

George McGovern

Dear Friend,

"The Moral Majority" ... "The New Right" ... "The Right to Life Movement" ... "Pro Family."

... Whatever name it's called, the Extreme Right is raising unprecedented money, recruiting unprecedented numbers of people and posing an unprecedented threat to individual rights in America today.

Under the cloak of Americanism, patriotism and morality, this movement is attacking fundamental American traditions.

It is seeking to destroy our basic rights and individual liberties. It is seeking to subvert the Constitution itself.

Not since McCarthyism in the 1950's has such a movement been so vocal, so well organized and so well financed. So zealous.

This new movement did not develop by chance. Its leaders have seized the opportunity to exploit the fear, anger and frustration that are building in this country because of grave national problems:

- America's loss of world leadership (the hostages in Iran, the war in Vietnam, the dependence on the OPEC nations);
- America's deteriorating economy (uncontrollable inflation and soaring unemployment);
- The deterioration of the quality of life (pollution and urban decay and crime).

It is easy to understand why many people yearn for a return to the "good old days" and to so-called traditional family values.

The leaders of the evangelical right do not have the answers to these problems. They do not even care to consider them. What they do have is the ability to divert national attention from sober consideration of realistic solutions with slogans that instill fear and repression and divisiveness.

Let's not kid ourselves. This movement was created, organized and orchestrated by some of the most sophisticated and

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skillful operatives on the Extreme Right today . . . people like Richard Viguerie, Phyllis Schlafly, and the Reverend Jerry Falwell.

The leaders of this anti-civil liberties movement understand how to manipulate radio and television, mass advertising and direct mail. They know how to reach millions of people and raise millions of dollars. They've proved they know how to "target" Senators and Representatives who disagree with their narrow views for defeat. And they've shown that they can elect their own candidates for Congress, and state legislatures, and local school boards, too.

What do they want?

Perhaps their aims are summed up best in Senate Bill 1808, the so-called "Family Protection Bill." It was introduced in the last Congress by Senator Paul Laxalt of Nevada, and is supported by many of his New Right colleagues.

This bill would:

- restore prayer in the public schools;
- prohibit Federal programs to fund the treatment of venereal disease, contraceptives and abortions;
- halt Federal protection of the civil rights of those with "perverse lifestyles," e.g., homosexuality;
- prevent state and Federal authorities from "impeding" private schools. Translation: Efforts to end tax subsidies of segregationist academies would be stopped;
- allow parents to review textbooks before their use in public schools;
- and even end Federal programs designed to prevent child abuse.

When this legislation was introduced less than a year ago, many people laughed it off. It was so preposterous an attack on basic Constitutional rights that it didn't have a chance.

Nobody's laughing now. The prospects for such legislation have increased enormously as a result of the last election and since its chief sponsor, Senator Laxalt, has become a major power in the new administration.

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Make no mistake about it, the threat is real.

*** Already, Federal funding of abortions for Medicaid recipients has been virtually eliminated. And now Congress could pass a Constitutional Amendment banning abortion for all women.

*** Already, efforts to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment have been successful in such major states as Illinois. And now a political party that explicitly opposes the ERA has been swept into power.

*** Already, prayer is back in public schools in Massachusetts, Louisiana, Kentucky, South Dakota, and other places. And now it is possible that Congress could pass legislation barring the federal courts from ruling on challenges to school prayer.

*** Already, public schools are being pressured by "evangelicals" to teach "creationism" as well as evolution in science classes from Indiana to Georgia. And now the Moral Majority and other evangelical groups have succeeded in electing officials favorable to their views.

*** Already, legislation to curb illegal practices by the CIA and FBI has itself been curbed. And now Senator Barry Goldwater, long a supporter of unrestrained domestic spying by intelligence agencies, has replaced Frank Church as Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee. And there are calls in Congress for reviving the notorious House Un-American Activities Committee.

The danger is clear. The danger is present. The time to act is now.

And the organization which millions of Americans depend upon to act is the American Civil Liberties Union.

Since its founding, the ACLU has been in the forefront of the battle to protect individual rights, even when the going was rough. In fact, especially when the going was rough.

Unlike all too many politicians and elected officials, the ACLU does not determine its principles by keeping its "finger to the wind."

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Unlike many other organizations, the ACLU does not dilute its efforts. It concentrates on civil rights and liberties.

Fact is, a strong and vibrant ACLU is our best protection against the evangelical right and its allies.

But right now, the going is especially rough for the ACLU. It is not strong enough to provide the protection we need.

Consider this. According to a Newsweek report, one right wing evangelical television preacher takes in a million dollars a week, every week.

By contrast, the national ACLU's entire budget for 1981 is only \$4.5 million, what that one evangelical preacher raises in a month. And because of soaring inflation, ACLU is considering budget cuts that would reduce its legal staff, cut back on its regional offices, and cut its Washington legislative office in half. Can you afford to have the ACLU reduce its resources and its effectiveness at this time of exceptional danger?

That's why I'm writing you this letter -- to ask you to join -- or send your contribution, if you're not a "joiner."

I feel that if you and I join with thousands of others concerned with preserving our precious human rights, those freedoms will be enjoyed by all and passed on to our children.

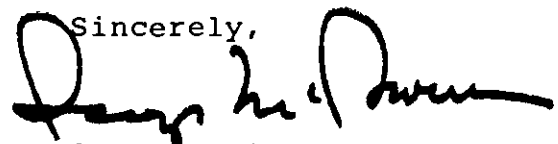
Please do not think that "they" will take care of it for you or that someone else will do your part. I know that many of us who fought so hard for civil rights and to end the Vietnam war are tired, and have turned away from public affairs. But we cannot let the Right Wing steal away our personal freedoms because we are frustrated, or alienated, or because of a failure of nerve.

Let it be said, instead, that we rose to the challenge and did our part.

I make few requests of people. I have never been more serious.

Please commit yourself today by joining.

Sincerely,



George McGovern