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Domestic Anticommunism In Alabama And The Resurgence Of American Conservatism

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HISTORY

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the pervasive anticommunist movement in Cold War Alabama. It considers the ways in which many white conservative Alabamians used anticommunism to resist the dramatic social and political changes of the 1960s and 1970s. During this time, Alabama's anticommunist campaign focused on seeking out "subversives" in public schools. Another main target of the state's anticommunist network was the black civil rights movement. As the struggle for racial equality gained momentum, many white Alabamians responded by labeling civil rights activists as communists. The thesis argues that Alabama's anticommunist movement was directed against radicals in academia, secularism, the federal government, non-traditional gender roles, sexual "deviance," liberalism, and black civil rights. Such use of anticommunism did not marginalize the South, but instead joined it with northern and western anticommunists fashioning a deep-seated conservative political movement. By examining the ways in which Alabama assembled a conservative anticommunist campaign during the 1960s and early 1970s, we can see how the South helped shape Cold War American culture and politics.

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INTRODUCTION

> The cadre of [anticommunists] seems to be formed primarily of wealthy business men, retired military officers and little old ladies in tennis shoes. They are bound together by an obsessive fear of "communism" a word which they define to include any ideas differing from their own.
>
> — *New York Times Magazine*
> 1961

> I believe that the Alabama syndrome reveals our sister states in the South comprise the target area for a centrally-directed revolution which is intended to eventually engulf the entire United States.
>
> — Major Arch E. Roberts
> 1965[1]

On Monday night, April 30, 1962, a crowd of more than 600 filed into a junior high school auditorium in an upper-class neighborhood in Birmingham to listen to the fifth in a series of lectures on domestic anticommunism. In the lecture entitled, "Challenge to Parents, Teachers, and American Youth," Dr. Houston Cole, president of Jacksonville State College in Alabama, warned the audience of the "Communist threat to education."[2] Nearly four years later in February 1966, Alabama congressman John H. Buchanan, Jr. received an embittered letter urging him to halt the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) investigation of the Ku Klux Klan and focus on "our *real* enemy"—communists. Homegrown communists, according to Birmingham resident Mrs. F. D. Cooch, "are allowed to walk free, stir up agitation among our young peoples, among the negroes, the atheist, and what have you." Like hundreds of similar letters

[1] *New York Times Magazine*, August 20, 1961, p. 12; "Speaker Tells Legislators 'U.N. is Subversive Tool,'" *The Montgomery Advertiser*, April 1, 1965.
[2] *Birmingham Post-Herald*, 30 April 1962, p. 12.

addressed to Congressman Buchanan, a member of HUAC, Mrs. Cooch protested the Ku Klux Klan hearings and pressured him to protect the nation "from the liberals, Supreme Court, Beatniks, communist, atheist, who are our real enemies."[3]

One month earlier similar stacks of angry letters arrived in Buchanan's office. This set of correspondence, however, protested the speaking engagement of a "known Communist" at the Alabama Educational Association's annual convention in Birmingham. The notification in the ultra-conservative newspaper, *Birmingham Independent*, of Max Lerner's arrival sparked a widespread anticommunist letter-writing campaign against the Jewish professor from Brandeis University.[4]

Events like these in Alabama call into question many previously held assumptions about American culture and politics during the Cold War era. The prevailing narratives of twentieth-century United States history have portrayed the post-World War II and early Cold War years as a period of political and cultural consensus rooted in traditional conceptions of American values. Postwar prosperity characterized the era. Such phrases as "the age of affluence" or "the fabulous fifties" symbolized the triumph of the New Deal's liberal capitalism and welfare policy. Yet, resistance to the New Deal order, the increasing prominence of the Republican Party, and the swing to the right have forced historians to rethink and reexamine postwar politics and culture. The end of the long Cold War during the Reagan years eased American anxieties and restored a sense of security. To many Americans, more importantly, it denoted the success of conservative

[3] Mrs. F. D. Cooch to John H. Buchanan, Jr., 8 February 1966, John Hall Buchanan, Jr. Congressional Papers, file 808, 36.8, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, Alabama, hereafter cited as BPL.
[4] "Letters to John H. Buchanan, Jr.," John Hall Buchanan, Jr. Congressional Papers, file 808, 36.6-36.9, BPL.

politics. Still, the trend toward conservatism was well underway before the Berlin Wall came down.

The South, too, was caught up in the crusade for Americanism in the postwar period. Entrenched white supremacy and pervasive Jim Crow laws were the order of the day in the South. Racial discrimination was compounded by an obsessive fear of communism. Real and imagined Soviet threats reinforced a climate of strict southern traditionalism and xenophobia. Those who resisted social and cultural conformity were quickly labeled "subversive," "communist," "red," "pink," and the like. Challenging the "southern way of life" resulted in social isolation and character ruin. Domestic anticommunism in the South, and particularly in Alabama, represented one of the most powerful forces in mid-twentieth century American history.

Destroying communism externally and especially internally appeared as the foremost issue facing mid-century America. A Cold War consensus deeply-rooted in red scare politics—or McCarthyism as it is commonly called—came to dominate the cultural and political atmosphere. Perhaps because of this apparent consensus, scholars have generally tended to focus on national figures and politics as indicators that shaped American life during the Cold War period. Only in the last decade have historians begun to peel away the layers of McCarthyism, revealing a distinctly variegated and multifaceted anticommunist movement in America.

The historiography of anticommunism has been anything but suggestive of a consensus. Historians of the 1950s, still very much embroiled in the atmosphere of anxiety, tended to view anticommunism as a tactic used by a populist-inspired mass movement against the elite political establishment. Such social scientists as Richard

Hofstadter and Daniel Bell proposed the concept of status anxiety and "the paranoid style" as the basis of McCarthyism. These scholars depicted McCarthyites as aberrant and extremist to the political majority.[5]

The revisionist or New Left historiography transformed the subject of Cold War politics and culture, as it revolutionized the profession of American history. New Left historians abandoned the idea of McCarthyism as a grassroots, populist insurgency. Instead these historians located McCarthyism at the top. Ellen Schrecker, for example, argued that anticommunism was "political repression" carried out from the top down by "a broad coalition of politicians, bureaucrats, and other anticommunist activists." Although there are interpretative differences within the revisionist scholarship associated with the New Left, they tend to place responsibility for McCarthyism on elite or national figures such as Joseph McCarthy, J. Edgar Hoover, and Harry Truman. Jeff Woods's recent book, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, examining segregation and anticommunism in the South, takes this approach. Although he concedes that the red scare would not have been possible in the South without public support, he argues that "Not surprisingly, a conservative white-power elite led the southern red scare." Political and elite manipulation of anticommunism, however, does not explain why it gained such a widespread backing. It also ignores grassroots campaigns that drove the anticommunist movement in the South.[6]

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[5] Michael J. Heale, "Beyond the 'Age of McCarthy': Anticommunism and the Historians," in Melvyn Stokes, ed., *The State of U.S. History*, (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 132; Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, (New York: Knopf, 1965); Daniel Bell, ed., *The New American Right*, (New York: Criterion Books, 1955).

[6] Heale, "Beyond the 'Age of McCarthy': Anticommunism and the Historians," in Stokes, ed., *The State of U.S. History*, 132-134138; Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*, (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), x, xii-xiii; Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 6.

Like the approach of Hofstadter and Bell, revisionist scholars explained domestic anticommunism as superfluous hysteria of marginalized individuals or groups seeking acceptance. This argument suggests that anticommunism was relegated to the political and cultural fringe. In *American Anticommunism*, M. J. Heale argued that the anticommunist consensus of the 1950s had, by the 1960s, crumbled. During the "liberal consensus" of the 1960s, anticommunism had become tangential, employed only by "extremists." In an attempt to support this theory, historians have overlooked the impact of local politics and anticommunist grassroots activism, especially in the South. Heale's argument does little justice to a thoroughly complex and diverse movement.[7]

Much of the current literature on anticommunism in the South has focused largely on red-baiting and race-baiting. These works examine anticommunism as a basis of forestalling racial change between the 1940s and 1960s. Wayne Clark Addison was one of the first to identify the link between anticommunism and reaction against the civil rights movement. Addison followed the consensus view of demagogic segregationist red-baiting. Like many early historians of the struggle for racial equality who concentrated on national individuals and organizations, Addison focused on such political limelighters as Strom Thurmond, James Eastland, and Herman Talmadge. His approach, however, slights the impact of grassroots activists and local anticommunist campaigns.[8]

Other studies that cover a great deal of ground since Addison include Woods's *Black Struggle, Red Scare* and George Lewis's *The White South and the Red Menace*.

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[7] Heale, "Beyond the 'Age of McCarthy': Anticommunism and the Historians," in Stokes, ed., *The State of U.S. History*, 132-134; M.J. Heale, *American Anticommunism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 191-92; 196-197; 199-200.

[8] Wayne Clark Addison, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between Anti-Communism and Segregationist Thought in the Deep South, 1948-1964" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1976).

Woods shows how southern investigative agencies pursued the "communist menace" behind the civil rights movement that fueled fervent segregationists. The strength of the monograph, though, is Woods's portrayal of the southern red scare as a distinctive regional phenomenon apart from national McCarthyism. He accurately recognizes that anticommunism in the South was a regional movement that varied from place to place, but he confines it within the context of race. In order to understand the larger dynamic of anticommunism, we must push beyond race and examine other variations of red-baiting. Lewis also argues that anticommunism was not necessarily McCarthyism in the South. Lewis looks at two case studies of segregationist anticommunism in Virginia and North Carolina. According to Lewis, segregationist red-baiting constituted both a top-down and a bottom-up phenomenon.[9]

Sarah Hart Brown explores southern anticommunism at the congressional level between 1954 and 1958. She focuses on two investigative committees, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS) and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). In a similar vein to Jeff Woods, Brown concludes that the hearings, spanning all of the southern states, "echoed distinctively regional themes and finally ended where they began in a determined attempt to bolster southern resistance and brand white integrationists as traitors." Her useful study, moreover, supports the argument that southern anticommunism characterized an extemporaneous movement.[10]

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[9] Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 2004, 5; George Lewis, *The White South and the Red Menace: Segregationists, Anticommunism, and Massive Resistance, 1945-1965*, (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 2004).

[10] Sarah Brown Hart, "Congressional Anti-Communism and the Segregationist South: From New Orleans to Atlanta, 1954-1958," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 80 (Winter 1996): 785-816; See also Brown's book *Standing Against Dragons: Three Southern Lawyers in an Era of Fear*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998.

Adam Fairclough touches lightly on southern red-baiting and race in his thorough study of the black civil rights struggle in Louisiana. He points out the role of the State Sovereignty Commission in emboldening segregationists by linking the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF) to Khrushchev and Castro. Louisiana's northern neighbor Mississippi and its State Sovereignty Commission has been the subject of a study that looks at states' rights and civil rights. In it, author Yasuhiro Katagiri discounts the role of anticommunism as a segregationist weapon. Katagiri narrowly perceives elite segregationists' use of red-baiting as a more respectable alternative than blatant racism for resisting racial change. While Katagiri is correct in identifying this commonly used tactic of southerners, his insular view fails to take into account other ways in which segregationists employed anticommunism.[11]

Many of the studies that examine anticommunism and race in the South ignore others targeted by southern red-baiting,, such as homosexuals and women's rights activists, thereby leaving a gap in the historical narrative. Although few scholars would deny the role of race as a substantial driving force behind southern anticommunism, detailed studies of other equally important factors behind their motivations remain rare. While there was essentially a consensus opposing communism both at home and abroad, most regions and states focused on various, sometimes disparate avenues of threat. There is an absence of scholarly attention to other individuals and groups exploited by the southern anticommunist campaign. Studies exploring the southern anticommunists

[11] Adam Fairclough, Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972, Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1995; Yasuhiro Katagiri, *The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission: Civil Rights and States' Rights*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

themselves also remain slim. In recent years, however, some studies have emerged that examine the red-baiting of various groups and the red-targeting of a variety of groups. By pushing beyond cultural and regional borders, we gain a greater understanding of this multifaceted movement.

Some important works have explored the red-baiting of sexual deviance. Historians responsive to cultural and moral sources of anticommunism have centered on the role of gender and sexuality. These studies have shifted the focus on the persecution of gay and lesbian Americans, or the "homosexual menace," thus broadening the definition of "subversion" to include homosexual teachers in public schools, in universities, and in the federal government. According to Stacy Lorraine Braukman, "The cold war had helped solidify the belief that political subversion and sexual deviance were bound together." In her fine study on anticommunism, sexuality, and race in cold war Florida, Braukman bolsters the notion of the need to rewrite the cold war narrative to include other groups, particularly the "most vilified" group—homosexuals.[12]

During the Cold War, anticommunism and religion were entirely concomitant. Throughout the United States and across the spectrum of religion, Americans feared "godless communism." For Catholics, Protestants, and Jews communism meant the

[12] Stacy Lorraine Braukman, "Anticommunism and the Politics of Sex and Race in Florida, 1954-1965," (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1999), 2, 4; John D'Emilio, "The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America," in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, eds. Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 2nd ed., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1991). Barbara Epstein, "Anticommunism, Homophobia, and the Construction of Masculinity in the Postwar U.S.," in Lori Lyn Bogle, ed., *The Cold* War, Vol. 5 *Cold War Culture and* Society, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 73-96, parallels the fears of communism and homosexuality in the mainstream and popular media in shaping post-World War II American culture. For a study on discrimination against gays and lesbians in the federal government during the Cold War see David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

secularization of American culture. Fear of atheism and the threat to God-fearing individualism associated with the red menace sparked nativist movements, xenophobia, and antiradical patriotism.[13]

To be sure, religious anticommunist movements varied by region as well as in application. In the North, for instance, the most zealous anticommunist religious institution was the Catholic Church. Catholics had championed anticommunism since the 1920s. The Catholic front perceived communism as the greatest enemy of Christianity and Americanism. Historian Ellen Schrecker has argued that "by claiming to speak for the working class, most of whose members were Catholic, Communists directly threatened the Church's hold over its followers." As a result, they sought to establish a Catholic presence within the labor movement even though some conservatives in the Church rejected unions.[14]

White Protestant southerners, on the other hand, generally disliked Catholicism. Although both faiths greatly abhorred communism, Protestant fundamentalism reigned in the South, and as historian M.J. Heale has observed, the two "often mingl[ed] uneasily in the nation's cities." However, both Christian denominations similarly red-baited Jews in the North and South. The red menace and the fear of secularization drove the

[13] Leonard J. Moore, "Good Old-Fashioned New Social History and the Twentieth-Century American Right," *Reviews in American History* 24.4 (1996): 555-573, 561-562; M.J. Heale, *McCarthy's Americans: Red Scare Politics in State and Nation, 1935-1965*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), 102.
[14] Colleen Patrice Doody, "Anticommunism in America: Detroit's Cold War, 1945-1960," (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2005); Gene Fein, "For Christ and Country: The Christian Front in New York City, 1938-1951," (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 2006); Heale, *McCarthy's Americans*, 206; Patrick Jude McNamara, "Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., and Catholic Anticommunism in the United States, 1917-1952, (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 2003); David Laurence O'Connor, "Defenders of the Faith: American Catholic Lay Organizations and Anticommunism, 1917-1975, (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2000); Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism*, (New York: The Free Press, 1995); Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism*, 72-75.

anticommunist movements of both the Catholic and Protestant faiths. Protestant fundamentalists also viewed communism as the end of southern civilization.[15]

Evangelicals advocated anticommunism elsewhere in the United States. In the West and Midwest, evangelical organizations like the Campus Crusade for Christ rallied around the cause. Suburban megachurches popped up all over the Midwest and televangelism grew into an empire based on conservative fears of modernity and secularism. Anticommunism attracted many evangelicals in the West, many of them well-educated and affluent. Their adherence to preaching against the evils of communism propelled them into the like-minded growing conservative political circle.[16]

Anticommunism proved to be a useful tool in attracting Americans to religious denominations during the Cold War period. The red menace was the glue that united religious opposition. Nationalist sentiment emerged entrenched in pious patriotism throughout the country. Its legacy can be seen in the acerbic debates over abortion, prayer in school, homosexuality, and other moral issues that divide contemporary America.[17]

The curious relationship between anticommunism and the nation's labor force has been the subject of numerous studies in recent years. On the one hand, anticommunists targeted labor unions because they perceived them as proponents of the welfare state. Communism, socialism, and the policies of the New Deal, as Colleen Patrice Doody has

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[15] Heale, "Beyond the 'Age of McCarthy': Anticommunism and the Historians," in Stokes, ed., *The State of U.S. History*, 141; Heale, *McCarthy's Americans*, 168; Powers, *Not Without Honor*, chapter 3.
[16] Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Angela Marie Lahr, "Millennial Dreams and Apocalyptic Nightmares: Evangelical and Secular Identity in the Early Cold War," (Ph.D. diss., Northern Illinois University, 2005); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); John G. Turner, "Selling Jesus to Modern America: Campus Crusade for Christ, Evangelical Culture, and Conservative Politics," (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2006).
[17] Moore, "Good Old-Fashioned New Social History," 562.

argued, were inextricably linked to the welfare state. Thus a logical target for red-baiters was the labor union. On the other hand, however, the labor movement had within it a large number of anticommunists. Conservative leaders primarily led the anticommunist fight against union organizing. Suspected and real communists were purged from such unions as the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the North and South following the Second World War.[18]

In June 1947, the Eightieth Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act that required all labor-union leaders to sign an affidavit against communism every year. The anti-labor law allowed anticommunists to bring sanctions against suspected red union officials. The measure proved to be a powerful weapon against rivals of CIO anticommunists in the postwar period. The act also helped to sustain the long tradition of anti-radicalism in America.[19]

Race also played a peculiar role within both the labor and anticommunist movements. Working-class whites hostile to New Deal politics feared blacks might reap equal benefits. Therefore, sharp tensions swelled within the labor movement. In the North, however, blacks often took up the fight against communism. According to Doody, the black community saw in the red menace as much of a threat to their American

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[18] Doody, "Anticommunism in America," 14-15; Kenneth D. Durr, "'Why We Are Troubled': White Working-Class Politics in Baltimore, 1940-1980," (Ph.D. diss., The American University, 1998); Kenneth D. Durr, *Behind the Backlash: White Working-class Politics in Baltimore, 1940-1980.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003; Heale, *McCarthy's Americans*, 224-225; Anders Geoffery Lewis, "Labor's Cold War: The American Federation of Labor and Liberal Anticommunism," (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 2000); Alex Lichtenstein, "Putting Labor's House in Order: Anticommunism and Miami's Transport Workers' Union, 1945-1949," *Labor History* 39 (Winter 1998): 7-23; Margaret Ada Miller, "The Left's Turn: Labor, Welfare Politics, and Social Movements in Washington State, 1937-1973," (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 2000); Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism*, 69-72; Samuel William White, "Labor and Politics in Evansville, Indiana, 1919-1955," (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Binghamton, 1999).

[19] Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 73.

values and capitalism as they did racial discrimination. In the South, as has been shown in countless studies on labor and the civil rights struggle, blacks and especially the movement for racial equality were prime targets of red-baiting.[20]

Historians have examined a strand of liberal anticommunism in recent years. During the McCarthy years, many Democrats and other liberals grew critical of domestic communism and certainly communism abroad. In addition to opposing labor unions, liberal anticommunist groups like Americans for Democratic Action became watchful for subversives. The Truman administration also developed an anticommunist foreign policy to combat the red menace all over the world. Liberal anticommunism helped to propel domestic communism to the fore as a national issue.[21]

Other localized liberal groups set out to defend against communism following World War II. Daniel Link for example has examined liberal anticommunism in New York between 1944 and 1956. He argued that the political order in New York was shaped by the creation of the Liberal Party as a result of the fight against communism. Such historians as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. represented the Cold War liberal position, that is, liberal on domestic social issues, but taking a hard-line stance against foreign and domestic communism. Further attention to liberal anticommunism is needed in this area to gain a broader comprehension of American politics and culture during the Cold War.[22]

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[20] Doody, "Anticommunism in America," 13-14; William A. Jelani Cobb, "Antidote to Revolution: African American Anticommunism and the Struggle for Civil Rights, 1931-1954," (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, 2003); Heale, "Beyond the 'Age of McCarthy': Anticommunism and the Historians," in Stokes, ed., *The State of U.S. History*, 140; Heale, *McCarthy's Americans*, 286.

[21] Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 22. Richard Fried also makes this argument in *Nightmare in Red*.

[22] Daniel J. Link, "'Every day was a battle': Liberal Anticommunism in Cold War New York, 1944-1956," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2006); Doody, "Anticommunism in America;" Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949).

Another area that has received little or no critical scholarly attention is the role of metropolitan space as the backdrop in which the anticommunist resistance movement has been played out. Already we have seen this trend in many of the studies previously discussed. Many, if not most, of the tensions between anticommunists and their targets were located in urban areas. M.J. Heale was perhaps the first to call attention to the role of "the metropolitan environment" in nurturing anticommunist sentiment.[23]

Heale first points out that several of the farm and mountain states in the Midwest and Plains regions resisted adoption of loyalty oaths and/or communist-control laws. In addition, unlike more urbanized and industrialized states, rural regions did not form state sponsored investigative committees, or "little HUACs" as they came to be called. The role of these committees was to investigate internal "subversion," which took on many definitions. Many states adopted little HUACs, but as Heale suggests, they "were least likely to be found in more rural states and more likely to be found in the more urban-industrial states."[24]

Secondly, Heale argues that industrial and urban areas embodied the Communist Party's (CP) "natural habitat." The CP flocked to urban areas whereby it could cajole competing political systems. Moreover, advanced welfare structures, organizations, and educational systems in cities appealed to the CP. The factors that attracted the CP also proved greatly threatening to anticommunists.[25]

Also as Heale points out, it is impossible to divorce anticommunist activities in states from their cities. Metropolises all over the United States, such as Boston, Detroit,

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[23] Heale, "Beyond the 'Age of McCarthy': Anticommunism and the Historians," in Stokes, ed., *The State of U.S. History*, 141, 152; Heale, *McCarthy's Americans*, 282-288.
[24] Heale, *McCarthy's Americans*, 282-283.
[25] Ibid, 283-284.

New York, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Birmingham, Atlanta, Charlotte, Miami, and others, were hotbeds of anticommunist action.[26] In the Motor City, for instance, anticommunists targeted labor unions. Also in Detroit, blacks sought to distance themselves from communists, thereby hoping to end segregated housing and discriminatory hiring practices. In the South as elsewhere, as Sarah Hart Brown has shown, little HUACs emerged in urban areas and cities adopted communist-control programs and loyalty oaths. In Florida, Stacy Lorraine Braukman has argued that the ethnic surge to urban areas after the Second World War diminished the white populace, bolstering anticommunism among whites. She also has shown that gay subcultures in the cities heightened the red-baiting of homosexuals and other "deviant" groups. Many cities in California boasted communist-control laws, accommodated many red-baiting organizations, and were home to many conservative politicians. Jack B. Tenney, Sam Yorty, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan launched their careers by promising to rid the state of communism. Metropolitan centers across the United States, then, served as the contentious backdrop for anticommunist agitation.[27]

Another inchoate area in anticommunist urban history is its role in undermining local public housing programs. Don Parson's recent study of the decline of public housing in Los Angeles addresses this subject. He argues that the public housing red scare in Los Angeles was "an assault on social-democratic reform and the Left-liberal popular front…that ushered in public housing as part of the American welfare state."

[26] Ibid, 284-285; Sara Hart Brown, "Congressional Anti-Communism and the Segregationist South: From New Orleans to Atlanta, 1954-1958," The *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 80, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 785-816; Braukman, "Anticommunism and the Politics of Sex and Race in Florida, 1954-1965"; Doody, "Anticommunism in America"; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*.
[27] Doody, "Anticommunism in America," 14; Brown, Congressional Anti-Communism and the Segregationist South"; Heale, *McCarthy's Americans*, 284; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Braukman, "Anticommunism and the Politics of Sex and Race in Florida, 1954-1965," 38.

Other similar urban studies are needed that look at the role of red-baiting New Deal liberal policies.[28]

As has been previously noted, domestic anticommunism represented a regional phenomenon. Although there was an American consensus against communism, the anticommunist movement varied from region to region, and sometimes from state to state. As the historiography has both tacitly and ostensibly indicated, red-baiting objectives and targets differed across regions. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of anticommunism, we must include the unique exigencies of regions and states.[29]

Finally, the connection between anticommunism and conservatism is unmistakable. Myriad studies have delineated the conservative roots of anticommunism and vice-versa. Despite regional variations, anticommunism was predominately a right-wing phenomenon. "The role of anticommunist pressures in bringing about this conservative turn," M.J. Heale has argued however, "has remained unclear." Yet recently, more and more historians have begun to examine the link between anticommunist attitude and activism with the rise of conservatism.[30]

By exploring red-baiting movements in the United States during the Cold War, historians have been able to interweave anticommunism with the resurgence of conservatism. Examining various historical case studies on the subject of

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[28] Don Parson, "The Decline of Public Housing and the Politics of the Red Scare: The Significance of the Los Angeles Public Housing War," *Journal of Urban History* Vol. 33, no. 3, (March 2007): 400-417, 401. See also Don Parson, *Making a Better Place: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Don Parson, "Los Angeles' 'Headline-Happy Public Housing War," *Southern California Quarterly* 65 (Fall 1983): 251-285.
[29] Braukman, "Anticommunism and the Politics of Sex and Race in Florida, 1954-1965;" Doody, Anticommunism in America"; Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*.
[30] Heale, "Beyond the 'Age of McCarthy': Anticommunism and the Historians," 139.

anticommunism, a conservative cultural narrative emerges. This new narrative embraces the grassroots origins of anticommunist conservatism. "The Right did not consist only of elites defending wealth and privilege," historian Alan Brinkley has argued, but "that there was a popular, grass-roots Right" that emerged out of the "alarming rise of 'McCarthyism' in the early 1950s." Looking at the social upheaval associated with racial conflicts, sexuality and gender relations, youth culture, liberal politics of the Democratic Party, and the impact of the Korean and Vietnam wars in the 1950s and 1960s, anticommunism "planted the seeds of the New Right that blossomed in the 1970s" and 1980s.[31]

The South in particular played an important role in the resurgence of conservatism. As Peter Levy has accurately argued, "southern utilization of anticommunism…was part of a largely successful strategy to build ties with other Americans which ultimately resulted not in the marginalization of the South but rather in the realignment of American politics, whereby Southern Democrats and Northern and

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[31] Alan Brinkley, "The Problem of American Conservatism," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, no. 2 (April 1994): 409-429, 411; Braukman, "Anticommunism and the Politics of Sex and Race in Florida, 1954-1965," 5; George Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945*, (New York: Basic Books, 1976), remains the definitive work on intellectual conservatism despite continual shifts in the historiography of the American right. Other studies that emphasize the role of anticommunism in the rise of the New Right include, Niels Bjerre-Poulson, *Right Face: Organizing the American Conservative Movement,1945-65*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002); Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*; Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 1995); Doody, "Anticommunism in America"; Heale, "Beyond the 'Age of McCarthy': Anticommunism and the Historians"; William B. Hixson, Jr., *Search for the American Right Wing: An Analysis of the Social Science Record, 1955-1987*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Himmelstein, *To the Right*; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Michael W. Miles, *The Odyssey of the American Right*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Leonard J. Moore, "Good Old-Fashioned New Social History and the Twentieth-Century American Right"; Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); Gregory L. Schneider, ed., *Conservatism in America since 1930: A Reader*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). This list is certainly not exhaustive.

Western Republicans overcame their historical divisions and forged a powerful conservative political movement." Many historians have dismissed southern anticommunism as simply a veil camouflaging its true intention—the preservation of Jim Crow. Indeed, much of the anticommunist attitude and action were rooted in maintaining segregation. A great deal remains to be understood, however, about how anticommunism and its relationship with conservatism influence the daily lives of ordinary Americans.[32]

So where does Alabama fit into the history of anticommunism? Did anticommunism trickle down from the top from animated political figures like George Wallace and Bull Connor? Or was the anticommunist movement in Alabama largely a bottom-up phenomenon? What individuals and groups were targeted by red-baiters? And how was the red-baiting carried out? What were Alabama anticommunist motivations? And what does this tell us about the broader picture of American anticommunism?

