

AGENDA SETTING IN AN ERA OF POLITICAL DRIFT

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Remarks before the City Club of San Diego
17 April 1992

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This campaign aims to set an agenda for California, through which California can set an agenda for the United States. This is not an exercise in political theorizing. We know we suffer today from acute political drift—an absence of the leadership and standards adequate to address the many problems which beset our nation.

When we think of the term political drift and recognize the prevailing liberal orthodoxy as at the root of our difficulties, we may imagine that I mean nothing more than what Ronald Reagan meant when he described liberals, not so much as being ignorant, but as knowing so very much about what isn't so.

The drift of liberalism may be captured in a few words: liberal orthodoxy in general comes to this—divide, divide, divide, tax, tax, tax, spend, spend, spend; divide us into groups, tax us into poverty, spend us into dependence.

I go beyond the dangers of liberalism to characterize the political emptiness which dogs our lives, for we live with many false orthodoxies, which have turned political discourse into a dialogue of the deaf. That certainly characterizes Washington, D. C., the one city in America where everybody talks and nobody listens. The false orthodoxies of today are perhaps less frequently but no less damagingly conservative as liberal. Today I will detail many of these false orthodoxies, not in a spirit of criticism but in an effort to point the way to clear solutions which I know the people of California are capable of understanding and adopting.

The need for this is clearest in the false impression of the House banking scandal conveyed by speaker Foley and all too many malefactors in both political parties. Consider their version: they did nothing wrong, they spent no public money, it was only a matter of poor organization and poor bookkeeping.

Baloney. The fact is that members of the House of Representatives were living like grand poobahs, above the law. Not all were equally guilty; some were great abusers while others were only guilty of petty oversights. In the Middle Ages the Catholic Church may have distinguished between those who were guilty of venial corruption and those who were guilty of mortal corruption. As it turns out, the venally corrupt were mainly Republicans, while the mortally corrupt were mainly Democrats.

But the abuses of the accounts were not significant because of the kited checks. The problem is worse. Consider the lame excuse that no public monies were involved. What do they imagine the Sergeant at Arms was paid in, green stamps? Of course public monies were involved. And their very salaries are public monies, which were never intended to give them a life above the law.

But that is what they had, a life in which they were free of government regulation of their banking habits, where they could freely launder monies in a way no one else can do, where they could provide public financing for their campaigns (which no challenger could do). That is the great crime of this company store approach to government. And on the conservative side of the aisle there is a still more significant problem: namely that those in the minority, instead of serving as watchdogs to alert public to the abuses of those who were in charge, simply bought into the system all too often. Our Paul Reveres were asleep on their horses, and we have every right to be angry.

Yes, there exists conservative simple-mindedness also. It consists in a litany of constitutional amendments thrown at audiences instead of solutions applied to problems. School prayer amendments. Balanced budget amendments. Human life amendments. Line item veto amendments. And the list goes on. The wonder is that such a recipe for political impotence could be sold to the public as easier than real leadership applied to real problems.

The agenda of self-government begins by re-establishing the dependence of lawmakers on the people who elect them. When we re-affirm the principles of the American founders, the belief that mankind is capable of self-government, we mean to vindicate the authority of ordinary citizens and to keep government within law, not above the law. We will succeed in revitalizing self-government only if we knock down the ruling orthodoxies of the day, which have blinded us to serious threats to our freedom.

I will use concrete examples in order to fix in your minds the seriousness of the problems of political indecision and moral decay, which work insidiously to corrode the cement which heretofore has bound Americans into a union of freedom-loving citizens.

Consider the term illegitimacy. What comes first to your minds, I know this, is the squalor and welfare dependency of urban minority communities, mainly black. But what will you say if I tell you that that picture is entirely false? That it is a picture that has been cultivated with the perverse two-fold effect of isolating black communities at the same time as blinding Americans to their own serious failings?

Let the numbers tell the story. Americans generate 1.5 million live births every year, an alarming percentage of which are out of wedlock. That is the story you have heard again and again. You have also heard that among those children born out of wedlock most are black—which is not so. Rather, it is true that among black women a much larger percentage of live births are out of wedlock than among Anglo or Hispanic women. The percentages are 70%, 22%, and 18% respectively. That 70% is the figure that sticks in your minds and leads you to wring your hands about the breakdown of the black family and to encourage social policy mongers to focus a magnifying glass on black communities, despite the fact that 70% of a small number may still be considerably smaller than 22% of a far larger number. In addition, for the last generation the rate of increase in illegitimacy for Anglo women has been steeper than that for black women.

