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Feet in the South, Eyes to the West: Fort Smith Enters the Sunbelt

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Abstract

This paper examines the political realignment of Fort Smith, Arkansas and argues that the standard historiographical argument about the process of realignment does not explain what occurred in this city. Much of the historiography of political realignment currently revolves around the belief in a white backlash against the federal government and the national Democratic Party for their support of African American civil rights. Though historians have moved toward a "suburban synthesis" that downplays the backlash thesis, historians still argues that many white southerners moved to the suburbs to avoid integration.

I argue that this process did not occur in the city of Fort Smith to the extent that it may have in other regions of the South. Rather, the citizens of Fort Smith began voting Republican as a way to entice northern industry to the region as a way of boosting the city's economy after the shutdown of Fort Chaffee; the fort was built during World War II and acted as the main source of economic growth for the city. Once the base was shut down, local elites in the local Chamber of Commerce began to devise methods to attract industry to the city as a way of keeping the local economy afloat. Over the course of a decade, they transformed the city from one that relied on the federal government to one that relied on industry. These changes coincided with Orval Faubus' push to industrialize Arkansas, however, the arrival of Winthrop Rockefeller created the opportunity for Arkansas Republicans to make major gains. Since the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce leaders were Republicans they convinced the people of Fort Smith to support the Republican Party. By the early 1960s, industry had created thousands of high paying jobs in the city and made it one of the wealthiest in the state. Fort Smith voters began to vote for Republicans primarily as a way to ensure economic success and not out of racial animosity.

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Chapter 1

Political Realignment's Historiography

1966 was a watershed year for the Republican Party of Arkansas. John Paul Hammerschmidt won his race for the Third district's congressional seat, Winthrop Rockefeller became governor, and several other Republicans won county and local elections. These were the first major electoral victories for Republicans in the state in the twentieth century beginning the slow process which saw an ever increasing number of Arkansans switching party affiliation from Democrat to Republican. As a result of the 2012 elections, Republicans will hold all four congressional seats and will control both the state House and Senate when the next legislative session meets. Republicans began this transformation by working from a favorable political base in northwest Arkansas and the city of Fort Smith. Unlike some parts of the South, where racism fueled realignment, support for Republicans in the 1966 election cannot be explained as a reaction to the national Democratic Party's civil rights record which included passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Fort Smith supported the Republican Party because of its unique history and local leadership that spent the previous decade promoting a pro-business conservative ideology. This ideology revolved around the belief in a limited role for the federal government, a lax system of business regulation, low taxes, and an environment unfavorable to organized labor. In this, Fort Smith resembled the developing Sunbelt of the Southwest more than the Deep South.

Part of the Fort Smith's unique history stems from its geographic location on Arkansas' western border with Oklahoma. While parts of Arkansas (principally the southeastern delta

region) share social and economic characteristics with Mississippi and Louisiana, the western edge of the state developed differently which resulted in a higher ratio of whites to blacks than areas of the Deep South. Yet it has also participated and shared in the history of the South at large. Fort Smith was shaped by slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow laws, the development of "The New South," the New Deal, World War II, and court ordered desegregation. Following the Civil War and until the 1960s, most voters in Fort Smith and Arkansas were staunch Democrats.

One-party control over the state government remained strong following World War II despite occasional challenges from within and without as it remained the party of choice for both white and black Arkansans. National Democrats had solidified African American support when FDR instituted New Deal reforms during his first term that, while not designed to do so, assisted black communities during the Great Depression. In 1936, the party became much more inviting once it eliminated its rule requiring presidential candidates to receive a two-thirds majority vote at the national convention, which had given southern states a virtual veto over the party's nomination.[1] While many Democrats opposed supporting black civil rights, many others recognized that African Americans had become an important constituency and supported measures aimed at ending segregation. However, this growing acceptance of African Americans as an important constituency bred resentment among many white Sothern Democrats.

In 1948, the Dixiecrat movement exposed the growing fissure within the Democratic Party over race, but this third party movement failed to receive much support in Arkansas. The Dixiecrats' goal was to recommit southern politics to the path of segregation as expressed

[1] Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell To The Party Of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), xiii-xiv, 184-185.

through state's rights ideology.[2] Yet, because Arkansas politics were largely factional, Arkansas Democrats maintained their dominance despite the Dixiecrats' challenge.[3] As a result, Strom Thurmond, Dixiecrat presidential candidate, received only sixteen percent of Arkansas' popular vote and received only ten percent in Fort Smith.[4] This would not be unusual as those candidates who ran heavily on race failed to do as well as more moderate candidates. One-party rule would continue largely unchallenged in Arkansas until Winthrop Rockefeller's unsuccessful, but strong, 1964 gubernatorial campaign.

The national Republican Party, on the other hand, had fared badly in the 1930s and 1940s due to their insistence that the economy was a self-correcting mechanism both before and during the Great Depression. However, the beginning of the Cold War allowed Republicans to define themselves as the party most opposed to communism. They used the language of free enterprise to push anti-union legislation such as Taft-Hartley in 1947 allowing states to outlaw closed shops and 1959's Landrum-Griffin bill, which restricted boycotts and allowed states greater control in dealing with unions.[5] This was part of the attempt by Republicans to roll back the welfare state, but, due to voter support for such programs, they were never able to eliminate them completely. As will be discussed throughout the paper, Fort Smith voters who switched to the Republican Party were driven more by economic concerns than a fear of communism. Though there were few major victories for the Republicans in Arkansas for several decades, this period marks the beginning of political realignment.

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[2] Randall Bennett Woods, *Quest for Identity: America Since 1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25-27.
[3] V.O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics In State And Nation: A New Edition* (reprint, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977), 10, 183-184.
[4] Film 1408 E-15, Sec. of State Election Results microfilm, University of Arkansas Library.
[5] Woods, 15-16, 83.

Due to the South's disproportionate influence upon national politics and legislation, a great deal of scholarship has been devoted to the question of why the "Solid South" changed from Democrat to Republican during the latter half of the twentieth century. One of the first scholarly treatments of the subject, Numan V. Bartley's *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, originated the "massive resistance" thesis by arguing that southern oligarchs, whom he referred to as "neobourbons," began to resist the destruction of the southern political and racial order threatened by *Brown v. Board of Education* and the incremental legal victories leading up to that case. In response, national, state, and local leaders used racism and segregation to push the populace to support anti-integrationist policies and illegal actions to maintain Jim Crow era social norms. These "neobourbons" began to support the Republican Party once the national Democratic Party started supporting African American civil rights in the postwar era (e.x.: Truman's integration of the military and northern support for *Brown v. Board of Education*), even though the Republican and Democratic Parties were, overall, closely aligned on the topic of race. When business conservatives and racial moderates saw the damage massive resistance did to their communities, their reputations, and the growing sympathy in the rest of the nation towards African Americans, they changed tactics. Without the support of a well-financed, respectable establishment, massive resistance failed.[6] As a result, white southerners turned toward rolling back African American legal victories through the electoral process by adopting an ideology of states' rights and more conservative views regarding the role of the federal government despite the success of New Deal and wartime programs.[7] Bartley initially tied massive resistance to the industrialization of the south by arguing that southern economic and

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[6] Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race And Politics In The South During The 1950s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 3-20.
[7] Ibid., 340.

political leaders were not willing to face the difficulties of "liberal democracy" or to relinquish southern distinctiveness.[8] The failure of massive resistance was not due to attitudinal changes within the white population, but to "pocket book ethics" that could not abide the refusal of northern corporations to locate factories and offices in disordered southern communities.[9]

Kevin Phillips' *The Emerging Republican Majority*, published the same year as Bartley's work, argued that conflict between white and black southerners was central to realignment. Rather than focus on Republican electoral victories in 1966 and 1968 as historical events tied to a specific set of circumstances, Phillips places the changes that had taken place in the American political landscape throughout the 1960s in the context of a cyclical evolution beginning with the Jacksonian Revolution in 1828.[10] Phillips argues that political cycles in America last roughly between thirty-two and thirty-eight years apiece and that Nixon "seems destined by precedent to be the beginning of a new Republican era."[11] The reason for the end of the New Deal Order, according to Phillips, occurred for several reasons: the alignment of the Democratic Party with African Americans, the change within the Republican Party since 1936, the development of suburban America (arguing that large population movements always resulted in political change), and that American politics has, since the 1820s, been divided along ethnic lines and their particular interests.[12] As for the South in particular, Phillips argues that it was the Outer South that began to influence the Deep South's movement toward the Republican Party and that

[8] Though not defined, presumably Bartley means a social system with greater racial and class parity in which the "neobourbons" held little sway.
[9] Bartely, 356.
[10] Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1969), 36.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 37-41.