This thesis considers the role of anticommunism in shaping twentieth-century southern cultural and political identity from the perspective of Alabama's grassroots campaigns, partisan politics, the machinations of the state's Peace and Sovereignty Commissions, conservative media, and other organizations. Such use of anticommunism, in the vein of Peter Levy, Stacy Lorraine Braukman, J. Mark Leavins, and others, did not marginalize the South, but instead merged it with northern and western Republicans fashioning a deep-seated conservative political movement.

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[32] Peter B. Levy, "Painting the Black Freedom Struggle Red: Southern Anticommunism and the Civil Rights Movement," in Lori Lyn Bogle, ed., *The Cold* War, Vol. 5 *Cold War Culture and* Society, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 125-146; J. Mark Leavins, "The Anti-Communist Prism: Perceptions of the Civil Rights Years, 1961-1964," *Southern Historian* Vol. 14 (Spring 1993): 58-70.

Alabama anticommunism echoed sentiments of a broader anticommunist movement, and at the same time, displayed localist distinctions. For example, despite early communist organizing in rural Alabama during the 1930s, anticommunism did not emerge as a widespread movement until the early 1960s. Domestic anticommunist grassroots mobilization in the state was directed against radicals in academia, secularism, the federal government, sexual "deviance," liberalism, and civil rights. The state's anticommunist movement and its connection with the actions of other states across the United States is germane to understanding the resurgence of conservatism that came to dominate American culture and politics in subsequent decades.

My study begins with a chapter on education in Alabama. Anticommunists believed that as communism and subversion seeped into the United States, its main objective was the nation's schools. According to many Americans and particularly Alabamians, the nation's youth were prime targets of communist brainwashing. Such sentiment in Alabama resulted in several anticommunist campaigns including a large communist literature purge, "Americanism versus Communism" courses, anticommunist seminars and study groups, the need for a homosexual purge in academia, opposition to student protests and campus unrest, campaigns against "radical" professors, and massive resistance to desegregation as seen as a communist plot. I will concentrate on anticommunist grassroots organizing in Alabama wherein many seminars, meetings, and study groups occurred. I will also focus on the large red-baiting campaign against Max Lerner, a Jewish professor from Brandeis University perceived as a "radical" and communist. In a climate where extremism could be found under every rock and around

any corner, the Alabama educational system emerged as the ideal institution for targeting subversion.

Chapter two examines race as the principal motivation behind anticommunist activism. As blacks increasingly fought for equal rights, segregationists aggressively counterattacked with red-baiting. In Alabama where much of the activity took place, whites retaliated by "painting the civil rights movement red." Thus segregationists garnered support from other whites because they perceived the changes occurring not as a black issue but as a red one. This chapter will look at the objectives and programs of Alabama's two anti-subversive committees, The Alabama Legislative Commission to Preserve the Peace and the Alabama State Sovereignty Commission. These two organizations, the former in particular, were crucial in bringing the race issue under the communist umbrella. The state's politicians also clung to the idea of a fifth column in the struggle for racial equality, although they mostly acted on behalf of their constituents' requests. Like their other campaigns, Alabama grassroots groups and individuals led the fight against the "communist-inspired and backed" civil rights movement.

The second chapter also focuses on to the function of family and moral values and religion as source of resistance against communism. Unlike the North, where prominent aggressors against the red menace were Catholics, southern anticommunists were largely Protestants. Racial change, feminism, homosexuality, the perceived encroachment of the federal government, and the Soviet threat caused many southern Protestants to feel that they lived in a time of unmitigated crisis. By embracing anticommunism southerners believed they could prevent calamity— seen as any change to southern social traditions. Many worried that the social changes they confronted were leading America toward

secularism. Alabama Protestants challenged what they perceived as secular liberalism and sought to reassert traditional Christian values rooted in the ideals of the patriarchal family. Thus any change to the social order, such as black civil rights advances, women's liberation, and homosexuality, was viewed as a threat to their Christian tradition. As a response, Alabama's conservative grassroots individuals, groups, and newspapers labeled such change as communistic and organized against the dangers of secularism that eroded their moral value systems. This chapter will discuss those groups that were targeted and how the campaigns against them were initiated and carried out.

Chapter two sets the stage for the subsequent chapter on the politics of anticommunism. The actions of the federal government during the 1960s, and indeed well before, plagued southerners. They had long abhorred and challenged what they perceived as the power and increasing encroachment of the federal government. Consequently, southerners advocated the platform of states' rights. Integration was viewed as "forced" on southerners by the liberalism of the Democratic Party. They detested John F. Kennedy's softness on the race issue and felt betrayed by "phony" southerner Lyndon Johnson. Alabamians also blamed Earl Warren and his "Extreme" Court for the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. Even the United Nations was not safe from southern red-baiting. In response to the liberalism on the national stage, Alabama anticommunists condemned the federal government from the grassroots and state levels. In this chapter, I argue that the anticommunist collective action of grassroots campaigns, legislative commissions, and politicians in Alabama in connection with other states helped transform American politics. Anticommunism represented the symbolic glue that

held conservatives all over the United States together. As a result, a new conservative political movement emerged during the 1960s which can still be seen today.

In conclusion, I will discuss the decline of anticommunism in Alabama and the resurgence of conservatism in American politics and culture. In the early 1970s Alabamians, with the exception of black voters, shed the cloak of anticommunism and adopted new conservative strategies such as gun rights, drug abuse and crime, anti-abortion, and anti-gay rights. I will also discuss the backlash against the Alabama Peace and Sovereignty Commissions. In the early- to mid-1970s, some white Alabamians began to view these commissions as witch-hunting organizations. Therefore both were dissolved in 1973. Why the political turnaround ten years later?

By examining the ways in which Alabama assembled a conservative anticommunist movement during the 1960s and early 1970s, we can see how the South shaped Cold War American culture and politics. Despite regional differences, Alabama shared an ideology with others across the United States. This anticommunist ideology did not marginalize the South but placed it within mainstream American culture. By mobilizing against radicals in public schools, secularism, liberalism, non-traditional gender roles, black civil rights, and the federal government, Alabama positioned itself as a natural ally to other anticommunist-minded states. As a result, the anticommunist collective action of the grassroots campaigns, legislative commissions, and politicians in Alabama, along with similar anticommunist efforts in conservative states, transformed American politics. In a broader context, many of the notions that shaped the ideology of anticommunism and racial politics in the South, and Alabama in particular, became principal tenets of a wider conservatism in American culture.

CHAPTER ONE

(RED)UCATION IN ALABAMA

> It was the time of the Red Menace. The fear of Communists taking over the PTA and Community Chest affected the lives of ordinary people in ordinary towns.
>
> — E. L. Doctorow

> Either men will learn to live like brothers, or they will die like beasts.
>
> — Max Lerner[1]

Though most of the action took place during the 1960s and 1970s, Alabama's commitment to stamping out communism in and via education began in the 1950s. Before focusing on education, however, the state initiated its attack on the red menace with the arrest of Paul Thomas Rose in 1950. Rose was detained in early July for distributing petitions against the Korea War in Woodlawn, a Birmingham neighborhood. Although he was jailed on charges of vagrancy and for changing his name to conceal his identity, Rose was arrested to set an example because he belonged to the Communist Party. Upon word that several hundred Communists and several hundred fellow-travelers conspired in Birmingham, Public Safety Commissioner Theophilus Eugene "Bull" Connor ordered a police crackdown. Perhaps best known as the staunch segregationist who in 1963 unleashed police dogs and fire hoses on civil rights demonstrators, Connor vowed that he would arrest every known communist in the city. "It doesn't make sense

[1] E. L. Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel*, (New York: Random House, 1971), 132-133; Lerner quote located at Culture of Peace Initiative, http://www.cultureofpeace.org/quotes/peace-quotes.htm, accessed March 23, 2007.

to be drafting our young men and sending them to Korea to fight the Communists," Connor declared, "and let the Reds run loose in this country.[2]

Ten days later the city passed a communist-control ordinance. Like many other cities in the United States, Birmingham's ordinance outlawed any member of the Communist Party within its city limits. It carried a maximum prison sentence of 180 days and a one hundred dollar fine for each day any known Communist remained in Birmingham. The City Commission, stated the *Alabama Journal*, implemented the law "without debate." The directive also maintained that distribution of Communist literature "shall be conclusive evidence" of Party membership.[3]

The anti-Red movement quickly spread to other cities in Alabama. Bessemer, a smaller city just outside Birmingham, adopted a similar ordinance that required all communists to register within forty-eight hours of its enactment. Demanding that communists register allowed police to "keep an eye on them," affirmed Bessemer Commissioner Herman Thompson. Nearby Tarrant followed suit after police raided eight houses in search of accused Party members. Although the police came back "empty-handed," Connor remained vigilant. He also stated that other cities, including Pell City and Oneonta in Alabama, as well as Miami, Tampa, and Lake City, Florida, and Chattanooga, Tennessee, had requested copies of the anticommunist law.[4]

To garner state-wide support for the anticommunist ordinance, Connor wrote an article in August 1950 entitled "Birmingham Wars on Communism" in *The Alabama*

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[2] Fred Taylor, "Arrest Ordered for All Known Magic City Reds," *Birmingham News*, July 8, 1950.
[3] "Birmingham Outlaws Communist Party," *Alabama Journal*, July 18, 1950; "Birmingham Red Law Held Illegal," *Montgomery Advertiser*, October 19, 1950.
[4] "City's Commie Fight Continues to Spread; Bessemer Acts," *Birmingham News*, July 26, 1950; "Red Ban Adopted by Another City," *Mobile Register*, July 26, 1950.

Local Government Journal. He pledged stalwart vigilance against the red menace. According to his article, Birmingham, as "the industrial hub of the South," was primed "for take-over duty by the [Communist Party's] Fifth Column." The Party, Connor asserted, successfully recruited "millions of pinkism liberals and fellow travelers." Also targeted by subversives were blacks and poor whites as part of the civil rights agenda "that would cause chaos in our Southland." Connor concluded by comparing communists to termites. "We should delouse our soil and air," he argued, "by putting the exterminator to the Communists." Evidence of communist-control programs in countless other U.S. cities indicates mainstream commitment to anticommunism.[5]

Three months later in October, however, a federal court ruled Birmingham's anticommunist ordinance illegal. U.S. District Judge Seybourn H. Lynne stated that the order violated the 14th Amendment "due process of law" clause. The grievance was raised by Sam J. Hall, Jr., Alabama Communist Party chairman. Hall and his attorney, John M. Coe, argued that the ordinance was a violation of his "right to enter and live in Birmingham because of political opinions." Coe was a Florida lawyer who litigated many civil rights cases involving segregation and discrimination. Birmingham officials were less than pleased with the decision. The city attorney contended that the ordinance "not only protects local property against damage and destruction but protects our forces in Korea from stabs in the back." Birmingham Mayor Cooper Green agreed, calling the federal court decision "regrettable." Connor added, "If the 14th Amendment…protects Communists in this country, then it is time for Congress and the people to start amending

[5] Eugene (Bull) Connor, "Birmingham Wars on Communism," *The Alabama Local Government Journal*, 8, no. 2 (August 1950): 7, 36-38; Heale, *McCarthy's Americans*, 60, 76-77.

the 14th Amendment." The federal court ruling nonetheless hardly hampered Alabama opposition to fighting communism. And the fight was launched in the state's schools.[6]

Alabama's anticommunist education campaign spanned nearly twenty years beginning in the 1950s. Anticommunist focus on education involved two interconnected movements in Alabama during the Cold War. The first was to seek out subversion in education. This included alleged communist literature, radical groups, professors, teachers, students, and other pro-leftists or liberals, homosexuals, and any other "communistic" elements in education. In a climate of intense social change, Alabamians felt compelled also to teach of the dangers of communism. Organized at the grassroots level, the second movement encompassed thousands of Alabamians who took part in the educational push against the red threat.

On March 4, 1954, Charles F. Zukoski lambasted the Alabama Legislature for passing Act 888. Zukoski, a columnist for a Birmingham-based newspaper, the *Shades Valley Sun*, represented one of the very few who spoke out against the anticommunist measure, or as its opponents called it, "the Poison Label Bill." Fearing anti-Red backlash, Zukoski published outspoken articles under the pseudonym Button Gwinnett. The bill, approved in September of the previous year, prohibited the use of any textbook or other printed instructional material whose author identified as a member or ex-member of the Communist Party. It required that all school and college textbooks and published literature "contain a statement…indicating clearly and with particularity that the author…is or is not a known advocate of communism or Marxist socialism, is or is not a member or ex-member of the Communist Party, and is or is not a member or ex-member

[6] "Birmingham Red Law Held Illegal," *Montgomery Advertiser*, October 19, 1950. For more about Coe, see John M. Coe Papers, located at Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

of a Communist-front organization." To comply with this demand, the Alabama superintendent of education obliged that every school in the state obtain previously-described credentials for all books. Thus Alabama schools, as Zukoski explained, were "tearing their hair over how they can get the certificates for some hundreds of thousands of books and pamphlets by next September." For the few like Zukoski who castigated the law, gratuitous fear and emotionalism were responsible for the state's opprobrium.[7]

Alabama anticommunists realized it was in effect impossible to confirm the backgrounds of scores of authors. Even if legislative committees had been initiated to track down suspected communist authors, the law would have triggered chaos for schools while publishers and libraries attempted to uncover what "thousands of authors were doing 20 to 30 years ago." Therefore a suit was brought against the Alabama law in April 1954. And in May, the state declared the act unconstitutional. Nevertheless, in the 1960s Alabama invented other ways to protect its schoolchildren from red brainwashing.[8]

Beginning in 1961, anticommunist organizers directed a large educational movement. Lasting twelve years, the campaign assumed many different forms and targeted numerous avenues of threat. Many in the state became involved in the movement to protect children and the state from communist infiltration in the schools. During the 1960s and 1970s education was one of the most important campaigns of the anticommunist movement in Alabama, from the grassroots level all the way up to the governor's office.

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[7] Act 888, Alabama Laws, 1953 Legislature of Alabama, Vol. 2, pp. 1196-1197; Lyn Stafford Brown, ed., *Voice in the Storm: The Button Gwinnett [Charles F. Zukoski, Jr.] Columns Written during the Civil Rights Struggles and Other Writings*, (Birmingham, Alabama: The Birmingham Public Library Press, 1990), 20; Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 176.

[8] Robert V.R. Brown, "The Books They Won't Let You Read," *Redbook*, October 1955.

No doubt international communist activity stimulated domestic anticommunist activism. Critical crises occurring on the global scene during the early 1960s heightened tensions at home. The demoralizing Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, followed by the building of the Berlin Wall just four months later proved to Americans that communism was a formidable enemy and it was spreading. Alabamians believed the best way to fight the red menace was to learn about it. To overcome their fears, they created study groups, invited public speakers, and developed Americanism seminars and classes. Women in Alabama, and indeed throughout history, have been the principal advocates for education. Not surprisingly, therefore, a large number of Alabama's anticommunist education crusaders were women.

In the fall of 1961, Birmingham housewives formed a communist-learning drive. Fearing that the nation would soon be darkened by a red cloud, women in the Magic City believed knowledge was power. They decided to read as much as they could about communism. "We must equip ourselves with information," declared Mrs. George Ladd. "My eyes are like burnt holes in a blanket from reading so much," she professed. To facilitate anticommunist edification, Mrs. Ladd, along with Birmingham homemakers Mrs. James Faulkner, Mrs. Axel Bolvig, and Mrs. Douglas Shook, organized one of three anticommunist study groups in the city. The other two local groups were spearheaded by Mrs. Jim Anderson and Miss Barbara Brown. These women activists met monthly to discuss communist literature they had studied. They also launched a letter writing project to attack subversion. The organizers' campaigns included writing to President Kennedy in protest of admitting Red China to the United Nations; objecting the training of Yugoslavian pilots in Texas; and encouraging the teaching of *The Naked Communist* in

public schools. They also sent out extensive correspondence to area residents promoting attendance at upcoming anticommunist lectures. The actions of these women encouraged further anticommunist activism in Alabama.[9]

Perhaps the most outspoken female grassroots anticommunist organizer was Mrs. Margaret Sizemore. As Dean of Women at Howard College, the premiere Baptist university in the state (now Samford University), Sizemore possessed the professional clout to initiate a number of anticommunist crusades. Sizemore, "a long-time student of subversive tactics," traveled all over Alabama and Florida during the 1960s warning of the red threat. The "tireless speaker" encouraged parents, teachers, and everyone else to educate themselves and to "check the background of organizations their children enter." In 1963 and 1964 alone, Sizemore visited and spoke about communism to nearly one hundred public schools and universities, PTA meetings, churches, civic clubs, fraternal organizations, and conferences in Alabama and Florida. "Mainly because of her fearless fight against Communism," she was selected as Birmingham's Woman-of-the-Year in 1962 and was twice selected as the city's Woman-of-the-Year in education. Like other Alabama anticommunists, Sizemore believed that the state's youth were extremely vulnerable to internal subversion. "The 'battle of the minds' of our young intellectuals is critical," she echoed, "and the victory must be won 'at the grass roots.'" Sizemore's Woman-of-the-Year award elicited enthusiasm from residents in Birmingham. An editorial in the *Birmingham Post Herald* declared her an "excellent choice" for the award.

[9] "Women here focus on ways to fight Communism at home," *Birmingham News*, October 29, 1961.

Although she demonstrated many talents, the editorial exclaimed, "most outstanding, however, has been her work in the field of anti-Communism."[10]

Stimulated by the anticommunist study groups and lectures in fall 1961, E.L. Holland, editorial page editor for the *Birmingham News*, introduced a "vital series" for the newspaper's readers. Based on his "thorough study of the Soviet doctrine, their subversive tactics, and life and death domination," Holland began the series entitled, "What Can I Do To Stop Communism?" on Christmas Day 1961. So instead of Birmingham residents opening the paper to a winsome holiday scene featuring Santa Claus or the nativity, they confronted a Christmas morning anticommunist headline that read, "Every Citizen Needs Guideposts to Preserve Heritage." Every day following the holiday into the New Year, *News* readers flipped open its pages to read a new part of the anticommunist series. "A major factor in understanding communism," Holland warned the day after Christmas, "is to realize, from the first, that many of us only THINK we know about it." Evidence of this sort on the nation's most beloved holiday reveals the widespread and staunchly-dedicated commitment of Alabama's anticommunism.[11]

With the New Year came more measures of aggression toward the red menace from the state's growing movement. On April 1, 1962, a series of eight anticommunist lectures commenced with a talk by leading light Margaret Sizemore. Her lecture, "Wake

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[10] "Women here focus on ways to fight Communism at home," *Birmingham News*, October 29, 1961; "Speaking Engagements of Mrs. James M. Sizemore-1963-64-Topic: Americanism," and "Education and Accomplishments of Mrs. James M. Sizemore," Communism, SC3444, Box 16, folder 11, Margaret Sizemore-Douglas Papers, Samford University Special Collection, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama; "Woman of Year is Mrs. Sizemore," *Birmingham Post Herald*, October 9, 1962, pp. 1, 13; "Excellent Choice!," *Birmingham Post Herald*, October 10, 1962, p. 10.

[11] "Vital series to tell all about Reds," *Birmingham News*, December 21, 1961, p. 1; "Every citizen needs guideposts to preserve heritage," *Birmingham News*, December 25, 1961, p. 1; "Learn aim of Reds, compare with U.S.," *Birmingham News*, December 26, 1961, pp. 1-2; "Read closely on Reds' acts to learn signs," *Birmingham News*, December 27, 1961, pp. 1, 3.

Me When Its Over," was aimed at youth as objects of communist propaganda. As a proponent of education, Sizemore's anti-Red rhetoric focused mainly on school-aged children and college students. "The average college student, anxious to learn about his government and also possess a feeling of being a member of an organization," she cautioned, "could very easily fall victim to one of the Communistic led clubs." Over the next eight weeks that spring, hundreds of Alabamians packed the Mountain Brook Junior High School auditorium to hear lectures on the red threat.[12]

Two lectures in particular focused on external communism. On April 9, 1962, Alabamians became acquainted with "Communism in China." Speaking to a packed audience, Colonel Lawrence Kwong weaved a story of his capture in Korea by communists, their brainwashing techniques, and his eventual escape. The next week, another large crowd learned of the volatile communist take-over of Cuba from Cuban exile, Mrs. Henry Coleman. On April 23, the Louisiana State Sovereignty Commission's John Deer spoke on the ways in which reds sought to infiltrate American, and particularly, southern organizations and businesses. The month concluded with a charged lecture from Dr. Houston Cole, former state Civil Defense chief and president of Jacksonville State College in Alabama. Speaking to a crowd of more than six hundred, Houston stirred fears and fueled hatred of communism, as Sizemore did, by connecting it with education and schoolchildren. "There are those who believe," Houston expounded, "that the issue between freedom and Communism might well be decided in the classrooms of the nation." The consensus against the red menace was already evident,

[12] "Lectures on Red techniques planned," *Birmingham News*, April 1, 1962, p. B-2; "Sizemore Warns Students of Communistic Organizations," in undated *Howard Crimson* issue in "Communism," SC3444, Box 16, folder 11 Margaret Sizemore-Douglas Papers.

but by linking the threat of communism to corrupting schoolchildren, anticommunists were able to play on the fears of Alabama parents.[13]

The month of May witnessed the last three lectures in the series. The "patriotic gatherings," as the *Birmingham Post Herald* called them, had averaged more than six hundred attendees per lecture in the Magic City. Dr. Robert Strong, pastor of Montgomery's Trinity Presbyterian Church, addressed another huge crowd of lecture-goers on May 7. According to the *Post Herald*, Dr. Strong discussed "certain" Kennedy administration's foreign policy "blunders and their domestic roots." However, the article failed to elaborate on what those blunders were, according to Reverend Strong. Speaking on a similar anticommunist subject, the Montgomery pastor had addressed a crowd of more than 1200 the previous January in the capital city. A refugee princess from Romania delivered the seventh anticommunist lecture. No doubt, a talk from someone who had lived behind the evils of the Iron Curtain had a large impact on the assembly. The princess, Catherine Caradja, urged Alabamians and Americans "to wake up to the Soviet conspiracy" before "the Free World side of the international scale get[s] lighter and the Communist side get[s] heavier." The Romanian princess also exploited Americans' fears of the end of capitalism. "In the nations of Europe captured by Communist trickery," she warned, "100 million people now own no home, no car and have no job unless they [Communists] let them have one." The lecture series concluded on May 21 with Mrs. H.A. Alexander's push for the continuation of America's "Freedom of Choice." As chairman of the National Defense Committee of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.), Mrs. Alexander apparently felt qualified in lecturing on

[13] "Lectures on Red techniques planned," *Birmingham News*, April 1, 1962; "Jacksonville State President To Speak Against Communism," *Birmingham Post Herald*, April 30, 1962, p. 12.

"all phases of Communist subversion." Although this particular anti-Red series wrapped up in May of 1962, it stimulated and encouraged other lectures.[14]

Dr. James R. Garber in fact made a career out of fighting communism in Alabama. Along with a "small group of local mad Americans and fighting patriots," Garber founded The Freedom Educational Foundation in Birmingham in August 1962. The mission of this organization was to promote Americanism and patriotism and to expose communism and defeat socialism. In so doing, the Foundation offered various services that included selling and renting anticommunist books, pamphlets, films, and other material; study group counseling; research material; and access to an anticommunist speakers bureau and "nationally know lecturers." In 1964, Garber, "at the urging of his many friends, who share his love of 'One Nation under God,'" published several of his anticommunist lectures. According to the foreword by Margaret Sizemore, Garber had reached thousands in Alabama schools, clubs, and churches through his lectures. Thus, with a published manuscript, perhaps he could touch thousands of other Americans before they were swept away by the "swelling tide of anti-God Communism."[15]

In mid-November 1963, the citizens of Center Point, a suburb of Birmingham, launched a series of four "outstanding" anticommunist programs. Lasting until a few weeks before Christmas, lecture topics included, "Communism and America," "Subversion in Text Books," "Communist Attack on the Mind of Youth," and "What Can

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[14] "Lectures on Red techniques planned," *Birmingham News*, April 1, 1962; "Anti-Red Lecture Audience To Hear Rev. Dr. Strong," *Birmingham Post Herald*, May 7, 1962, p. 4; "Reds Taking Over, Princess Declares," *Birmingham Post Herald*, May 15, 1962, p. 3.
[15] James R. Garber, *Selected Patriotic Talks*, (Birmingham, Alabama: The Freedom Educational Foundation, 1964), 83, foreword.

You Do." So they might learn more about the threat of communism, attendees received "a number of [anti-Red] pamphlets and two books," *Masters of Deceit* by J. Edgar Hoover and Dr. Billy James Hargis's "communist-exposing volume," *Communist America – Must It Be?*. The Center Point lecture topics stressed the communist threat to education and schoolchildren.[16]

Over the next few years Alabama cities played host to a number of other anticommunist educational programs. Among these was a bookstore's operation in East Lake, another Birmingham suburb. American Opinion bookstore carried between 300 and 400 books "dealing with the horrors of Communism and its tragic effect on the world and its perils to our country." This literature, the bookstore assured, was "checked for documentation and accuracy." In addition to selling anticommunist material, American Opinion also housed a "Record Library" where patrons could listen to "speeches and talks of an Anti-Communistic nature." The bookstore also provided a speakers bureau, furnishing some of the "top" lecturers on the subject.[17]

Just outside of Birmingham, in Fairfield, another series of anticommunist lectures debuted in February 1965. State representative and chairman of the Legislative Commission to Preserve the Peace, Alabama's "little HUAC," John H. Hawkins, Jr. directed the lectures. Hawkins was one of Alabama's leading advocates of anticommunism. Later that year in November, James Garber's Freedom Educational Foundation sponsored a series of more anticommunist programs in Leeds and Bessemer, two towns near Birmingham. And a couple of weeks later on November 24, Alabama

[16] "Center Point To Hold Anti Red Meetings," *Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent*, November 13, 1963, pp. 1, 3.
[17] "American Opinion Book Store Leads Fight Against Communism," *Birmingham Independent*, March 4, 1964, p. 1.

welcomed Cleon Skousen, author of *The Naked Communist*, to speak at Howard College. Skousen, a former FBI agent, had recently returned from overseas where he witnessed firsthand "the oppression of Communism." Two days later, Alabama governor George C. Wallace addressed the Young Americans for Freedom at Howard College. Wallace, a long-time anticommunist, spoke on "Individual Liberty and Freedom and Constitutional Government."[18]

A recurring theme of these lectures stressed the need to teach the nation's youth the values of Americanism and the evils of communism. "Americanism vs. Communism" lectures, classes, and workshops were common across the United States. In an editorial in the *Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent*, Norman Hall addressed this issue. Although a consensus existed in favor of communism being taught in schools, according to Hall, a north Alabama native, "debate rages concerning how it should be taught." He argued that one school of thought believed the red menace ought to be taught as just that—an evil menace to freedom. The second school of thought, however, pushed for an objective view of communism that stressed its good and bad characteristics. Hall denounced the second view. He cited the following metaphor as justification:

> I am reminded of the story about the big bass who was swimming by and observing [sic] an enticing piece of fish. It says to itself, 'High protein content. What's wrong with that? Delicious aroma, what's wrong with that? Highly nutritious…What's wrong with that?' What's wrong with it is the hook in it! What's wrong with Communism? Its [sic] got the hidden Hook of Death in it. America lets [sic] teach our children that the HAMMER IS HEAVY AND THE SICKLE DRIPS WITH BLOOD.

[18] "John Hawkins Speaks," *Birmingham Independent*, February 10, 1965, p. 1; "The Freedom Educational Foundation Story," *Birmingham Independent*, November 12, 1965, pp. 1, 3; "Skousen Says Wake Up," *Birmingham Independent*, November 24, 1965, p. 1; "Wallace Slates Birmingham Talk," *Birmingham Independent*, November 24, 1965, p. 1.

