

# THE HERITAGE LECTURES

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The Challenge to  
Conservatives

*By Hon. Donald P. Hodel*



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# THE CHALLENGE TO CONSERVATIVES

by The Honorable Donald P. Hodel

I am excited and enthusiastic about being with you today, and I want to start by paying tribute to The Heritage Foundation for its willingness to sponsor these seminars, which are important because they recognize that ideas matter. I also want to pay tribute to those who had the vision to found such an organization and who realized that, unless you can provide philosophical and ideological underpinning for your political ideas, you have difficulty obtaining the public support for them that they merit.

The Heritage Foundation's *Mandate for Leadership* was a classic document in charting the course for this Administration. While the report cards to date indicate that we have fallen short, consider where we might be and how much further we might have fallen had there never been such a document. So I commend The Heritage Foundation.

I would like to speak to the issue of why I am conservative and what I think is the challenge for conservatives.

My parents came to this country from Canada as young adults, and they never let me forget that we owe something to a society that gives us so much freedom and opportunity. They made it clear to me that freedom is the essence of this nation. I also learned that ideas matter, that values have consequences, that leadership matters, and that the philosophical and spiritual quality of leaders also matters.

**Judeo-Christian Values.** Our foundational documents, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence were drafted by men who were steeped in the Judeo-Christian value system. They believed they were writing these documents for a body politic that would be populated by citizens who also were steeped in the Judeo-Christian value system. They gave us a great deal of freedom and individual opportunity; they did not visualize a government that would inject itself into the daily life of its citizens. The Founders envisioned a body politic made up of people who had an internal moral gyroscope that would help them try to do right because it was right and not do wrong because it was wrong, not because they feared being caught.

President John Adams said our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people, that it was wholly inadequate for the government of any other. The challenge we confront today is how to preserve the freedoms our Founding Fathers gave us.

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He spoke at The Heritage Foundation on May 17, 1988, as part of a series of lectures on "What It Means to Be a Conservative."

ISSN 0272-1155. ©1988 by The Heritage Foundation.

I would like to recite some recent history. In 1960, in a conservative speech to the Republican National Convention, Barry Goldwater ignited a spark. In 1964, because of that speech, he was our standard bearer. During that campaign Ronald Reagan delivered "the speech," memorable because it set forth the principles that stimulated and excited us and brought us to his cause. With that speech, Ronald Reagan fanned the spark into a flame. It grew in 1968, 1976, and 1980, when he was elected President of the United States. Ronald Reagan came with a strong conservative message...to bring change. He wanted a strong America, an America that would be the leader of the free world. He wanted an America that could and would focus on rolling back communism and would not accept Brezhnev's Doctrine that once a nation has gone communist it always stays communist.

**Keeping Alive the Flame.** He brought the conservative message that we oppose fiscal irresponsibility and deficit spending, federal government intervention in the market place and in the daily lives of Americans. His goal was to turn loose the imagination, initiative, and innovation of the private sector. He has had great success compared to what some of us thought could be accomplished. Ronald Reagan also brought the vision of a moral U.S., which recognizes the importance of family and of education to the American scene.

Those Americans who share the ideals of Ronald Reagan know there is no place for them but the Republican Party. But, in 1988, Ronald Reagan will not be our standard bearer, so the question we face is keeping alive this flame that Ronald Reagan lit. The challenge to conservatives in the post-Reagan era is: How do we proceed to keep alive that flame and see to it that Ronald Reagan does not become a footnote in American history?

First, we need to have confidence in our cause and in ourselves. Admittedly, we have had frustrations when we have fallen short. I look at the Department of the Interior and see things I wish we had been able to accomplish that we have not. I am sure others who have a broader view of the Administration can go to any department and say "if only, if only." Yet much has been done, much more than we thought possible in 1980.

Ronald Reagan came, in his words, to try to build a shining city on a hill. I think it is up to us as conservatives to continue to try to build that shining city.

**Unhyphenated Conservative.** Second, we need to be careful today about using labels. Ask a newcomer to political life, "Are you a liberal, conservative, or a moderate?" Many will say, "I am a moderate." Ask them what they believe in, and they will say, "I believe in fiscal responsibility, strong national defense, standing up to the communists; I want to see the family restored to its proper place, and I want a good education for our kids." Ten years ago, we would have called that person a right winger for holding those views.

Today, Ronald Reagan has shifted the middle ground in such a way that these people who are new to politics think of themselves as supporting "moderate" positions. You and I still use the label "conservative," so we need to be careful about those labels. I admire Jack Kemp for many things, but I am not in favor of labels like "progressive conservative." I like to think of myself as just a plain, unhyphenated conservative.

Third, we need to recognize that the real world and the future of this nation reside outside the Washington Beltway. We must bring about what happens inside the Beltway,

but the mechanism for doing so rests outside the Beltway with the American people. We need to mobilize them if we seek to change Congress and to direct the leadership of this country. We need to find a way to reach them.

**The Next Generation.** Fourth, we need to develop the next generation of conservative leaders. In doing so, we need to recognize that the training ground, the place to obtain experience, is at the local and state level. When able, articulate, committed conservatives develop at those levels, they will be in a far better position to attract support for U.S. House of Representatives and Senate seats. And we should hope they will have become so committed to the conservative philosophy that, when they come to Washington, they will be able to resist the temptation to change.

I was present at a dinner several years ago where a number of people from the news media were talking about a conservative, a former conservative, I should say. They were talking about how he had "grown" since he came to Washington, D.C. They meant that he had moved to the left. I hope that we will identify, support, and elect conservative leaders who will know better than to try to "grow" in those terms when they find themselves in the nation's capital.

