

**RICHARD
NIXON:**

**"A
New
Alignment
For
American
Unity"**

*A nationwide radio
address, Thursday,
May 16, 1968*

**A NEW ALIGNMENT FOR
AMERICAN UNITY**

An Address by

RICHARD M. NIXON:

on the CBS Radio Network

Thursday, May 16, 1968

Great movements and changes in the political scene are seldom recognized while they are happening.

They are perceived long afterward. Historians, looking back in American history, can spot the great shifts:

There was the time, 140 years ago, just after the Era of Good Feeling, when Andrew Jackson re-introduced the two-party system in America.

There was the time, 100 years ago, after the collapse of the Whig Party, of a new coalition that became the Republican Party.

And there was the time, 35 years ago, when Franklin Roosevelt assembled a Democratic coalition of organized labor, minority groups and the "solid" South.

That last assemblage of power blocs dominated the middle third of the Twentieth Century in America. But as we enter the last third of this century, it is time we recognize a profound change that has taken place in American politics.

Parallel Ideas

Without most of us realizing it, a new alignment has been formed.

Most Americans have not been aware that this new alignment has been gathering to-

gether. Yet it has happened, and it is an exciting, healthy development.

More than a century ago, Alexis de Tocqueville put his finger on the mysterious formation of a new opinion:

Time, events, or the unaided individual action of the mind will sometimes undermine or destroy an opinion, without any outward sign of the change. It has not been openly assailed, no conspiracy has been formed to make war on it, but its followers one by one noiselessly secede; day by day a few of them abandon it, until at last it is only professed by a minority . . .

They are themselves unaware for a long period that a great revolution has actually been effected . . .

The majority have ceased to believe what they believed before, but they still affect to believe, and this empty phantom of public opinion is strong enough to chill innovators and to keep them silent and at a respectful distance.

This new alignment is already a new majority; it will affect the future of all Americans for generations to come whether they are part of it or not.

The new majority is not a grouping of power blocs, but an alliance of ideas.

Men and women of all backgrounds, of all ages, of all parties, are coming to the same conclusions. Many of these men and women belong to the same blocs that formed the old coalitions. But now, thinking independently, they have all reached a new conclusion about the direction of our nation. Their very diversity of background provides a basis for a new unity for America.

The Republican Voice

Listen to the conclusion as expressed by one group, the most visible one, voiced by many Republicans for many years:

“This nation has become great not by what government has done for people but by what people have done for themselves. The more centralized and domineering a government gets, the less personal freedom there is for the individual.

“The role of government is to do for people what they cannot do for themselves: to open up new opportunities, to mobilize private energies to meet public needs, to protect and defend every citizen, to create a climate that enables every person to fulfill himself to the utmost — in his own way, and by his own choice.”

That's the Republican voice, the voice of both liberals and conservatives within the party, and its good sense is becoming more appealing to millions of Democrats and Independents. That traditionally Republican thinking is the well-spring of the new alignment.

Voice of the New Liberal

But there is another voice saying much the same thing in a different form. It is the voice of the New Liberal.

That voice of the New Liberal calls for a workable form of “participatory democracy.” It demands a political order close to the people who are governed, in which the people play a vital part. That voice demands more personal freedom and less government domination.

Thoughtful critics like Daniel Moynihan and Richard Goodwin—both liberals—are giving the word another dimension. A century ago, to be a “liberal” meant to be against the domination of governmental authority, to put personal liberty ahead of the dictates of the State. Only recently has the term “liberal” come to mean the dependence on federal action to meet people’s needs.

The future meaning of liberal is likely to return to the reliance on personal freedom. But it will have a difference: it will see that a key role of government is to provide incentives for the free enterprise system to accept more social responsibility.

In that context, liberals and conservatives will find themselves coming closer together, rather than splitting apart.

Just as there is a difference between the New Deal Liberal and the New Liberal, there is a big difference between the New Liberal and the New Left.

The New Liberal recognizes that progress and order go hand in hand. He points to the channels of protest open to those who dissent, especially through the electoral process. In this way, the American system can be a force for change without changing the American system itself.

The extremists of the New Left strongly—even violently—disagree. They say that the respect for dissent, the protection of their civil rights to protest peaceably, are only safety valves for the Establishment.

The very processes that permit gradual change are resented by these extremists. That is because they would find it much easier to

break a rigid structure than to break our flexible one.

They feel—quite wrongly—that they have to tear down in order to build, shaking society to its foundations, leading us to anarchy. The New Left has a passion, while the New Liberal has a program.

And yet I have a feeling that many of the young people who call themselves New Leftists now are in fact far more closely attuned to the voice of the New Liberal. When it comes to a choice between getting something off your chest or getting something done, sooner or later most people choose to get something done.

Voice of the New South

There is a third voice—the voice of the new South. Not the old solid South of the Thirties, of automatic voting habits and a declining economy.

The new South is no longer prisoner of the past; no longer bound by old habits or old grievances or the old racist appeals. The new South is building a new pride, focusing on the future, pressing forward with industrial development through resurgent private enterprise, forging a new place for itself in the life of the nation.

Politically, the new South is in ferment. It is breaking the shackles of one-party rule. Its new voices are interpreting the old doctrines of states’ rights in new ways—those of making state and local governments responsive to state and local needs.

Voice of the Black Militant

There is a fourth voice—the voice of the black militant. There is a deep and widening division between today's black leadership and the doctrinaire welfarist.