Wallace's third party presidential campaign in 1936 was merely a "way station" for whites moving from the Democrats to the Republicans.[13]

Bruce J. Schulman's *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt* argues against Bartley's top down analysis of massive resistance insisting that political realignment was a result of the failure of liberal whites throughout the nation to radically alter their attitude toward the civil rights movement. Rather than accept the goals and aims of the civil rights movement, liberal whites began to shy away from government programs designed to foster economic equality and, rather, started to view the further industrialization and economic development of the region as a necessary prerequisite (and eventual substitute) for racial equality. Both Southern Democrats and Republicans adopted policies in support of industrial deregulation, laws restricting unions, and lower taxes when it became evident these policies brought jobs to their districts, which further diluted efforts aimed at improving African Americans' economic standing.[14] Schulman's work shows the link between southern economic development and the rightward shift in political ideology that occurred alongside the movement of southern Democrats away from the national Democratic Party because of its stance on African American civil rights. For Schulman, political realignment was not just the increase in support for the Republican Party, but in the rightward shift of all southern politics due to politicians' preference for promoting economic development rather than engage in the hard work of ameliorating the systemic economic disadvantages faced by African Americans.

Despite Schulman's insistence that historians consider economic factors in determining how different white communities accepted the civil rights movement's goals, Dan Carter's *The*

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[13] Ibid., 286-287.
[14] Bruce J. Schulman, *Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 208-219.

Politics of Rage argues that it was, in fact, racism that motivated the movement of racially conservative whites to the Republican Party. George Wallace, a complex individual from northern Alabama whose own friends never knew what he actually believed, gained success by espousing populist rhetoric to gain victory over "black belt" politicians. Wallace's subsequent notoriety as an arch segregationist only came about after his losing to an opponent who "out niggered" him. However, he found nationwide success only after moderating his message for national television which caused Wallace to exclaim: "The whole nation's the South."[15] Unlike Bartley, Carter argues white southerners resisted the federal government's actions in order to maintain white political and social advantages that stemmed from being white. They were not manipulated or coerced into doing so by "neobourbons.[16]" As southerners turned away from an ever more progressive Democratic Party represented by Johnson's Great Society and Robert F. Kennedy's 1968 campaign based on racial and economic justice, they found the Republicans waiting with open arms. *The Politics of Rage* has been crucially influential in the current historiography due to its reassertion of the centrality of white racism in southern political realignment.

Carter concluded that Barry Goldwater's 1964 campaign unleashed the pent up energy of previously marginalized western libertarians who wrested control of the Republican Party from moderate northern business Republicans and provided later individuals like Wallace with a new vocabulary (libertarianism) with which to battle integration. Before 1964, the primary difference between Republicans and Democrats was their economic platforms. Both parties were more

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[15] Dan Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 19.
[16] 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), 82.

closely aligned on racial policies with major differences resting on geography rather than political ideology. Southern Democrats were deeply tied to the old politics of maintaining the traditional southern racial hierarchy, while northern Republicans, like Nelson Rockefeller, were much more liberal on race than many Democrats. The 1964 presidential campaign changed that. At issue was Lyndon Johnson's support of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and his vision for expanded federal authority and governmental intervention through the Great Society with those programs dealing with race; many southerners supported those programs that aided them and their communities though. Despite Goldwater's personal support for African Americans, he opposed the Civil Rights Act on the grounds that it was an unconstitutional intrusion by the federal government into state's rights and the prerogatives of private business. Unfortunately for him, racist whites vocally supported his campaign, which, along with his extreme statements, scared moderates into backing Johnson.[17] 1964 was one of the major turning points in creating a clearly defined difference between the two parties on race. In the next presidential campaign, national Democrats would follow Johnson's Great Society, while the Republicans would follow Nixon and his Southern Strategy, which sought to drive a wedge between southerners and the Democratic Party.

Following the success of *The Politics of Rage*, Carter wrote *From George Wallace to New Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994* in an attempt to tie white opposition to the civil rights movement to the modern Republican Party. Richard Nixon spurned the idea that Goldwater had influenced Nixon's campaign in 1968, but it is clear that much of his Southern Strategy was built upon Goldwater's campaign.[18] Additionally, in his attempt to stave

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[17] Randall Woods, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* (New York: Free Press of Simon & Schuster, 2006), 527-528, 540-542.
[18] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 326-327.

off George Wallace's third-party challenge, Nixon copied much of Wallace's rhetoric to court disaffected southern whites. Nixon tied the civil rights movement and black activism to the decline of "law and order" and argued that if voters threw away their vote on Wallace, then Hubert Humphrey would win the election and usher in a new era of federal support for minorities.[19] "Law and order" was coded language for those who believed that black activism had been responsible for the upswing in violence and social instability across America in the 1960s. Nixon's success in pulling disaffected voters from both Wallace and the Democrats allowed him to create a "New American Majority" that represented those voters who felt that the Democrats had lost touch with moderate, middle-class values.[20] Carter ties racism to the Republican Party still further by examining Ronald Reagan's policies that reduced federal economic aid to the indigent who were largely perceived as African American. Rather than employing overtly racist language, Regan utilized coded imagery such as initiating his campaign in 1979 with a speech about state's rights in Neshoba County, Mississippi, where several civil rights activists were murdered in 1964. Reagan's "benign neglect" kept minority communities from receiving federal aid, but this was couched in the laissez-faire idea that stressed individuals were responsible for their own successes or failures and denied the validity of systemic racism.[21]

Kevin Kruse's *White Flight* and Matthew Lassiter's *The Silent Majority* challenge Carter's grassroots examination, arguing that race reductionist views obscure the class schism within the white population exasperated by desegregation and the civil rights movement. Additionally, they argue that industrialization, suburbanization, an increased emphasis on the United States being a meritocracy, and the use of color-blind language to promote individual and state's rights by

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[19] Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*, 30-34.
[20] Ibid., 53.
[21] Ibid., 58-68.

middle and upper-middle class grassroots organizers formed the modern Republican ideology with its emphasis on laissez-faire capitalism and limiting the role of the federal government in domestic affairs. As a result, many people living in suburbia and the Sunbelt South believed their communities to be the fullest expression of individual liberty and material prosperity produced by America's merit based society and a federal government that had established (past perfect tense) legal equality among all Americans. Numerous proponents of this belief resisted all attempts by the federal government at implementing policies for the purpose of actually addressing the centuries of inequality faced by African Americans.

