AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONALISM

VOLUME I: STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT

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Supplementary Material

Chapter 9: Liberalism Divided – Introduction

*Richard M. Nixon*, **Speech Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination** (1968)

In 1964 the Democrats seemed to have the Republican Party on the ropes. Lyndon Johnson defeated the conservative ­Republican nominee, Barry Goldwater, in a landslide and liberal Democrats made large gains in the House and the Senate. Four years later the Democrats were in disarray and there was talk of an “emerging Republican majority.” The Democrats held Congress in the 1968 elections, but Richard Nixon successfully launched a presidential bid that emphasized “law and order” and focused his attacks as much on the Warren Court as on the Johnson administration.

. . . .

As we look at America, we see cities enveloped in smoke and flame. We hear sirens in the night. We see Americans dying on distant battlefields abroad. We see Americans hating each other; fighting each other; killing each other at home.

And as we see and hear these things, millions of Americans cry out in anguish;

Did we come all this way for this? Did American boys die in Normandy and Korea and in Valley Forge for this?

Listen to the answers to those questions.

It is another voice, it is a quiet voice in the tumult of the shouting. It is the voice of the great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans, the non shouters, the non demonstrators. They’re not racists or sick; they’re not guilty of the crime that plagues the land; they are black, they are white; they’re native born and foreign born; they’re young and they’re old.

. . .

They’re good people. They’re decent people; they work and they save and they pay their taxes and they care.

. . .

If we are to restore prestige and respect for America abroad, the place to begin is at home—in the United States of America.

My friends, we live in an age of revolution in America and in the world. And to find the answers to our problems, let us turn to a revolution . . . the American Revolution.

The American Revolution was and is dedicated to progress. But our founders recognized that the first requisite of progress is order.

. . .

And tonight it’s time for some honest talk about the problem of order in the United States. . . .

. . .

Let those who have the responsibility to enforce our laws, and our judges who have the responsibility to interpret them, be dedicated to the great principles of civil rights. But let them also recognize that the first civil right of every American is to be free from domestic violence. And that right must be guaranteed in this country.

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