

## Explaining Causation... *The New Right*

### Directions:

1. Read the summary below. Highlight your evidence for CAUSES of the New Right forming.

There was nothing truly new about political and economic **conservatism** that led to the election of **Ronald Reagan** in 1980. **BARRY GOLDWATER** based his 1964 Presidential campaign on the premise that the **New Deal** should be reversed. He declared that big government was the greatest threat to American liberty. [Reagan later stated as much in his inaugural address.] According to conservatives, **social spending** and **welfare** needed to be cut to reduce the **tax burden** on individuals and families. **Federalism** needed to be restored as central **activism** in all three branches had not solved problems, only created new ones. And... Government **regulations** were inhibiting economic growth and personal freedoms. Goldwater lost, and LBJ was elected... and created an even bigger welfare state with his Great Society. Liberalism was at its height in the 1960s, but conservatives were slowly reorganizing and responding to the changes of the liberal era.

When **foreign competition** (Japan, Germany) made inroads against American corporations in the 1970s, many people began to believe **Goldwater** had been right. **Big business** wielded its financial resources as a backbone of the **NEW RIGHT MOVEMENT**. Also... Not everyone was happy with the social changes brought forth in America in the 1960s and 1970s. When *Roe vs. Wade* guaranteed the right to an abortion, a fervent **pro-life movement** dedicated to protecting the "unborn child" took root. **Antifeminists** rallied against the **Equal Rights Amendment** and the eroding traditional family unit. Many ordinary Americans were shocked by the **sexual permissiveness** found in music, counterculture, films, and magazines. Those who believed **homosexuality** was sinful lambasted the newly vocal **Gay Rights Movement**. As the **divorce and crime rates** rose, an increasing number of Americans began to blame the **liberal welfare establishment** for social maladies. A cultural war unfolded by the end of the 1970s. *Enter the New Right...* The **NEW RIGHT** was a combination of **Christian religious leaders, conservative business bigwigs** who claimed that **environmental and labor regulations** were undermining the competitiveness of American firms in the **global market**, and a few fringe political groups.

Another linchpin of the conservative backlash was the **CHRISTIAN RIGHT**. Since the 1950s, members of the evangelical Christian denominations increased fivefold. By the mid-1970s, over a quarter of adult Americans identified themselves as born-again Christians. Religious broadcasters in the late 1970s and '80s took advantage of the boom in cable and satellite television by creating stations and networks that reached more people than ever before. In the 1950s, when television first swept the nation and transformed American culture, Billy Graham entered people's living rooms. His publicized events continued into modern times, and he was joined by many others such as **FUNDAMENTALIST, JERRY FALWELL** who believed in a literal interpretation of the Bible. **Pentecostal PAT ROBERTSON** also claimed the Holy Spirit communicated directly with people on a regular basis. These two, among others, galvanized the New Right behind a general fear that America was experiencing a **moral decline**. They explained that **homosexuality** was a sin, and that a **traditional woman's role** should be protected for the best interest of children and

American values. They criticized the "**liberal**" **media** for corrupting America's youth. They chided the courts for taking religion out of the public schools (*Engle v Vitale*) and supported private Christian academies and homeschooling as alternatives.

Many **Catholic Americans** agreed with the sentiments of the **New Right**. The reforming spirit of the Catholic Church reached its high water mark in the 1960s with a convention called **VATICAN II**. Latin was dropped as a requirement for the mass. Lay people were given a greater role in Church services. Support was given for ecumenical outreach to other Christian denominations and Jewish synagogues. This liberalism also ended by the 80s, as social politics of the time forged connections between Catholic and Protestant leaders. Abortion and "**FAMILY RIGHTS**" were seen as areas of common ground. The appointment of the conservative **JOHN PAUL II** in 1979 marked an end to the reform spirit within the Church. Protestants and Catholics stood united as never before by the election of 1980.

New Right leaders were highly organized and understood the potential of mass telecommunications. **PAT ROBERTSON** formed the **CHRISTIAN BROADCASTING NETWORK** to send his message. The **PTL (PRAISE THE LORD)** Club led by **JIM BAKKER** transmitted faith healing and raucous religious revival to the largest viewing audience of any daily program in the world. They built massive databases containing the names and addresses of potential financial contributors and regularly solicited funds. In 1979, Jerry Falwell formed the **MORAL MAJORITY**, Inc. This group and hundreds of others raised money to defeat liberal senators, representatives, and governors. They sought to control school boards on the local level to advance their conservative agenda. **Ronald Reagan** freely accepted contributions from the **New Right** on his way to the Presidency in 1980.

Like most movements, the **New Right** contained an extremist element. Racial hatred groups like the **Ku Klux Klan** and the **AMERICAN NAZI PARTY** joined the outcry against American moral decline. **Ultra-libertarian militia groups** formed in many states dedicated to attacking the American government they believed had become far too invasive. They steadfastly supported the right to bear arms as a means to defend themselves from tyranny. Some groups began stockpiling arsenals. These organizations interpreted the term "**cultural war**" in the most literal, ominous sense.

In 1980, confidence in the American economy and government hit rock bottom. Looking for a change and the promise of a better future, voters turned to **RONALD REAGAN** for answers. His message was clear. **Government has become too big** and needs to be trimmed down to size. **Taxes are insanely high** and need to be cut to stimulate growth and investment. **Military spending should be increased** to fix the degenerating state of the **American war machine**. **Morality and character need to be reemphasized** in American life. The United States is still the largest superpower in the world with the best system of government. It's time to feel good about being an American again, and it's time to finally win the **Cold War**.

(source: ushistory.org)