Kevin M. Kruse's *White Flight* argues that "white flight," as a mode of resistance, did not just physically remake urban centers, but acted as a determining factor in a white individual's political realignment because different classes of whites were forced to integrate at different periods. This was, additionally, the process by which modern conservative principles were created in opposition to racial integration. After the failure of massive resistance, whites adopted a color-blind rhetoric to defend their "individual rights," which allowed them to see segregation as not "a denial of other's" rights, but as an assertion of their own political freedom to live however and associate with whomever they wanted.[22] All whites faced the prospect of desegregation, but class determined when and where they had to face it with lower class whites doing so first when middle and upper class southerners shifted the social burden upon them. In this way, according to Kruse, lower class whites began their personal process of realignment first, followed by middle and upper class whites as they, in turn, faced the prospect of integration.[23] Large scale defenses of neighborhood schools, resistance to busing, and the

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[22] Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 9.
[23] Ibid., 15.

movement toward privatization came later when wealthier classes were forced to deal with integration in their communities. Though massive resistance failed, Kruse presents a white working class that is highly reactionary when confronted with integration.

Matthew Lassiter's *The Silent Majority* argues that, in response to school desegregation, "grassroots politics produced by residential segregation and suburban sprawl" created a "center right" political consciousness without the racial overtones of massive resistance that formed the basis of the modern Republican Party.[24] Suburban voters turned to the color-blind language of merit and self-reliance to oppose further integration and reinforce spatial segregation.[25] Essentially, the creation of the suburbs as a reaction, in part, to fears of integration created a structural mechanism that did not require individual racism. Jim Crow era race baiters were replaced by white collar business conservatives who continued to promote the old southern values of anti-unionism, lax business regulation, low taxation, consumer, state, and individual rights.[26] Whites could be assured that, though they believed in equal opportunity, they would never have to deal with large-scale desegregation as few African Americans would be able to surmount the hurdles created by centuries of slavery and racial inequality. Thus, Lassiter and Kruse support a historiography of southern political realignment that argues that resistance to integration through spatial segregation and coded language after the failure of massive resistance was at the root of the reasons why white Southerners changed parties and, in so doing, altered the Republican Party to more closely represent their beliefs.

Unfortunately, this historiography, with its emphasis on race as the contributing factor to both southern realignment and the development of the modern Republican Party, does not accurately

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[24] Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics In The Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 3.
[25] Ibid., 4.
[26] Ibid., 3

describe the process of realignment for the city of Fort Smith. Beginning with the 1952 presidential election when little in the GOP's platform would encourage white southern racial conservatives to switch parties, Fort Smith began consistently supporting Republicans for president. In 1954, Little Rock's Republican mayor, Pratt Remmel, ran a modestly successful state-level gubernatorial campaign against Orval Faubus on the need for "new, clean, enthusiastic, honest leadership." Though unsuccessful, he beat Faubus 6,437 to 4,508 in Fort Smith.[27] The Republican Party's attitude toward civil rights prior to Barry Goldwater's 1964 campaign was more supportive than not, therefore there was no reason for white racists to turn to the party before then. It was President Eisenhower who asked for a Civil Rights Bill to be introduced into congress in 1956 to provide for some provisions protecting black voting rights and who ordered soldiers to integrate Central High, but it was southern Democrats under Sen. Richard Russell who ensured that, if whites were accused of violating the law, a jury trial must ensue which, with barriers to African Americans serving on juries, effectively neutered the law.[28] Republicans remained, relatively, racially moderate as part of party tradition, to maintain America's image in the world during the Cold War, and because businesses were interested in selling products and services to an increasingly wealthy African American community.

Dan Carter and others argue that Johnson's signing of the 1964 Civil Rights bill pushed many white southerners into voting Republican.[29] However, because support for Republicans in Fort Smith began to grow before that bill was enacted, white racist animosity toward the Democratic Party cannot be the prime factor in this early period of realignment. One cannot cite the Little

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[27] Democrats For Remmel advertisement, *Southwestern American*, Nov. 1, 1954.; "Sebastian Turns Backs On Democrats, City Provides GOP Victory," *Southwestern American*, Nov. 3, 1954.
[28] Woods, *Quest For Identity*, 96.
[29] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 211-212.

Rock Crisis as the turning point for Arkansans' disaffection with the Democratic Party because it was the Democrat Orval Faubus who supported segregation and the Republican Eisenhower who forced integration. There was little reason for voters in Fort Smith and Arkansas to change their political affiliation due to the parties' respective views on race before 1964, so the political switch prior to President Johnson's support of black civil rights had to occur for a different reason.

Prior to 1960, there were few real local or state level Republican candidates, so Fort Smith continued to vote heavily Democratic in non-presidential races. Once the Republican Party of Arkansas began fielding stronger candidates, Fort Smith voters increasingly supported Republicans.[30] Winthrop Rockefeller and John Paul Hammerschmidt, the two Republicans whose 1966 triumphs signaled the return of the two-party system, held more racially moderate views than their opponents. In 1966, the Democratic nominee Jim Johnson, former state Supreme Court member and avowed segregationist, lost to Winthrop Rockefeller, who campaigned for the black vote by promising to appoint more African Americans to positions within the state government. Congressman "Judge" Jim Trimble had signed the Southern Manifesto and voted against both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but lost to the pro-business Republican John Paul Hammerschmidt in 1966.

Fort Smith's realignment, which began in 1952, was rooted in the efforts of Fort Smith's business community to diversify the city's economy. Local leaders, not grassroots organizers, copied strategies from the Sunbelt cities of the Southwest to lure industry to the city. In so doing, realignment more closely resembled transformations in Texas, Arizona, and southern

[30] Though there were some Republicans seeking state and local elected positions it has been difficult finding any information about their campaigns beyond the odd newspaper advertisement, none of which mention race. So, I have not been able to draw conclusions about their views on race one way or the other.

California than Atlanta, Memphis, or Little Rock. Lisa McGirr's *Suburban Warriors* argues the conservative movement developing in Orange Co., California was a result of a synthesis of western libertarianism and classical Republican economic ideology, with virtually no emphasis on race. Much like the Southern Californian leaders examined by McGirr, Fort Smith city leaders, Governor Faubus, and other Arkansas Democrats began, in the late 1950s, promoting a pro-business ideology to the public on the promise that such policies would allow the city to develop into a prosperous community as had occurred with the public's support of Eisenhower in 1952. John Paul Hammerschmidt and Winthrop Rockefeller would espouse this ideology in 1966. By and large, the people of Fort Smith supported low taxes, lax regulations on industry, and subsidized industry without large scale grassroots activism, anti-busing demonstrations, or a schism between white classes. Unlike Atlanta, Memphis, or other cities with significant African American populations, the African American population in Fort Smith and the region was so low as to pose little threat to the established order. At nine percent of the population, they could neither form a significant labor minority nor were they numerous enough to prompt white flight.[31] This realignment took place in an area where ratios of whites to blacks favored whites to a greater extent than many parts of the South (four-to-one in Atlanta, and two-to-one in New Orleans and Memphis).[32]

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[31] U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1960, Vol. 1, Part V: Arkansas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 5-27, Table 12. Interestingly, the black population in Fort Smith would remain unchanged throughout the 1960s, but would decrease as a percentage of the population as large numbers of whites moved into the city so that they represented only 7.5% of the city's population by the end of the decade. United States, *Special Census of Fort Smith, Arkansas: March 17, 1977*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1977.

[32] United States Census of Population, 1960 Census of Housing, Atlanta Table P-1 page 14, Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1961.