But these facts are not the source of the mistaken impression conveyed about the state of our union today. To see the full picture you must challenge the assumption that the discussion of

illegitimacy ought to be limited to live births out of wedlock. Today, you see we have as many abortions every year as we do live births—another 1.5 million. And guess what: two-thirds of those occur among unmarried women. In short, if we calculated every unmarried pregnancy as a problem of illegitimacy, we would discover that our problem is far more alarming than we have been told. Nor could we still focus on the black community as the heart of the problem, for the statistics regarding abortion are the opposite of those regarding live births—that is, among Anglo women roughly 70% of the abortions are out of wedlock, while fewer than one-third of all abortions occur to minority women. Black women are being singled out because they kill their offspring at a far lower rate than others and not because they are less disciplined than others. Now that you see the true picture—namely, that our country has experienced rampant illegitimacy across the board—it should not be difficult to figure out what effect the concentration on the black community has had. It has blinded you to the fact of pervasive and deep moral decay in our society. When we fail to see the true problem, we fail to take any corrective measures to address it.

When we formulate social policies based on an orthodoxy that distorts reality, we act only to perpetuate the underlying condition, which is tearing at the vitals of our society. That is why I have proposed not only to reform dependency-creating welfare policies that spawn illegitimate births, but also to stigmatize abortion and the underlying moral laxity that has made it a political issue. The present path we are on can reach no end but the ultimate cannibalization of the family.

Bearing in mind this extensive example of perverse orthodoxies, we can cite far more briefly many others no important in posing obstacles to our future prosperity.

In our foreign affairs we are especially vulnerable today, for our policy makers seem to be not at all conversant with the fundamental principles of our republic. That is doubtless the reason that they imagine that it is possible to build free democracies and free market economies using the methods of socialism, consumption-driven government to government aid. Such a “bailout” of the former Soviet Union is doomed to failure.

This is especially regrettable insofar as known alternatives, with a real possibility of success, actually exist. This United States was once a new democracy and a new free economy. It began with a still more crushing burden of debt and a gigantic need for infrastructure building. Happily, it built on principles of freedom, letting productive energy rather than consumption lead the way. Even the foreign money that came in such as that from Dutch bankers, went into productive channels and not into mere government expenditures. That is the only way we can truly aid the ex-Soviet Union. Everything else is a mere illusion of the false orthodoxies of our own time.

Among these false orthodoxies, which explain much of political drift, none is more prominent than the lie that parents cannot educate their children. We have built up a Byzantine system of education that mis-educates every bit as often as it educates—all the time routinely blaming its failures on the parents and children rather than on the true authors of this failure, education bureaucracies totally unfit for such serious work

While attacking parents for the time they permit their children to watch television, for leaving the children unsupervised, for failures of discipline at home, and for the parents' own general ignorance, we neglect altogether the extent to which the state—acting through its education bureaucracy—has separated parents from children and undermined parental authority to the point that only hero parents can overcome the effects of such a system.

We treat an educational system that has evolved only in the last eighty years as if it were inscribed in holy tablets. In reality it was an experiment from early in this century—an experiment which has failed. But our bureaucrat educators react like the laboratory scientist who, finding his experiment to have failed, simply sent out for more mice, and who continued to do so even though each new cohort died in the experiment, declaring that he was determined to continue until he found some mice who survived. Well, someone from Missouri might think that he had seen enough, and that perhaps the experiment ought to be changed.

That is the reason that I support parental choice—scholarships for students to study where the parents may choose—as a first step toward taking our children back from the state and establishing them within the breasts of families that will protect and educate them.

There are conservative orthodoxies that are no less deceptive in the field of education. For thirty years now we have demanded a school prayer amendment, not once pausing to notice the incongruity of training believers to pray to the state for the right to pray. This orthodoxy suggests that it might be wise for parents to barter away their children into the hands of godless schools in exchange for a 30-second non-denominational prayer. That is a lunacy, which it is very hard to imagine any true American from the founding generation ever falling prey to. The fact is, American schools have been made more rigorously atheistic than anything ever accomplished in the old Soviet Union. And it makes far better sense to take children away from them than to beg for a little prayer to leaven the gruel of skepticism that is routinely poured into them.