To anticommunists, the idea of studying the red menace from an objective viewpoint was ridiculous and dangerous.[19]

In summer 1964, Howard College initiated several Americanism vs. Communism workshops and programs. The first program sponsored by the State Department of Education reached perhaps the largest audience, mainly because it was an anticommunist television course. Televised in Alabama's major urban areas including, Birmingham, Montgomery, Huntsville, Mobile, Florence, and Gadsden and reaching into countless rural regions, the purpose of the 36-lesson course was "To help prepare high school Social Studies teachers for instructing their pupils in AMERICANISM vs. COMMUNISM." Viewers who watched a minimum of twenty-seven lessons and sent in "satisfactory" papers and exams were awarded a certificate of completion. In late July, Howard College also hosted a five day workshop on "patriotism education." Like the televised course, the workshop was designed to teach primary and secondary educators "the principles of Communism" (or anticommunism) so that they could in turn educate their students the upcoming fall. This workshop featured representatives from the Freedom Forum, Freedoms Foundation, and the State Department of Education. The workshop's director, Dr. John T. Carter, received special recognition at its close from Howard College President Leslie S. Wright and Dean of Women Margaret Sizemore. Wright in particular expressed gratitude on "behalf of the entire college family" for Carter's "splendid leadership."[20]

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[19] "How Communism Should Be Told In Our Schools," *Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent*, December 18, 1963, p. 2.

[20] "Seminar on Americanism vs. Communism," SC3444, Box 14, folder 19, Margaret Sizemore-Douglass Papers; "Letter from John T. Carter to Mrs. Margaret Sizemore, August 7, 1964," SC3444, Box 14, folder

Two months later, some sixty-four major civic and service clubs of the greater Birmingham area jointly sponsored an Americanism program entitled, "THE SPIRIT OF '64 – IN GOD WE TRUST." The program aspired "to set a precedent which other cities throughout the nation will follow." Sessions for the two-day series were held at various places in the metropolitan area to "promote a keen awareness of our precious American Heritage." The program included such topics as "Zero Hour for America," "Understanding and Preserving Our Heritage," "Communist Party U.S.A. and the Supreme Court," "A Mandate for Victory," "The Fight for the Human Mind," and "Communism and Youth." The speakers hailed from Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Mississippi. Among other anti-Red objectives, the program proposed to assist the attendees in understanding communism's "double-talk – and what we can do to counter-act it."[21]

Alabama's dedication to defeating the red menace through Americanism vs. Communism emulated many other states' campaigns. Alabama followed in the footsteps of neighboring states Florida and Georgia, which adopted similar measures in 1961 and 1962, respectively. The campaigns stimulated a lasting effect, with evidence of their use in Alabama as late as 1968.[22]

On February 22, 1967, seventeen-year-old Nell Crawford from Eight Mile, Alabama wrote George Wallace "concerned about the problems of America today." The problem she referred to was of course communism. She asked for Wallace's help in

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19, Margaret Sizemore-Douglass Papers; "Letter from Leslie S. Wright to Dr. John Carter, August 4, 1964," SC3444, Box 14, folder 19, Margaret Sizemore-Douglass Papers.

[21] "The Spirit of '64 – In God We Trust Announcement," Communism (Information, letters, literature, etc.), SC3444, Box 9, folder 21, Margaret Sizemore-Douglass Papers; "Clubs Unite to Promote 'Spirit of '64' in God We Trust," *Birmingham Independent*, September 16, 1964, pp. 1, 3.

[22] M.J. Heale, *McCarthy's Americans*, 268

fighting the red menace and expressed shame in "just sitting around not lifting a finger against communism." Crawford represented one of the many students in Alabama who received training in the evils of communism. Four months later, fourteen-year-old Debbie Davis conveyed similar sentiment. In a letter to Governor Lurleen Wallace, Davis stated that her class had been studying about communism. The young Birmingham resident acknowledged that she had been reading up on the red menace "for the past 2 or 3 years." "At school we've had many discussions about the world of Communism," she declared. "My teacher at school told me if I kept feeling the way I do, that I might be an important leader in our future government." Like Crawford, neophyte anticommunist Debbie Davis asked Governor Wallace how she might combat the red evil.[23]

Almost two years later, Alabama governor Albert Brewer received a similar letter. Shirley Jean White, an eleventh grader from Tuscaloosa, Alabama asked the governor "what do you think that young people could do about Communism?" White wanted information for a class presentation on the subject, a topic that had been studied in her American history class. She also requested an autographed picture of the governor to put on display in the classroom. Brewer replied by stating "that the most effective thing that young people could do concerning Communism is to learn as much as possible" about it and "to live by the principles set out in the Constitution of the United States." The governor also complied with the young student's request by sending her an autographed

[23] Nell Crawford to George C. Wallace, February 22, 1967," Administrative files, "Communism," December 18, 1966-June 22, 1967, SG 22420, folder 14, George C. Wallace Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama, hereafter cited as ADAH; Debbie Davis to Lurleen B. Wallace, June 17, 1967," SG 22420, folder 14, Wallace Papers.

picture of him. This correspondence reveal that even as late as 1967 and 1968, Alabama's schools curricula boasted Americanism lectures.[24]

Fear of subversion in Alabama schools encouraged anti-Red protests in other facets of education. Coinciding with the development of lectures, programs, workshops, and Americanism courses, anticommunists focused on possible ways schools and education might be infiltrated. The turbulent, changing climate of the 1960s supported anticommunists' fears. They targeted most any individual, group, or organization that disturbed the southern status quo. The charged atmosphere on college campuses across the United States created by issues of civil rights, student demonstrations, women's liberation, anti-war protest, and peace movements underpinned anticommunists' notion that reds directed these efforts and would soon seize complete control of educational institutions. Groups in Alabama who witnessed these sometimes volatile events began speaking out.

Embroiled in a war against communist aggression in Vietnam, disillusioned by race riots in the Watts section of Los Angeles, and marred by the violence of Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama, America in 1965 resembled a state of mayhem. During the mid-1960s, Alabama's Peace Commission kept a close eye on subversive activities, much of which they believed was creeping into the state's education system. Edwin Strickland, an anticommunist and the Commission's staff director, worked with those both within and outside the state who shared a like-minded rancor for the red menace. Although the

[24] Shirley Jean White to Albert P. Brewer, December 23, 1968, Administrative files, "Communism," October 14, 1968-June 17, 1969, SG 22456, folder 17, Albert P. Brewer Papers, ADAH; Albert P. Brewer to Shirley Jean White, December 26, 1968, SG 22456, folder 17, Brewer Papers.

Peace Commission had been established two years earlier, it did not take up the fight against subversion in schools until 1965.

Anticommunists' anxieties were heightened by the increasing unrest on college campuses across the United States. Alabama anticommunists believed radical student groups and liberal professors were at the helm of these campus problems. To anticommunists, student-led demonstrations and professor-directed teach-ins, like the ones at Berkeley, constituted nothing more than communist take-over of education. Correspondence with other anticommunists outside the state reinforced fears as well as the need to warn those at the head of Alabama's colleges and universities. For instance, Edwin Strickland received letters from anticommunists in many other states regarding "the filth that has crept into our bookstores, public and school libraries and has even been 'required reading' in some schools." As has been argued, Alabamians took every precaution to rid schools of pro-Red literature in the 1950s and early 1960s. But as the civil rights, student, anti-war, women's, peace, and other "radical" movements of the mid-1960s geared up, anticommunists found new enemies to focus on.[25]

For Strickland and other Alabama anticommunists, social unrest on U.S. campuses represented a harbinger of what was in store for the South. Already they had witnessed extremist episodes at the University of Alabama and the University of Mississippi in the form of desegregation and federal intervention. Thus, college campuses and classrooms were seen as battlegrounds on which good and evil struggled. The Free Speech Movement fashioned by students at Berkeley ignited deep divisions among the American people across generational and political lines. Amid the maelstrom,

[25] Colonel Robert E. Lee Masters to Edwin Strickland, March 21, 1965, Administrative files, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

Strickland and the Peace Commission kept close association with the California Legislative Investigative Committee concerning campus teach-ins as well as other events that threatened the state. Fearing the same would occur in Alabama, the Peace Commission set out to warn the public about groups that might imperil the state's educational system.[26]

In a September 1965 newsletter, the Peace Commission addressed the student unrest problem in Alabama schools. According to the Peace Commission, the primary and secondary levels of education were interrupted by "forced" integration. At the college level, "There has been a massive effort by radical student groups to make college campuses the major field of pro-left activity." Florida and Mississippi had already been plagued by "Freedom Party Clubs," which served as "student action arm[s]" of the Communist Party. The newsletter warned that the "extreme student movement already on almost all major college campuses" was sponsored by such "Communist front groups" as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), League for Industrial Democracy (LID), and the Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF). In the eyes of the Peace Commission, and indeed for many anticommunists, pro-left equaled pro-Red. The Commission cautioned that these "communist" groups planned to facilitate pro-left speaking engagements on many southern college campuses during the 1965 fall term. As a response, the Peace

[26] Edwin Strickland to California Legislative Investigating Committee, June 18, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

Commission advised school administrators "to be on alert to weed out some who may prove embarrassing to their institutions."[27]

Along with other anticommunists, Governor George Wallace sought to initiate a campaign barring communism in Alabama schools. In a letter in the *Birmingham Independent* on August 18, 1965, Wallace advocated "house bill 973," which would ban communist speakers on college campuses. "It is time," Wallace avowed, "for the state of Alabama to make sure Communist sympathizers shall not be given a right to spread their poisonous doctrine on our college and university campuses." Although he believed in freedom of speech, Wallace "opposed…anyone whose allegiance is to foreign power, intent on burying us, and who advocate the forceful overthrow of our Government." Wallace, like many other southerners, viewed student organizing on campuses as a symbol of communist take-over.[28]

Red-baiting pro-left student groups and radical professors was an effective way to garner support for the anticommunist movement. Parents of college students who could no longer keep an eye on their child's activity undoubtedly paid close attention to anticommunist rhetoric. Worried that their son or daughter was being influenced by leftist professors and communist propaganda, Wallace's denigration of radicalism on campuses proved germane. The *Birmingham Independent* instigated a tirade against weak college officials and university presidents who promoted "academic freedom." Speaking directly to parents of college students, the newspaper asked, "Trust the colleges to shield your child from Communism? Not on your life!" Academic freedom according

[27] "September 1965 Newsletter," 1965-1971, Communist Party USA-ML, Reference files, SG 21072, reel 5, ALCPP Papers.
[28] "Wallace Fights to Keep Communist Speakers off Campuses," *Birmingham Independent*, August 18, 1965, p. 1.

to anticommunists was a disguise under which red infiltration could flourish. "The most important academic freedom," retorted the *Birmingham Independent*, "is the freedom of parents to prevent foreign ideologies being rammed down the throats of their children against their will." The article called for support of the communist-speaker ban, arguing that "the college campus has become the great recruiting ground" for the red menace. As proof, it suggested that "Every major world Communist figure" got his start "as a student in college" in an "atmosphere of 'academic Freedom.'"[29]

In early 1966, the Peace Commission began writing to college and university administrators notifying them of the ostensible red movement that gripped their campuses. They sent background information to college presidents on many of the campuses speakers. In addition, the Peace Commission issued reports on campus disorders at other colleges and in other states. In a letter to the Assistant to the President of the University of Alabama, the Commission's Edwin Strickland released the background of an alleged radical speaker John Ciardi who was scheduled to appear at the university. Although Strickland insisted that the letter was "in no way an attempt by this Commission to suggest who may or may not be a proper speaker" on the university's campus, he stated that Ciardi's speech to the Alabama Educational Association meeting a few years earlier "was canceled after his [leftist political] background became known." The Peace Commission sent many college presidents "for your information" missives.[30]

The speaking engagement of another educator at the Alabama Education Association's (AEA) annual meeting in 1966 created a large-scale and fervent

[29] "Alabama Professors, Leftists, Promoting Academic Anarchy," *Birmingham Independent*, August 18, 1965, p. 4.
[30] Edwin Strickland to Jefferson Bennett, January 16, 1966, 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

anticommunist campaign. Early that year the Peace Commission and Alabama Congressman John H. Buchanan, Jr. received a large number of letters protesting the proposed speech of Max Lerner, a college professor, at the AEA's meeting. In addition, the correspondence requested any information on Lerner's communistic background. Many of the letters asked for numerous copies of his "activities" to be handed out among the populace. Lerner was a professor of American Civilization at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts and a journalist for several popular periodicals such as, the *New York Post*, the *Political Science Quarterly*, and the *New Republic*. Although he was not a member of the Communist Party and he "opposed 'red-baiting,'" Lerner was a left-winger and a Jew. In an atmosphere that "saw no great difference among liberals, 'creeping socialists,' and Communists," Lerner was branded red. In the 1940s, his failure to take a hard stance against the Communist Party earned him the misnomer, "Marx Lerner." Thus, Lerner's scheduled appearance at the AEA meeting in March 1966 set off an alarm among anticommunist zealots in Alabama.[31]

The ultra-conservative *Birmingham Independent* also denigrated Lerner. The newspaper protested the AEA's invitation of the Brandeis professor and urged Alabamians to contact the organization as well as their state representatives. The *Independent* blamed Birmingham's "local liberal establishment" for defending Lerner's appearance. According to the paper, Lerner had a "Pro-Communist background" and was affiliated with twenty or thirty front organizations. The *Independent* deplored Lerner's

[31] *Birmingham Post Herald*, January 7, 1966, p. 12; (Mrs. Hal C.F) Mildred L. Lamar to John H. Buchanan, Jr., January 14, 1966, and (Mrs. R.L.) Mary A. Bell to John H. Buchanan, Jr., January 14, 1966, see also 36.6 through 36.10 for the numerous letters sent to Buchanan from Alabama residents objecting Lerner's scheduled appearance in Internal Security/Un-American Activities Committee, 36.6, March 22, 1965 to January 16, 1966, John Hall Buchanan, Jr. Papers, BPL; Hugh A. Locke, Jr. to Edwin Strickland, January 19, 1966, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Sanford Lakoff, *Max Lerner: Pilgrim in the Promise Land*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 92, 142.

"subversive pseudo sophisticated thinking," even though it admitted, "We don't know him, and never heard of him until recently." The newspaper and other anticommunists urged collective protest of Lerner before "Students and educators are subjected to brain bending." "Only the grass roots voices will be heard," the anticommunist periodical exclaimed, "and you better start yelling."[32]

Citizens of Alabama's southern port city, Mobile, also spoke out against the alleged communist's visit to Birmingham. The Mobile County School Board, the city's two newspapers, and concerned residents denounced the AEA's selection. "[Lerner's appearance] is only part of a broad-scale program for 'reform' or to 'liberalize' Alabamians," the *Mobile Press* claimed. The *Mobile Register* issued a similar statement in agreement with other Alabamians in the protest of Lerner's invitation.[33]

Despite vehement protest from many in the state, the AEA did not rescind its invitation and Lerner spoke to an assembly at the Birmingham Municipal Auditorium on March 17, 1966. By the time of his speaking engagement, however, the *Birmingham Independent* attacked the AEA, not Lerner for his invitation. The newspaper admitted that "despite the fact that we despise Communism with our entire being, we find ourselves with a higher regard for Dr. Lerner than we now have for the A.E.A. hierarchy which, faced with the facts of life, squirms like a can full of fish bait." The Lerner case represented one of many in the anticommunist fight against perceived radical educators.[34]

Anticommunist organizers also focused on "extreme" student groups. In several of the Peace Commission newsletters, Staff Director Edwin Strickland stated, "We have

[32] "Liberals Rush to Defense of Max Lerner," *Birmingham Independent*, February 2-8, 1966, p. 1; "What's Wrong with Max Lerner…Speaking to the A.E.A.?," *Birmingham Independent*, March 3-8, 1966, p. 1.
[33] "School Board Hits A.E.A. Guest," *Birmingham Independent*, February 9-15, 1966, p. 5.
[34] "Will the Real Max Lerner Please Stand Up," *Birmingham Independent*, March 16-22, 1966, p. 1.

been fortunate in Alabama in not having open organizations of the [W.E.B.] Du Bois Clubs or S.D.S. on our campuses. We feel this is due to the fact that our college administrations are generally more alert to such activities, and because of active surveillance by police and state agencies." This statement came following an announcement that peace activism against the war in Vietnam was communist-directed. College administrations were more alert because the Peace Commission stayed in incessant contact with them regarding subversion on campus. It warned that student "agitators who promoted campus riots and the Filthy Speech Movement" at Berkeley had arrived in Alabama.[35]

The Free Speech Movement was not the only group of student activists targeted by ardent anticommunists. Much of the stir at Berkeley and elsewhere across the United States was caused by student and teacher protest against the war in Vietnam. Anticommunists believed protest against the war represented subversion. If one were against the Vietnam War, then he or she was surely a communist. A 1966 *Birmingham Post Herald* editorial cited J. Edgar Hoover's conclusion that the American Communist Party was responsible for the campaigns for peace in Vietnam. "The [Communist] party and other subversive organizations," the paper announced, "fully supported and participated in the emergence of anti-war groups last year which focused attention on Viet Nam fighting." Alabama anticommunists worried that the state's college and university campuses would be overrun by pro-red and anti-war student protestors.[36]

[35] October 12, 1965 Newsletter, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; January 10, 1966 Alabama Legislative Commission to Preserve the Peace newsletter, SG 22400, folder 17, Wallace Papers.
[36] "Reds' Role in Protests Disclosed," *Birmingham Post Herald*, January 7, 1966, p. 2.

To alert schools, state officials and the Peace Commission issued memos and correspondence to college heads. In a letter to Peace Commission field director J. Dean Fleming, Adril L. Wright from Florence State College expressed concern over student subversive activities on college campuses. However, he assured Fleming that "so far" the student activities on his campus were "sound." Should the actions become "off base so to speak," Wright attested, "I believe I will be hearing about it; for I have a daughter who is a Freshman at the college this year." "She is a fundamentalist as her father," he continued, "and even though she is young none of the liberals and socialists have been able to move her one inch yet."[37]

Anticommunists corresponded with other university heads regarding student demonstrations and assessed the "campus unrest" situation into the 1970s. Over the next few years the Peace Commission sent information primarily about SDS to the heads of Alabama's major colleges and universities. All of the university presidents and administrators shared the same apprehension that their campuses might be in danger of radical, communist student subversion should they let down their guard. "We feel SDS poses a considerable threat," Edwin Strickland wrote to the University of Alabama, "to tranquility in areas where they are able to get a foothold." School administrators responded similarly to Troy State College President Ralph W. Adams against infiltration. "To be forewarned," Adams argued, "is to be forearmed, and I appreciate the information about this [SDS] subversive organization."[38]

[37] Adril L. Wright to J. Dean Fleming, October 9, 1966, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.
[38] Edwin Strickland to Jeff Bennett, February 21, 1967, and Ralph W. Adams to Edwin Strickland, March 9, 1967, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

University of South Alabama Executive Committee Chairman E.G. Cleverdon assured Strickland that he and the schools other officials were in control of possible subversion on campus. "The President and the Trustees," Cleverdon stated, "are dedicated to the proposition of developing a sound faculty and student body in conforming with the ideals and principles which made this country great and we will do all we can to accomplish this end." Those ideals and principles clearly did not include student demonstrations relating to civil rights, peace and women's activism, or any other "radical" issue.[39]

Over the next several years the Peace Commission informed other Alabama institutions of higher education about "pro-communist" student organizations that jeopardized campus balance. In addition, Alabama governors George Wallace, Lurleen Wallace, and Albert Brewer received many epistles from the Peace Commission, school officials, and from average citizens disturbed by radical student unrest on the state's campuses. On March 10, 1967, Governor Lurleen Wallace and her husband received an embittered letter from Lillian Ruehmann from Sheffield in northwest Alabama. After reading a notice entitled, "Operation Campus Awakening" from Christian Crusade founder Billy James Hargis that detailed how communists were "making amazing inroads" among youth on college campuses, Ruehmann decided it was "a worthy cause" to bring to the governor's attention. "Communism," she warned, "is spreading so fast on our campuses at college, in a disguised way through music and the arts." Ruehmann spoke of "communist" musicians Pete Seeger and Phil Ochs and "pro-Red" songs such as, "Draft Dodger Rag" and I Ain't Marching Anymore." She urged the governor to

[39] E.G. Cleverdon to Edwin Strickland, June 12, 1967, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

consider having Christian Crusade evangelist David Noebel speak on the subject, "The Marxist Minstrels" at Alabama colleges.[40]

A year and a half later in September 1968, Edwin Strickland wrote a nine-page letter to Governor Albert Brewer further detailing the communist influence and "growing militance" on Alabama college campuses. The campuses targeted by "agitational activity," both on the faculties and in the student bodies, were the University of Alabama, the University of South Alabama, Birmingham Southern College, Auburn University, Livingston College, Troy State College, Jacksonville State College, Alabama State College, Tuskegee College, Talladega College, Stillman College, and Miles College. According to Strickland, the communists worked via the black power and peace movements as well as through underground publications on campuses. The communist presence "will be felt in Alabama," he warned the governor, "in the form of more 'peace demonstrations' and more assaults, physical or otherwise, against the 'establishment.'"[41]

Three months later, Peace Commission Chairman John H. Hawkins, Jr. also notified Governor Brewer of the "rapid growth of certain student new left groups on" Alabama college campuses. "The warning symptoms are clear," he maintained, "drug abuse, underground publications, anti-draft counseling—all are present." He advised Brewer of "the new technique of 'telectures' by which objectionable speakers, including [William] Sloan Coffin and the communist party's Gus Hall, are reaching thousands of students on campuses." In order to restore "quality education," the Peace Commission

[40] Edwin Strickland to Pat Green, Auburn University, February 26, 1967, and Walter A. Graham, Southern Union State Junior College, January 11, 1969, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Lillian Ruehmann to George and Lurleen Wallace, March 8, 1967, SG 22420, folder 14, Wallace Papers.
[41] Edwin Strickland to Albert P. Brewer, September 15, 1968," SG 22449, folder 12, Albert P. Brewer Papers.

distributed several campus disorders reports. Much like the correspondence sent to the Alabama governors and college administrators, the Commission's reports extensively red-baited student groups and faculty members that threatened the stability of the state's colleges.[42]

Alabama anticommunists perceived a large communist conspiracy was at work behind the network of radical campus activities. Perhaps most unnerving to anticommunists was the belief that the campus unrest stemmed from non-student communist groups. These groups, they believed, were actually controlling radicalism in educational institutions across Alabama. In 1971, the Peace Commission set off yet another, albeit very small, educational red scare by declaring that the Communist Party had re-organized at Miles College in Birmingham. In addition, the Alabama Peace Action Coalition which "was controlled by the communists" established "a new peace offensive" at the University of Alabama. Even the 1970 Earth Day "movement" was not exempt from the Alabama anticommunist smear campaign. The "efforts to clean up our environment" observed by a number of Alabama, and national, college students and faculty equated to nothing short of communist propaganda.[43]

By the mid-1970s the Peace Commission, along with fellow communist misanthropes, ended their drive to save education from the red menace. The last trace of evidence was found in a letter from Edwin Strickland to the *Montgomery Advertiser* in

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[42] John H. Hawkins, Jr. to Albert P. Brewer, December 19, 1968," SG 22626, folder 1, Brewer Papers; Campus Disorders Report, April 23, 1969, SG 21074, reel 16, ALCPP Papers; Blue Print for Student Revolution-Role of the Student Radical-The Radical Professor, June 18, 1970, SG22647, folder 17, and April 23, 1969 to August 31, 1971, SG 22647, folder 18, Brewer Papers; Edwin Strickland to Albert P. Brewer, February 1969, and Edwin Strickland to Commission Members and George C. Wallace, August 31, 1971, SG22647, folder 17, and April 23, 1969 to August 31, 1971, SG 22647, folder 18, Brewer Papers.
[43] Communist Party Reorganized in Alabama, and U. of A. Students Follow Communist 'Peace' Plan, SG 21073, reel 12, ALCPP Papers; Earth Day Activity, SG 21074, reel 16, ALCPP Papers.

1973. In the letter, Strickland suggested that student complaints about high school cafeteria food "could be considered 'subversive.'" Strickland argued that "professional trouble makers, such as leaders of Students For a Democratic Society, would try to use minor grievances to activate students." "I mentioned as an example," he continued, "demonstrations that did erupt in several schools over cafeteria food or service. I have made the point in many reports and in talks to schools, colleges and civic clubs that law enforcement personnel should be careful about overreaction in cases of minor disturbances."[44]

Strickland's harangue to the Montgomery newspaper in early 1973 illustrates the uniqueness of Alabama's crusade to save education from the red menace. Although communism on the international scene was far from forgotten, most of the American public by the early 1970s stopped fearing that communists had taken over schools. Not Alabama. Its educational red scare was long-lasting and far-reaching, stretching from the early 1950s to the early 1970s. A campaign that began by rescuing students from communist literature in schools ended by labeling the same group—students—"subversive." The individuals and troupes that adopted the banner of anticommunism ranged from the grassroots to the state legislative committee.

In many ways, the Alabama anticommunist educational campaign resembled that of other states. In other ways, however, it was distinctive. For example, unlike Florida, where anticommunists focused on purging sexual deviants from public schools and universities, Alabama merely wrote about and warned of subversives in education. No evidence was found that indicated any educator lost his or her position for being a

[44] Edwin Strickland to Harold Martin, January 3, 1973, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

communist in Alabama. This is not to say that it did not happen. Some of the Peace Commission's collection contains gaps, particularly meeting minutes as well as any hearings it brought against "subversives." Although the Commission reported that it held hearings and meetings, many of the records have been purged. Unfortunately, those documents may well have been the key to finding out if alleged subversives were arrested or penalized in any way.

The increasingly tumultuous political and social climate surrounding George Wallace and the black civil rights demonstrations created a unique anticommunist movement in Alabama. This movement was fueled by fear of outsiders. Most of the anticommunists' campaign focused not on the fact that reds had already breached Alabama's borders, but on the idea that communists *might* infiltrate the state's schools and universities. As a result, especially in the early years of the campaign, anticommunist grassroots organizers developed workshops, speaking tours, and seminars designed to inform Alabama residents about how to spot communists and safeguard their children from propaganda. The state also developed an anticommunist curriculum. Elementary, junior, and high school teachers taught course on the values of Americanism while exposing the "evils" of communism. Furthermore, Alabama anticommunists opposed any perceived communist speakers from coming into the state. These campaigns occurred at the grassroots, local, and state levels. In addition to and concurrent with the educational campaign, Alabama anticommunists launched a number of other campaigns. The Alabama anticommunist educational campaign influenced the social and political atmosphere. In addition to education, the influence of race, religion, morality, and conservative politics created a climate of fear in Alabama.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL ANTICOMMUNISM: RACE, RELIGION, AND RECTITUDE

> …there is in every region a type of person who is ready to link communism with anything he doesn't like.
>
> — Jane Cassels Record
> 1957

> If enough people could see the red hands stirring the races in the south I'm sure both White and Black would oust the trouble making outsiders for good.
>
> — Charles C. Ray
> Vista, California
> 1965[1]

Beginning in the 1950s, southerners blamed communism for the racial change that threatened the status quo. Disillusioned by the recent United States Supreme Court decision that ended segregation in public schools, whites in the Deep South decided that the push for black civil rights must be communist-motivated and –sponsored. In order to secure support for massive resistance to desegregation, southerners labeled the struggle for racial equality a grand red conspiracy. Desegregation symbolized a vehement salvo in an international communist scheme that corralled sundry white southerners around a common cause. Communism as the end of the southern and American way of life became the axiom for these southerners. Consequently, many white southerners exploited anticommunism as an instrument to resist racial desegregation.

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[1] Jane Cassels Record, "The Red-Tagging of Negro Protest," *The American Scholar*, 26, (Summer 1957): 325-333, 326; Charles C. Ray to Governor George C. Wallace, March 29, 1965, SG 22384, folder 8, Wallace Papers.

Southern anticommunism was steeped in religious rhetoric. Protestant southerners felt that communism and religion could never coexist and they brooked no such tolerance for the concept. For religious southerners, social and cultural changes of the postwar period signified the secularization of America. Domestic anticommunism undermined God and their traditional Protestant faith. Therefore, a strong foundation in religion was the key to overcoming the communist menace before it destroyed America. As more and more churches opened up to the idea of integration, anticommunists became increasingly paranoid that "race-mixing" was a grand communist conspiracy and that places of worship were becoming hotbeds of subversion. As a result, many religious leaders underwent investigations of character and a number of them were red-baited. Some faced scrutiny as they transitioned to a different congregation as a result of the investigations, while others lost their current positions within the church. Religious anticommunism proved to be a strong bulwark against what southern Protestants viewed as impious, anti-God, and anti-American.