The Deep South, subject to the rule of the planter class, possessing large black populations, traditionally bound to staple crop agriculture, and featuring a system of racial stratification that conferred a social advantage upon whiteness, has traditionally received the lion's share of historical examination. While race could have been the primary reason for realignment in these parts of the South, this was not the case in Fort Smith. This city explains why race was not a major factor in the victory of Republicans John Paul Hammerschmidt and Winthrop Rockefeller over Democrats Jim Trimble and Jim Johnson in western Arkansas. John Paul Hammerschmidt acknowledged as much by saying: "You know the Deep South had gone Republican -- South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi -- over the racial issue. We did not."[33]

Chapter 2

The Failure of Federal Favor: The Economic Development of Fort Smith, AR, 1817-1957

Central to Fort Smith's realignment in the 1960s was the growing belief that the federal government was an unreliable partner in economic development. This is ironic considering the city's reliance upon the federal government for a large portion of its economic development since its founding. However, once the federal government began to reduce its presence in the region after World War II, city leaders sought alternative sources of wealth to keep the city afloat. The citizens of Fort Smith soon learned they could trust businessmen whose interests

[33] Interview by the author with John Paul Hammerschmidt, Harrison, Arkansas, April 13, 2011.

seemed to be tied to the community more than government bureaucrats in Washington and so supported those business leaders for public office.

From its beginning as a fort built in 1817 at a strategic point on the Arkansas River, the residents of the city had strong ties to the federal government and to federal monies designated for building and maintaining infrastructure as well as to federal payrolls that were spent locally. However, the fort was abandoned in 1824 when the government reassigned the soldiers to what is now the town of Fort Gibson, Oklahoma, but the fort was reactivated in 1838 as a waypoint for the Creeks and Choctaws during Indian removal. Federal troops remained stationed at Fort Smith until the Civil War when Confederates forces captured it; however, in September of 1863 federal troops retook the fort and held it for the rest of the war. Afterward, federal troops remained garrisoned there until 1871 when they were sent again to Fort Gibson.[34] That same year, a new federal judicial district was established with jurisdiction over the entirety of Indian Territory. On May 2, 1875 Judge Isaac C. Parker took the bench and began a storied career presiding over an area of 74,000 square miles.[35] Judge Parker required an extensive bureaucracy to oversee such a large district, which became the economic lifeblood of the city.[36] In his first year at the bench, Judge Parker hired two hundred deputy marshals to work in western Arkansas and Indian Territory.[37] Additionally, the federal court provided many other types of work directly and indirectly: jailers, cooks for the jail, court clerks, a hangman, secretaries, cleaning crews, attorneys, plus ensuring business for the hotels, restaurants, and other establishments that

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[34] William J. Butler, *Fort Smith: Past and Present; a Historical Summary* (Fort Smith, Arkansas: The First National Bank, 1972), 97.
[35] This is an area three thousand square miles larger than New England.
[36] Mary M. Stolberg, "Politician, Populist, Reformer: A Reexamination of 'Hanging Judge' Isaac C. Parker," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 47, (Spring, 1988): 26.
[37] Ibid., 12.

catered to the court and to those who came into town for court.[38] Judge Parker's district was the second most expensive federal court district in the nation with an operating budget of $75,000 a year. However these funds were not always made available and the court had to suspend operations for months at a time until Washington provided the funds.[39] Such uncertainty would, no doubt, have caused concern among many for the public safety and for the local economy. The years Judge Parker spent on the bench, his reputation as "the hangin' judge," and the dangerous work done by the U.S. marshals throughout Indian Territory lent Fort Smith a permanent aura of the west. Fort Smith would continually promote itself as a border town, a town of lawlessness; a town that proudly proclaimed itself "Hell on the Border." Federal efforts to police Indian Territory throughout the 1800s sustained the city's economy. Private business was largely limited to supplying those traveling through Indian Territory to destinations further west or catering to the needs of the federal court.

Although the federal presence sustained economic activity in Fort Smith, industries emerged after the Civil War to take advantage of the natural resources in the region, while new businesses sought to supply the region's growing population with manufactured goods. As the northern white pine forests of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan became depleted lumber dealers found an alternative in the southern yellow pine.[40] In 1878 J.G. Miller opened a sawmill to take advantage of the copious timberland in the Arkansas River Valley, foothills of the Ozarks, and the Ouachitas, which drew a number of furniture manufactures into the local market.[41] The furniture industry became the primary manufacturing base of the city for the next seventy years.

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[38] Ibid., 25.
[39] Ibid., 16-17.
[40] William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Complany, 1991), 196.
[41] J. Fred Patton, *The History of Fort Smith, Araknsas, 1817-1992* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Heritage Press Inc., 1992), 47, 59.

When natural gas deposits were discovered by John Carnall in 1888, the town fathers used the prospect of cheap energy to lure more manufacturing to the city. As a result of improved transportation, an increase in available jobs, and the further settlement of eastern Oklahoma, Fort Smith to became a regional commercial center, whose population tripled from 1870 to 1900 to approximately 11,000.[42]

The industrialization of Fort Smith was aided by four other events in the late 1800s: an increase in the regional agricultural population, the discovery of more natural gas deposits as well as coal, and the arrival of rail lines. Laid in the 1880s, these rail lines connected Fort Smith and its surrounding hinterland to Kansas City making Fort Smith a regional hub for agricultural goods and allowed local manufacturers and farmers to expand their markets. Further gas explorations found larger pockets that lured several glass and brick manufactories to provide goods for both the city and the growing region. This process of regional commercial expansion remained stable until the Great Depression.[43]

As a regional manufacturing center, one would expect World War II to have brought further industrial expansion to Fort Smith as it did to other cities across the South. Overall investments in Arkansas were substantial, though heavily weighted to central and south-central Arkansas. Two-hundred forty million federal dollars, split between wartime plants and military training camps, put the state on par with Oklahoma, Virginia, and Kentucky, but Fort Smith received little money for industrial expansion. Instead, the city was awarded a $25,000,000 contract for an armored division training facility, named Camp Chafee, where approximately 30,000 troops

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[42] Butler, *Fort Smith: Past and Present*, 117. Small deposits of coal to the south of the city also lowered energy costs further.
[43] Ibid., 117-119; Patton, 113.

were trained for combat over the course of the war. City fathers credited this award, in part, to the cheap cost of energy due to local natural gas and coal deposits.[44]

The financial impact of Camp Chaffee on the local economy was enormous with $1,350,000 spent by the federal government to acquire an initial 15,163 acres for the camp.[45] Eventually, 74,000 acres were purchased by the government, all construction materials were purchased from local companies, and work was given to local contractors and subcontractors who employed around six thousand locals.[46] When the troops at the camp had some time off, they spent their pay at the local bars, restaurants, and stores; it was a retail bonanza. Federal dollars brought an immediate turn around to the local economy which had suffered throughout the 1930s.

Though Fort Smith received the lion's share of federal camp dollars, the city received almost nothing for plant construction or expansion. Of the $241,317,000 spent on the creation or expansion of wartime industry in Arkansas between 1941 and 1945, only $543,000 went to Fort Smith. This was to expand the production of zinc oxide, critical in the production of thermite used in various explosives. It is perfectly understandable that major plants like Alcoa's would be located nearer critical resources, but the lack of industrial expansion forced the city to become even more reliant on the federal government.[47]

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[44] Charles Bolton, "WWII and the Ecnomic Development of Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (Summer, 2002): 132-135.; J. Fred Patton, *The History of Fort Smith*, 125. The second largest expenditure on training facilities was $20,000,000 for the expansion of Camp Robinson outside of Little Rock.

[45] The Arkansas Encyclopedia of History and Culture, "Fort Chafee," http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2263 (accessed 12/10/12).

[46] Ibid., 135.

[47] Ibid., 138. Bauxite received more money for plant expansion, $39,000,000, than any other Arkansas city.