A new orthodoxy holds that the end of the Cold War makes defense spending unnecessary, that we have a peace dividend to pass around in ever new forms of government welfare. This orthodoxy builds on the mistake of assuming that the government's obligation to defend the society derives only from the existence of a particular, named enemy state. In reality, our government has the obligation to defend us from any potential threat. In a world in which it is more rather than less difficult to pinpoint the source of such a threat, defense may even be more costly.

We do not forget that the policy of Mutual Assured Destruction was a substitute for a more costly defense—defense on the cheap. Now that it no longer serves our needs, we face far tougher judgments and decisions.

That is the reason that I have rejected proposed defense budget cuts that make the mistake of undermining American preparedness. All of the existing proposals threaten to cut out weapons production, leaving only research and development and armed forces as the basis of a defense establishment.

On those grounds, within in a very few years we will find that we have troops using obsolescent arms and an expensive research industry going nowhere—not to mention the loss of

numerous jobs in the defense industry. This is not 1941. Never again in the life of this country will we enjoy 18 months to gear up in order to repel a major threat to our security. In the future, we will either be prepared for each threat as it arrives, or we will fall. That is the true price of defense cutbacks now

A less pervasive but still worrisome orthodoxy is the mob cry for federal term limits, imposed through state enactments. The arguments seems to be that, since terms limits are a good idea at the state level, they will be even better at the federal level. To that end, imposing such a change, which amounts to a change in the federal Constitution, without going through the legitimate process for amending the Constitution, is an irresistible idea.

It is extraordinary that people who pose as conservatives can join with others far less thoughtful in such a show of disdain for our federal Constitution. Furthermore, their arguments in defense of term limits ignore altogether the copious and intelligent arguments against that very idea by several of our leading founding fathers

No one would insist that the founders were in every particular invariably right in their judgment. But I would insist that their deliberate judgments are always relevant, and that no modern statesman can pose as a conservative who does not accept the obligation at least to respond to such arguments before rejecting them.

Besides, the founders also sustained that there was no contradiction between term limits universally imposed throughout the states while being absent from the federal government. And every evidence suggests that that is a workable solution for the United States, providing more effective challenges for entrenched congressional incumbents while also securing the nation from the complete parochialization of its national politics. A vision of the good of the nation as a whole is an indispensable condition for the effective operation of the federal government. Such a vision would be far less likely to emerge in a Congress exclusively in the hands of itinerant officeholders.

Perhaps the most seriously dangerous orthodoxy of our age is the belief that questions of civil rights can only be resolved in terms of group interests. Liberals live and die by this faith and conservatives too often offer little more than lip service to resist it. Indeed, last fall some supposedly conservative representatives and senators (Mr. Seymour among them) joined with liberals to pass the worst civil rights law ever placed on our books—a law based squarely on this perverse principle.

The 1991 Civil Rights Act abandoned the ideal of the same justice for rich and for poor—for which George Washington began to pray as early as 1783—and replaced it with a regime that explicitly subjects Americans to different standards of justice based on their circumstances.

There can be no future for freedom in an American in which this orthodoxy is not successfully challenged and overturned. That is the reason I have pledged to spare no effort in erasing every last syllable of race, gender, ethnic, or other preferences in all of our laws.

It is a disgrace among freemen that we are subject to as many as 150 federal civil rights laws, often mutually contradictory and always confusing. It is imperative that they be consoli-

dated into a single, consistent code, re-establishing the principle of common civil rights for all Americans, without exceptions.

Moreover, in undertaking this work we undertake as well to drive out of polite society every attempt to divide Americans in competing racial, gender, and ethnic groups. The politics of division that Dianne Feinstein practices serves no useful purpose in America—besides boosting demagogues into office. Feinstein's determination to make gender an issue in this election is a symptom of how deep our illness is, for she imagines it to be in her interest to exaggerate tendencies, which ultimately, if unchecked, will destroy America. Similarly, her riding on Anita Hill's hemline, with her politics of rage, displays the same cavalier attitude about the fate of the country. I am confident, however, that the people of California will be no less discerning in dealing with the return of Anita Hill in the form of Feinstein than they were in dealing with the original.