Morality was also threatened by the rising tide of communism. Southerners viewed any change in the social and moral fiber of American life with suspicion. Southerners apotheosized fierce dedication to virtue. In an environment where subversion lurked in every corner, anyone who appeared out of the ordinary might be a communist. Southerners desired conformity. Thus, in the socially-fractured period of the sixties and seventies when orthodoxy was often ignored, southerners had little problem labeling nonconformists subversive. Unconventional women and homosexuals were a favorite moral target of anticommunists. Anticommunists drew on the postwar obsession with the nuclear household, traditional gender roles, and normative heterosexuality as a

defense against unconventional and subversive elements. Conservative southerners believed the feminist politics of women's empowerment would undermine social and economic tradition. Likewise, same-sex relationships earned moral opprobrium in the South. In response, southerners hoped to jettison diversity by labeling such groups red. Along with religion and rectitude, racial advances incited southern red-baiting.

Jane Cassels Record was perhaps one of the first to voice the red-black connection. Record, an academic who grew up in the South, wrote a controversial article in 1957 entitled, "The Red-Tagging of Negro Protest." She made several arguments supporting the idea that white segregationists exploited and linked southern fears of communism to the civil rights movement. While Record acknowledged that not all southerners were segregationists, just as not all segregationists were southerners, she also argued that civil rights red-baiters were not exclusively reactionary opportunists. "If such thinking were confined to the lunatic fringe or to cynics who make political capital out of this sort of thing," she argued, "the matter could be dismissed without comment." But, as Record pointed out, many southerners subscribed to the belief that communism and desegregation were inextricably linked.[2]

Record developed several theses in support of the hypothesis that southerners "red-tagged" black civil rights activists. "The fact that the colored man wants schools and gadgets and a gray flannel suit, far from indicating his subversiveness," Record argued, "is virtual proof of his Americanism. The Bill of Rights, not the Communist Manifesto, is the source of his ferment." Segregationists' counter-argument, however, rested on the idea that black southerners seemed satisfied with their lot and, that as

[2] Record, "The Red-Tagging of Negro Protest," *The American Scholar*, 26, (Summer 1957): 325-333, 325.

inferior individuals, they could not possibly construct such grand schemes as the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Communists then must be behind the movement.[3]

Record also built a North versus South contention. "Only the Southern-born, Southern-bred white can wisely decide what is good for the South and the colored man. If this foundation premise is allowed to fall," she explained, "the whole Southern position collapses." Therefore, according to Record, white segregationists espoused the Communist-plot theory behind the civil rights movement.[4]

Predictably, southerners regarded her article as a betrayal by one of their own. The piece unsurprisingly elicited vitriolic response from whites in Dixie. According to Laban Lacy Rice, Record's "implicit imputation" that the "South as a unit is guilty of protest is an instance of the 'Achilles heel' fallacy too flagrant to ignore." An Orlando, Florida native, Rice recognized Record's North versus South slant. He wondered "why Mrs. Record doesn't turn the spotlight on some of the North's unresolved racial problems instead of pecking away at the South." In Record's rejoinder, she addressed this contention. According to her, "to tell [northerners] to stop talking about Alabama problems until every last wrong has been set to right in New York and Chicago would be like a resident of Jerusalem in 33 A.D. telling Jesus to clean up all the sin in Galilee before asking any other city to repent." Thus, instead of Record's article drawing critical response to the red and black connection, it was simply seen as an argument for the North and against the South.[5]

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[3] Ibid, 329, 331.
[4] Ibid, 331-332.
[5] "The Reader Replies," *The American Scholar,* 26, (Fall 1957): 531-532; "The Reader Replies," *The American Scholar,* 27, (Winter 1957, 1958): 135-136.

In Alabama, where a substantial amount of civil rights action took place, anti-Red segregationists found further legitimacy for resisting racial change by adopting the communist-plot theory. Anticommunism offered a more reputable means of forestalling desegregation and other race reforms than many of the massive resisters' aggressive, often shocking actions. Curbing the pro-segregationist rhetoric of such characters as George Wallace and Bull Connor, white Alabamians no doubt sought a more honorable national cause—fighting communism. Thus, the state's legislative investigative committee headed the red-hunt against black activists. Whether or not the Peace Commission actually believed the civil rights movement was communist-controlled is not clear. What is evident, however, is many Alabamians viewed it as such, thus providing often decisive succor in the fight against racial change.

On October 10, 1962, prior to becoming the Peace Commission staff director, Edwin Strickland wrote a letter to United States Attorney General Robert Kennedy. He condemned the Kennedy administration for "appeas[ing] the Red-ridden NAACP…to the extent of invading a soverign [sic] state with more troops than we currently have in Laos and West Berlin combined." The occurrence that Strickland referred to was James Meredith's admission to the University of Mississippi. A month earlier, "Ole Miss" had been the scene of truculent, riotous protest. Meredith's admission sparked a violent confrontation between Ole Miss students and local segregationists and Kennedy-ordered federal troops and marshals. Not only was the Meredith incident seen as a breach of Mississippi's, and indeed the South's, sovereignty, but red-hunters, such as Strickland

and ring-wing patriot General Edwin Walker, also viewed Ole Miss as a "battlefield" on which Americans fought communism.[6]

Strickland's epistle castigated the Kennedy administration and the "forced" integration of the races. In the vehement letter, Strickland used such phrases as "jungle lawlessness," "prostitution of the majority," and "dark-skinned dictators" to describe what he viewed as communist-stirred racial agitation in the South. He felt that the Kennedy administration played into the hands of the communists by allowing the NAACP-backed Meredith to attend an all-white university. Strickland explained that "using minority groups, principally the Negroes in the South," was representative of the communist "blueprint…for bringing America into the Soviet camp." "The tragedy of it all," he cautioned, "is that hatreds which did not exist are being burned into the souls of men of good will." The movement dedicated to desegregation in the form of the 1961 Freedom Riders, the student-led sit-ins in restaurants, and the integration of public schools was soon to be painted red in Alabama. These events also inspired Strickland to join the Peace Commission as a combatant against subversion.[7]

Clarence Edwin Strickland, the son of a Confederate soldier, was born in 1917 in Billingsley, a small town between Birmingham and Montgomery. In the 1940s, he worked as a reporter for the *Birmingham Post-Herald* and *Birmingham News* covering crime, politics, and other noteworthy events. Before joining the Peace Commission in January 1964, Strickland served as executive assistant to Alabama Attorney General

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[6] Edwin Strickland to Robert Kennedy, October 10, 1962, SG21074, reel 15 ALCPP Papers; W. J. Rorabaugh, *Kennedy and the Promise of the Sixties*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 96-103; Yasuhiro Katagiri, *The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission: Civil Rights and States' Rights*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 104-117.

[7] Strickland to Robert Kennedy, October 10, 1962," SG21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

MacDonald Gallion from 1959 to 1963. With a background as an investigative journalist, he became the leading red-hunter of the civil rights movement for the Peace Commission.[8]

Other Alabamians also fought to preserve Jim Crow by means of red-baiting. Alabama Department of Public Safety Director, Albert J. Lingo, had a reputation for abhorring blacks. He recommended to Governor George Wallace re-naming the Alabama Highway Patrol as the Alabama State Troopers. State Investigator Ben L. Allen also held disdain for civil rights radicals. Following the lead of other states, Allen proposed the creation of the Alabama Legislative Commission to Preserve the Peace to work alongside the state police force. Wallace often ordered Lingo and Allen to uncover salacious activities that would damage the reputation of prominent black activists. Both also believed that communists directed the civil rights movement.[9]

In a memorandum to Lingo on January 21, 1963, Allen outlined the state's troubles with the drive for racial equality and recommended that Alabama form a Peace Commission to avert problems. Citing as troublesome examples—the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW) and the Council for Human Relations, he wrote that "we have had with us people who sought to change our Southern way of life and intergrate [sic] the races." Amid the racial diatribe, the letter insinuated that the "Negro unrest" represented a communist plot. He explained that reds were nefariously concealed deep within the movement, refusing to expose themselves until blacks and communists had taken control of the United States. To illustrate this point, Allen stated that "they

[8] Memoranda for Biographical Sketch of Clarence Edwin Strickland, SG 24838, reel 16, ALCPP Papers.
[9] Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, The Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics*, 2nd ed., (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 125-126, 230-231.

lean to the Communistic thinking of 'big fish swim deep.'" The Peace Commission, he advised, "would allow officers to quickly determine who the 'outsiders' were that were so prevalent at every scene of violence, be it the Freedom Riders in Montgomery or at Oxford, Mississippi."[10]

To be sure, concern about communism in Alabama was not devoid of certain merit. During the 1920s and 1930s, Alabama witnessed a surge of communist activities, principally in the labor movement. Historian Robin D. G. Kelley uncovered this far-reaching movement in Depression-era Alabama in his pioneering work, *Hammer and Hoe*. Kelley revealed a social and political group that challenged the southern hegemonic forces of white supremacy. Primarily composed of working-class blacks, with a small cadre of whites, the Alabama Communist movement remained deeply concealed. Individual and collective differences within the movement sustained it and at times threatened its dismantling. "Those assembled under the red banner," Kelley contended, "did not share the same vision of radical opposition, nor were they motivated by the same circumstances." In spite of, and at the same time, because of their internal differences, the Party effectively challenged racism and inequality well into the postwar period. The actions of the Alabama Communist Party decades prior to the civil rights movement validated fears of anticommunists that mass mobilization of reds was possible.[11]

Another organization that provided further rationalization for anticommunists was the Southern Conference for Human Welfare. Ben Allen referenced SCHW in his memo to Lingo. This assemblage was loosely connected to but distinct from the Alabama

[10] Ben L. Allen to Albert J. Lingo, January 21, 1963, SG 22384, folder 6, Wallace Papers.
[11] Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), xi-xii, passim.

Communist Party. Perhaps the first southern interracial organization to protest all forms of segregation, the Southern Conference in the 1930s launched a massive assault on the southern Jim Crow social standard. Although not officially a communist organization, many of its members demonstrated leftist affinities and some were committed Party members. SCHW comprised a diverse amalgamation of followers who advocated many of the Party's philosophies. Still, "The Southern Conference's desire to democratize the South, to equalize the opportunities of her depressed masses" remained at least for this organization an unfulfilled aspiration. In 1948 the SCHW split and ultimately ended, but its propaganda arm, the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF), survived. SCEF took up where SCHW left off. As John Popham, one of SCEF's officers declared, "The next great liberal movement in this country will come from the South." Like the Alabama Communist movement, SCHW and SCEF motivated future groups like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). At the same time, SCEF and its progenitor, SCHW, also bolstered fervent opponents of communism.[12]

Pursuant to Allen's recommendation, as well as the impetus of the civil rights movement, the Alabama Legislature established the Peace Commission in 1963. Composed of five unpaid members, three from the House of Representatives and two from the Senate, the Peace Commission was "authorized and empowered to investigate, analyze and interrogate persons, groups and organizations who may be engaged in

[12] Thomas A. Krueger, *And Promises to Keep: The Southern Conference for Human Welfare, 1938-1948*, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), 192-196; See also Linda Reed, *Simple Decency and Common Sense: The Southern Conference Movement, 1938-1963*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama: The Climatic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 77.

activities of an unlawful nature against the sovereignty of the State of Alabama." Additionally, the Peace Commission reserved the right to hold hearings and direct meetings at its discretion anywhere in the state. The Peace Commission was required to report all discoveries to both Houses of Legislature and to the governor of Alabama. From its inception, the Peace Commission wasted little time seeking out communists in the struggle for racial equality, many of whom were in the top echelons of the civil rights movement.[13]

Birmingham community leader and civil rights activist Fred L. Shuttlesworth was one of the first targets of red-hunting. A column in the *New York Journal American*, identified Shuttlesworth as the president of the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF), an offshoot of SCHW. The article indicated that SCEF was an organization "set up to promote communism throughout the South." Peace Commission Chairman John H. Hawkins, Jr. called SCEF "a communist transmission belt in the South." On July 17, 1963, *The Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent* stated that SCEF called the Peace Commission a "Un-Alabama Committee." The front-page headline red-tagging Shuttlesworth, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the civil rights movement created outrage among anticommunists in Alabama.[14]

The Peace Commission took every opportunity to denounce leaders within the movement as communists. The Peace Commission condemned Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC for "running a 'Religious Hootenanny'," filled with communists

[13] 1965 Biennial Report to the Alabama Legislature, SG21073, reel 12, ALCPP Papers.
[14] Jack Lotto, "On Your Guard: Stirring Tensions in South," *New York Journal American*, June 8, 1963; "Revelations Raise a Burning Question – Do Some in Birmingham Side with Reds?" *The Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent*, July 17, 1963, p. 1; "Chairman John Hawkins Again Accepts Communist Challenge," *The Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent*, July 24, 1963, p. 6.

and "communist-fronters." Throughout its duration, however, King maintained that the movement was communist-free. Although he drew much of his support from those who advocated communist principles, King believed that a connection to the Party would largely damage the movement's momentum. Hence, he denied any ties to its membership and doctrines.[15]

Hawkins responded by identifying the supposed communists behind the prior racial demonstrations in Birmingham that spring. According to the ring-wing newspaper, *Birmingham Independent*, among the communists directing the civil rights movement was Dr. James Dombroski, Carl and Ann Braden, and Howard Pitts O'Dell. He also stated that he was proud to be called the chairman of the "Un-Alabama Committee." He stated that the title meant that "communists not only in Alabama, but throughout the South, are scared." He continued:

> I furthermore assure them that our committee has every intention of fully exposing the diabolical plot through racial agitation and racial tension to destroy this great America in which we live, and all the great freedoms as handed down to us from our forefathers; and to help maintain our right to worship God and protect our free enterprise system against all efforts to destroy them.

Hawkins's statement and the newspaper's articles revealed Alabamians' fear that the civil rights movement was indeed controlled by communists and, that if successful, would undermine American freedoms of religion and capitalism.[16]

Two months later, Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing was blamed on communists. *The Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent* announced

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[15] Communists in Civil Rights, SG21073, reel 12, ALCPP Papers; Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 159-161; Concerning the connection between Martin Luther King, Jr. and the CP, see David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From "Solo" to Memphis*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981).
[16] "Chairman John Hawkins Again Accepts Communist Challenge," *The Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent*, July 24, 1963, p. 6.

in the September 18, 1963 headline that the bombing of the black church that killed four girls "means only one thing: COMMUNISM IS HERE!" Instead of turning to white segregationists who perpetrated the detestable violent act, the newspaper placed responsibility on the communist "condoned" Kennedy "dictatorship." The article also referred to Shuttlesworth's and King's involvement with communist organizations, insinuating they perhaps had some participation in the church bombing. Nonetheless, week after week a new headline emerged fueling race-centered anticommunism.[17]

In February 1964, *The New York Times* exposed Alabama's investigations of subversives. The *Times* recognized that the "intelligence network of state agencies and officials" was primarily concerned with accruing information on civil rights activists and organizations. Among the agencies singled out were the Peace Commission, the Subversive Unit of the Department of Public Safety's Investigative and Identification Division, under the leadership of Albert Lingo and Ben Allen, and the Alabama State Sovereignty Commission. Although the State Sovereignty Commission was established more as a states' rights organization, Governor George Wallace, who chaired the Commission, and other members worked closely with the Peace Commission and state police to seek out those who resisted the state's stance on segregation.[18]

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[17] "Communism is here, Congress Take Notice!," *The Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent*, September 18, 1963, p. 1; "Shuttlesworth Ties with Communists," *The Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent*, October 30, 1963, p. 1, 5; "Martin Luther King's Ties with Communism," *The Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent*, April 1, 1964, p. 1; "Alabama Again Leads the Way by Exposing 'Rights' Bill Ties with Communist Creed," *Birmingham Independent*, April 15, 1964, p. 1, 8; "Martin Luther King's Imported 'Army' and Communists Await Orders to Launch All-Out Racial War in Alabama," *Birmingham Independent*, May 13, 1964, p. 1, 3; "Election Year Program of Reds in U.S. Announces 'Rights' Bill Key to Communist Plot," *Birmingham Independent*, June 3, 1964, p.1.

[18] Claude Sitton, "Alabama Compiling Files on Civil Rights Advocates," *The New York Times*, February 17, 1964, pp. 1, 16.

Alabama set up its Sovereignty Commission in the summer of 1963. Following Mississippi and Louisiana, Alabama exercised the power to investigate any element or entity that threatened the state. In 1963, the threatening elements in Alabama were blacks and communists. At the State Sovereignty Commission's first meeting, members clearly illustrated this issue. One of the main purposes of organizing the Alabama State Sovereignty Commission was to boost "funds to fight the Civil Rights Bill of 1963 now pending in Congress." The aforementioned proposed law came to be known as the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Sovereignty Commission communicated with Mississippi and Louisiana on matters of subversion, mostly civil rights activism. In a letter applauding the establishment of the Alabama State Sovereignty Commission, Erle Johnston, Jr., Director of the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, stated that the "three states [Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama] certainly have many areas of common interest, and we look forward to working with your organization just as we have been working with the Commission in Louisiana." For the most part, however, Mississippi and Louisiana worked more closely with the state's Peace Commission, not the Sovereignty Commission, against red-tainted racial agitation and for the preservation of segregation.[19]

No other anticommunist network rivaled Alabama's. At the fore of the state's agenda was civil rights. According to *The New York Times*, in the area of investigation and "in terms of over-all scope and amount of activity [Alabama's] intelligence network seems to be unparalleled in this country." Thus, when the Peace Commission or any

[19] Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, pp. 170-172; State Sovereignty Commission Minutes, January 3, 1964, Administrative files, 1964-1965 Minutes, SG 24709, reel 13, Alabama State Sovereignty Commission Papers, hereafter cited as, ASSC Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Erle Johnston Jr. to Carl Herbert Lancaster, March 16, 1964, 1964-1968 Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, SG 24709, reel 13, ASSC Papers.

other group or influential individual such as George Wallace alleged "that the integration movement is Communist-inspired," the rest of the country listened. And the anticommunist groups in Alabama kept in close contact not only with southern states, but also with like-minded groups throughout the United States.[20]

In April 1964 the Birmingham branch of the John Birch Society began speaking out against the proposed Civil Rights Act. The Society claimed that the red agenda included exploiting "artificially created racial disturbances as a means of advancing the Communist takeover of the United States. 'The Civil Rights Act of 1963' is essentially a part of that plan." In the first of many reports, the Peace Commission also argued that the 1964 Civil Rights Bill was red-tainted.[21]

In March 1964 the Peace Commission prepared the report, "The 1964 Civil Rights Bill…Its Pattern…Its Architects," and charged the United States Congress as a "federal dictatorship." The Peace Commission translated the bill's purposes into their own language and falsely correlated its provisions with the 1928 Workers' Party platform. The report was not only an attack on civil rights groups, but on the federal government, which proposed the bill. First, the Peace Commission alleged that it "would virtually eliminate the use and enjoyment of private property." Next, the bill, under the Peace Commission's interpretation, removed the right to a trial by jury; instead, a "master" handled complaints. Third, the bill's equal employment requirements placed an "impossible burden" on businesses and employers. Finally, the Commission claimed

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[20] Sitton, "Alabama Compiling Files," *The New York Times*, February 17, 1964, pp. 1, 16.
[21] "John Birch Society Takes the Position," *Birmingham Independent*, April 1, 1964, p. 2; "Alabama Again Leads the Way by Exposing 'Rights' Bill Ties with Communist Creed," *Birmingham Independent*, April 15, 1964, pp. 1, 8; "If Civil 'Rights' Bill Passes Just Nobody Will Be Satisfied," *Birmingham Independent*, May 13, 1964, p. 1; "Election Year Program of Reds in U.S. Announces 'Rights' Bill Key to Communist Plot," *Birmingham Independent*, June 3, 1964, p. 1.

that school and law enforcement would be federally operated, "creating the machinery for a police state." The Peace Commission undoubtedly viewed or at least propagandized the 1964 Civil Rights Bill as connected with the "Communist Party Manifesto." Furthermore, it clearly interpreted the bill from a states' rights viewpoint.[22]

Two months later Chairman Hawkins and Staff Director Strickland attended the Annual Conference of the Southern Association of Investigators (SAI) in Montgomery. The two hour conference discussed in detail the "Communist Subversion in Racial Unrest." Subsequently, the Peace Commission updated state and city officials of dissenters in Alabama.[23]

In May, Hawkins and Strickland met with Birmingham Mayor Albert Boutwell. The theme of their discussion was "Communist Goals as They Apply to Present Racial Strife." Hawkins and Strickland provided Boutwell with details of the Peace Commission investigative work thus far. Strickland stated:

> Racial turmoil and revolution was first promulgated in 1959, when the Communists charged that it was necessary to establish a Black State in America. After passage of the Federal law requiring card-carrying Communists to register, no more than 1,400 Communists complied. 45,000 Communists gave up their identity, but not their allegiance. These include the fellow travelers, the nuts, bleeding hearts, intelligence, etc. The original goal of the Communist movement is now in sight. In 1963 the Communists saw the Muslim Movement as prime material to obtain this goal. The Communists' strategy was to infiltrate and give direction to this movement by integrating top party officials into the Muslim hierarchy. A so-called non-violent approach is fast being forgotten. Communists must have turmoil and pit group against group.

Strickland continued, paying particular attention to activities in Birmingham:

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[22] The 1964 Civil Rights Bill…Its Pattern…Its Architects, SG21073, reel 12, ALCPP Papers; "Alabama Again Leads the Way," *Birmingham Independent*, April 15, 1964, pp. 1, 8. "If Civil 'Rights' Bill Passes," *Birmingham Independent*, May 13, 1964, p. 1; "Election Year Program of Reds in U.S.," *Birmingham Independent*, June 3, 1964, p. 1.

[23] 1965 Biennial Report to the Alabama Legislature, SG21073, reel 12, ALCPP Papers.

> Martin Luther King is totally under the direction of the Communist Party. King was raised in Montgomery and a Communist Party saw in King a tool to be used. Beard Ruskin [Bayard Rustin] [sic], a Communist of some 30 years, served for three years as King's spokesman and brain. He became what is known as an albatross around the neck of Martin Luther King…In Birmingham the militant Muslims are in majority. The Negro movement is almost totally under Communist direction. 300 are being trained in a school in Dorchester, Georgia. More than 1,500 have been trained to date. Training consists of military tactics to demobilize police units.

In a letter thanking the Peace Commission for the report, Mayor Boutwell pledged that he would personally keep law enforcement personnel conversant with the Commission's information to help preserve law and order in Birmingham. "We very much appreciate," Boutwell wrote, "the Commission's thoughtfulness in making these materials available to us." In reaching out to city officials and by providing "documented" evidence that communists controlled the racial demonstrations, the Peace Commission ensured support for its anticommunist crusade.[24]

In July 1964, the Citizens' Council of Alabama inaugurated "a militant campaign" to bring about the repeal of the Civil Rights Bill. The campaign sought to "enlist the support of white Americans" against the communist-backed law. "We are convinced," the Council harangued, "that many parts of the so-called 'Civil Rights Act' are unconstitutional, especially the public accommodation section." The Citizens' Council, an all-white male segregationist organization, had long been opponents of racial equality. Aside from the Ku Klux Klan, the more respectable Citizens' Councils led the way in preserving Jim Crow in the South. Therefore, the group unsurprisingly condemned the bill.[25]

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[24] Report to Mayor Albert Boutwell, May 19, 1964, File 265, 3.26, William C. Hamilton Papers, BPL; Albert Boutwell to Edwin Strickland, May 1, 1964, File 265, 3.26, William C. Hamilton Papers, BPL.
[25] "Citizens' Councils Seek 'Rights' Appeal," *Birmingham Independent*, July 22, 1964, p. 1.

In October 1964, the Peace Commission delivered another report entitled "Communists in Civil Rights." It warned that "Communists have been assuming leadership roles in the civil rights movement, promoting violence, racial hatred and widespread law violations." The report indicated that Alabama was designated as the "target area" for numerous upcoming civil rights demonstrations. The Peace Commission cited a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) report that stated that members of the CPUSA had been involved in civil rights "riots." However, in 1964 J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, recanted his previous allegation of infiltration in the civil rights movement, angering Peace Commission Chairman Hawkins.[26]

Hoover issued a new report stating that the past year's civil rights demonstrations contained no communist involvement. Thus, on September 28, 1964, a disgruntled Hawkins sent a letter condemning Hoover's sudden vicissitude. In the letter, Hawkins declared his concern, stating that Hoover's report represented a "gross distortion" of reality. In addition, he hoped that Hoover "might take the occasion of publicly setting the public straight" because "the report will be widely used to white-wash any and all civil rights groups, whether infiltrated or not." Hawkins also expressed similar concern to Alabama Senator and Chairman of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare Lister Hill. In a reply to Hawkins, Hill pledged his "relentless" support to the Peace Commission and to Hoover in combating communism. Despite Hoover's public renunciation, the Peace Commission continued to garner support for the anticommunist cause.[27]

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[26] Communists in Civil Rights, SG21073, reel 12, ALCPP Papers.
[27] John H. Hawkins, Jr. to J. Edgar Hoover and Lister Hill to John H. Hawkins, Jr., SG21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

Over the next several years, anticommunist groups persisted in red-baiting the civil rights movement. The 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery march aroused considerable anger from Alabama anticommunists and segregationists. The Peace Commission and Selma civic leaders called for an investigation and public hearings of "the invasion of Communist racial agitators in Alabama." Anticommunists alleged that "racial violence and demonstrations" violated "state statutes prohibiting the inciting of insurrection against the government." According to anti-Red groups, the communist-advocated march had caused Alabama citizens to fear for their lives and their property. Thus, Selma residents demanded investigation into the "racial dissension" that had overwhelmed their city days earlier.[28]

Two months later, the Peace Commission responded by preparing public hearings. The Commission claimed it was in the process of producing a documented film of the march to distribute to city and state officials. The Peace Commission contacted officials in counties near Selma to aid in this process. "I believe," John Hawkins affirmed, "that by holding public hearings in that area, a great number of things will be brought to the attention of the people of Alabama and to the nation concerning the background and affiliations, the number of outside agitators, etc., who were in these areas advocating civil disobedience."[29]

The Peace Commission's Biennial Report arose from these investigations. The report specified the machinations of the Commission. Alabama newspapers, especially the ultra-right *Birmingham Independent*, produced cyclical snippets from the report. The

[28] "Red Racial Agitators Arouse City," *Birmingham Independent*, March 17, 1965, p. 1, 3.
[29] "Alabama Legislative Commission to Preserve the Peace Preparing for Hearings," *Birmingham Independent*, May 12, 1965, p. 1-2.

fractional information was designed to draw readership and persuade curious Alabamians to request the report from the Peace Commission. And it worked. The Peace Commission received requests for copies of the report from myriad individuals and groups both within and outside the state. Reaching persons in more than forty states, the *Birmingham Independent* urged its readers to encourage their "friends" to subscribe "so they can know the truth about the 'SELMA TO MONTGOMERY' March." Consequently, the Selma march documentary film awakened fierce response and became a successful propaganda tool to champion espousal for the anticommunist campaign. Letters poured in to Alabama from all over the United States requesting copies of the incriminating material that painted the black civil righters red. Over the next few months, the *Birmingham Independent* released weekly reports from the Peace Commission, pointing out new individuals and organizations connected with the Communist Party and communist front groups.[30]

The Peace Commission had already received numerous letters from both internal and external individuals and groups requesting information to neutralize the red-controlled racial strife in their areas. For instance, the Police Department in Mansfield, Texas petitioned the Alabama Peace Commission to investigate a member of the NAACP and Texas resident, John Howard Griffin. Texas had had its own red scare. The fact that the Mansfield Police Department requested assistance from Alabama illustrates its reputation as a paramount anti-subversive organization. In January 1965, state Senator E.