On July 31, 1946, less than a year after the Japanese surrender, the federal government closed Camp Chaffee as part of its general demobilization.[48] Without the jobs provided by the camp and money spent locally by soldiers stationed there, Fort Smith faced dire economic straits. As with the original fort and the federal court, Fort Smith's economic prosperity was once more endangered by the withdrawal of the federal government. Unlike the large expanded plants in Bauxite that could be refitted by Alcoa to produce aluminum for a myriad of other goods, there was no profitable civilian use for Camp Chaffee's land.

Local citizens were not completely unaware that the war had to end and in 1945 the local Chamber of Commerce commissioned an economic study of the region to plan for the future. The chamber and local government soberly recognized the Fort Smith was not "a war plant boom town" and that many people from the area had left for Dallas, Tulsa, Kansas City, St. Louis, and Little Rock in search of factory work. They anxiously noted that the regional farm population had declined by twenty-five percent since the war began with a large portion of those being young men who left and did not wish to return to farm life. This would have a long-term negative impact on a city which was already under economic pressure due to the shift away from a war economy.[49] The chamber's economic forecast optimistically stated that existing industry (furniture, glass, and brick making) would expand to absorb some of the newly jobless workforce and that consumer spending should increase, which would keep most businesses afloat.[50]

Despite the demobilization of Fort Chaffee, the Chamber of Commerce continued to look to the federal government to sustain its economy. The chamber made a list of local improvements that they hoped would be partially or fully funded by the federal government. Concerns revolved

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[48] Butler, *Fort Smith: Past and Present*,126.
[49] Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce, *Fort Smith: Forward By Plan* (Fort Smith, Arkansas: Chamber of Commerce, 1945), 4-7.
[50] Ibid., 13, 22.

around improving farm-to-market roads, increasing telephone service within the city, and rural electrification. They hoped the federal government would pay for the expansion of the local airfield, improvements to the sewer system, and a widening of the highway to Little Rock. A secondary list of improvements to city infrastructure that they also hoped the government would pay for included: garbage disposal, parks, and school facilities. Beyond that was a short list of things the city might be interested in pursuing: a zoo, an aquarium, and "Negro housing improvements" (in that order).[51] Nowhere was there any design for increasing the manufacturing base of the city nor was there any decision to raise local revenue if the federal government would not pay for the improvements. Though not stated, the lack of any backup plan if federal spending was cut implies the city either would not have moved forward with any of those plans by itself. The plan provides ample evidence that city leaders still believed in using the federal government to promote economic growth. Fortunately for the city, the Cold War began.

In 1948 the federal government reopened Camp Chaffee as the home of the 5th Armored Division to train and process recruits to fight in Korea. Its status was raised to fort in 1956, but, unfortunately, the facility was closed again in 1959. After fierce lobbying by city leaders and representatives, the base was reopened in 1961, but it would never be the engine of Fort Smith's economy it once was.[52] While the number of people who worked at the base fluctuated with the military's need (highest during World War II and the Korean War), Fort Smith's population declined by 18,000 once the base was closed in 1959 as the military personnel and their families were transferred to different posts.[53]

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[51] Ibid., 35-36.
[52] Butler, *Fort Smith: Past and Present*, 125-127.
[53] Betty Zander and J. Fred Patton, "Vignettes & Vision," *Southwest Times Record Centennial Celebration*, April 25, 1976.

The economic instability caused by the repeated openings and closings of Fort Chaffee acted as the catalyst in altering Fort Smith's relationship with the military and the federal government. Many southern cities, like Marietta, Georgia and its airplane industry, had become reliant on industry tied to the military or on a nearby military facility as Fayetteville, North Carolina was on Fort Bragg. Fort Smith chose a different path in seeking to create a more stable economic base based on private enterprise. Three years after the bases' closure and when Fort Smith was well on the path of industrial development, the *Southwestern American* praised those "Far-sighted" individuals who "saw and correctly interpreted the handwriting on the wall in the late 1950s – a city needed incoming industries to grow and progress."[54]

Chapter 3

The Chamber of Commerce

Boosters and boosterism have been part of southern cities' attempts to attract business since Reconstruction, but, by 1960, the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce became the central tool by which industry and business were brought to the city. Chamber members argued that the arrival of industry was a result of the innate characteristics of the people of the region (hard-working and loyal), an environment that promoted business interests, and a city that treated businessmen as valuable members of the community. They further espoused the idea that if the city was to

[54] "Norge Formal Opening, an Industrialization Milestone," *Southwestern American*, Jan. 31, 1962. Of course if Fort Chaffee had been the size of Fort Bragg it is doubtful Fort Smith would have ever found the need to diversify it economy.

remain prosperous and grow, the people of Fort Smith would need to vote for candidates who best represented this successful ideology; the candidates who did so were increasingly Republicans.

Chamber of Commerce members were typically upstanding business leaders from the city and surrounding area, so their insistence in pushing for the adoption of a business mentality was successful, in part, to their standing in the community. Many were veterans and would claim that they not only loved democracy, but had fought for it. Most had been born and raised in the city or region, so they had deep ties to the community. They worshipped at local churches, sent their children to local schools, and lived in the community. One individual who represented these characteristics was J. Fred Patton who authored several histories of the city. A long standing member of the Chamber, veteran, church elder, and successful businessman, he worked for years on the committee that pushed for the development of a north-south interstate between New Orleans and Kansas City. Patton seemed to be a particularly gregarious and effective spokesperson for the Chamber, but is more difficult to get a more complete profile of chamber leaders from brief mentions in the newspaper and the Chamber of Commerce's newsletter.[55] Another, better known individual was Donald W. Reynolds, media mogul and later philanthropist, who, in 1954, was Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce and eventual owner of Fort Smith's newspaper, the *Southwest Times Record*. Reynolds was one of the individuals who proposed that Fort Smith begin advertising itself to northern cities to try to lure industry south.[56] Others were doctors, lawyers, and small-business owners; the kind of red-blooded American role models who identified their own interests with those of the larger

[55] J. Fred Patton Papers, University of Arkansas Fort Smith; interviews, obituary, newspaper articles, personal papers. It is a small collection and, as such, has only one box.
[56] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 6, November, 1953.

community. So, when they said they were working to make Fort Smith a better place to live and work, they possessed a legitimacy that counted immeasurably in their attempts at convincing the public to adopt their low regulation, anti-union ideology.

In 1944 Arkansas approved a right-to-work measure to keep the CIO from organizing black workers, but this would be utilized in the 1950s as a major selling point for luring industry to the state.[57] Unions had increased membership rolls in Arkansas from 25,000 in 1939 to 43,000 in 1943 as wartime expenditures opened up new avenues for the expansion of union membership in the lumber industry in Arkansas. The campaign to add a right-to-work clause to the state constitution began in 1944 with the goal of having the measure approved in November general elections. The measure was approved by fifty-five percent statewide, but Fort Smith voted against the measure 4,781 to 4,062 probably due to the vote of manufacturing workers who could pay the poll tax which, but the close vote shows the extent to which the voting population believed the measure could help attract industry.[58] Yet with the passage of Arkansas' right-to-work law, the Chamber of Commerce touted this advantage to businesses seeking to relocate by the late 1950s. In doing so, the Chamber was promoting an anti-union argument far different from that of the national Democratic Party, which had made unions a center-piece of the New Deal coalition, but more in line with the national Republican Party's economic ideology. Yet the right-to-work legislation did not immediately attract the industry to the area that voters may have hoped for. By and large, Camp Chaffee remained the economic lifeblood of the city, but the

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[57] James C. Cobb, *The Selling of the South*, 5-7, 22.; Tami J. Friedman, "Exploiting the North-South Differential," *Journal of American History* 95, no. 2 (September 2008): 328.; Gilbert J. Gall, "Southern Industrial Workers and Anti-Union Sentiment: Arkansas and Florida in 1944," in *Organized Labor in the Twentieth-Century South*, ed. Robert H. Zieger (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1991): 223.

