

## THE ELECTION AND THE "MORAL MAJORITY"

It is of unusual importance that we be clear about the role of the Moral Majority -- in the last election, and in the mood of the country.

The Moral Majority does not represent this country's evangelical population, politically, and neither the evangelical movement nor the Moral Majority was responsible for Reagan's victory; or for the defeat of liberal Senators.

To begin with, the Moral Majority is a "right-wing" political apparatus, according to the common definition of that term; but the evangelical population is *not* right-wing, politically. "Are government social programs a way to deal with social problems?" The proper "right-wing" and Moral Majority answer to that question is "no." But a slightly higher percentage of evangelicals than of non-evangelicals answer "yes."

The Moral Majority and conventional "right-wingers" support more nuclear power plants -- but about the same percentage of evangelicals and of non-evangelicals support them. The registration of firearms is opposed by the Moral Majority and conventional "right-wing" philosophy. But the same percentage of evangelicals and of non-evangelicals oppose firearm registration.

The point is that people who are conservative on public-moral issues, such as abortion or bible-reading in the schools, are not necessarily conservative on economic issues, or foreign affairs, or energy. The Moral Majority is a group of evangelicals who happen to be political conservatives. They reflect the evangelical population's beliefs about public-moral issues; but they don't represent evangelicals on most political issues.

Earl Raab

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Of course, as an apparatus for political conservatism (not as an evangelical group), the Moral Majority undoubtedly helped to defeat some Senators or Congressmen. But it did so only by stressing that those candidates did not fit the electorate's "mood."

There was a "conservative" edge to that electoral mood -- having to do with government spending, inflation and America's diminished stature in the world -- but it was primarily an anti-establishment mood ('throw the rascals out'), built around frustration on those issues. The evidence is overwhelming that most people voted "against" rather than "for." The Moral Majority did not create either the anti-establishment mood or its conservative edge. Rather, the Moral Majority rode the mood that was already gathering -- like a surfer finding a good wave to ride. (A slightly higher proportion of evangelicals voted anti-establishment, not because they bought some ideological conservative package, but because of a somewhat higher concern about the moral condition in the nation.)

So what's all the fuss? Well, the Moral Majority is trying to sell the idea that it *does* represent evangelicals politically; and that it *was* responsible for the electoral mood. And many who are hostile to the Moral Majority are helping the Moral Majority in this endeavor by giving it too much credit for what happened last week.

If the Moral Majority sells to politicians the idea that *it* was heavily responsible, then the idea might as well be true. One thinks of the tale of the Emperor's Clothes -- although it is rather unsettling to think of the Reverend Jerry Falwell unclothed.

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There would be some reasons for concern if the Moral Majority succeeded in over-selling itself and gained more political influence as a result. But the big mistake would be for opponents of the Moral Majority to make that group the main target. The big mistake for those who are uneasy about the political mood in the country would be to blame it on such groups as the Moral Majority. The political mood preceded the Moral Majority. The mood is there for a reason. A lot of voters are up for grabs. There is a political vacuum out there.

If the political center is to prevail in this country, it had better not become preoccupied with this or that bogeyman. Instead, it had better pay some fresh, positive and sane attention to the objective reasons for the public mood.

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## West Bank 'Growth' During Begin's Term

### Jerusalem

The number of Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank has increased more than five-fold in the 3½ years since Prime Minister Menachem Begin took office, a government official said yesterday.

Mattityahu Shmulevitz, director of the prime minister's office, said by the end of Begin's four-year term next November, there could be 25,000 Jews living in the former Jordanian territory.

There are now 17,400 Jews living on 68 settlements across the West Bank. When Begin's Likud bloc ousted the Labor Party in May 1977, Shmulevitz said there were 3200 Jews living in 24 outposts.

He provided the statistics in a

memorandum, apparently intended for use in Begin's re-election campaign, which went on to say, "thousands more Jews could settle in the region if the Likud wins another term in office."

Israeli moves to set up settlements in the West Bank as well as in the occupied Gaza Strip and Golan Heights have been a long-standing irritant in relations with Washington and a bone of contention with Cairo.

Begin and other officials have said Israel planned to set up only 10 more settlements on the West Bank and then concentrate on beefing up the existing ones. There is confusion as to how many new settlements remain to be established.

United Press