[30] "Commission to Preserve the Peace Reveals Communist Strategy in Ala.," *Birmingham Independent*, July 14, 1965, p. 1; "Commission to Preserve the Peace Facts Revealed," *Birmingham Independent*, July 21, 1965, p. 7; "Communist and Perverts Dominate Martin Luther's S.C.L.C.," *Birmingham Independent*, August 18, 1965, p. 1; "Commission to Preserve the Peace Report: 'John Lewis SNCC'," *Birmingham Independent*, August 18, 1965, p. 10; ""Commission to Preserve the Peace Report on SNCC," *Birmingham Independent*, August 26, 1965, p. 6; "Commission to Preserve the Peace Report: C.O.R.E. & S.C.L.C.," *Birmingham Independent*, September 22, 1965, p 7.

O. Eddins from Demopolis, Alabama requested one hundred copies of three of the Peace Commissions reports, including the 1964 Civil Rights Bill report, a staff study of the National Council of Churches, and the report on Communists in Civil Rights. Edwin Strickland also sent the senator information on a suspected subversive living in Fairhope in southern Alabama. Similar requests were manifest throughout the Peace Commission's tenure.[31]

Anticommunists in California commonly conversed with those in Alabama. In March 1965, Governor George Wallace received a letter commending his energy against communism. "If enough people could see the red hands stirring the race in the south," Charles C. Ray from Vista, California wrote, "I'm sure both White and Black would oust the trouble making outsiders for good." Also from California was a letter from Frances P. Bartlett, editor and publisher of *Facts,* a conservative publication that stood as an acronym for "Fundamental Issues, Americanism, Constitutional Government, Truth, and Spiritual Values." In the note, Bartlett thanked the Peace Commission for sending a report on the Selma march and requested a copy of the corresponding documentary film. She assured the Commission that California acted as Alabama's best friend in the fight against race-centered communism. "California," Bartlett declared, "has probably contributed more students, professor, clergymen and lawyers to the Civil Rights strife in the South than any other state." The Peace Commission welcomed another communication of anticommunist solidarity from Charles L. Grove, a California fireman

[31] Mavis S. Hicks, secretary for Peace Commission to Mrs. Henry Clifton from, August 7, 1964, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Lee V. Seeton, Chief of Police, Mansfield, Texas to Edwin Strickland, August 20, 1964, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

and member of the John Birch Society. He explained his sympathy for the "long-suffering Southerners" at the hands of the "Communist conspiracy." He continued,

> I have been trying, for instance, to make my fellow firemen see beyond the 'pigmentation curtain,' as I call it, to see the guiding hand behind the scenes of these 'spontaneous' [civil rights] disturbances; to help them realize that for them to hate negroes would be a communist victory---and believe me, there are many people out here whose indifferent 'liberalism' has changed overnight to a violent antipathy to the negro cause, and to just, simply, negroes. It is frightening to watch the revolution fomenting, the people arming themselves on both sides as per the grand script of Lenin, and not knowing themselves what is taking place; and too preoccupied or too damned stupid to listen when you try to give them some facts.

He, too, solicited information dealing with the "famous Selma-Montgomery raids." Thus, anticommunists in Alabama and California rallied under the banner of anticommunism to defeat racial disturbances in the South.[32]

Requests poured in from all over the United States concerning the black-red conspiracy in the South. They called for any and all incriminating evidence the Peace Commission might give that proved that communists were behind the civil rights demonstrations. A vast number of the requests for reports arrived from outside the South from places like Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania because, by the mid-1960s, the movement had moved north. The Peace Commission was also inundated with correspondence from other southern states, eager to collaborate in the witch hunt. The Commission did not vacillate; any help from outside sources was looked on favorably. Thus, staff director Strickland sent out copious duplicates of the Commission's reports implicating that communists dictated black civil rights organizing.

[32] Charles C. Ray to George C. Wallace, March 29, 1965, SG 22384, folder 8, Wallace Papers; Frances P. Bartlett to John H. Hawkins, Jr., January 13, 1966, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Charles L. Grove to Peace Commission, March 17, 1966, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

In 1965, a large amount of the Commission's mail emanated from Illinois. In 1965, Illinois experienced its own troubles with civil rights marches. As groups pushing for racial change made their way up north, particularly demanding equal housing, segregationists above the Mason-Dixon line looked south for ammunition. For instance, W. J. O'Brien wrote to Strickland in hopes of obtaining propaganda linking the movement to communism. He asked for copies of the Selma march film. "My reason for asking this," O'Brien stated, "is…to alert people to the dangers of extreme Socialism and Communism." He learned of the film through a Civic Information Center in Scottsdale, Arizona. Another example showing an anticommunist relationship between the north and south is illustrated in a letter from a doctor in Kankakee, Illinois. He congratulated the Peace Commission's reports and "for the privilege of [their] correspondence." He adds, "the subvert and overt activities of communists in the civil rights agitation [are] disruptive and radical demonstrations must be completely stopped. Otherwise chaos, anarchy and civil war will be the end result." Over the next several years, northern cities such as Chicago, Cicero, Dayton, Detroit, and Newark witnessed a surge of race riots.[33]

On May 7, 1965, John Desris from a Catholic publishing company in Kenosha, Wisconsin wrote to the Peace Commission seeking material and photographs dealing with the civil rights marches. "We are especially on the lookout," Desris disclosed, "for photographs showing police hurt physically by the peaceful 'drummers of discord' and followers of the 'most notorious liar.'" He advised the Commission that his publication

[33] W. J. O'Brien to Strickland, April 21, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Robert R. Citron, M.D. to Strickland, July 2, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: American in the King Years, 1965-68*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 501-522, 630-633; *Harvard* Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1992*, rev. ed., (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 187-188.

company was "preparing a tabloid with Communist subversion of the 'civil rights' movement." [34]

Over subsequent months, anticommunists in Alabama and outside the state wrote to the Peace Commission and other state officials requesting reports and providing evidence that "proved" communists were working within the civil rights movement. The Peace Commission, for instance, received correspondence from Ohio thanking them for sending copies of reports and rancorously condemning the red-inspired civil rights demonstrations. Earl J. Kilgore, a resident of Dayton asked:

> Why can not the Alabama State Senate and Representative pass a law that would hang the dirty niggers and sorry white people who come from other States to cause the Good People of Alabama so much truble [sic] the rotton [sic] rabbis jews and white to gather with the niggers have no right to live in other state [sic] like New York and Michigan then gang up and invade a nother [sic] state the [sic] should be a law that would hang each one of them.

A month later Kilgore returned word that he would put the Commission's reports "into the hands of men and wemon [sic] that will help defeat the niggers and communist organizations."[35]

Beginning on January 1, 1966, Alabamians began a campaign condemning HUAC's investigation of the Ku Klux Klan. Seven members of the Klan were subpoenaed in January and ordered to "produce KKK documents" and questioned about

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[34] John Desris in Kenosha, Wisconsin to Peace Commission, May 7, 1965," SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Charles E. Youngblood to George Wallace, April 29, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Edwin Strickland to E.L. Wallace in Mobile, Alabama, June 23, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Paul Wharton in Port Gibson, Mississippi to George Wallace, July 12, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Edwin Strickland to Robert Roberts in Radford, Virginia, September 30, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Virgil Stuart in St. Augustine, Florida to Strickland, August 18, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; R.H. Paole, Jr. in Johnstown, Pennsylvania to Peace Commission, October 26, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Rosalind K. Frame in Savannah, Georgia to Strickland, June 7, 1966," SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

[35] Earl J. Kilgore in Dayton, Ohio to James Clark, October 23, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Earl J. Kilgore to James Clark, November 2, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

Klan activities. Most campaigners believed the committee ought to focus on the civil rights activists instead of the Klan. The racial demonstrations, not the Klan's actions, during the past several years, they viewed as subversion. Commonly, they asked, "Why pick on the Ku Klux Klan?" Although nearly all suggested they were not Klan members, most stated they shared "deep sympathy with their aspirations." "I am not a member," H.R. Simmons, a native of Birmingham, declared. "Some of the most decent neighbors I have are." Mrs. Brooks C. St. Whitton expressed similar sentiment:

> I somehow cannot go along with persecution of the Ku Klux Klan. It just seems to be the popular thing to do in Washington…I suppose my sympathy with them comes from the great admiration for the course of the southern man 100 years ago…I feel like there are many things that need much more investigation than the Ku Klux Klan. For instance—who is really behind all the civil rights demonstrations, etc.?

Nearly all of the letters connected communism with the civil rights movement.[36]

Simon J. Smith, an outspoken Hueytown resident and frequent newspaper editorial writer, also expressed umbrage to the denigration of the Klan. In an article in the *Birmingham Post-Herald*, he wrote,

> It seems that the President can't condemn the violence occurring in our streets by black people without bringing in the Klan. And the esteemed Dr. Billy Graham put his two cents worth in in the same style. Klansmen have not gone into the streets and tossed Molotov cocktails into buildings, nor have they been guilty of looting and destroying the property of others. Neither have they thrown bricks at policemen and firemen who were trying to quell anarchical 'demonstrations.

Smith had also been critical of the 1965 Voting Rights Bill. He, along with many other Alabamians, wrote weekly opinion editorials about communism and civil rights.[37]

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[36] "Klan Titles May Trip Up Shelton," *Birmingham News*, January 7, 1966, pp. 1-2, 6; H.R. Simmons to John H. Buchanan, Jr., January 1, 1966, File 808, 36.6, Buchanan Papers; Mrs. Brooks C. St. Whitton to Buchanan, January 6, 1966," File 808, 36.6, Buchanan Papers.

Alabamians were not alone in castigating the Klan investigations. Alabama Representative John H. Buchanan, Jr. received a splenetic letter from a woman in Columbus, Mississippi. In the letter, she called Buchanan a "traitor" to the South "by joining in to slander and defeat the Ku Klux Klan." She reminded him "that the Klan is only trying to protect us against race mixing, communists, and the Jews that are really behind a one-world government." "God help your soul," she concluded, "in helping to destroy an organization that wants to protect our beautiful South from black rule." Letters similar to the aforementioned inundated Buchanan's office day after day for the next two years. Each called for a halt to the Klan investigations and demanded instead an inquest into the seemingly red-ridden civil rights movement.[38]

In the late 1960s, many groups still convinced that communism directed the civil rights movement asked George Wallace what they could do to combat it. A representative of a group of anticommunists in Fort Valley, Georgia wrote Wallace in 1967 seeking advice about how they could help fight communism. "Mr. Wallace," Laura Virginia Kitchens asserted, "I believe the Communists are working through the civil rights movement." "I know you oppose civil rights," she continued, "so could you help us decide where to find the communist [sic] and how to fight them." Almost a year later, Mrs. L.H. Houston, president of the Thursday Afternoon Club in Hartselle, Alabama, thanked governor Albert Brewer for "being on the ball when it comes to communism." She expressed concerns about local communism in the civil rights movement "as Martin

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[37] "Some Things the Klan has not Done," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, August 8, 1966 in "Letters to the Editor, etc.," SCB 711, box 3, folder 2, Simon J. Smith Papers, hereafter cited as Smith Papers, Samford University Special Collection.

[38] Mrs. Viva Yagle to Buchanan, January 13, 1966, File 808, 36.6, Buchanan Papers; See File 808, 36.6 through 36.13, Buchanan Papers.

Luther King set up his first school in Birmingham." Although she argued that "Racism does not exist in Alabama as far as I know," Houston noted that she was affiliated with many club women in Alabama and all sought to keep the state free of communists.[39]

Perhaps the most striking portrayal of the connection between red and black was found in a six-page "Communists' Bible" written by Alabama native, George Blackmon. In it, Blackmon converted scriptures from the Christian Bible into statements that related the civil rights activities of the 1960s to communist prophecy. The following illustrates several of the passages from the Communists' Bible:

> Remember the Sabbeth [sic] is the day for rest, this being the most important commandment, but since the exact day of the week this is has never been established, little children I say unto you, take them all and rest, riot and burn as it is far better to demonstrate for a bigger welfare check than to be found working on the wrong day of the week.
>
> Honor thy father and thy mother by giving them an abundant supply of illegitimate grandchildren.
>
> Thou shall not kill any rats or roaches in thine own house or in thy neighbors [sic] house, for it is the sacred responsibility of the tax payer to keep your house in order.
>
> Thou shall not commit adultery or loveins or shack up with any person of the same color of skin as yours.
>
> Thou shall steal only whiskey, beer and narcotics while you are burning cities as you have already been blessed with every thing else comming [sic] from Washington.
>
> Thou shall not covet your neighbors welfare check, anti-poverty check, rent check, head start check, subsidy check, baby bonus check, disaster check, relief check, or medicare check. Instead sit on your ass and draw your own checks.
>
> Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for my handouts for they shall be filled from my food stamp program.
>
> Now talking to the police, sherrifs [sic] and all law officials, I say unto you, if any of my elect hit you on the jaw turn your other to him. Let him spit on you, mall [sic] you into the earth and kick you with his welfare shoes for my names sake for if one hair of his head, kinky or straightened, is harmed woe unto you for you will be brought before the judgement [sic] bar and judged by the

[39] Laura Virginia Kitchens to George Wallace, March 1, 1967, SG 22420, folder 14, Wallace Papers; Mrs. L.H. Houston to Albert Brewer, January 28, 1969, SG 22456, folder 17, Brewer Papers.

> same nine black robed old men that made the decesions [sic] that brought socialism, mongrelism, communism, hippieism and crime into our midst.
>
> And all others must be separated from their kind and placed one male and one female of different color in a federal bird housing project…For thousands of years the white dove has been a bigot and refused to share his mate with his black brother the black bird. On account of the superiority of his weapon the bigoted yellow hammer has held his hammer over his brother the woodpecker and kept the blood beat from the top of his head untill [sic] he has become known as the red headed pecker wood. This we will not tolerate in my socialist society for they must be forced by my black robbed disciples opinion to love each other. And their children must go to school together and learn the same songs and custom. This extensive project will be financed and come under the supervision of the space administration.

Blackmon linked many events, individuals, and issues with communism, not simply black civil rights. It is clear from the passages that civil rights legislation and blacks were the cause of much of his angst. In the Communists' Bible, he accused the federal government, the anti-poverty, Medicare, and welfare programs, public housing, and even the U.S. Space program as representative of the Communist Party's machinations. Blackmon also cleverly exploited something that southerners considered sacred—the Bible. In so doing, he played on the fears of religious southerners.[40]

Thus far, it is clear that religion played a strong role in shaping southern anticommunism. Protestant southerners saw communism as anti-religion, anti-God, and anti-Christ. Few felt that their faith could exist in a communist America. In fact, many believed, if domestic communism prevailed, religion would be wiped out. Therefore, anticommunists exploited the South's fears of the end of religion to gain support, not only in fomenting patriotism in American classrooms and in forestalling the black freedom movement, but also in issues of morality, such as preserving the family, protesting women's liberation, and denigrating homosexuality.

[40] The Communists' Bible by George Blackmon, SG 22456, folder 17, Brewer Papers.

America has witnessed "a highly malignant cancer—a cancer which threatens to destroy Judaic-Christian civilization," J. Edgar Hoover wrote in 1960. The malignancy was of course "intolerant, atheist" communism. According to Hoover, red ethics rejected all morality. "Communist morality," he wrote, "is rooted in total rejection of a belief in God and in the values of Christian moral code." Hoover's statements reflected the general sentiment, especially in the South, about religion and the red menace.[41]

Responding to Hoover's harangues, *The Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham Independent*, in 1963, called the National Council of Churches (NCC) an evil, communist organization. According to the newspaper, the National Council "advocates surrender to the atheists, neutrals, cannibals and communists." The NCC made up an ecumenical body of Protestant and conventional Christian denominations. Distressing to anticommunist segregationists was the National Council's racial tolerance and rejection of segregation. Perhaps most alarming, however, was its racial inclusiveness and advocacy of the civil rights movement. According to historian James Findlay, the NCC was viewed as "socialistic" because of its liberalism on such issues as integration, nuclear war, unions, and "the recognition of Communist China." Among its other activities, the National Council's "socialist scheme" according to the ultra-right newspaper, encompassed "peace at any (communist) price," "reconstruction of religion on basis of modern scientific materialism," "abolishment of all our investigating committees on Communism," and "a One-World cooperative, non-profit socialistic brotherhood." The

[41] J. Edgar Hoover, "The Communist Menace: Red Goals and Christian Ideals," reprinted from *Christianity Today*, October 10 and 24, November 7, 1960 issues, in SG 21070, reel 10, ALCPP Papers.

NCC's connections with the NAACP and the SCLC provided further confirmation that the religious organization endorsed communism.[42]

In June 1964, the Peace Commission released a staff study of the National Council of Churches. Like the staff study detailing communists in the civil rights movement, the Commission found red influence in "over 100 persons in leadership capacity" in the NCC. Anticommunists were all the more alarmed to learn that the National Council was a nationwide conglomeration consisting of thirty-eight thousand members. From its investigation, the Peace Commission concluded that the NCC represented an anti-religious organization. Instead, it formed a "political pressure group" that aimed at "abolishing public prayer in schools." According to the Peace Commission, moreover, embracing black and white members, the National Council clamored for racial amalgamation in the United States.[43]

The Peace Commission wasted little time in getting the study out to Alabama church leaders, as well as church and public officials in other states. In July, John Hawkins, in a letter to a Presbyterian church leader, stated that the Commission has "been able to contribute considerably to the public knowledge of left-wing infiltration into our society including the churches." A few months later, the Commission sent copies of the report to St. Mark's Special Vestry Committee chairman H. E. Linam in Shreveport, Louisiana. In a reply, Linam informed that he could put the Commission in contact with a man from Dallas who possessed "such a wonderful library of Congressional

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[42] "They Speak for Who?," *The Cahaba Valley News/Birmingham* Independent, September 4, 1963, p. 2; James Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3-7, 28, 87-88; Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 118-119.

[43] The National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.: Staff Study by the Alabama Legislative Commission to Preserve the Peace, June, 1964, SG 21073, reel 12, ALCPP Papers.

Investigative Reports" that may be advantageous to "your wonderful Commission." Three days later, Peace Commission secretary, Mrs. Mavis Hicks, sent copies of the staff study to five church and public officials in DeKalb, Mississippi, including Mississippi state senator John Stennis. Hicks apologized for a delay in getting it to the officials because "our first printing was depleted almost immediately." Thus, similar to the staff study on civil rights, the Peace Commission's sphere of influence was extended beyond Alabama.[44]

Over the next several years, the Peace Commission sent and received countless studies, pamphlets, reports, and correspondence to and from what emerged as a huge anticommunist network all around the United States. Arno Q. Weniger, president of the San Francisco Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary sent Peace Commission investigator J. Dean Fleming fifty copies of a study entitled "Has Communist Thought Penetrated the Church?" "[I]n these days of ideological and theological confusion," the Seminary purported to provide a pamphlet that "is in such great demand that we can hardly keep up with orders for it" to inquisitive masses throughout the United States. Such literature augmented the Peace Commission's growing compilation of material concerning communist infiltration of religion.[45]

Anticommunists in Georgia also declared their steadfastness in the fight to drive out red influence in places of worship. "I stand ready," Dr. John R. Andrew of Decatur affirmed, "to help in this movement to preserve Fundamentalist Christianity," against

[44] John H. Hawkins, Jr. to J. Donald Thornburgh, July 30, 1964, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; H. E. Linam to Mavis S. Hicks, October 16, 1964, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Mavis S. Hicks to Dr. W.S. Beardshaw, Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, DeKalb, Mississippi, October 19, 1964, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.
[45] Arno Q. Weniger to J. Dean Fleming, June 29, 1964, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

communist indoctrination. Raiford Archer, a Baptist pastor from Ty Ty, Georgia told the Peace Commission that he would unite with the "Southern Baptists" in the fight to "cleanse denomination of leftist influences. Archer expressed concern "with the trend of our denomination and have prayed that some one would recognize it as liberal and attempt to correct it." He also requested materials concerning the NCC.[46]

Other anticommunists drew on the suspicion of red influence in the NCC and in other denominations to thwart black civil rights gains. The "Almighty God's Holy Gospel has been perverted with the doctrines of communism and has been twisted in such a manner until christianity [sic] is a mockery and a sham," cried Sam H. Moore. Meanwhile, requests for copies of the Peace Commission's staff study on the NCC continued to pour in from all over the state. Albert Lee Smith, Jr. requested "300 copies…for us to distribute to interested citizens" in Birmingham and during his trip to a convention in Nashville. "I am convinced more than ever that this political pressure group working under the guise of Christianity," a Tuscumbia resident declared with reference to the NCC, "is pouring financial support into the trouble and turmoil, hypocritical troublemaker, Martin Luther King, Jr. is causing in our great state now." As the black freedom movement achieved more victories and instigated further demonstrations, particularly under the banner of religion, anticommunists painted it red. In addition, letters from across the United States from places like Tucson, Arizona,

[46] John R. Andrew to United Baptist Laymen, Inc. (Peace Commission), December 14, 1964, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Raiford Archer to J. Dean Fleming, January 19, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

requesting information concerning the NCC and communist-infiltrated churches, inundated the Peace Commission's mailbox.[47]

Fear of communist infiltration in churches stretched across denominational lines. The communist attack on Christianity was felt in the Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Christ, Episcopal, and Catholic churches, to name a few, in the South and elsewhere. At the same time, the Peace Commission's staff study sparked trepidation in Alabama among church members that their pastors and laymen might be communists. Many church goers petitioned the Commission to investigate the background of their church leaders and fellow church members. Beginning in 1964, upon the release of its staff study, the Commission entertained requests from Alabama Christians to investigate rumored subversives in places of worship.

Dr. Harry F. Ward, founder of the Methodist Federation of Social Action, was one of the first investigated. In late 1964, Methodist church leaders Daniel Jones from Auburn Methodist Church, C. Everett Barnes from First Methodist Church in Opelika, and J. Herbert Orr from the Alabama-West Florida Conference of The Methodist Church solicited information about Ward from the Peace Commission. The church leaders stated that "It is important that we have facts for the investigation that we are making." "It would be helpful, therefore," the leaders continued, "if you could tell us by whom Dr. Ward was 'officially' identified as a member of the Communist Party." Three months later, Edwin Strickland replied to the Methodist leaders, confirming Dr. Ward's

[47] Sam H. Moore to Edwin Strickland, January 23, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Albert Lee Smith, Jr. to John Hawkins, February 15, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Adril L. Wright to John Hawkins, March 9, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Edwin Strickland to Mrs. J.J. McLaughlin, February 18, 1966, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; John R. Rarick, District Judge of Louisiana to J. Dean Fleming, March 13, 1966, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; J.C. Phillips, Borger, Texas to J. Dean Fleming, April 27, 1966, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Sherman A. Patterson, Atlanta, Georgia to J. Dean Fleming, May 10, 1966, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

subversion. The Commission's investigation "proves beyond a doubt," Strickland asserted, "that Dr. Ward was a high ranking Communist conspiracy member over many decades." "Because of the importance we attach to such interest shown by Christian ministers," Strickland stated that he would "be glad" to meet with Jones and the other religious leaders concerning others, like Ward, who might subvert their churches. Alabama acolytes targeted Ward because he was a member of the leftist Methodist Federation of Social Action, a group that sought to integrate churches.[48]

Anticommunists outside the state also solicited the Commission's service in seeking out subversives in their denominations. In late 1965, a member of the Christian Reformed Church, which had local denominations in Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, New Jersey, and other east and west coast states, asked for information on the pastor of the Second Christian Reformed Church of Roseland in Chicago. "We wish to expose these participants," urged Ira Rysdam, a member of the church, "if we can obtain proof of their civil rights activities." Rysdam contacted the Peace Commission because the persons whom he suspected were believed to have participated in the Selma march, which was viewed as communist-directed.[49]

An Episcopalian from Austin, Texas also expressed alarm concerning his church bishop's participation in the Selma demonstration. "I am very disturbed over the fact that John Hines went to Selma," J. D. Abel declared. He hoped the Peace Commission could provide him and the "many in our church who are very displeased with the Bishop

[48] Daniel Jones, C. Everett Barnes, and J. Herbert Orr to Edwin Strickland, October 2, 1964, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Edwin Strickland to Dr. Daniel Jones, January 6, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.
[49] Ira Rysdam to Peace Commission, December 8, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

[Hines]" with information about his subversive "politically connected activities." Investigations of church members and leaders continued into the late 1960s.[50]

As late as 1967, anticommunist Christians worried that churches were being infiltrated by red influences. Anticommunists targeted Reverend L. Reed Polk, the pastor of First Baptist Church of Enterprise, Alabama, in August 1967. A pastor from Valdosta, Georgia expressed concern that Polk may have supported "liberal or left causes," and he wondered if the Peace Commission might "know of any reason why he would not make a good pastor." The Peace Commission responded with the following information concerning Reverend Polk:

> I have checked through three very reliable sources and here are the findings: Level headed, not radical, preaches the Gospel and attends to his church duties, is not a knife and fork club man, or organization man, prints articles for his Church Bulletin each week which is sound in all respects. In fact, they give him a clean bill of health concerning all liberal or left causes.

Investigation into communist subversion in religion was a chief concern among Alabama anticommunists, especially in resisting black civil rights. Alabama Christians viewed their churches as places of sanctuary from the secularization of America. More threatening, too, was the constant threat of the world, and America, falling to communism. Therefore, southern Christians worried that their sanctuary was possibly tainted with anti-God communism. As a response, they endeavored to discover proof to justify their suppositions.[51]

Morality, too, played a large part in the anticommunist campaign. Movements sparked by civil rights gains, such as women's liberation and the gay rights movement of

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[50] J. D. Abel to George Wallace, December 27, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.
[51] Mrs. Edgar C. Bundy to J. Dean Fleming, August 31, 1967, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; J. Dean Fleming to Dr. Henry T. Sherman, Valdosta, Georgia, September 7, 1967, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

the 1960s and 1970s, threatened southern rectitude. Anticommunists viewed the gender politics adopted by the women's liberation movement as morally deleterious. Women seeking to expand their economic, political, and social status were labeled red. Feminism, in Alabama, equaled communism. As historian Kate Weigand has found, right-wing groups red-baited women's rights organizations in order to discredit their cause. Feminists focused on issues and questions about sex and sexuality neglected by male domination. Weigand suggested that "feminists made issues of sexuality central and emphasized the need to transform themselves and their surroundings, even though they also worked to change economic and social structures." This "need to transform themselves and their surroundings" perhaps most threatened the southern social standard. Like blacks, southern anticommunists charged that women were content with their place in society. If women were dissatisfied, anti-Reds claimed, then communists must have stirred up their discontent.[52]

In Alabama, women's empowerment was an entirely foreign notion. Political conservatism reinforced traditional female roles. American popular culture further underpinned the ideology of domesticity. Feminism, in the words of one historian, "traveled a rough trail" in the postwar era. Alabama anticommunists' view of women, moreover, is perhaps best reflected in a statement by staunch segregationist, John R. Rarick, congressman from Louisiana. "Jesus wouldn't even talk to the woman of Canaan until…she placed herself in the category of a dog," Rarick jeered. In this callous declaration, Rarick exploited a verse in the Book of Matthew in the Bible to justify

[52] Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation,* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 2-6.

denigrating women. Alabama anticommunists applied such an attitude to women's rights organizations.[53]

For instance, the *Birmingham Independent* charged the League of Women Voters as being communist-driven. "Government documents exposing communism in our country," the newspaper argued in 1965, "mention the League of Women Voters with a frequency which rivals such organizations as the American Civil Liberties union…[and the] NAACP." The newspaper claimed that Voter chairman Frances Nusbaum "had been instrumental in setting up a communist front to defend three teachers who were members of the Communist Party." The article states that "communists use [women] 'liberals' (who are blind, almost to the point of insanity) to do their leg-work." The newspaper suggested that women, like blacks, were not smart enough to initiate activism; therefore, communists must be behind their movements.[54]

Peace Commission staff director Edwin Strickland argued this point in 1970. "The revolutionary forces are working feverishly," he asserted, "in an effort to alienate and activate women…in much the same way the black issue was used." Again, those in Alabama who thought similar to Strickland, believed women lacked the intellect and motivation to direct the feminist movement. After all, anticommunists deemed women were content with their position in society.[55]

As a result of the growing feminist movement, organizations, such as The National Association for the Preservation of the Family Unit, emerged. On January 21,

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[53] Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 166; John R. Rarick to J. Dean Fleming, June 28, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.
[54] "Conservative Research Institute Says: League of Women Voters Coddle Communists," *Birmingham Independent*, June 30, 1965, p. 1.
[55] "Women's Liberation," SG 21074, reel 16, ALCPP Papers.