[58] Gall, "Southern Industrial Workers and Anti-Union Sentiment," 228-230, 239.; Alexander Heard and Donald Strong, *Southern Primaries and Elections*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1950), 35.

arrival of Dixie Cup in 1947 was an early example of the kind of industry attracted to a small southern city.

The company opened up a small factory on the north side of Fort Smith expanded it several times until it became the city's largest employer until Whirlpool arrived in 1964.[59] Despite the early arrival of Dixie Cup, industrial expansion was slow as the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce failed in developing a strategy to make Fort Smith an attractive place to locate a factory in. The arrival of Dixie Cup was characteristic of the type of industry that moved to Fort Smith and other parts of the South: low skill and low paying. Those industries that moved to cities like Fort Smith did not require an educated labor force; they wanted people who could lift boxes and push buttons. It is true that larger southern metropolises were able to attract high tech industries, but much of that industry came as a result of federal war spending. Though much of the industry that would settle in Fort Smith was low skilled and low wage, the cost of living in Arkansas was such that the wages paid provided a decent living for workers. Though they did not take fullest advantage of the arrival of Dixie Cup, Fort Smith's Chamber of Commerce began its work of slowly developing strategies that might lure more factories to the city.

The best evidence for the chamber's introduction of pro-business ideology to the public was its annual "Business Education Day," which began in 1950 to promote the "Free Enterprise System." This event became a major annual Chamber of Commerce event for nearly thirty years. The day began with a large number of public school teachers gathering at a conference downtown to hear a presentation from a leading member of the Chamber about the "Free Enterprise System." This was essentially the pro-business ideology of lax regulation, low

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[59] Francis Fletcher Shaver, "An Economic Base Study of Fort Smith," Master's thesis, University of Arkansas, 1964, 55; Fort Smith Public School System, *A Resurvey of Present and Future Building Needs* (Fort Smith, Arkansas: Fort Smith School System, 1964), 43.

taxation, and anti-unionism coupled with comparisons of capitalism and communism. Business Education Day's ultimate goal was to convince the teachers of the connection between a pro-business ideology and basic American freedoms with the expectation that teachers would impart these ideas to their students. While not a "grass roots" action taken by everyday community members, the Chamber put on these events without direction from any other state or national body to influence, not just voting aged adults, but future generations. After the presentation, the teachers were then split into groups and taken to separate factories around town where plant managers or some other company official gave another presentation. These company men explained the economics of a factory, specific problems in their industry, their company's ambitions, and how their growth helped "sustain the economic life of our community."[60]

Once the factory tours were finished, the teachers met to compare experiences and hear a final presentation about the importance of the "Free Enterprise System" to the United States as a whole and to Fort Smith in particular. Again, it is impossible to quantify the impact of these events over the decades, as it is impossible to know if those participating teachers took the lessons back to the classroom and, even if they did, if it influenced the children's development in any way. All that can be said is that the Chamber was satisfied with the success of the program. From 1950 onward, "Business Education Day" grew steadily in size and scope each year. What is truly remarkable about this event is how the Chamber of Commerce sought to influence teachers so that they would then teach school children of the importance of the "Free Enterprise System." It was one way that they tried to move the ideology of the people of Fort Smith toward accepting pro-business policies as fundamentally inseparable from American freedom. This ideology was the same one espoused by future Republicans John Paul Hammerschmidt, whose

[60] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 1, May 1953.

family worked in lumber industry, and Winthrop Rockefeller, who chaired the Arkansas Industrial Committee from 1955 to 1964.[61]

Aside from public education outreach, the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce began, in the early 1950s, to actively attract northern corporations to move to the city. The first major attempt occurred when several chamber members travelled to Philadelphia in 1953 to drum up interest in city as a place where industry could thrive. These men put ads for Fort Smith in local papers, wrote letters of introduction to over one thousand businesses, sent seventy-five special letters endorsed by the governor to companies they thought would be most interested in moving, and followed up on thirty-two serious responses. Despite the unsophisticated nature of this action, the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce would use this tactic in the future (with modifications) as the basic strategy for luring businesses to the city.[62] Though no industry moved to Fort Smith from Philadelphia, the venture was considered a successful learning experience.

In November 1953, the Chamber of Commerce initiated another major program devoted to attracting business: "Fort Smith Unlimited." Initially, the Chamber created an industrial committee for the express purpose of drumming up interest in Fort Smith. The Chamber claimed in its newsletter that the United States was entering a "new industrial age" and those cities that were not first in attracting factories would be "doomed to certain economic death." With the city being "a labor paradise" possessing "an untapped labor market," Fort Smith could attract industry better than Oklahoma City, especially as Arkansas was a right-to-work state and

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[61] John Paul Hammerschmidt interview with the author.; John L. Ward, *The Arkansas Rockefeller* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 4,8.

[62] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 2, June 1953.; Cobb, *The Selling Of The South*, 83. It is easy to see the continuity between the first trip to Philadelphia and the creation of the Minute Men five years later. Additionally, they are mentioned numerous times in the newsletters.

Oklahoma was not.[63] This is one of the first mentions of Fort Smith competing against other cities in the region; later, the chamber often viewed Oklahoma City, Dallas, Tulsa, and Kansas City as competitors, but rarely mentioned Little Rock.

Of these cities, Fort Smith leaders looked to Oklahoma City as a guide for how to achieve success through industrialization. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Oklahoma City had been growing by leaps and bounds due in no small part to the energy of its own Chamber of Commerce. While not traditionally considered a Sunbelt city, Oklahoma City nevertheless experienced a similar rapid economic expansion and development. In 1947, the Chamber of Commerce got Allen Street elected mayor. He would serve for twelve years in that position. Over the next several years, more and more Chamber of Commerce backed candidates found their way into office and further cemented the bonds between public office and business interest.[64] Oklahoma City possessed only a few weak unions and a largely white population that already possessed a typical western pro-business anti-government ideology.[65] In some ways, it was like a larger version of Fort Smith, though the city had received a substantial amount of government investment during WWII. Throughout the 1950s, Oklahoma City favored certain companies with low interest industrial revenue bonds, annexed large swaths of land to more than double the size of the city limits in four years, and redeveloped its downtown.[66] Seeing the prosperity of a city so close in character to Fort Smith, it is understandable why the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce sought to emulate Oklahoma City's chamber.

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[63] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 6, November 1953.
[64] Richard M. Bernard, "Oklahoma City: Booming Sooner," in *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth Since World War II*, ed. Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983), 213.
[65] Ibid., 216.
[66] Ibid., 220-221.

Over the next few years the Fort Smith chamber gleefully accepted every new small manufactory and business opening, increased airline service, and expansions to Camp Chaffee. Yet it is hard to say that "Fort Smith Unlimited" was a success, as the program could not boast of any truly major industry arriving as a result of their efforts. It would take a few years, however, for the Chamber to begin seriously working on improving their efforts to lure business. In 1953, the Chamber began publishing a monthly newsletter to better inform the business community of their actions and accomplishments. The newsletter often argued that the way to attract business was to create an environment of low taxes, little regulation, while keeping union power to a minimum; however the chamber remained silent on specifics of legislation they might wish to see enacted. Not only was the newsletter a mouthpiece for a specific type of conservatism, but it was a way to show the community that success was (to them) a direct result of the work of Chamber of Commerce members and the economic development of Fort Smith predicated upon the acceptance of the Chamber's pro-business ideology. The publication of a monthly newsletter marked the first step in the creation of a vigorous chamber that helped remake the region.