**A Cadre of Conservatives in the Media.** Fifth, we need to develop a cadre of conservatives in the media. This is a serious problem. If you have not read Bill Rusher's book, *The Coming Battle for the Media*, you can not appreciate how serious this problem is. He catalogues in detail the extent to which former Carter Administration officials now are holding key positions at the major networks, in the major newspapers, and along with them, as major officials in the Dukakis Administration in Massachusetts. When we wonder why we see the tremendous disparity in favorable and unfavorable coverage on the nightly news, the problem is explained in this book, and we must come to grips with it.

Sixth, we need to stay in the fray. We cannot afford to withdraw just because we are not happy about some element of it. We cannot afford to withdraw from this battle.

Finally, we need to support George Bush in 1988 if we seek to have an impact on the Bush Administration in 1989 and beyond. We cannot play in this ballgame if we do not participate in that campaign. If we are not supportive of the Vice President's campaign efforts, by what right can we claim to tell him what to do and what directions to take in 1989?

I often am asked by conservatives why I should support George Bush, most recently in an interview for a conservative magazine.

**Issues '88.** First of all, George Bush clearly has identified himself in his own terms as a conservative. Second, he has stood with President Reagan through eight years on every issue where you and I have supported the President because those are conservative issues. He has been there.

Michael Dukakis, on the other hand, is terribly to the left. This is a man that so far has not been identified by the American people for a leftist position, but that is where he stands. I submit to you that for a conservative or a Republican to vote for Michael Dukakis

is like a chicken voting for Colonel Sanders. I do not know if you are aware of it but Dukakis has threatened America. He has said, "I will do for America what I've done for Massachusetts."

We need to stand against the liberal tactic of "divide and conquer." I have written an article in *National Review* that goes into greater depth on this subject. I will not go into it now, but the liberals are suggesting to us that there is some inherent incompatibility between economic, foreign policy, and social policy conservatives. That just is not true. Not only can they work together, but they are compatible. The best evidence of that is the *Issues '88* work that has been done by The Heritage Foundation and the Free Congress Foundation.

**A Detailed Expose of Communist Subversion.** I would like to close by making an announcement. I am privileged today to announce a decision that we have made at the Department of the Interior. I believe that many of the roots of the conservative commitment against international communism on philosophical or moral grounds can be found in the writings of Whittaker Chambers. I am going to quote from a document I signed today.

"In 1948, Mr. Chambers hid microfilmed documents on his farm in Maryland which became known as 'the Pumpkin Papers.' Perhaps as much as anything, they contributed to the eventual perjury conviction of Alger Hiss.

"Chambers wrote his autobiography, *Witness*, on that farm. Published in 1952, it contained a detailed expose of Communist subversion in the U.S. Government; but the book also gave us an important message.

"Mr. Chambers, a gifted writer, gave witness that at the core of the Hiss case was the conflict of two irreconcilable faiths--Godless Communism versus the freedom of Divinely created and inspired Man. In that remarkable piece of American literature, Mr. Chambers explained to an innocent nation, as he later reiterated, that 'this struggle is universal and mortal, and only by reason of it, on condition that you are willing to die that your faith may live, can you conceivably recover the greatness which is in the soul of men.'

"President Reagan posthumously awarded Whittaker Chambers the Presidential Medal of Freedom on March 26, 1984. In making the award, the President summed it up well when he said:

'At a critical moment in our Nation's history, Whittaker Chambers stood alone against the brooding terrors of our age. Consummate intellectual, writer of moving, majestic prose, and witness to the truth, he became the focus of a momentous controversy in American history that symbolized our century's epic struggle between freedom and totalitarianism, a controversy in which the solitary figure of Whittaker Chambers personified the mystery of human redemption in the face of evil and suffering. As long as humanity speaks of virtue and dreams of freedom, the life and writings of Whittaker Chambers will ennoble and inspire.'

"With this background in mind, I have decided that the Whittaker Chambers Farm should be designated as a National Historic Landmark.

"My staff informs me that certain persons or organizations appear to be engaged in an effort to prevent designation of the Whittaker Chambers Farms as a National Historic Landmark. It is reported to me, for example, that they have attempted to convince the Maryland State Historic Preservation Officer to withdraw his prior, affirmative recommendation and that they have contacted certain congressional committees with the apparent aim of having them become involved.

"Such persons or organizations have not communicated with me, although I have considered their statement of objection as forwarded to me by National Park Service Director William Mott. The National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) argues that there 'are other sites of equal, if not greater, integrity where the historic significance of this Hiss-Chambers controversy could be recognized.' The NPCA suggests that such sites include the Alger Hiss home in Georgetown. This Secretary of the Interior will not designate that site as a National Historic Landmark.

"If there be objection by some as to this designation, or if there is controversy, so be it. When we consider Mr. Chamber's observation that one must be 'willing to die that your faith may live,' it seems to me that mere controversy is not sufficient reason to walk away from the opportunity to do what is right.

"Therefore, pursuant to the applicable statute and regulations, I hereby designate the Whittaker Chambers Farm, as described in the attachments hereto, as a National Historic Landmark. Dated this 17th day of May, 1988."

**Cause of Human Freedom.** Last fall, President Reagan spoke to the Corps of Cadets. He talked of the men and women who have died in our cause, and he described it in these terms. He said, "It is the cause of life as God meant life to be lived. It is the cause of human freedom." That, ladies and gentlemen, is the same cause to which you and I are called. That is our mission, that is our commitment, we dare not falter.

God bless you, and God bless America.

