer Morton Blackwell, and speeches by conservative representatives, including Jack Kemp of New York and Phil Crane of Illinois.<sup>115</sup>

Simultaneously, Helms's political action committee carried out direct mail fundraising in and outside the state so successfully that a *Nation* journalist described the Congressional Club as "the very model of modern, high-technology politics." Supported by Viguerie, the club compiled a mailing list of approximately three hundred thousand names, gaining \$7.5 million from a national constituency with the average contribution between \$12 and \$15. The Helms campaign used the funds for organizing all precincts of the North Carolina state as it opened campaign offices, installed telephones, and conducted public opinion polls.<sup>116</sup>

Sending ten to twenty million copies, the Congressional Club developed ideological direct mail in the 1978 campaign. As Ellis explained that the club aimed "to counterbalance the political activities of the union bosses, the ERA crowd and the other far-left political campaigns," Helms's fundraising letters were designed to rally support by condemning liberals, particularly labor unions and détente proponents. An appeal under Reagan's signature attacked union bosses as Helms's main political enemy, saying, "I am not exaggerating when I say that Big Labor and Radical pressure groups will pull out all the stops to defeat Jesse Helms. Jesse's State of North Carolina will be literally swamped with out of state money and Union organizers who are really political experts who specialize in voter registration." In another solicitation letter of September 15, Helms similarly noted, "[AFL-CIO President] George Meany and the other big union bosses have handpicked me as their #1 Target for defeat in 1978!" In the same letter, Helms also attacked "anti-defense activists," asserting that the administration defense advisers and liberal senators tried to shrink national defense by "scrapping the B-1 bomber . . . without getting any concessions from the Soviet Union."<sup>117</sup>

The 1978 elections indicated that the New Right's financial might grew through political direct mail and political action committees. Special interest



groups spent \$76.3 million during the 1978 campaign period, increasing from \$74 million in the last off-year election in 1974. Conservative money was outstanding as six conservative PACs outspent all other special interest groups by a considerable margin. Reagan's Citizens for the Republic was the largest single PAC, raising \$2.9 million over the period and sending money to 238 House candidates and 27 Senate candidates. Weyrich's CSFC ranked the third largest PAC as it spent \$1.9 million, whereas the AFL-CIO's Committee for Political Education and its state affiliates spent the same amount. Yet a large sum of the political funds was absorbed in direct mail operations. Of \$2.9 million raised by Reagan's PAC, only \$1 million was actually sent to candidates. In the case of the Helms campaign, Viguerie controlled two-thirds of Helms's mailing list of three hundred thousand conservatives and received rental payment from the Congressional Club every time the names were used. Although several observers were critical of Viguerie's direct mail operation, his national network did not stop expanding. As Viguerie's influence extended to conservative Democrats and blue-collar Americans, the New Right movement assisted conservative candidates in congressional campaigns. Now they attempted to have a conservative president in the White House.<sup>118</sup>

### The 1980 Reagan Campaign

The conservative waves, which gathered force throughout the 1970s, culminated in the election of Reagan. While television advertising continued to play a major role in selling candidates, direct mail and the New Right movement served to ferment the conservative mood by 1980. As political direct mail became a key device for solicitation, Viguerie riveted public attention as the best direct mail operative in the political arena. But at the same time, Viguerie's approach of emotionalism for fundraising faced public criticism for fostering negativity. Furthermore, Viguerie's ideological direct mail kept the New Right movement away from the mainstream of conservatism. Although the 1980 election was the historic victory for American conservatives, the New Right's antielitist populism prevented it from being integrated into the conservative establishment.

As in 1976, the relationship between the New Right and Reagan was strained during the 1978 campaign due to their difference over political strategy. Despite his cooperation on the fight against the Panama Canal treaties, Reagan refused to support New Right challengers to moderate Republican incumbents because he wanted to distance himself from feverishly ideological conservatism. His hesitancy to work closely with the New Right irritated Viguerie and Weyrich.