By the late 1950s, the Chamber's newsletter became more vocal in its criticisms of the federal government's continuation of Keynesian economic policies. As such, the newsletter began to rail against excessive government social spending programs that were seen as damaging to the individual and their work ethic. The newsletter derided the New Deal as consisting of "something for nothing" programs, while it argued that: "Before the government can give anything to the people, it must first take it away from the people." [67] Though it remained, on the surface, politically neutral, its criticisms were mostly aimed at the Democratic Party, government debt, communism, and vague "social problems." While the term "social problems" could

[67] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 2, June 1953.; Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 1, no 3, July 1953.

indicate a hostile attitude toward the burgeoning civil rights movement, the vast majority of its complaints were focused on government inefficiency, unfair taxation, and any seemingly anti-business developments around the country.[68] The chamber also sought to promote civic pride and social conformity through the newsletter; one way was by publishing boogey man stories about threats to the community. One such story was recounted in the March 1958 issue that purportedly occurred in an unnamed industrial town in Iowa. A company president interested in relocating his factory went to the town and started asking the citizens their opinion about their municipality. Their supposed complaints and criticisms of the town and its government caused the company president to rethink his plan of locating a twelve hundred person plant there. The article further admonishes employees to tell their family members and friends to always be positive when discussing Fort Smith.[69] Though not directly aimed at getting citizens to vote Republican, an article such as this promotes the idea that the entire city is responsible for its prosperity. It seeks to unite the goals of the Chamber with the goals of the average citizen. Despite the concerns expressed in the newsletter, the city was quietly prospering with its new factory and military jobs.

The decision made by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to study Fort Smith as part of an examination of the potential effects of introducing a one dollar minimum wage attests to the positive effects Fort Chaffee and Dixie Cup had upon the city's economy. The study noted that twenty percent of workers in the city earned less than $1.00 an hour, with $1.25 being average. Twenty-five percent of workers in manufacturing or business services had no insurance or pension other than social security (men in these types of jobs made $1.40 on average), while only

[68] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 6, no. 10, Mar. 1959.
[69] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 5, no. 10, Mar. 1958.

seven percent of service sector workers had benefits.[70] Before taxes, these industrial workers in Fort Smith (assuming they averaged a forty-hour workweek) would earn roughly $2,700 a year, while the national average was $3,608 for urban males.[71] With northern businesses looking to find lower operating costs, relocating plants to cities with below average hourly rates would be highly advantageous. Additionally, Arkansas' right-to-work law, left workers with less incentive to join unions, pay dues, and potentially limit the number of jobs coming into the community.

The Chamber's efforts at industrial outreach began to bear fruit as three small factories opened in the city in 1955, each one employing thirty to forty workers. It proudly declared that Fort Smith faced a "minimum of industrial friction," but reminded its readership that "quality of labor" (non-union labor) was the most important factor for industries interested in relocating.[72] At an annual dinner of the Arkansas Industrial Development Committee, Orval Faubus and Arkansas Industrial Development Committee chairman Winthrop Rockefeller saluted the industrializing of Fort Smith as "second-to-none," and stressed that the only way to continue growth was to understand what industry was looking for: a friendly "business climate," "competitive costs," and "community loyalty."[73] All of these were not so coded language for the need for Arkansas and Fort Smith to remain unfriendly to union organization. The next year several similarly small factories, Baldor Electric, the American Canning Company, and the Arkansas Container Corporation began operating in Fort Smith and planned to hire around one thousand workers combined. In September of 1956, the chamber developed a forty point plan of

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[70] United States, *Studies of the Effects of the $1 Minimum Wage, Fort Smith, Arkansas, February and April 1956, and April 1957: Earnings, Establishment Practices, Supplementary Wage Provisions*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1957.
[71] United States, *Current Population Reports: Consumer Income, Series P-60, No. 25*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce and Bureau of the Census, June 1957.
[72] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 2, no. 1, June, 1955.
[73] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 2, no. 7, Dec. 1955.

action for the next year that was laid out on the front page of the *Southwestern American*. Major planks included: work on getting federal funding for a north-south interstate, creating a Better Business Bureau ("Anything that helps business here helps Fort Smith"), create a full time position to promote industry, support the Arkansas-Verdigris river development system to help industry, "Establish a 'speaker's bureau' as a further means of extolling the chamber's capacity and function to the public," "Co-ordinate chamber activities with city government," and "Assist the city on self-government in civic problems."[74] By 1957 the Chamber planned to take advantage of new natural gas deposit discoveries, improvements that increased the navigability of the Arkansas River, and were seriously lobbying for the building of a north-south interstate connecting Kansas City to New Orleans that would go through Fort Smith.[75] With Camp Chaffee having been upgraded to Fort Chafee in 1957, city leaders were more positive than ever that the base would remain the economic lifeblood of the city.

That year, the chamber gleefully reported that the city had the highest per capita income in the state, while implying that it was partly a result of the Chamber's actions in luring business.[76] A year later, the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce pushed proposals for improving the state's business climate and unanimously endorsed the state's right-to-work law, an "anti-violence in picketing" provision later attached to it, and other measures that banned certain forms of

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[74] "Plan Outlined To Improve, Promote City," Southwestern American Sep. 18, 1956.
[75] Chamber of Commerce Newsletters. The issues discussing the early plants arriving were vol. 1, no. 11, April, 1954; vol. 2, no. 6, November, 1954; vol. 2, no. 8, January 1954. The issues discussing the larger manufactories are vol. 3, no. 9, February, 1956 and vol. 4, no. 1, June, 1956. By 1957 the Chamber had become obsessed with getting a north-south highway built and the Arkansas-Verdigris River Project completed as a way to connect Fort Smith further into a wider regional transportation infrastructure and discussed every development. However, the two issues with the most coverage on the infrastructural improvements were vol. 4, no. 3, August, 1956 and vol. 4, no. 6, November, 1956.
[76] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 4, no. 11, April 1957.

secondary boycotting or picketing.[77] Factory owners and business supported right-to-work laws to stave off union organization and brought pressure on legislators to make sure their voice was heard.

Focusing on one such company can help explain how the creation of a business friendly environment attracted industry. The arrival of Baldor Electric in 1956 helps to show how and why industrial development began to increase in the mid-1950s as well as the internal reasoning behind a company's decision making process. George Schock, an upper level manager who worked his way up the company ladder, wrote a small two volume history of the company after his retirement. Schock enunciates the same pro-business ideology that characterized members of the Chamber of Commerce. He believed in low taxes, resented government regulations, and saw businessmen, such as himself, as the natural leaders of communities they had made prosperous. Schock wrote of his fond memories of Baldor employees (both white and blue collar), the city, and his friendly relationships with its citizens, which is partly why he and others like him would have served as models of good citizenry commanding support for their ideology. The company was founded in 1922 by two Washington University graduates in St. Louis to develop and manufacture small electrical motors.[78] Baldor struggled through the Great Depression until World War II brought greatly increased demand for their products. However, Baldor was in the awkward position of being a small company whose sole customer was the federal government. Many experienced employees left for other factories that paid higher wages and, as a result of government contracts, Baldor had to hire more office personnel than the company wanted. In the

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[77] "State Gets Industrial Boost Plan," *Southwestern American*, Aug. 25, 1958. Not every Chamber of Commerce newsletter issue mentioned these topics, but enough did that bonds and anti-unionism can be considered a theme of the publication.

[78] George Schock, *Early History of Baldor Electric Co., 1920-1976* (Fort Smith, Arkansas: Baldor Electric Co., 1992), 7.