1967, J. Anderson Lee sent Governor Lurleen and George Wallace a telegram asking them to become "charter members" of the organization. "HELP FIGHT COMMUNISM AT HOME," Lee declared, "THE FAMILY IS THE BACKBONE OF AMERICA." In a letter to Hugh Maddox, the Legal Adviser to Governor Wallace, Mr. Lee's wife also expressed the importance of the preservation of family. In a statement that revealed that race-mixing motivated her fear of the threat to family, Lee warned "that in the future there will be no more families, but children of all races will be placed in one large room in infancy so they can grow up to be 'equal'—anyone who has had at least two children know that two in the same family of the same parents do not grow up to be equal….[This] sounded like communism to me." Maddox responded to Mr. and Mrs. Lee, affirming that "the family unit is an important part in the fight against Communism."[56]

Another moral issue seen as a threat to the family and to national security was homosexuality. Historian John D'Emilio has written that "The Cold War and its attendant domestic anticommunism provided the setting in which a sustained attack upon homosexuals and lesbians took place." Following World War II, issues of sexuality were pushed to the fore of Cold War domestic politics. Between 1947 and 1950, nearly five thousand men and women were purged from the armed forces for "sexual perversion." Thousands were also dismissed from governmental jobs for being homosexual. By early 1950, nearly sixty homosexuals were fired from federal jobs per month. Heterosexual Americans rallied against same-sex relationships because they viewed it as the demise of

[56] J. Anderson Lee to Lurleen and George Wallace, January 21, 1967, SG 22420, folder 14, Wallace Papers; Mrs. J. Anderson Lee to Hugh Maddox, February 2, 1967, SG 22420, folder 14, Wallace Papers; Hugh Maddox to J. Anderson Lee, January 30, 1967, and Hugh Maddox to Mrs. J. Anderson Lee, February 10, 1967, SG 22420, folder 14, Wallace Papers.

the country's moral integrity. Homosexuals, like communists, were labeled menaces to United States moral fiber. These "sexual perverts" were not only an opprobrium on society, but stories of homosexual conspiracies led many to believe they imperiled the nation's security.[57]

Homophobia spread nearly as quickly as anticommunism. Although the hunt for "sexual deviates" began in the federal government and military, it soon extended far beyond these boundaries. Local police raided bars and other gay hangouts to ferret out homosexuals. Newspapers often printed the names and addresses of those arrested. Men and women who dared to live as homosexuals faced harassment, reputation ruin, and violence. Despite assertions from gay men and lesbians that they were "not seeking to overthrow or destroy any of society's existing institutions, laws or mores, but to be assimilated as constructive, valuable, and responsible citizens," heterosexual America felt the "homosexual angle" represented a fifth column.[58]

Beginning at its inception, the Peace Commission collected material linking homosexuality with communism. A large driving force in the attack on the homosexual and red menace was what became to be known as the Seelig document. Written by Fred Seelig, a former armed serviceman from California, the report contained machinations of communist brainwashing, sabotage of Americanism, and "organized homosexual

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[57] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, 2nd ed., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 40; Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 140-141; Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 167-168; D'Emilio, "The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America" in Peiss and Simmons, eds., *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004); D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 195. See also James T. Sears, *Lonely Hunters: An Oral History of Lesbian and Gay Southern Life, 1948-1968*, (New York: HarperCollins-Westview, 1997).

[58] D'Emilio, "The Homosexual Menace," 231; D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 48-51, 84.

perversion." Seelig charged that he was imprisoned in a federal penitentiary medical center wherein "young doctors are trained and indoctrinated in Communist psychiatric techniques of torture, control of the mind, standards of mental health, police-state methods and mass brainwashing." "Homosexuality is encouraged and pampered," he continued. "Homosexual and communist books are circulated freely." The Peace Commission embraced the potential veracity of Seelig's claim and disseminated the document across the state.[59]

The *Birmingham Independent* especially celebrated the arrival of the document. Anticommunist ideologues and homophobes jettisoned the idea that Seelig was delusional, which was the reason for his imprisonment. The Seelig document connected communism to homosexuality. Thus, new bait emerged to rid the country of subversion of all kinds—moral, political, or social.

A *Birmingham Independent* article asserted that a liberal homosexual campaign was headed for the South in a front-page headline on March 3, 1965 entitled, "Liberals and Perverts Organize to Legalize Homosexuality in Attack on Christianity." The article stated that "All of the security risk[s]" to embrace communism "have been homosexuals." The newspaper charged that "homosexuals and communistic liberals" threaten to "destroy sexual laws, promote pornography, sexual promiscuity, obscene books and to corrupt and infect youth."[60]

In succeeding weeks and months, the newspaper featured stories of "perversion and communism" in eye-catching headlines. Connecting homosexuality with child

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[59] Fred Seelig, "Destroy the Accuser: A Case History in the Use of Communist Psychiatric Techniques," in SG 21074, reel 16, ALCPP Papers.
[60] "Liberals and Perverts Organize to Legalize Homosexuality in Attack on Christianity," *Birmingham Independent*, March 3, 1965, pp. 1-3.

molestation, the *Birmingham Independent* warned, "Your child may be the next victim!" In February 1965, Alabamians feared that "organized homosexuals" were "recruiting" the youth on university campuses. The *Birmingham Independent* charged that the liberal group, Americans for Democratic Action, directed this odious campaign, which pushed for the "legalization of homosexuality, the Communist Party, [and] recognition of Red China and Cuba." Sexual conformity, the newspaper asserted, contradicted the communist doctrine. The combination of communism and homosexuality would "subject the American people to a totalitarian government operated by criminals and degenerates."[61]

The Peace Commission continued to collect evidence on subversive homosexuals. Levi Laub, "a notorious homosexual and narcotics addict," was frequently victimized by the Commission. Laub had ties with the Communist Party U.S.A. and was the head of the Progressive Labor Party. He also led student activist groups that incensed anticommunists. Another victim of the red-baiting and anti-homosexual campaign was Bayard Rustin. Although he left the Communist Party in 1941, Rustin was an easy target for anticommunists since he advised Martin Luther King, Jr. and directed and led many civil rights demonstrations. Since he did not hide his homosexuality, moreover, Rustin endured "recurring witch-hunts."[62]

Anticommunists blamed the Kennedy and Johnson administrations for the "homosexual aberration" that imperiled the security of country. The "Johnson socialistic

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[61] "Seelig Document Tells of Homo Politico Power in California," *Birmingham Independent*, March 17, 1965, p. 1, 5; "Kuchel Case Sparks Expose of Perversion," *Birmingham Independent*, March 17, 1965, p. 1, 5; "Perverts, ADA Recruit Youth on Campus," *Birmingham Independent*, February 10, 1965, p. 1; "Seelig Affidavit Reveals Government Protection of Homosexuals," *Birmingham Independent*, March 17, 1965, p. 3.

[62] Edwin Strickland to Hugh Maddox, June 14, 1965, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 195.

clique of degenerated proposed 'Great New Society'…goes far beyond nationwide acceptance of homosexuality," the *Birmingham Independent* contended. "It calls for legalizing of homosexuality with court rulings declaring sexual laws unconstitutional under the 'social equality' provisions of the civil rights legislation." In the above statement, the ultra-right newspaper effectively unified communism, homosexuality, and blacks' civil rights gains. It also vilified the liberalism of the Johnson administration and the Democratic Party as a whole.[63]

Race was the crux of Alabama's anticommunist campaign. The Peace Commission, state officials, newspapers, and other anticommunist ideologues in Alabama conspired with colleagues in other states to form a nationwide interconnected anti-Red network. Anticommunists in other states looked to Alabama's Peace Commission as a model. By painting the civil rights movement red, segregationists provided legitimacy for their domestic anticommunist crusade, which had at its heart the preservation of Jim Crow. As a result, those who believed in racial equality questioned the movement's political integrity. Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, anticommunists both within and outside the state red-tagged the civil rights movement, extending previously held assumptions of the geographic and time boundaries of domestic anticommunism. Ultimately, the damage the southern red scare inflicted on the movement was minimal. Nevertheless, the movement's alliance with the left instilled in conservative southerners antipathy to racial advances.

Although the issue of race was the foremost issue behind the anticommunist movement, Alabama's anticommunism also stemmed from issues of religion and

[63] "New Immoral Lows: L.B.J. Liberalism on Minorities Perils Nation," *Birmingham Independent*, September 22, 1965, p. 1.

morality. Many Americans believed that domestic communists sought to destroy fundamental Christianity. Thus, the social and economic equality campaign of the black civil rights movement resembled Soviet communist doctrine. At a time when sexual freedom and feminism were pushed to fore in American culture, many viewed such issues as the deterioration of family and morality. They created "Preservation of the Family" groups and argued that communism, feminism, and racial amalgamation challenged and was contradictory to the American family. Assertions that homosexuals were taking over the government further bolstered those fears. By creating a network of fear, Alabama anticommunists gained allies across the United States in their fight to preserve the social order. This anticommunist and politically conservative network would become a major moving force in American politics during and long after the 1960s.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POLITICS OF ANTICOMMUNISM: ALABAMA AND THE RESURGENCE OF AMERICAN CONSERVATISM

We want no part of these federal controls.

— Helen M. Peters, President
Property Rights Association, Inc.
1968

Alabama has not joined the nation, the nation has joined Alabama!

— George Wallace[1]

On August 22, 1950, former Alabama congressman Joe Starnes spoke to a crowd of 350 farmers at the sixth annual Helicon Soil Conservation Field Day and Picnic in Winston County. He warned them of "a new menace—the Red weevil of communism" endangering their southern life. Starnes had had a long history of red-hunting, beginning in the 1930s, with the investigations of the CIO's John L. Lewis and the SCHW. In the 1950s, however, he turned his sights to the farmers' most nettlesome pest. Starnes stated that the "Red weevil was as dangerous as…the bool [sic] weevil." The threat of domestic communism was a common and oft-used approach to achieve a political end.

Southerners employed many red scare tactics similar to the "Red weevil" speech during the Cold War era.[2]

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[1] Helen M. Peters to John Rarick, SG 21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Wallace quoted in Michael Lind, "The Southern Coup: The South, the GOP and America," *New Republic*, June 19, 1995, Vol. 212, Issue 25.
[2] "Starnes speaks on 'Red weevil' menace," *Birmingham News*, August 22, 1950; McWhorter, *Carry Me Home*, 53; John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 291.

A decade or so later, better-known politician, George Wallace, campaigned on a platform of anticommunism, states' rights, and racial politics that propelled him to national prominence into the 1970s. During the 1960s, Wallace traversed the state, visiting Alabama's cities, towns, and hamlets. In the state's heartland of Opelika, Phenix City, Eufaula, Dothan, Troy, Greenville, and elsewhere, thousands rallied in support of Wallace. During his fifty-minute speech in 1966 in the small town of Demopolis, Wallace blamed big government, federal bureaucrats, and communists for the plight of the state's "God-fearing white people." In an adept clustering of terms, Wallace successfully red-baited the liberalism of the national government.[3]

To be sure, the success of national conservative politicians like Wallace, Barry Goldwater, and Richard Nixon would not have been possible if not for the mobilization of what historian Lisa McGirr calls "kitchen-table" activists. Although she chronicles the roots of modern conservatism through the movement in Orange County, California, similarities between the Golden State and Alabama explain a wider trend elsewhere in the western and southern regions of the United States. Historians, social scientists, politicians, and journalists have called this trend the "Southernization" of American politics. While not discounting the movement's distinctive regional flare, the conservative ethos in the South was also present in the West and elsewhere. Thus, this chapter seeks to show how Alabama contributed to the widespread conservative movement.[4]

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[3] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 207, 281-282.

[4] McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 6-7; Dan Carter devotes a large part of *The Politics of Rage* to explain how George Wallace helped to "Southernize" American politics. He suggests, too, that Wallace himself perhaps prophesized that future national politics would resemble that of the South, 324-370, 451-474. Journalist Michael Lind used the phrase "Southernization" of America and "the Southernization of Republican

The conservative identity in Alabama was shaped by issues of communism, race, states' rights, private property, discontent with the economic and social liberalism of national politics, and feverish disapproval of the power and perceived despotism of the federal government. Alabama's "kitchen-table" activists, legislative committees, and other conservative constituencies have been obscured by well-known figures to describe the state's political trends. These groups acted not merely as responders to the social movements taking place in the country, but they also became notable political agents of change. The themes of local control and opposition to the intrusion of federal power in the region resonated with southern conservatives. These men and women eschewed the Democratic Party's liberal philosophy and instead advocated personal economic autonomy and stalwart conservatism.

American politics underwent a transformation during the 1960s. This chapter seeks to explain how anticommunism helped shift twentieth-century American politics. Like the social vicissitudes taking place at the height of the Cold War, national politics, too, was in flux. Although southerners were unable to destroy civil rights legislation with anticommunist tactics, they successfully built ties with other conservatives, creating what would become a formidable coalition in subsequent years. In tracing the history of national conservatism through the lens of Alabama, this study will show the state's connection to a larger general movement and, at the same time, reveal expressions of its uniqueness.

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philosophy" while describing the then current state of politics in 1995 in "The Southern Coup," *New Republic*, June 19, 1995. See also John Egerton, *The Americanization of Dixie: The Southernization of America*, (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1974) and Peter Applebome, *Dixie Rising: How the South is Shaping American Values, Politics, and Culture*, (New York: Times Books, 1996).

Historians like Lisa McGirr have rightly argued that blacks' struggle for equality was "the most successful social movement of the twentieth century." Yet, until recently, scholars had a relatively superficial view of the pervasiveness of the American conservative movement. Conservative politics and grassroots mobilization of segregationists have been slighted in favor of liberalism and black civil rights history. The attitudes of white southerners warrant examination, historian Charles W. Eagles has argued. This broader perspective would aid in gaining a more complete history of the "momentous changes" that occurred in the South between blacks and whites, conservatives and liberals.[5]

In the last decade, however, scholars have begun to study the struggle on the opposite or "Right" side. Additional ground needs to be covered in this area to gain a broader understanding of the roots of the American Right and its relationship with the social and economic issues of the post-World War II period and after. This thesis seeks in part to do that. It argues that the transformative shift of American politics to the Right was perhaps the most successful *political* movement of the twentieth century. The conservative coalition championed ideologies of Americanism, domestic and foreign anticommunism, defense of property rights, a strong belief in tradition and the importance of religion, and opposition to big government. Conservatives harbored critical attitudes toward the Democratic Party's rights-based liberalism. Without having to shed strong commitment to white supremacy, southerners worked under the guise of

[5] McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 6; Charles W. Eagles recognized this important absence in scholarly literature in "Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era," *The Journal of Southern History* 66 (November 2000): 815-848. See also David L. Chappell, *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) and Michael J. Klarman, "How *Brown* Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis," *The Journal of American History* 81 (June 1994): 81-118.

anticommunism and advocated a position that would solidify a political alliance with northern and western conservatives.[6]

Southern conservatives harbored long-standing antipathy toward centralized bureaucracy. They viewed centralized or "big" government as communists' method of state control and a violation of states' rights. Instead, conservatives espoused decentralized, local-controlled government. To them, Americanism was rooted in states' rights. They linked state sovereignty with national security. Thus, such federal initiatives as integration were viewed not only as anti-Southern but anti-American. In response, southerners successfully used anticommunism to advance states' rights.[7]

George Wallace was perhaps the most well-known champion of states' rights. He and others, such as Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, and later on, Ronald Reagan, who called for a return to conservatism, sparkled on the national political scene. Wallace garnered nationwide support for his states' rights platform. As Charles C. Ray of the John Birch Society stated, "More and more good old Americans are seeing the light" and the federal government's "attempt to destroy States [sic] Rights...and will vote conservative." The John Birch Society, an ultra-conservative and staunchly

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[6] McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Alan Brinkley, "The Problem of American Conservatism"; Braukman, "Anticommunism and the Politics of Sex and Race in Florida, 1954-1965"; Bjerre-Poulson, *Right Face*; Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Crespino, *In Search of Another Country*; Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*; Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*; Doody, "Anticommunism in America"; Durr, *Behind the Backlash*; David Farber and Jeff Roche, eds., *The Conservative Sixties*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2003); Heale, "Beyond the 'Age of McCarthy': Anticommunism and the Historians"; Hixson, *Search for the American Right Wing*; Himmelstein, *To the Right*; Miles, *The Odyssey of the American Right*; Moore, "Good Old-Fashioned New Social History and the Twentieth-Century American Right"; Perlstein, "Who Owns the Sixties: The Opening of a Scholarly Generational Gap," *Lingua Franca* 6 (May/June 1996): 30-37; Perlstein, *Before the Storm*; Schneider, ed., *Conservatism in America since 1930*; Jeff Roche, "Cowboy Conservatism: High Plains Politics, 1933-1972," (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2001). See also Roche's forthcoming book, *Cowboy Conservatism*, which examines the emergence of western conservative politics. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*.

[7] Lewis, *The White South and the Red Menace*, 174-175.

anticommunist organization, was a stalwart backer of Wallace and other states' righters. By 1965, the Society boasted more than 100 chapters in Birmingham and its surrounding suburbs. Aside from his racial politics, Wallace's denunciation of big government nurtured his career. He acquired mass appeal all over the United States from this manifesto. Wallace, however, was not the first Alabama politician to utilize states' rights to boost his political game.[8]

Before becoming a longtime Alabama congressman and senator, Lister Hill used the "principle" of states' right in 1919 in opposing the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Although he publicly stated that he did not oppose women's suffrage, Hill did object to the "*federal* action" with regard to voting rights that "imperil[ed]" the country's states' rights. His use of states' rights politics as an "emotional appeal" to southerners paved a "well-worn" path for other politicians to follow. Curiously, Alabama politics and politicians have often been relatively liberal compared with other southern states. [9]

In fact, Hill, along with Hugo Black and John Sparkman, largely supported Franklin D. Roosevelt, and to a lesser extent, so too did Alabama congressmen Luther Patrick and John H. Bankhead. Hill advocated many of the Roosevelt's New Deal policies, especially for local initiatives in Alabama. In 1944, the Democratic senator defended the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Alabama Rural Electrification Authority from attacks by opponents of public power. He also garnered huge support from the Alabama Education Association because of his efforts to improve teachers'

[8] Charles C. Ray to George Wallace, March 29, 1965, SG 22384, folder 8, Wallace Papers; "Birch Society is Growing in the South," *The New York Times*, November 8, 1965, p. 1.
[9] Virginia Van Der Veer Hamilton, *Lister Hill: Statesman from the South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 38-39.

salaries and working conditions through federal aid. Moreover, Hill was a strong sponsor of labor groups, such as the Alabama Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.[10]

Hill's support of New Deal policies, however, made him the target of recurrent attacks from those who viewed his liberalism as bordering on socialism. Many of his opponents criticized his lack of toughness against communism. Hill's biographer, Virginia Van Der Veer Hamilton, stated that he privately opposed Joseph McCarthy's red scare tactics and actually voted for his censure in 1954. In an atmosphere of fear, however, failing to meet the challenge of communism proved harmful for one's political career. Nonetheless, while he championed federal government assistance for better roads, schools, and hospitals, especially in rural regions of the state, which earned him the title of a "southern progressive," his opponents failed to convince voters that he was a "socialist." Hill and other supporters of New Deal reform earned Alabama in 1947 the appellation, "the most liberal state in the South." Yet, as southerners grew more and more suspicious of the perceived liberalism of the Democratic Party, Hill and other southern Party loyalists drew heat.[11]

The South's desertion of the Democratic Party followed a curious path in American political history. Following the Civil War through Reconstruction and into the opening decades of the twentieth century, southerners viewed the Republican Party with ferocious abhorrence. To white southerners, it was the party of corrupt carpetbaggers, federal oppression, and the Negro—or "the party of Lincoln." Although differences occasionally surfaced regarding certain issues within the Party between 1865 and the

[10] Hamilton, *Lister Hill*, 120-121; Egerton, *Speak Now*, 219.
[11] Hamilton *Lister Hill*, 254, 330 n., 292-293.

1920s, the South invariably remained united on one vital concern: race. The year 1928, however, marked one significant turning point in the southern political tradition.[12]

The 1928 presidential election served as an entering wedge in the "Solid Democratic South." Dissatisfied with their party's nominee, many white southerners decided to abandon "the party of their fathers" in support of Herbert Hoover, a Republican. Unable to be fully identified as Republicans, however, these party deserters called themselves "Hoovercrats." To the South, the Democratic candidate, Alfred Smith of New York, seemed a Yankee liberal who was soft on the race issue. Still, many in the South and over fifty percent of Alabama's white voters remained steadfast and voted for Smith because they felt that the southern Democratic Party symbolized "the most important guardian of white supremacy." Hoovercrats and Party Loyalists both propounded the preservation of Jim Crow, but they differed in their approach. Thus, in 1928 their differences led to a party divorce.[13]

The minor disparities that split the southern Democratic courtship had little significance compared to their mutual veneration of white supremacy and anti-federalism. During the 1930s, Roosevelt's New Deal politics and "the increasing liberalism of the National Democratic Party" further solidified the South's ascendancy within the Republican Party. In addition, Harry Truman's executive order to desegregate the armed forces following the Second World War ended the likelihood of returning to

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[12] For a concise and insightful history of the South's, particularly Alabama's, political party conversion from Democrat to Republican, see Glenn Feldman, "Ugly Roots: Race, Emotion, and the Rise of the Modern Republican Party in Alabama and the South," in Glenn Feldman, ed., *Before Brown: Civil Rights and the White Backlash in the Modern South*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 268-270. See also Kari A. Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932-1968*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) and William D. Barnard, *Dixiecrats and Democrats: Alabama Politics, 1942-1950*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1974).

[13] Feldman, "Ugly Roots," in Feldman, ed., *Before Brown*, 270-272.

the "Solid Democratic South." Southerners clamored against Truman's racial policies, which pushed them closer to party rebellion.[14]

In 1948, disenchanted southern Democrats formed a new political party, the Dixiecrats, whose platform centered on states' rights. As former Alabama and New Deal-friendly senator John Sparkman recalled years later, "actually, we couldn't vote for Truman in Alabama. There was no way. The Dixiecrats' ticket had it—[Strom] Thurmond and [Fielding] Wright. Truman's name was not on the ballot." States' Righters also stayed at the head of Alabama politics in subsequent years via the thousands who joined such groups as United Americans for Conservative Government (UACG), the Ku Klux Klan's more respectable political arm; the Alabama States' Rights Party; the Alabama White Citizens' Council; the John Birch Society; and others.[15]

Birmingham's prominent businessmen and industrialists, collectively known as the Big Mules, also enjoyed an enormous amount of political clout and helped to maintain the conservative stronghold in the state. The name was derived from the industrialists' largely black work force that toiled daily in Birmingham's coal and iron mines. In the event of a large mine explosion, the industrialist's flippantly asked, "How many mules did we lose?" The Big Mules represented right-wing interests and they successfully influenced many of the state's powerful men and women.[16]

Over the next two decades as the civil rights agenda gained momentum, so too did the anti-federalism, white supremacy, and states' rights domination of the South. Many southerners, especially in Alabama, believed that their "1948 bolt to the States' Rights

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[14] Ibid, 272-277.
[15] John Sparkman, Interview by Tennant S. McWilliams and James A. Lopez, February, May, July, 1976, UAB Oral History Collection, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, Alabama.
[16] Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt*, 91-92; McWhorter, *Carry Me Home*, 20.

cause had not been sufficient" in their quest for a strong political union. While remaining Democrats fled the party of their fathers in droves, most of the 1948 Dixiecrats had switched to the Republican ticket by 1956. In the early 1950s, some called themselves "Eisenhower Democrats." The unassailable Democrats had dominated the southern political landscape for nearly seven decades, but, in the words of historian Glenn Feldman, "When they emerged from the thunder and lightning [of the postwar era], they came out Republicans."[17]

The southern exodus from the Democratic Party strengthened during the tempestuous years of the 1960s. Plagued by racial advances, segregationists and other groups who sought to preserve the southern way of life blamed the liberalism of the Democratic platform. The years of Roosevelt, Truman, and even Eisenhower foreshadowed the connection between prescribed conservative anticommunist opinion and the civil rights programs of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Southerners hoped their shift in parties would ward off the liberal elite they perceived dominated American society.

By the mid-1960s, Alabama had shifted from "the most liberal state in the South" to one of the most staunchly conservative states. Alabama politicians realized that if they stuck with the Democratic Party, they would have little chance of winning reelections. These men had witnessed the success and prominence of George Wallace's platform. Lister Hill and the rest of the state's "liberal" politicians, therefore, took up a more conservative position and espoused anticommunist and racial politics.[18]

[17] Feldman, *Ugly Roots*, 277-282.
[18] McWhorter, 70; Barnard, *Dixiecrats*, 4.

In 1962, a young lawyer from Birmingham began spearheading a conservative campaign. John Grenier, like many other dissatisfied conservatives in the South, looked to the Republican Party for a home. He organized a local Young Republicans chapter, complete with an official headquarters, staff, supplies, and a budget of $150,000. Confident of his party's chances in the upcoming presidential campaign, Grenier stated, "We can win. We've got a product and a sales force, just like a business. The product is conservatism in the South." Over a forty day period, Grenier traveled the state five days a week, conducted forty-three meetings, often in local general stores, in a campaign the Republican National Committee called, "Operation Dixie." The campaign was designed to build a Republican rank and file in the South. Over the next few years, the power of the Republican Party in the South swelled.[19]

In March 1964, Alabama conservatives worried that communism would enter the White House via Lyndon Johnson and control the country if he won the presidency in November. Many even felt the nefarious Communist Party, USA (CPUSA) would place a candidate on the ballot. If that initiative was unsuccessful, then perhaps the red menace might "masquerade as another political party" in the election—the Democratic Party. Alabamians grew tired of "apologists" demanding tolerance. "[W]e must not 'tolerate' anybody hiding behind our Constitution for the admitted purpose of setting fire to it," noted the *Birmingham Independent*. Constituents in Alabama viewed the CPUSA not as a political party, but as an "international criminal conspiracy."[20]

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[19] "The New Breed," *Time*, July 13, 1962; Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 47, 167-168.
[20] "Communist Plot Subversion at Polls in Next Fall's Election," *Birmingham Independent*, March 4, 1964, p. 1, 6.

Staunch conservative anticommunists believed that the Johnson administration would lead the country into the Soviet camp. As one Birmingham resident put it, the communists secretly want southerners to "vote like 'Good Democrats' and elect LBJ, a "hard core communist." The administration's, and indeed, the Democratic Party's, "softness" on the race issue and the liberal economic program known as the Great Society reinforced their position. Alabama anticommunists judged that should the Democratic Party win the presidential election, it would "accede to every demand of Soviet Russia." They contended, after all, that the Party had passed several key pieces of deleterious civil rights legislation. Alabamians, moreover, felt that Johnson's liberal policies had led to an infringement of state sovereignty. His liberal economic and social programs proved to be deciding factors for conservative activism.[21]

By the June 1964 primary, it appeared that Birmingham Young Republican president John Grenier's efforts had paid off. Results reflected "the continuing resurgence of states' rights conservatism" in Alabama and Mississippi. In August, supporters of the Democratic Party were all but absent in the state and elsewhere in the South. Delegates attending the National Democratic Convention stated that "resolving the differences" between the Party and the Deep South was "virtually impossible." The region's militant opposition to communism and racial change embodied by southern conservatism were reflected in the upcoming presidential election.[22]

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[21] "Recent Brazen Developments Suggest Administration Sell-Out to Communists," *Birmingham Independent*, April 8, 1964, p. 1; Charles A. Robinson to George C. Wallace, SG 22371, folder 15, Wallace Papers.

[22] "Right Wing Gains in Southern Vote," *The New York Times*, June 4, 1964, p. 19; "Democrats and Dixie," *The New York Times*, August 26, 1964, p. 28.