When you listen to these black voices, you hear little about "handouts" or "welfare." Instead, you hear the words "dignity," "ownership," "pride." They do not want to be recipients, they want to be participants.

The message of giveaway, of handout, of permanent welfare is no longer of interest to people who want dignity and self-respect.

The nation, in its present economic crisis, cannot afford an increase in these giant welfare programs today.

What we can and should do immediately, is to respond to their demands for a share of American opportunity, for a legitimate role in private enterprise.

The Silent Center

There is a fifth element to the new alignment—a non-voice, if you will.

That is the silent center, the millions of people in the middle of the American political spectrum who do not demonstrate, who do not picket or protest loudly. Yet, these people are no less committed to seeking out this new direction. They are willing to listen to new ideas, and they are willing to think them through.

We must remember that all the center is not silent, and all who are silent are not center. But a great many "quiet Americans" have

become committed to answers to social problems that preserve personal freedom. They have rejected the answers of the Thirties to the problems of today.

As this silent center has become a part of the new alignment, it has transformed it from a minority into a majority. That is why we are witnessing a significant breakthrough toward what America needs: peaceful, orderly progress.

Disharmony in the New Alignment

My point is this: these voices—the Republicans, the New Liberals, the new South, the black militants—are talking the same language.

Let's not oversimplify. The voices are not joined in any harmonious chorus—far from it. The ideas of the new alignment differ in emphasis. But they do not conflict the way the old alliance of power blocs used to conflict.

The differences within the new alignment are differences of emphasis, not of fundamentals; differences in the *speed* of change, not so much in the *direction* of change.

Now, the new alignment's greatest need is to communicate with all its elements, rather than march along in parallel lines that never converge.

Strange Bedfellows

You can be sure that the members of the old power blocs will try at first to dismiss this new majority as just an assortment of strange bedfellows.

But despite the differences in appearance, despite the differences in ways and means, despite the lack of communication, despite all the pains of realignment, the *fundamental agreement is there*. Even men who find each other disagreeable at first, can find themselves in agreement.

The Straddlers

I do not claim to be the only one who notices the formation of this new alignment. On the campaign trail today you can see the politicians of the old order adjusting their appeals. It may be awkward, but they speak about "more Federal billions now for the cities" in one breath and then, in the next breath, talk of "an end to the old welfare system and a return to private enterprise."

These politicians are trying to have it both ways. On the one hand, they are reluctant to abandon the old power alliances that have served them so well in the past. On the other hand, they don't want to miss the new boat as it leaves the dock.

People today, and the political figures who appeal to them, will have to make the hard choice: whether to cling to the old power-bloc alliances of the middle third of this century, or to join the new alignment of ideas that will shape the final third of this century.

Promise of Unity

And therein lies the great excitement of this new alignment. Right now, we see our differences all too clearly; in the future, those of us in the alignment will see our similarity of methods and goals much more clearly.

The mark of a good insight is when everyone says "Of course—that's what I've been thinking all along, only I never put it that way." That is what is at the heart of the new alignment: the crystallization of what is on the minds of the American people today.

Tomorrow, as we focus the new movement more clearly, America will gain a new unity.

We will not seek the false unity of consensus, of the glossing over of fundamental differences, of the enforced sameness of government regimentation.

We will forge a unity of goals, recognized by men who also recognize and value their own diversity. That is the great advantage of an alignment of ideas over the coalition of power blocs.

As we coalesce the elements of this new alignment, some surprising things will begin to happen. As frustration ends, violence will wane; as runaway government is curbed, personal freedom will grow; as demeaning welfare systems are replaced, individual initiative will take the lead; as peace returns to the American city, America will be better able to build peace in the world.

Joining the New Alignment

The new alignment speaks in many accents, and approaches its point from many directions. But the common message is there:

People come first, and government is their servant. The best government is closest to the people, and most involved with people's lives. Government is formed to protect the individual's life, property, and rights, and to help

the helpless—not to dominate a person's life or rob him of his self-respect.

The concept is great not because it is new, but because it is right and it is relevant.

Victor Hugo pointed out that there is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come. The time has come for this idea. No one leader has drawn together this new alignment; it has been drawn together by the magnet of an idea that is right for our time, that speaks to us now, that has special meaning today.

How do you become part of the new alignment?

You don't have to be a member of any special party, or any union; you are not required to live in any region or any city; you don't have to be rich or poor, young or old. Because we're not dealing with blocs—we're dealing with an idea.

If you believe that people do come first; if you believe that dignity must replace the dole; if you believe that order and progress go hand in hand; if you are idealistic about personal freedom;—then you don't have to worry about where to go to join the new alignment.

You are already a part of it.

Rising to the Crisis

The great re-alignments of our history did not take place in normal, quiet times. They took place when America was in trouble, or when the existing majority could not come to grips with the needs of the nation. And so, without realizing it, a new majority is formed

and lasts as long as it meets the need for change. This is what we mean by "the collective wisdom of the people."

This is the unspoken voice of America, in its majesty and its mystery, demanding articulation by men who sense its new meaning.

That is why new faces with more of the old answers miss the point. That is why new leadership is needed now—leadership with a proven record of fighting for the action the new majority now demands.

No man can predict the ultimate shape of the alignment that is happening in America today. But I know this: It is alive, it is moving forward, it is rooted in reality, and it calls out for you to come aboard. In the years to come, I believe that historians will record this:

That in the watershed year 1968, America, in a time of crisis, responded as it has responded before—with new ideas, with great traditions, with a new alignment, and with the fresh hope that comes from a new unity.

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