A deeper, somewhat more hidden orthodoxy is the belief that no problem can be solved without being referred to Washington for its solution. The insane proposal to make gang membership a federal crime is a perfect illustration of this fact, for that idea of Mr. Seymour's betrays two ignorances in a single stroke.

First, it demonstrates that he does not understand the nature of the police power, and its proper placement in the hands of the state and not the federal government. Thus he will be utterly incapable of defending state-chartered credit unions from the assault on their independence, which is right now underway in the federal government. States' rights mean nothing to Mr. Seymour, and every local itch qualifies for a federal back-scratch. There is at least a kernel of truth in the orthodoxy that, if the federal government doesn't tackle a problem, it won't get done; namely, at least it won't get done badly.

Secondly, he fails to perceive that the problem of gangs cannot be resolved by exacerbating the very circumstance which enables them to thrive today—that is the increasing impotence of local communities. One would proceed far more surely to eliminate gangs by restoring parents to respect in the eyes of their children. Such respect is always a product of just authority and power. Parents will put an end to gangs in proportion as they can actually make the kinds of decisions in their own lives that will compel the attention of their children. Rather than displacing power and authority to Washington, he ought to be urging its increase in families, churches, and communities—even devolving too large political units into smaller units in order to foster the reality and sense of control which will enable parents to impress their youngsters with appropriate restraints.

When will we ever resolve the terrible dilemma of illegal immigration, if we continue to phrase the problem mainly as a question of welfare expenditures on illegal immigrants, instead of what is truly the case, luring illegal immigrants into this country to perform jobs that we cannot get welfare recipients off their posteriors to do? A government that pays people not to work can hardly afford to be amazed that others will fill in the vacuum thus created, illegally if need be.

Materially, the most harmful orthodoxy we have lived with is the notion that a federal debt is a blessing without which no economic growth is possible. That is a view shared on both sides of the political aisle in Washington, and it has ruled unchallenged for thirty-one years.

This is the view that makes the deficit the annual increase on the national debt a permanent feature of our government, for one cannot use the debt to manage the economy without increasing the debt each year.

We might believe that experience alone would demonstrate the absurdity of this orthodoxy, save that no matter whom we have sent to Washington the last thirty years, not one of them has seemed to master it. We might believe that the disastrous consequences in our economy, the competition for credit and the inflexibility imposed on our financial institutions in financial hard times, would suggest that a different view was needed. Still, the orthodoxy prevails

If nothing else, we might believe that even a little bit of pride would lead to a change. For who wants to live permanently in his own country as a mere renter rather than as an owner? Still, our government does nothing to pay off our debt, even though it is very much possible to do so without increasing taxes and without inflation. That is why I have insisted on re-directing the debate, formally calling to retire the debt, and providing sure means for doing so. We can pinpoint the future growth that will enable us to pay off our debt which, though great, is considerably smaller than the debt with which the nation began, calculated as a ratio to annual revenues), and to do so much as a homeowner would anticipate paying off a mortgage (which often sustains approximately the same ratio to annual income as our national debt presently sustains to annual revenues).

We confront the orthodoxy of a balanced budget amendment repeatedly invoked by so-called conservatives, despite its manifest failure to discipline state governments—instead of serious proposals to retire the national debt—another sign of our political drift. Some, like Mr. Dannemeyer, even propose a constitutional convention for the purpose, again revealing an extraordinary lack of sophistication about the foundations of our polity and the dangers associated with inviting tampering with the foundation documents. Such impossible dreams as these accomplish nothing more than to blind us to the reality that we hold in our own hands the capacity to make the needed changes in our national life.

Nor can we afford any longer to accept the excuse of impotence that all too many offer, on account of their being in the minority in government. The fact is, we do not have a parliamentary system, and anyone with intelligence of purpose and dedicated spirit can provide the leadership that will invigorate our system. Those who, on the other hand, can boast nothing more than their votes against measures, which nonetheless pass and precipitate our country's downward spiral can claim no more reputation than to be losers.

I have learned this lesson well at the Commission on Civil Rights. There I gained deep appreciation for the quiet victories that reward dedicated efforts by altering the discourse and achieving policy changes long after the tribunes of orthodoxy (who have notoriously short attention spans) have gone on to other controversies.