Three months later, Republican Senator Barry Goldwater swept sixty-three of Alabama's sixty-seven counties in the 1964 presidential election. The conservative senator from Arizona captured four other Deep South states: Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Goldwater's conservatism represented a dedication to many of the ideals the South held dear—national security, moral conviction, free market capitalism, individual state sovereignty, private property rights, and opposition to civil rights legislation. Alabamians found in Goldwater the ideal man who personified the South's conservative philosophy.[23]

Saddened by the Goldwater defeat, opponents of the Democratic Party predicted that President Lyndon Johnson's "softness towards Communism will be a governmental policy." In addition, conservative anticommunists cautioned that "friends of the communists in Congress" threatened to take over the legislative body and quell the House Committee on Un-American Activities. According to conservative anticommunists, this signaled a "national trend to the 'left' " and after "two or three more sessions," communists will have seized the United States Congress. Thus, the success of conservatism in Alabama was bound to the politics of race and fear.[24]

Many conservative grassroots groups strongly supported Alabama's states' rights agenda. In 1964, the Paul Revere Associated Yeomen held several conventions with seventeen "Patriotic Organizations" exploring ways to combat "Federal Encroachment, Socialism and Communism." H. S. Riecke, a New Orleans native, founded the Paul Revere Associated Yeomen (P-R-A-Y), a group that espoused the mantra "BETTER

[23] Feldman, "Ugly Roots," 283; Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 203, 226-227.
[24] Focus on the American Scene, November 1964, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 1 and April 1965, Vol. 3, No. 8, SG21072, reel 5, ALCPP Papers.

DEAD THAN YELLOW OR RED." Riecke's cabal was similar to the Minutemen, a cadre of armed men who anticipated an eminent conflict between the United States and Soviet forces. According to religious studies scholar Edward Linenthal, P-R-A-Y "sought to locate militant anticommunism with the American revolutionary tradition." This radical Right group organized and campaigned to raise funds, often door-to door, for the anticommunist campaign. Riecke argued that subversion and communism "out-distanced" American nationalism and patriotism because of organization and money. In order to defeat the power of the federal government and "one-worldism," he contended that more conservative groups must rally to "trigger an anti-Communist blast that will be heard around the world!" In the South, and especially in Alabama, uniting conservative forces proved to be relatively effortless.[25]

Based in Mobile, another right-wing anticommunist group, Forum for the Republic, Inc., pledged unyielding support for patriotism and conservatism. Under its all-female leadership, the Forum was a grassroots organization that held patriotism lunches and meetings, organized campaigns, and traveled the state promoting conservatism. On Veteran's Day in 1965, Peace Commission staff director Edwin Strickland, "armed with factual information," discussed with the Forum subversion that may eliminate the "peace and dignity" of Alabama. "Our nation is under attack today as never before," Forum secretary Elsie Gill declared, "and Uncle Sam needs a strong home front as well as a strong fighting force if our nation is to survive." The Forum also

[25] Edward Tabor Linenthal, with foreword by Robert M. Utley, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 28; H.S. Riecke to George Wallace, March 10, 1964, SG 22371, folder 15, Wallace Papers.

argued that strong conservatism more than anything else will help rid the country of communist influences and liberal weakness.[26]

The Birmingham chapter of Young Americans for Freedom organized in 1965. Like the Forum for the Republic, women lead this conservative organization. The group formed to "alert and educate Americans to the threat of socialism and communism." Witnessing the "trend of bigger and bigger government and less and less individual freedom," the Birmingham chapter supported such projects as studies of communism, efforts to build state sovereignty, distributing political information, and programs to stimulate public discussion of conservatism. These local groups provided a groundswell of grassroots support for the state's conservative political hegemony.[27]

The state's Peace and Sovereignty Commissions also played a large role in connecting the actions of the federal government to the red menace. As early as August 1962, the Peace Commission labeled the federal government as a noxious, "anti-American" assembly that supported and encouraged such communist schemes as the black struggle for racial equality. The Kennedy administration, argued the Peace Commission, "violate[d] the U. S. Constitution and 'follow[ed] the Communist line' to gain negro votes." The civil rights drive and the Democratic Party-dominated politics, it argued, threatened "the progressive civilization of the white citizens who compose [sic] 80 per cent of the South's population." The civil rights gains achieved during the

[26] Mrs. H.W. Gill to "Fellow Mobilian," November 6, 1965, SG21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.
[27] "New YAF Chapter Formed," *Birmingham Independent*, March 3, 1965, p. 1.

Kennedy years prompted the Peace Commission and other conservative groups to propagandize the Democratic Party as communist-supported and directed.[28]

In October 1964 the Peace Commission contended that in a letter printed in the *The Daily Worker*, two Communist Party members stated that "in the South the Democratic Party will acquire an influx of millions of militant working-men and women, steeled in the great struggle" of good versus evil—Americanism versus communism. The Peace Commission capitalized on anticommunist rhetoric, such as "sworn foes of the Dixiecrats" and "radical changes in our nation," to alarm the one hundred thousand or more readers who received continual reports and propaganda material from the Commission throughout the 1960s and 1970s.[29]

From 1964 to 1967 the Peace Commission used the anticommunist publication, *Focus on the American Scene*, to further condemn domestic infiltration and to recruit additional opponents of the Democratic Party.[30] In March 1964 the publication warned that under Democratic President Lyndon Johnson the nation was "moving strongly in the direction of Communism." A month later opponents of the Democratic Party contended that President Johnson, Robert Kennedy, and other liberals had placed a "stamp of approval" on red-directed politics and civil disobedience. Frequently, traces of anti-federalism appeared in anticommunist opinion. "It is hard to realize that there is no such thing as State's [*sic*] Rights anymore," *Focus* asserted. "[E]very carpet-bagger, from any State in the Union [can] readily become a candidate in our great welfare State, better

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[28] "America's Betrayal: Government Officials Support Anti-American Drive," SG21070, reel 10, ALCPP Papers.
[29] "Communists in Civil Rights," SG21073, reel 12, ALCPP Papers.
[30] *Focus on the American Scene* was just one in a multitude of anticommunist and communist publications, underground newspapers, and other reports the Alabama Legislative Commission to Preserve the Peace accumulated over the years of its term. "Focus on the American Scene," 1964-1967, SG21072, reel 5, ALCPP Papers.

known as the Liberal's Paradise. Here defeated liberal candidates will find a warm Democratic haven." Exploiting the actions of the federal government, southern conservatives continually echoed anticommunist, anti-Democratic Party sentiment.[31]

Throughout its tenure, the Peace Commission initiated myriad charges against the Democratic Party. The Commission's actions and accusations fit within the growing conservative movement in the South that repudiated the political, economic, and racial tolerance of the Democratic Party. Similar to other reports on race and communism, the Peace Commission prepared a study looking at misdeeds of the federal government and the national Democratic Party. This report revealed a blatant call to stymie and in fact disable the national Democratic Party. Most often, the Peace Commission exploited racial politics to achieve its goals. The Commission had little trouble finding support for their anticommunist and anti-Democratic crusade as such sentiment had already been shored up by 1964 by southern conservatives.[32]

The study, nonetheless, extensively employed anti-federalism and anticommunist rhetoric to claim that the national Democratic Party was "captured by 'big government' forces." "The idea of…the 'welfare state' is championed by the Democratic Party under the leadership of President Johnson," the Peace Commission maintained. Johnson "sold his 'conservative image' for the support of radical groups and minority segments cynically directed by left-wing forces." The study spuriously asserted that the national Democratic Party's platform had been "captured" by the Communist Party. The Peace Commission propagandized that the Communist Party manipulated civil rights groups

[31] Focus on the American Scene, March 1964, Vol. 2, No. 7, p. 2 and April 1964, Vol. 2, No. 8, SG21072, reel 5, ALCPP Papers.
[32] July 1964 Staff Study, SG21074, reel 16, ALCPP Papers.

and other minority factions "as a vehicle to gain control" of the Democratic Party. The Peace Commission also claimed that the Communist Party labeled the "radical Right" as an "evil" entity. "Johnson, [Robert] Kennedy and the National Democratic Party have joined hands with…a rag-tag of red front groups and opportunistic Negro leaders," the Peace Commission warned, in order to wield power over "the law-abiding people" of the South. Moreover, it cautioned that the Democratic Party sought to steal the South from conservatives "with their Counterfeit Confederate, L. B. J."[33]

The Peace Commission's study concluded by turning the tables on the Democratic Party and the liberalism it attracted. "The Communist like the Federal Government, is in favor of discrimination," argued the Peace Commission, "if it is the white Southerner who is the object of discrimination." It further warned that "a defeat of the 'ultra-right' " during this crucial period in American history unequivocally meant "the end of all freedoms except those 'granted' by an all-powerful federal government whose allegiance is founded in its base of power—the Communist-coalition" of Democrats, reds, and blacks. Within the Peace Commission's propaganda, Communists, blacks, and Democrats constituted, not separate groups, but a unified movement against the white conservative South.[34]

Many of the United States Supreme Court decisions motivated deeper ire among conservative southerners against the federal government. Earl Warren, in particular, was seen as a red puppet. Mississippi Senator James O. Eastland charged that out of seventy or so cases involving communist activities during the tenure of Chief Justice Warren, the Court upheld the position in favor of the communists forty-six times. As a consequence,

[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

southern anticommunists believed that the entire Court, not only Warren, were red dupes. Southerners, already chafed by the *Brown* decision, seethed over the alleged comment by Warren that "there would be no need for federal government to exercise powers reserved in the states if state governments fulfilled their obligations to the people." Eli H. Howell, the Alabama State Sovereignty Commission's staff director, deplored the statement as "downright cynical."[35]

Conservative Alabamians regularly excoriated the "Socialist admitted" Warren and "Communistic" U.S. Supreme Court. They frequently wrote op-ed pieces in local newspapers calling the Warren Court's edicts unconstitutional and criminal. The "Extreme" Court decisions and the actions of "Lucifer Belial Johnson" and his "Great Perverted Society," argued Court Asher and Simon Smith, two recurrent op-ed writers, have caused the destruction of American freedom. Such opinions were common among bellicose conservative southerners who viewed the Warren Court's liberalism as a violation of "their" constitutional rights. Consequently, they felt that the Supreme Court was making laws instead of interpreting them.[36]

Conservatives also directed their attack at Johnson's war on poverty program. Johnson and his predecessor, John F. Kennedy, believed poverty bred ignorance, crime, and disease. Thus, during Johnson's 1964 State of the Union address, he declared an "unconditional war on poverty." His anti-poverty program called for better schools,

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[35] Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 195-196; Eli H. Howell to Bob Cleckler, July 10, 1968, SG24709, reel 13, ASSC Papers.

[36] Charles E. Rounsley to Lurleen B. Wallace, April 1, 1967, SG22420, folder 14, Wallace Papers; Court Asher Editorial, undated, SCB 711, box 3, folder 2, Smith Papers; Simon J. Smith to Court Asher, September 10, 1965, SCB 711, box 3, folder 2, Smith Papers; Court Asher to Simon J. Smith, undated, SCB 711, box 3, folder 2, Smith Papers; See also Simon Smith's numerous editorials in the *Birmingham Post-Herald*, *Centreville Press*, and other area newspapers in SCB 711, box 3, folder 2, Smith Papers.

roads, healthcare, homes, job opportunities. It also sought to eradicate squalor, unemployment, and juvenile delinquency. Moreover, he and other anti-poverty warriors felt that poverty reform would lessen the racial problems that plagued the South. In Johnson's view, the heart of the racial strife lay in the economic differences between the races. Therefore, by providing blacks with decent jobs and homes, their social status would be elevated and, in Johnson's opinion, they would earn respect from whites needed to achieve civil rights. Furthermore, Johnson firmly believed that the elimination of poverty was the government's responsibility.[37]

Conservatives viewed the partisan issue of poverty championed by Johnson Democrats as an extension of New Deal liberalism. And, indeed, much of Johnson's rhetoric harkened back to the New Deal days. His war on poverty called for government largesse, egalitarianism, and humanitarianism. Conservatives viewed these terms and the anti-poverty program in general as the "socialization" of America. Reacting to Johnson's policies on poverty, conservative politician Richard Nixon deemed that such terminology merely produced "grist for the Communist propaganda mill." Alabamians agreed. Alabama Representative Jim Martin described Johnson's anti-poverty campaign as a communist plot, comparing "so-called" national Democrats to "national socialists." He characterized the program as the "Great Society boondoggle designed to pay the rent of the unambitious so that they might live next door to the ambitious." According to many white southerners, the "unambitious" were blacks. In 1966, some 41.8 percent of blacks

[37] Carl M. Brauer, "Kennedy, Johnson, and the War on Poverty," in Lori Lyn Bogle, *The Cold War*, 253, 251.

lived below the poverty line, compared to 12.2 percent of whites. Martin's statement suggested that the anti-poverty program really signified an anti-white program.[38]

The Peace Commission's Edwin Strickland opposed the poverty program on the grounds that it further enabled the civil rights movement. If not for Johnson's war on poverty, he argued, civil rights groups "would be virtually destitute." Claiming that the federal government has "poured into the pockets of radicals and agitators" hundreds of thousands of dollars to subvert the South, Strickland called on "competent" southern congressman to act. He claimed that the anti-poverty program gave funds to people like LeRoi Jones, "one of America's most dangerous radicals," to help him produce a "hate-the-white" project at the Harlem Theater. Strickland made clear in the Commission's January 10, 1966 newsletter that anti-poverty funds only helped blacks and communists.[39]

Six days earlier, Ronald Reagan had entered the California governor's race, attacking the federal bureaucracy. The GOP hopeful challenged the liberalism of Johnson's Great Society and campaigned as a staunch conservative anticommunist. When asked if he expected campaign support from the 1964 conservative standard bearer Barry Goldwater, Reagan replied, "this is between Californians and outsiders would be carpet-bagging." Using distinct Reconstruction terminology, Reagan appeared to have secured the South for his presidential bid in the 1980s. Reagan also exploited the Great Society and antipoverty programs for his resurgent conservative agenda in 1980. He

[38] Brauer, "War on Poverty," 237; Jim Martin to Simon J. Smith , May 11, 1966, SCB 711, box 3, folder 2, Smith Papers; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, Historical Poverty Tables, Table Two.
[39] Edwin Strickland, Peace Commission Newsletter, January 10, 1966, SG22400, folder 17, Wallace Papers.

claimed that these programs did not solve the nation's poverty woes, but exacerbated them by trapping the poor in a cycle of penury and dependence. To Reagan and Alabama conservatives, the Great Society symbolized too much government intervention, waste, and bureaucratic red tape.[40]

Former economically liberal senators Lister Hill and John Sparkman, who years earlier decisively supported Roosevelt's New Deal programs, voted against the anti-poverty bill. Sparkman equivocally stated that he voted against Johnson's poverty reform "because I felt that it was not soundly based." Most of the senators' fellow Alabama congressmen agreed, although many of them were as ambiguous as Sparkman in their argument against the anti-poverty measure. Representative Jack Edwards from Grove Hill, Alabama voiced his dismay over the "many defects" in the war on poverty, yet he failed to identify and coherently articulate those defects. However, they all appeared to agree that Johnson's poverty reform represented an "anti-American philosophy."[41]

Conservative disdain for the poverty issue carried over into other programs in Johnson's Great Society. Medicare was another hotly contested issue. Under the Kerr-Mills plan, medical care for the elderly was based on financial need. Although individual states were responsible for this program, Alabamians, nonetheless, saw Medicare as "socialized" medicine.[42]

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[40] "Reagan Enters Race, Won't Screen Backers," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, January 6, 1966, p. 5.
[41] John E. Campbell, Assistant to Senator Hill, to Edwin Strickland, January 7, 1966, SG21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; John Sparkman to Edwin Strickland, February 23, 1966, SG21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Jack Edwards to Edwin Strickland, February 25, 1966, SG21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Edwin Strickland to Karl Mundt, February 15, 1966, SG21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Alabama Congressmen George Andrews, Armistead Sheldon, Jim Martin, Glenn Andrews, John H. Buchanan, Jr., William L. Dickinson all expressed rejection of the war on poverty.
[42] Hamilton, *Lister Hill*, 237.

Alabama resident Simon Smith stated that, under the Medicare program, he and his wife received "about as much insurance as a ghost." He and other Alabamians felt that Medicare left elderly Americans much worse off than they were before. Smith called the healthcare plan the "lowest type of blackmail." As an older American, Smith believed his voice would fall on deaf ears, but he called on the younger generation to "wake up…and choke this Communist conspiracy." Jimmy Zeigler, a University of Alabama college student, answered Smith's call. He agreed with Smith in the "socialistic" nature of the Medicare program and vowed "to dedicate my life to the reform of American government." Over the next few years, conservatives red-baited Johnson's Great Society and denounced the "high-handed actions" of the Democratic Party.[43]

This conservative branding of federal government programs as communistic or socialistic also spilled over into public housing initiatives. Opposition to public housing dated back to the New Deal days. Conservatives attached a stigma of poverty to this program. They viewed public housing as a refuge for the destitute instead of a guaranteed right for all persons. If the federal government promised public housing as a right similar to public education, conservatives believed everyone would demand it. To white southerners, therefore, undesirable minority groups, such as blacks and Mexican-Americans, would be eligible for public housing and might move next door. Advocates of private property, as a result, attacked public housing as a communist plot.

[43] Simon J. Smith to Editor, *Birmingham Post-Herald*, June 20, 1966, SCB 711, box 3, folder 2, Smith Papers; Jimmy Zeigler to Simon J. Smith, June 22, 1966, SCB 711, box 3, folder 2, Smith Papers; Simon J. Smith to Alabama Representative Jim Martin, no date, SCB 711, box 3, folder 2, Smith Papers.

Wallace, for example, wrote a confidential memo in 1966 that revealed his true motivations eclipsed his personal views. In the conspiratorial memo, Wallace advised Alabama State Sovereignty Commission staff director Eli Howell to "write a statement about civil rights…on the vain [sic] that [the movement] is really a take over of the property ownership system and state government." Publicly, therefore, Wallace brooked no such program. Instead, he race- and red-baited public housing for political advantage.[44]

Much of the controversy originated in racially-transitioning neighborhoods, as whites tried to defend the homogeneity of their enclaves. As historian Dan Carter pointed out, "Ironically, prosperity, not poverty had intensified…racial polarization." In the postwar years, as more and more black families gained greater affluence, they radiated outward to urban fringe and suburban neighborhoods to achieve affordable and better housing. Moving into marginal white neighborhoods spurred racial tensions and led to often volatile confrontations. At the same time, paradoxically, more affluent black and white homeowners banded together to oppose publicly funded housing for the poor. These critics of public housing assailed it as "socialized real estate."[45]

Alabamians red-baited urban projects, such as public housing, urban renewal, zoning, and metropolitan government as inefficient and un-American. Water fluoridation was also seen by some as a communist conspiracy. In 1964, Alabama anticommunist James Garber attacked urban renewal and metropolitan government as part of the "Communist's doctrine." The idea of metropolitan, or metro government creates a

[44] George Wallace to Eli Howell, May 16, 1966, SG22416, folder 16, Wallace Papers.
[45] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 349; Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 12; Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 169.

merging of several counties into one larger unit. Garber warned Alabamians that this would lead to "encroaching upon and wiping out of state boundaries," just one of many Soviet "conspirirtorial [sic] techniques." According to Garber, under this system, property owners could be dispossessed of and "forced" to sell their home by an all-powerful, communist-controlled metro-planner. "The entire management [of metro government] would be under the absolute control of the Metro-planner," Garber cautioned, "who is always from a Communist school." Urban renewal, Garber contended, was simply a "miniature" program of the "sinister and dictatorial" metro government. Alabamians also denounced real estate block busting in white neighborhoods. Block busting occurred when real estate agents sold a home in a racially homogenous (usually white) neighborhood to someone of a different race (usually black). The State Sovereignty Commission, neighborhood organizations, racist real estate agents, and white supremacists roundly sought directives to correct this practice. At the same time, white Alabamians criticized it as "socialism," further exacerbating racial tensions and violence in urban and suburban areas.[46]

Racial fringe neighborhoods during the mid- to late-1960s were the sites of extreme racial violence. A 1967 *Congressional Quarterly* poll revealed that southern Democrats and Republicans similarly viewed the nation's urban riots as a red and black conspiracy. Sixty-two percent of southern Democrats believed "outside" black agitation created the riots and labeled the problem one of "great importance" to America. Among the same group, forty percent felt communists were behind the riots. Republicans generally felt the same, registering fifty-nine percent and twenty percent, respectively.

[46] Garber, *Selected Patriotic Talks*, 63-70; Alabama State Sovereignty Commission minutes, September 7, 1967, SG24709, reel 13, ASSC Papers.

On the other hand, only seventeen percent of northern Democrats viewed "outside" black agitation as the cause of turmoil in the cities and less than one percent felt communists played a role. Thus, the red and black conspiracy clearly created an alliance between southern Democrats and Republicans.[47]

Alabama conservatives continued their anticommunist-directed tirade on the Democratic Party and the black civil rights struggle well into the late 1960s and early 1970s. As the rhetoric and agency of the civil rights movement shifted from nonviolence to an emerging philosophy of "black power," the Right took full advantage of the often volatile climate. In 1967 conservative anticommunists charged that "Washington" ignored the "co-ordinated Communist effort…behind the riotous conditions in our cities." According to the Peace Commission, by donating "almost one-half million dollars to 'Black Power' groups in two Alabama Counties," the Democratic Party had "financed revolution in this country." Southern conservatives castigated President Johnson for applauding the civil rights advances and denounced his televised "revolutionary cry 'We shall overcome.'" The South's only hope, Edwin Strickland argued, lay with "the man who has no axe to grind, who works for a living, pays his taxes and has the patriotic zeal to defend his country when duty calls." "He is the hero of our time." The "hero" Strickland referred to was the white southern man.[48]

Conservative Alabamians also viewed the United Nations as a red-controlled international body. All agreed that United States membership to the international assembly brought America closer to Soviet domination. Some blamed LBJ. As one Alabama resident argued, Johnson "will not stop at anything short of the surrender of the

[47] Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 253.
[48] "Miami Speech, August 29, 1967," SG21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers.

United States to the United Nations, which is the same as surrender to Russia." As a peace-keeping organization, many felt the U.N. imperiled national security with its program of disarmament. If Americans "must forget nationalism and place world unity first," Alabamians wondered how they would maintain national safety. Once the United States dismantled its arms, Barry Goldwater argued in his book, *Conscience of a* Conservative, "aggressive Communist forces will be free to maneuver under the umbrella of nuclear terror." Conservatives also argued that the U.N. lay at the heart of America's foreign policy problem. By embracing such communist-controlled countries as Cuba and the Soviet Union, the international body placed an "effective straightjacket" on American foreign policy.[49]

Alabama even launched its own investigations into the United Nations. In 1965, anticommunists warned the Alabama Legislature that the U.N. was guilty of "subversive activities." Major Arch E. Roberts, former aide to anticommunist General Edwin Walker, and some 200 members of Women for Constitutional Government urged the Alabama Legislature to investigate the legality of the U.N. and to enforce the U.S. Constitution for the body's abolition. Roberts and others charged that the U.N. charter was "the master plan for a Communist-style revolution in America." As a result, Alabama petitioned for the state's (not the U.S.) withdrawal from the U.N.[50]

Right-wing Alabamians supported the state's renunciation of the international body. Mrs. C.J. Cargile, Jr., a director of the anticommunist Forum for the Republic,

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[49] Charles A. Robinson to George Wallace, March 1, 1964, SG22371, folder 15, Wallace Papers; "Administration Sell-Out to Communists," *Birmingham Independent*, April 8, 1964, p. 1; "U.N. + A.D.A. + C.F.R. + H.H.H. + L.B.J. = Soviet U.S.," *Birmingham Independent*, September 16, 1964, p. 1; Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 66-67.

[50] "Legislature is Told UN Subversive," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, April 1, 1965; "Speaker Tells Legislators 'U.N. is Subversive Tool,'" *The Montgomery Advertiser*, April 1, 1965;

congratulated the "State of Alabama" for "proving the United Nations the subversive organization that it is." Another Alabama resident thanked the Peace Commission for its efforts in exposing "the 'sell-out' of our sovereignty to the United Nations One World Government." State officials also received numerous inquiries from conservatives outside Alabama about the status of its removal from the U.N. "This so-called United Nation Organization is the greatest fraud in history," Reese F. Englerth, a Tucson local, told George Wallace. "It is a Soviet Apparatus." In 1967, the state legislature introduced a bill to "rescind and revoke membership of the State of Alabama in the United Nations." Due to a filibuster, as Edwin Strickland explained, the bill failed to pass the Senate and expired at the end of the session. Still, Alabama received apparent nationwide right-wing support for its quest to eliminate the "communist-run" body.[51]

By 1968, the "southernization" of American politics was well underway. Conservative candidate Richard Nixon won thirty-six percent of the vote in eleven southern states in the presidential election; Wallace followed closely behind seizing thirty-three percent. During the campaign, Nixon publicly distanced himself from the race issue and extremist politics of Wallace. He did, however, adopt some of the Alabama governor's political strategy, albeit from a more respectable and refined approach. He challenged busing as a way of accomplishing school desegregation. He vowed to appoint "strict constructionists" to the Supreme Court. He took a strict position

[51] Mrs. Charles J. Cargile, Jr. to Members of the Alabama Legislature and Peace Commission, April 27, 1965, SG21074, reel 15 ALCPP Papers; Eugene F. McKenzie to Peace Commission, July 17, 1965, SG21074, reel 15, ALCPP Papers; Reese F. Englerth to George Wallace, July 5, 1966, SG22401, folder 9, Wallace Papers; Edwin Strickland to John M. Busch, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, October 19, 1967, SG22449, folder 12, Wallace Papers; Strickland to W.D. Warren, Bakersfield, California, November 6, 1967, SG22449, folder 12, Wallace Papers; Strickland to Mrs. J. Addison Hagan, Norfolk, Virginia, November 6, 1967, SG22449, folder 12, Wallace Papers; Strickland to Lieutenant William G. Cherry, Jr., Hawthorne, Nevada, November 13, 1967, SG22449, folder 12, Wallace Papers.

on law and order. This traditional platform courted and secured many of the South's conservative politicians, including Strom Thurmond. Many of the stalwart states' righters of the last two decades became what *The New York Times* writer Don Oberdorfer called "Nixiecrats." "The South will never go back," a Nixon aide prophesized, "the Republican beachhead is so well established. People in the South now realize that they have been Republicans philosophically for a long time." With an overwhelming victory in 1972, it was clear that Nixon helped to bring the South into the mainstream of American politics, or as historian John Egerton put it, "he Americanized the politics Dixie."[52]

The conservatism that emerged out of the South during the late 1960s and 1970s was more respectable than the anticommunist and racial politics of the past. The new conservatism was less sectional and more palatable to the rest of the nation. By the 1970s, a nationwide coalition of conservatives would take American politics to the late twentieth and into the early twenty-first centuries. This right-wing political group far outnumbered the poor, working-class, minority groups, and liberal whites that made up the Democratic Party. This conservative coalition boasted mostly upper- and middle-class white suburbanites and was tantamount to the transformation of American politics. Situated in the sophisticated landscape of suburban neighborhoods, upscale shopping centers, and megachurches that formed the nucleus of conservatism, suburbanites escaped the deterioration of urban slum where they could control their own local governments and

[52] Egerton, *The Americanization of Dixie*, 127-131.

rid their neighborhoods of crime. It was in this setting, as Dan Carter has argued, that "the conservative revolution reached high tide."[53]

The new conservatism of the late twentieth century was rooted in the politics of fear, racism, emotionalism, and nationalism. Anticommunist ideas became legitimate expressions of deeply held beliefs about the dangers that threatened national security. For many southerners, the communist threat came from within as they viewed American society as growing too secular and socialistic. Over the course of the 1960s and early 1970s, southern, and especially Alabama, red-baiters exploited the country's fears of internal subversion in order to forestall social and racial change. The anticommunist collective action of the grassroots campaigns, legislative commissions, and politicians in Alabama, along with similar anticommunist efforts in conservative states, transformed American politics. Anticommunism represented the symbolic glue that held conservatives together all over the United States. In a broader context, many of the notions that shaped the ideology of anticommunism and racial politics in the South, and Alabama in particular, became principal tenets of a wider conservatism in American culture.

[53] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 472-474.