Although Reagan was the most desirable option for many conservatives in the 1980 election, New Right activists kept a distrust of him as the authentic conservative during and after the race.<sup>119</sup>

Thus, it was not a surprise that the Reagan campaign did not select the Richard A. Viguerie Co. as its fundraising firm for his 1980 campaign. Bruce Eberle, who had been engaged with the 1976 Reagan campaign, eagerly proposed his assistance in fundraising. "I am very anxious to be of service to Governor Reagan again in 1979–1980," he wrote in a letter to the campaign. One of the advantages, Eberle said, was the access to his mailing list that he had organized in the previous campaign. As a coowner of the 1976 Reagan for President donor file, Bruce W. Eberle & Associates was the only agency that could guarantee the exclusive use of the list throughout the entire campaign. Eberle simultaneously submitted a fundraising proposal, whose goal was "to raise approximately \$12 million at a cost of \$2 million" over an eighteen-month period. He also emphasized the evolution of the computer in the proposal. "One of the most dramatic and practical advances in computer technology as applied to direct response fund raising is in the area of data entry. . . . Thanks to the advent of the so-called 'mini-computer' and advances in peripheral technology, direct response source information can now be entered on a 'real time' basis." Eberle's proposal indicated the development of computer technology and the sophistication of conservative fundraising by the end of the 1970s, assuring that his direct mail would be immensely helpful.<sup>120</sup>

The Reagan campaign, however, inherited political consultants from previous Republican presidential candidates, and assigned L. Robert Morgan to handle direct mail fundraising. Morgan had participated in the November Group, the team of advertising executives and political consultants for the 1972 Nixon campaign. In 1980, he was president of Integrated Communication Systems, Inc., which was the exclusive agency that directed all of the direct mail and telephone fundraising on behalf of the Reagan for President Committee. Several other former members of the November Group served in the Reagan campaign. For instance, Phil Joanou was vice president of Doyle, Dane, Bernbach, a prominent advertising agency on Madison Avenue, had been executive vice president of the November Group and served as a free advertising consultant to Reagan in 1980. "In my 20 years in the business world," Morgan mentioned, "I rate Phil Joanou as having the finest advertising and marketing mind I have met." The Reagan campaign also employed an advertising firm called SFM, which the 1972 Nixon and the 1976 Ford campaigns had used.<sup>121</sup>

The former November Group members crafted a marketing strategy that was markedly different from that of the New Right. They thought that it was not

enough just to capitalize on the conservative mood for winning the presidential race. For the purpose of developing confidence in Reagan among moderate and conservative Democrats as well as independents, the consultants attempted to create the positive image of Reagan as “a reasonable, responsible and acceptable choice.” The marketing plan of the 1980 Reagan campaign stressed, “We must give people a reason to vote *for* Governor Reagan, not just against President Carter.” Unless they could build trust in Reagan, the consultants analyzed, moderate Democrats and independents would display their dissatisfaction with Carter either by voting for another Democrat or not voting whatsoever.<sup>122</sup>

The marketing strategy defined Reagan’s direct mail fundraising. The Reagan campaign actively mailed out appeals partly to finance television advertising. When Reagan conducted a campaign for the Republican nomination in January 1980, his fundraising agency sent a fundraising letter to those who had contributed money. Intimacy characterized the direct mailings from Reagan. “Dear Ed: I hope you’ll keep the special photograph I’ve enclosed for you,” said the letter, which was sent to Ed Meese of La Masa, California, who had contributed \$200 before. Enclosed was a photo taken during the filming of Reagan’s announcement on television, and Reagan asked for more donations to reserve air time on television. “With the support of people like Paul Laxalt, Jack Kemp, Orrin Hatch and you, I know we can win—if we can raise enough money,” the mail stressed.<sup>123</sup>

The New Right similarly implemented massive direct mail campaigns for the 1980 election, sharing many conservative names on their lists, but taking a negative approach. Ed Meese also received an appeal from Terry Dolan of the National Conservative Political Action Committee in January 1980. Attacking Ted Kennedy who sought the Democratic nomination, Dolan’s letter asked “Mr. Meese” several questions: “Do you think he lied about Chappaquiddick? Do you think America can afford Kennedy as President? Do you think he is qualified to be President?” The appeal doubted Kennedy’s leadership, criticizing his welfare policy and his voting record against national defense, gun control, and school prayer. This fundraising letter asked for money to develop two campaigns, the Kennedy Poll and the Emergency Stop Kennedy Squad, in order to launch negative ads that emphasized that Kennedy was a “Big-Spending, Anti-Defense, Pro-Big Labor superliberal.” While condemning the Democrat, however, this direct mailing never mentioned any candidates whom Dolan endorsed as the next president. This was one of the typical fundraising letters of the New Right, which stressed what they were *against* rather than *in favor of*.<sup>124</sup>