CONCLUSION

> They're not spying on people who have broken laws. They're spying on people who have different political views than they do.
>
> — Alabama Attorney General Bill Baxley, referring to the Peace Commission in 1972

> The day of accountability is coming.
>
> — Steve Suitts, Executive Director
> Alabama Civil Liberties Union[1]

As the 1960s drew to a close, Alabama's investigative commissions resisted doing the same. Both the Peace and Sovereignty Commissions faced increasing scrutiny from incessant critics and from those who had once supported their efforts. Since their inception in the early 1960s, the two investigative agencies drew opposition from the state's mainstream press. The *Alabama Journal* did "not expect the [State Sovereignty] commission to accomplish much, if anything." The *Montgomery Advertiser* agreed that both commissions "[are] of doubtful value." The Alabama press chronically censured the commissions' public expenditures that stretched into the hundreds of thousands without any accountability to taxpayers. From the waning days of the 1960s until the Commissions' ultimate demise in the mid-1970s, criticism of both commissions mounted. Those who had advocated the creation of the anti-subversive organizations during the tumultuous sixties questioned their validity in the subsequent decade.[2]

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[1] "Alabama's Peace Commission Seen as 'Spy Agency,'" *Montgomery Advertiser*, December 24, 1972.
[2] "Secrecy Isn't a 'Sovereign' Right," *Alabama Journal*, January 8, 1964; "The Previously Baptized," *Montgomery Advertiser*, January 8, 1964.

By the late 1960s, the press, legislators, and others began doubting the necessity of the two commissions. Do we really need a State Sovereignty Commission to spend $100,000 a year in public funding to fight federal encroachment, critics asked? The *Alabama Journal* criticized the Sovereignty Commission for failing to protect the state from federal government interference. Since the Commission creation three years earlier, the periodical maintained in 1966, "the very best it has done is absolutely nothing to check the encroachments of the federal government." Other critics claimed that protection from big government was superfluous and argued that the Sovereignty Commission and its sister agency were witch-hunting groups. From the outset, the Commission's spending of public money and its operating under a cloak of secrecy angered much of the mainstream press, but in the 1970s legislators jumped on the opposition bandwagon.[3]

Although both commissions were similarly condemned for working beneath a veil of subterfuge, the two investigative commissions exerted their energies in different ways to hasten criticism from Alabamians. While the commissions similarly confronted increasing disapproval, they pursued different tortuous courses before their ultimate demise. In the commissions' last years, many agreed that they were "hush-hush with anything to be hush-hush about," but views of both and reasons for their dismissals varied. For instance, the commissions differed in their areas of focus. The Peace Commission continued to investigate subversives in the state, particularly in public schools and universities, but it also focused heavily on issues of drugs and white collar

[3] "The State Sovereignty Commission…It Has Had No Usefulness to Outlive," WSFA Television News Editorial, July 18, 1968, SG 24709, reel 13, ASSC Paper; "Abolish the Sovereignty Commission," *Alabama Journal*, February 4, 1966.

crime. In addition, the Peace Commission became more politically active, campaigning for the state's right-wing candidates and launching smear drives against their opponents. The State Sovereignty Commission, too, became more involved in state and nationwide politics. For example, it created a political research group actively involved in Wallace's campaigns in 1968 and 1972. Another Sovereignty Commission initiative involved a $10,000 donation to the Citizens' Councils of America. All of these campaigns, which will subsequently be discussed, gleaned intense disparagement from those who labeled both commissions as "witch-hunting" and "cloak and dagger" agencies, as well as "poisonous" to the state.[4]

Most alarming to many in Alabama were the commissions' public expenditures and the obfuscation under which both operated. The Sovereignty Commission, the *Birmingham News* argued, "is the only state agency which does not have to account to the public for its spending." By this time, the Alabama press had become privy to the veritable aims of the clandestine commissions. "Now we know," claimed the *Birmingham News* in 1973, that the state created the two agencies "to fight integration and to keep tabs on the black community." The State Sovereignty Commission, in particular, handled the legal fees of organizations seeking to preserve segregation. The *Montgomery Advertiser* and *Mobile Register* acquiesced, calling for the abolition of "these two right-wing organizations" that specifically targeted civil rights and "alleged" communists. Thus, it was not until the late sixties and early seventies that many Alabamians recognized the racial implications of the commissions' work. Before then, the Alabama press and others simply opposed the commissions because both concealed

[4] "Gentlemen, Your Gumshoes are Showing," *Montgomery Advertiser*, July, 18, 1968.

public spending. However, the commissions' political spy efforts, not cryptic public disbursement resulted in their downfalls.[5]

Beginning in the late 1960s, the State Sovereignty Commission launched a politically dubious program. It allocated $1000 in state tax money to the Mississippi-based Citizens Council of America. The largesse funded the creation of a political survey that Commission Executive Secretary Eli Howell stated would "reflect a conservative viewpoint." In an editorial, one Alabama citizen called the Sovereignty Commission the "Confederate CIA" and, if it was not already apparent by Howell's statement, claimed the survey was "rigged." In an embittered response to the resident's claim that the Sovereignty Commission was racist and acted as a southern CIA, Commission member Carl Lancaster, Jr. argued that "Racism...is a word manufactured by liberal extremists following W.W.II." The *Montgomery Advertiser* contended that the $1000 largesse was but one of several in a string of the Commission's mismanagement of Alabama tax money. The newspaper questioned two other Commission endeavors: $15,000 to a group in New Hampshire, "from whom nothing has since been heard" and $40,000 to finance a film about the 1965 civil rights march in Selma. Donating $1000 to a segregationist outfit to fund what newspapers described as an engineered partisan political survey led many more Alabamians to question the Sovereignty Commission's importance.[6]

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[5] "Two Named Sovereignty Unit Members," *Birmingham News*, October 1, 1972; "Now We Know," *Birmingham News*, June 10, 1973; "Sovereignty, Peace Groups Cut," *Montgomery Advertiser*, August 18, 1973; No title, *Mobile Register*, July 2, 1973.

[6] "The State Sovereignty Commission…It Has Had No Usefulness to Outlive," WSFA Television News Editorial, July 18, 1968, SG 24709, reel 13, ASSC Paper; "Taxpayers' Money-Survey Being Financed by Sovereignty Group," *Birmingham News*, July 16, 1968; "State Giving Citizens Council $1,000," *Montgomery Advertiser*, July 17, 1968; "A Purveyor of Futility," *Alabama Journal*, July 18, 1968; "Stand

Alabamians were also upset by the Commission's creation of the publicly-funded organization called The Legal, Economic and Cultural Research Association, Inc., or LECRA. According to Commission Secretary Eli Howell, LECRA functioned as a "nationwide organization to do research and provide both sides of the picture." Although LECRA acted as political outfit, Howell denied that it was involved with George Wallace's 1968 presidential campaign. Instead, Howell claimed the group endorsed a graduate study program in white racism. The *Montgomery Advertiser* called the program "nauseating" and stated that LECRA "appears as useless as its parent" in "wasting tax money acutely needed in legitimate Alabama education." By the late 1960s, many people had opened their eyes to the Commission's penchant for abusing public funds.[7]

Despite growing protest, the Sovereignty Commission survived for five more years. In 1971, the investigative body requested a budget approval of $130,000 and two years later, an approval of an additional $10,000. Before becoming what one commenter described as "financially strangled" in 1973, the Commission worked on several state political campaigns and claimed it had focused on issues of inflation and energy. Although the Commission asserted that it could be revived in 1975, the agency closed forever the doors of its Dexter Avenue office in Montgomery on September 30, 1973.[8]

The state's other anti-subversive investigative body, the Alabama Legislative Commission to Preserve the Peace, managed to outlive its sister agency by three years.

Against Sovereignty Commission 'Poisonous,'" *Alabama Journal*, no date, in SG 24709, reel 13, ASSC Papers; "A Terminal Case," *Montgomery Advertiser*, July 18, 1968.

[7] "Taxpayers' Money-Survey Being Financed by Sovereignty Group," *Birmingham News*, July 16, 1968; "Dead but Still Kicking," *Montgomery Advertiser*, no date, in SG 24709, reel 13, ASSC Papers; "Day of Reckoning Needed," *Alabama Journal*, September 26, 1968.

[8] "Legislature Gives Axe to State 'Snoop' Funds," *Alabama Journal*, August 18, 1971; "Sovereignty Panel Asks $140,000," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, March 21, 1973; "State Sovereignty Commission Closes its Doors for Last Time," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, September 29, 1973; "Another Agency Thrives-State Sovereignty Commission Could be Revived," *Birmingham News*, *October* 27, 1974.

Like the Sovereignty group, the Peace Commission, too, was financially cut-off before the state legislature dissolved it in 1976. The Peace Commission alleged it shed its more subversive focus, working, by the early 1970s, on Alabama's problems with drugs, vandalism, organized and white collar crime, and ironically, the misuse of state funds. Yet, evidence of the Commission's continued investigations of educators and interracial couples at state universities and so-called subversive activities at public schools suggested otherwise. [9]

Allegations of campus spying stirred tensions between the Peace Commission and Alabama university students. In 1974, a University of Alabama student body officer complained that the Commission spied on students. The investigative group denied the charge, but when the student produced pictures of the spies, as the *Birmingham News* reported, "the men were identified as agents from the Peace Commission." The Peace Commission also spied on students at the University of South Alabama located in the coastal city of Mobile. According to staff director Edwin Strickland, Mobile was "the most critical area of potential violence in Alabama." The University of South Alabama had, according to Strickland, been infused with "the spirit of Berkeley." Also troubling to the Peace Commission was an alleged relationship between a professor and his pupil, as well as student interracial dating on campus. When later asked about the legitimacy of the Commission's probe, Strickland stated that the investigations "were justified by the entire climate at that time."[10]

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[9] Peace Commission Report, September 30, 1975, SG 24838, reel 16, Peace Papers.
[10] "Another Agency Thrives-State Sovereignty Commission Could be Revived," *Birmingham News*, October 27, 1974; "Former Director Claims Peace Probes Justified," *Montgomery Advertiser*, May 25, 1976; "State Agency Spied at Colleges, Got Info on Interracial Dating," *Mobile Register*, May 17, 1976.

In 1970, the Peace Commission expanded their sphere of influence, getting involved with the campaign for the Alabama attorney general. During the campaign, the Peace Commission launched a television commercial promotion for incumbent McDonald Gallion against Bill Baxley. As Gallion's intimate former aide, Strickland doubtless supervised the Commission's endorsement. However, Strickland denied any role in the campaign. The Peace Commission also initiated an unsuccessful anti-Baxley drive, widely distributing smear flyers against the hopeful. As a Peace Commission abolitionist, Baxley harshly denigrated the "political spy agency." Speaking flippantly about the Commission's secret files, Baxley stated, "I know there's nothing but trash in them...And they aren't after criminals. They're after people for political reasons. You can learn more about criminals by reading Double Bubble comics than you can by going through those files." Although legislators began calling for its abolition and trying to cut off its funding in 1969, the investigative agency unflaggingly survived, triggering problems in state politics, investigating college students, and continuing to be consumed in a "frenzy of racial paranoia" well into the mid-1970s.[11]

On September 8, 1975, Alabama Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) executive director Steve Suitts filed a lawsuit against the Peace Commission. The complaint challenged the "constitutional authority of the agency to gather allegedly false and misleading information on alleged troublemakers." The ACLU requested that the Commission's files be impounded before the suit went to court. In January 1976, U.S. District Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr. authorized the ACLU and Attorney General Bill Baxley to view the Commission's previously confidential files. Strickland doubted the standing of the

[11] "Alabama's Peace Commission Seen as 'Spy Agency,'" *Montgomery Advertiser*, December 24, 1972; "State Agency Spied at Colleges, Got Info on Interracial Dating," *Mobile Register*, May 17, 1976.

ACLU's case. Immediately following the ACLU suit, the Peace Commission purged some of its files. Commission secretary Mavis Hicks stated that "the records were burned in late September." When asked what happened to the missing files, Strickland said, "I don't know, they should be in there somewhere." Although he claimed the Commission possessed numerous photographs, those too were never recovered.[12]

Due to termination of funding by the state legislature, the Peace Commission was rendered all but defunct in December 1975. It officially shut down in April 1976 as a result of Suitts's legal action. Although the Peace Commission had been ordered to turn over its records to the Alabama Department of Archives and History, as of July 1976 it had not. The State Sovereignty Commission failed to do the same. ACLU director Steve Suitts questioned whether the records had been lost or destroyed, but stated "in either case, serious questions are raised about whether the law has been followed." "For more than 15 years," Suitts argued in 1976, "this state has been plagued by secret government snooping" costing taxpayers almost two million dollars. "The day of accountability is coming," Suitts averred. At the end of its tenure, the Peace Commission maintained that it never investigated any persons, groups, or entities based on race. "We do not, and have not, deal[t] with any matters on a racial or ethnic basis," a Peace Commission report claimed in 1975. "We have been careful, always, to protect the rights of all parties in all situations."[13]

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[12] "Peace Commission Fights Efforts to Impound Records," *Birmingham News*, October 18, 1975; "Peace Agency Told to Reveal its Files," *Montgomery Advertiser*, January 24, 1976; "In ACLU Suit-'Peace Commission' Files Closed Until Feb. 26 Trial," *Birmingham News*, February 8, 1976; "Lacks Data-Peace Body Hits Lawsuit," *Birmingham News*, February 15, 1976; "State Agency Spied at Colleges, Got Info on Interracial Dating," *Mobile Register*, May 17, 1976.

[13] "Secret Agency's Files Sought," *Mobile Register*, July 4, 1976; "Former Director Claims Peace Probes Justified," *Montgomery Advertiser*, May 25, 1976; Peace Commission Report, September 30, 1975, SG 24838, reel 16, Peace Papers.

By the mid-1970s, domestic anticommunism finally began to disappear from public discourse in Alabama, while foreign anticommunism continued until the end of the Cold War. Scholars in recent years have discovered ways in which legitimate expressions of anticommunism shaped American political and social history. Although some scholars have incorporated anticommunism in their histories of American conservatism, its importance has been slighted. While the history of conservatism came into vogue a decade or so ago, historians have shown little interest in the role anticommunism played in the rise of the modern Right, a shortcoming this thesis has sought to correct.

The Alabama anticommunist movement was both multifarious and inexorable. The anticommunist educational campaign that began in 1950 and lasted nearly two decades had enduring effects on the state's social and cultural atmosphere. Organized at the grassroots level, thousands of white Alabamians took part in the educational campaign to stamp out domestic communism. They organized lectures, meetings, study groups, workshops, and other anti-Red campaigns. They distributed literature and planned weekly speaking engagements where thousands eagerly attended. Several individuals rose to state-wide prominence as a result of traversing the state, pontificating about the values of Americanism and the evils of communism. The urgency with which these educational campaigns occurred and the trepidation they instilled resulted in a formidable movement.

This Alabama educational red scare also encompassed a crusade to rid public schools and universities of subversion. Many school teachers and university professors were investigated as a result. The Peace Commission worked with many Alabama

university presidents to find out who appeared to be a threat. Where radical activities took place or different ways of thinking were expressed, educators were purged. Gay teachers and radical student groups were specifically targeted. Educators were ill-advised to adopt unusual methods of teaching or act in ways that disrupted the southern status quo. Doing so, might have cost them their career and reputation. The Alabama anticommunist educational crusade also impacted the social and political atmosphere.

In addition to education, the influence of race, religion, morality, and conservative politics created a climate of fear in Alabama. Segregationists used militant anticommunism to thwart civil rights legislation and the direct action campaigns of the black struggle for racial equality. Civil rights activists discovered their commitment to racial justice was easily and often red-baited by those attempting to preserve Jim Crow. Most Americans, whether or not they were for racial equality, despised communism. Thus, by painting the black civil rights movement red, anticommunists garnered additional opponents for their cause.

An enemy that embodied secularism also concerned anticommunists. Southern religious traditionalism was a decisive weapon against the red menace. Communism symbolized godlessness and the end of traditional values rooted in Protestant faith. Therefore, a strong foundation in religion was the key to overcoming the communist menace before it destroyed America. As more and more churches opened up to the idea of integration, anticommunists became increasingly paranoid that “race-mixing” was a grand communist conspiracy and that places of worship became hotbeds of subversion. As a response, anticommunists investigated subversion in churches and practiced

anticommunism in the name of religion to defeat what they viewed as the secularization of America.

The evils of communism also threatened southern morality. Southerners viewed any change in the social fiber of American life as morally deleterious. They had a fierce commitment to traditional sexual practices and historical gender roles. Therefore, those who refused to conform to traditional roles in the South found themselves consistently red-baited. Anticommunists often targeted unconventional women and homosexuals. Conservative southerners viewed as morally menacing the feminist politics of women's empowerment and the sexual freedom of the gay rights movement. As a result, southern anticommunists challenged communism, feminism, homosexuality, and racial amalgamation as contradictory to American society.

The conservative renaissance was also rooted in militant anticommunism and racial politics of the 1950s and 1960s. The conservative coalition, not just in Alabama, but in many places across the United States, championed ideologies of Americanism, domestic and foreign anticommunism, defense of property rights, a strong belief in tradition and the importance of religion, and opposition to big government. Without having to shed strong commitment to white supremacy, southerners worked under the guise of anticommunism and advocated a position that would solidify a political alliance with northern and western conservatives.

In subsequent years, Alabama anticommunists shifted their focus from issues of blatant racial politics and communism to the bitter contests over drugs, crime, abortion, school prayer, and gay rights. Symptomatic of the social changes occurring across the United States during this time, this shift created the "culture war" politics of the late

twentieth century. Despite regional differences, anticommunism welded conservatives together by a common enemy. Alabama states' righters had much more in common with suburban Republicans in California and Catholics in Detroit than has previously been assumed. Anticommunism was both an ideological cement and a distinct political posture for the often disparate conservative movement. Anticommunists from across the country came together and became important players in the modern right-wing movement that recast American politics in the twentieth century. The more palatable conservative politics of today, however, cannot be explained without examining the anticommunist politics of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The anticommunism of modern conservatism sustained the one of the more successful political movements of the twentieth century.

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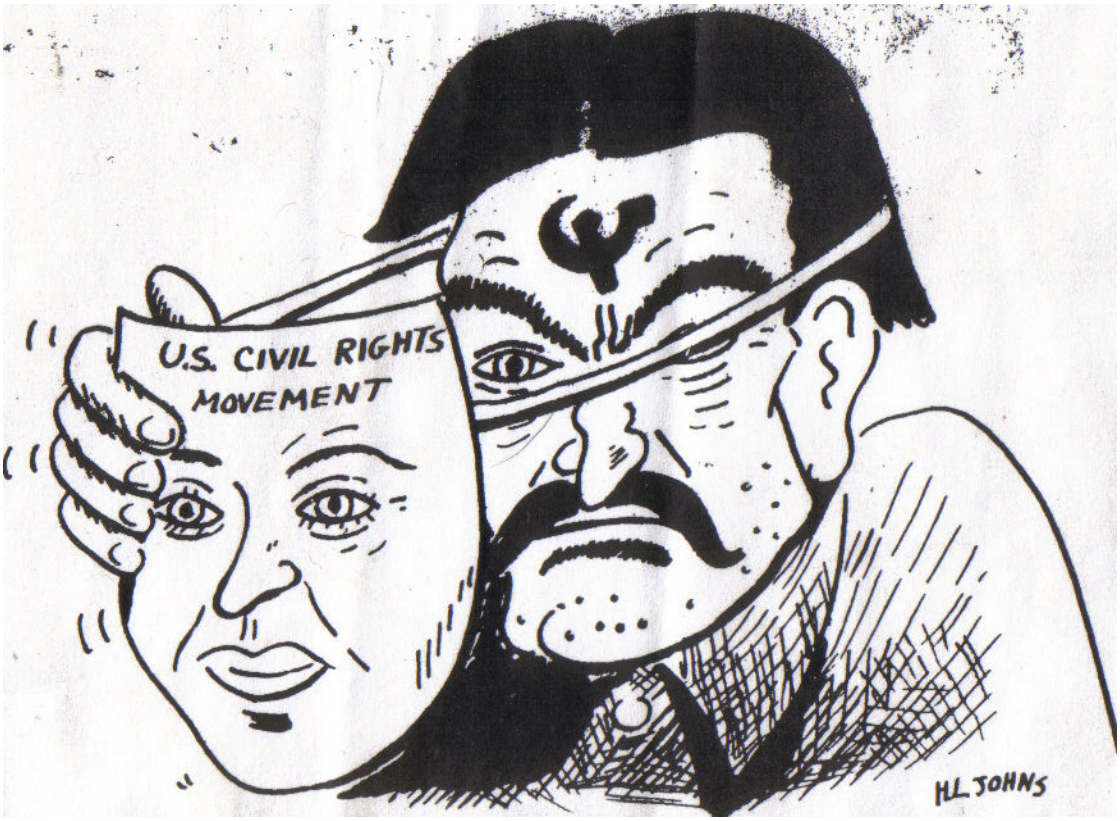
APPENDIX A

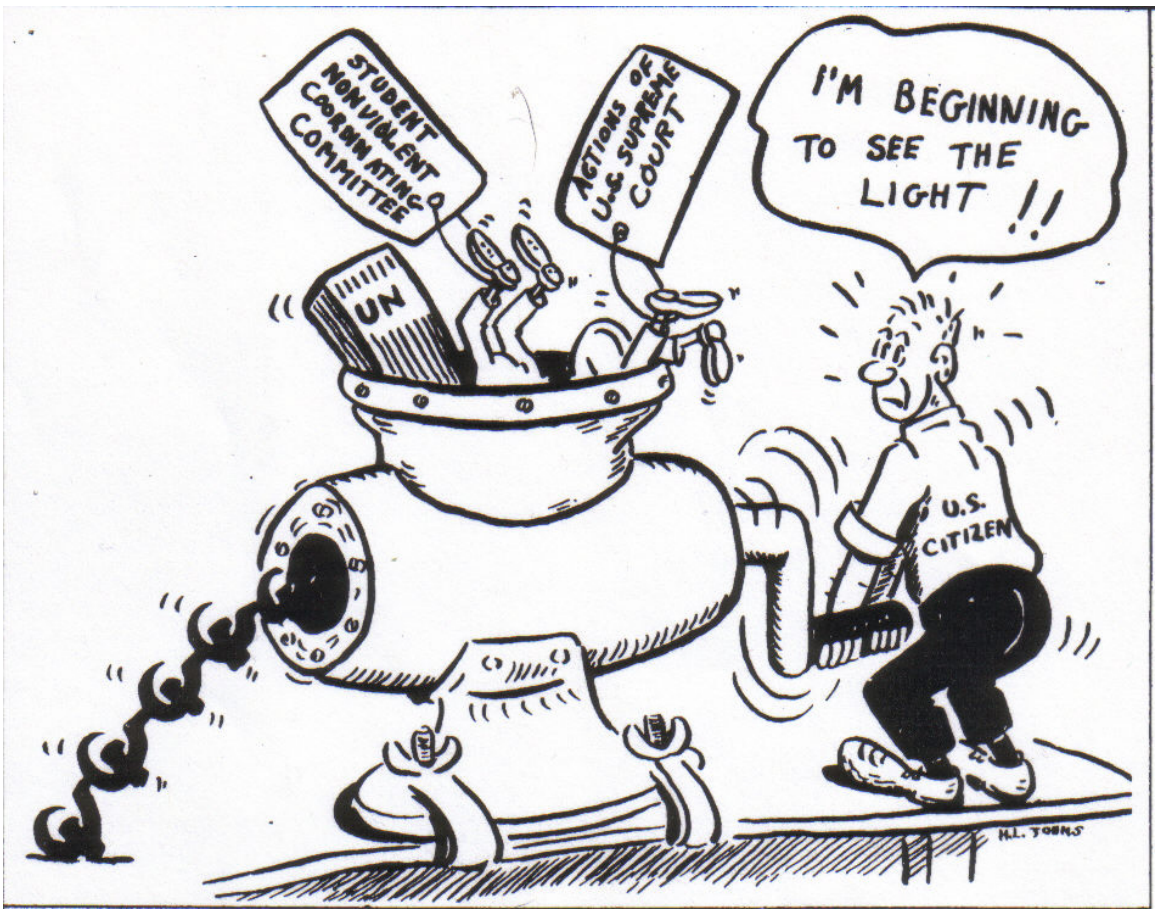
U.S. CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT



Source: *Birmingham Independent*, November 23-30, 1966, p. 4.

APPENDIX B

I'M BEGINNING TO SEE THE LIGHT



Source: *Birmingham Independent*, May 3-10, 1967, p. 4.

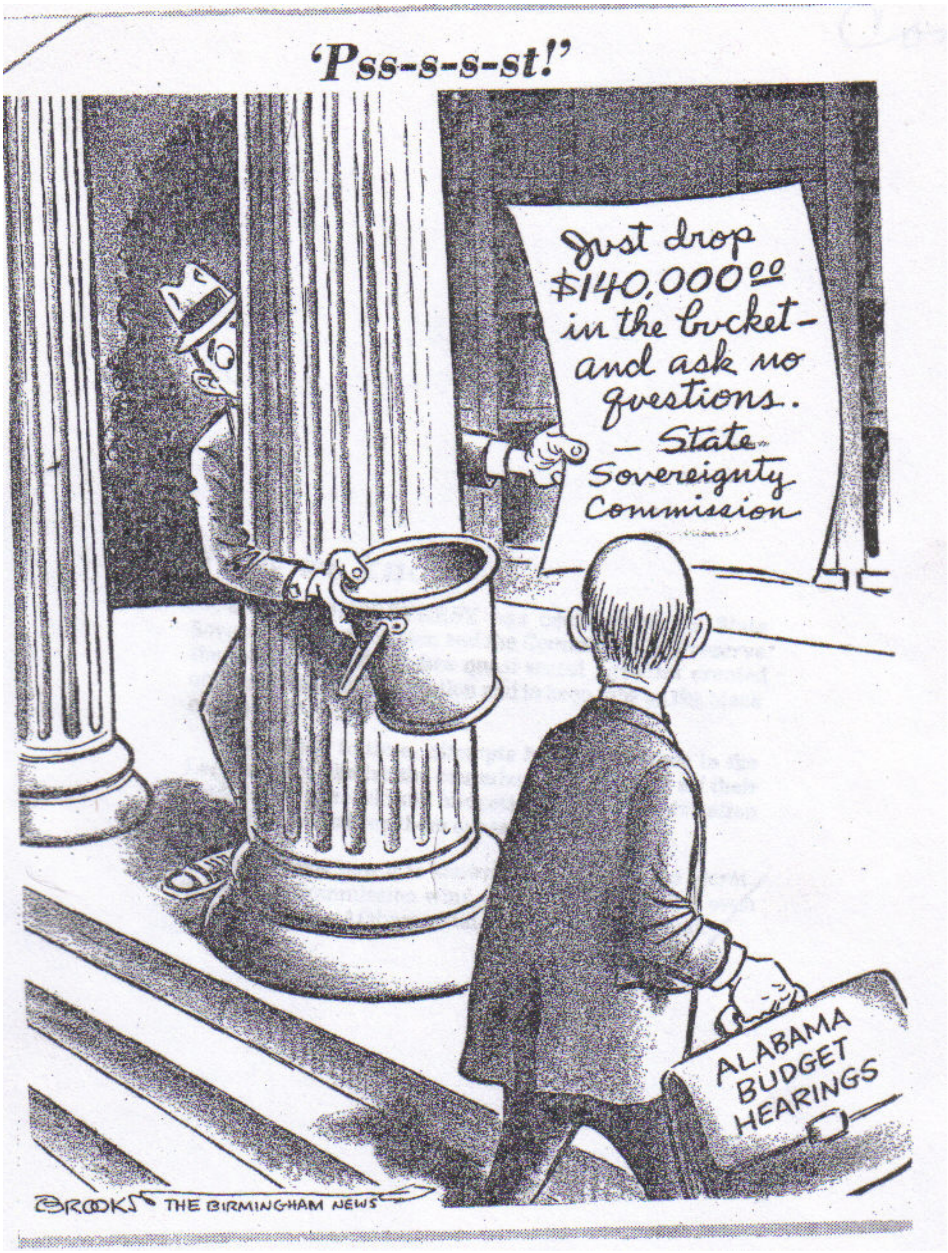
APPENDIX C

WHY HAVE YOU VOTED FOR THIS?

Source: *Birmingham Independent*, November 2-9, 1966, p. 4

APPENDIX D

PSS-S-S-ST!



Source: *Birmingham News*, March 22, 1973.