Other conservative organizations involved themselves with the Reagan movement largely through attacking political enemies. The American Conservative

Union dispatched copies of a direct mailing in August, emphasizing the threats of liberals such as John Anderson who ran for president as an Independent in 1980. "You see, the Anderson and McGovern types are willing to do almost anything to keep Conservatives out of power," the letter noted. Simultaneously this appeal suggested that, if Democrats won the 1980 elections, a Democratic-ruled Congress would dismiss voters' choice, saying, "If Anderson . . . can win just a few states this fall he can throw the election into the Democratic controlled House of Representatives. And if that happens your vote won't count. The liberals who control Congress—rather than the voters—would select our next President." The ACU obviously supported Reagan as the Republican presidential candidate, but its appeal put heavy emphasis on the opponent campaign against Democrats.<sup>125</sup>

The strategy of constructing Reagan's positive images, rather than attacking his adversary, resulted partly from the public opinion against negative campaign in 1980. Both the Reagan and Carter campaigns were not able to evade the criticism. David A. Schwartz, president of Consumer Response Corporation, investigated New York voters' impressions of the two candidates' political advertisements. In his report in October, Schwartz found out that many voters in the New York area were quite dissatisfied with the advertising of both candidates, which displayed opponents negatively. He acknowledged that Reagan's attacks on the president were more acceptable than Carter's attacks, but he added that voters did not perceive Reagan's criticisms as a positive portrayal of the former California governor. Schwartz suggested, "There are other criticisms of course, but *intelligence* and *generalities* are two themes that work their way into every discussion."<sup>126</sup>

The Carter campaign, too, observed the backlash against a negative campaign. Because opposition campaigns had been effective in 1976, the media strategists for Carter devoted a great deal of time and money to negative campaigns by using facts sheets, print ads, columnists, and Ford's speeches. But Martin Franks, Carter's opposition research chief, opined that negative campaigns tended to backfire. Anthony R. Dolan, a staff member of the Reagan campaign, agreed with him, saying, "[H]e is right, guttersniping does tend to backfire." But at the same time, Dolan maintained that negative campaigns would be highly effective if they were truthful and not strident. "The point here," he stressed, "is that we should not get carried away with the latest from the experts—sure, opposition campaigns need to be handled very carefully—but they are essential in most campaigns, especially this one."<sup>127</sup>

Viguerie showed his support for Reagan in the 1980 presidential campaign, even though he did not wholeheartedly trust the politician. In his publication

*Conservative Digest*, Viguerie declared that he formally endorsed Reagan for president. But he added, "Which is not to say that he is perfect." Even when Reagan ran for president, Viguerie wished a conservative politician close to the New Right, such as Jesse Helms, Jack Kemp, or Paul Laxalt, would be his running mate. "Our endorsement of Ronald Reagan does not extend to George Bush," Viguerie wrote. The remark indicated that the schism between the conservative candidate and the New Right still ran deep.<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, when Reagan won the race on November 4, 1980, Viguerie celebrated the victory, exulting that direct mail contributed to the conservative revolution. "Few people realize how much of this great conservative victory is due to direct mail," he emphasized. Viguerie claimed that over 75 percent of the funds Reagan raised in his 1976 and 1980 campaigns came from direct mail, and over 90 percent of the money collected by Reagan's PAC was the result of direct mail drives. These figures were probably exaggerated, but the enormous number of direct mailings surely played a part in raising funds and sending Reagan's messages to conservatives. Viguerie wrote that conservatives had sent out one billion pieces of advertising mail directly to voters after 1974. He stressed that the new technology enabled conservatives to bypass the liberal ascendancy in mass media including television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. "What is the new technology? It's computers, direct mail, telephone marketing, TV (including cable TV), and radio that asks for contributions, cassette tapes, and the use of toll-free phone numbers, among other things," he boasted.<sup>129</sup>

Indeed, the result of the 1980 presidential election came primarily from Carter's unpopularity, and Reagan might have won the race without new technologies. Yet direct mail of the New Right was doubtless an important factor of America's right turn by 1980. While neoconservatives offered the theoretical backbone of foreign policy and the new Christian right, including Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, sent conservative messages to many evangelicals across the nation, New Right activists provided conservative candidates with pragmatic expertise in organizing and fundraising. As an analyst mentioned, a good budget and a good system for controlling costs would not automatically win the election—"but without them we could lose it."<sup>130</sup>