1943 annual Christmas letter the company president thanked those "good employees" who stayed at the company rather than look for something better. Schock argues that it was only government wage stabilization policies that kept the company from paying better wages and that, as soon as it was allowed (July 19, 1944), the company raised the wages of all hourly workers and provided back pay to the company's initial request.[79]

During the war the federal government wanted Baldor to expand its operations and the types of goods produced, however the leadership decided it would rather specialize in motors. This hurt them in the short run as they found post-war St. Louis a less suitable place to do business.[80] After the war, the company wished to expand its motor production, but St. Louis' regulatory environment made it difficult. Baldor produced small electrical motors, but the city categorized the company as heavy industry. Other industries had expanded during the war and, Baldor found there was, physically, no land zoned for heavy industry left. This all occurred in the 1950s before the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce had really dedicated itself to attracting industry to the city. By chance Baldor's chief engineer, Fred Ballman, had a cousin living in Fort Smith who mentioned that it was the type of city that Baldor might wish to expand into. A meeting was set up with the chamber that covered "the city, its people, its industries, business climate, and any other information." That evening, Schock dined with Ben Pollack, a leading Chamber member, to discuss Fort Smith's plans for the city expanding its industrial sector.[81]

In the spring of 1956, Baldor opened a plant on the southern side of town with Fred Ballman as plant manager. Ballman said that the movement of Baldor to Fort Smith was part of an ongoing trend of companies moving "to outlying areas from metropolitan areas." The company

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[79] Ibid., 19-21.
[80] Ibid., 23.
[81] Ibid., 26-28.

found the situation so favorable in Fort Smith that it expanded several times. In 1961, they opened up a second plant in the city near the original and began moving more and more of its top people to Fort Smith.[82] The company decided to move its headquarters from St. Louis to Fort Smith in 1967 when the company realized that the majority of its leading executives and technical people were in Fort Smith anyway.[83] Baldor became a pivotal member of the community providing jobs for hundreds of workers.

In the Fort Smith, Baldor found a low wage, low regulatory environment with the advantage that, by being a big fish in a small pond, the company would have a municipal government that would bend over backwards to accommodate its needs. Though not the typical story of how a company decided to located in Fort Smith (there are, after all, only so many cousins to go around), Baldor Electric helps show that those companies that moved to Fort Smith found an environment favorable to their business. The city possessed large areas of land available for development, extremely low utility rates, an improving transportation network, its business community was becoming more competent in their dealings with industry, and it still possessed the advantage of labor willing to work for less than northern workers. These advantages proved vital in getting other companies to invest and build plants in the city who were preparing to expand or relocate for similar regions.

To honor the new members of the community and to continue their promotion of the pro-business ideology, in August 1957, the Chamber of Commerce inaugurated its annual "Fort Smith Industrial Week" for the purpose of acquainting the people of Fort Smith with local industries. Over five days, large presentations were placed in bank and hotel lobbies to showcase the industrial heart of Fort Smith and the chamber's success in attracting them. The

[82] Ibid., 32.
[83] Ibid., 34.

presentations consisted of pictures of company leaders with short quotations about their business and the city. They also had photographs of the factories with descriptions of how many workers were employed and the goods produced.[84] Other smaller programs were created to spread the ideology, such as a discussion group for businessmen to better understand the "Free Enterprise System." The newsletter noted in an alarmed tone "so many businessmen are just like me – unable to say just exactly why the free enterprise system is the best for all of us." Not only was the Chamber trying to organize an ideological offensive to win the hearts and minds of the people, but also to maintain and reinforce an orthodox notion of what the "Free Enterprise System" meant to the United States.[85]

In 1959 the Chamber of Commerce set up a "political education course" designed to help vigorous young men enter into the world of politics and win elections. Ostensibly this was open to anyone of any political persuasion; however there was definitely an implicit, though never explicit, Republican slant to the chamber evidenced by the party affiliation of leading members, their guest speakers, and non-partisan yet ideological editorials. The course consisted of exploring the role of the individual in politics, while developing an understanding of political party organization and operation. It would help those interested to find ways they could utilize their talents and recognize an opportunity to get involved in politics at a deeper level. The chamber promised to give first-hand information to help individuals practice applying political judgment during elections to win campaigns.[86] The Chamber of Commerce was learning more

[84] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 5, no. 2 June 1957.; "Products Made in City To Be on Display This Week," *Southwestern American*, Aug. 4, 1957.; "Plan Displays On 'Industrial Week,'" *Southwestern American*, Aug. 24, 1958.
[85] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 5, no. 8, Jan. 1958.
[86] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 6, no. 10, Mar. 1958.

about how to more effectively present its visions, actions, and successes, but members would soon be confronted by a potential economic disaster.

Rumors began to circulate about the closing of the recently upgraded Fort Chaffee in 1957, which put Fort Smith in danger, once again, of losing the federal government as the city's primary cash cow.[87] Despite pleas made to the army by citizens' groups and the Chamber of Commerce, Fort Chaffee was put on caretaker status in 1959. This was the catalyst that transformed Fort Smith from a moderate industrial city with a military base to its becoming an outsized manufacturing center of the greater central southern region of the country. Fort Chaffee had employed over 1,000 civilians directly, while the nearly 18,000 military personnel and their families stationed in and around the fort had a major impact on the number of commercial ventures Fort Smith could support. Despite the industrial gains made by the city since the arrival of Dixie Cup in 1947, Fort Smith was still very much a military town. Crises resulting from the base closing included: local businesses failing, a depressed real estate sector as hundreds of homes came onto the market almost at once, a $5,000,000 drop in yearly retail sales, and the underutilization of several newly built and expanded schools when over one thousand students left the Fort Smith public school system.[88] Without a radical transformation of the city's economic base, Fort Smith really did face the "economic doom" predicted for cities that failed to take advantage of this new era of industrialization.[89]

The chamber's response to the growing rumors was fairly swift and in accordance with their pro-business ideology. They and the city's leaders, led by the local newspaper editor C.F.

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[87] Butler, 127.
[88] Shaver, "An Economic Base Study of Fort Smith," 1964, 55; Fort Smith Public School System, *A Resurvey of Present and Future Building Needs* (Fort Smith, Arkansas: Fort Smith School System,1964), 1.
[89] Patton, *History of Fort Smith*, 436.

Byrnes (whose pro-business editorials appeared daily on the front page of the *Southwestern American*, which was owned by chamber member Donald W. Reynolds), traveled to Washington D.C. to petition Defense Department officials to keep the base open, but the chamber also created a new industrial committee specifically designed to attract new industry.[90] Additionally, the chamber organized a group of businessmen, referred to as "Minute Men," to act as a fast reaction team. Upon hearing of a corporation interested in opening a new factory or relocating, they would immediately travel to that company to make Fort Smith one of the first cities to make a bid.[91] The need for new industry pushed the chamber to expand its horizons in creating a more professional brand for the city. These "Minute Men" scored a few small early victories that taught them how to better sell Fort Smith. Success bred success, as the "Minute Men" were able to utilize prior examples of industry relocating to Fort Smith to convince other businesses to relocate. The citizens of Fort Smith hoped for Chaffee to reopen, but they soon learned that was not going to happen. The Chamber of Commerce offered the only viable plan to not only avert economic stagnation, but to promote growth.

A month after the closing of Fort Chaffee, the chamber organized a public celebration of industry designed to convince the public that the city's future lay in private manufacturing rather than federal favor. The newspaper praised the chamber as the "Vital Force" for prosperity in the community for the previous seventy-five years. Manufacturers put ads in the paper encouraging the citizens of Fort Smith to look to industry for prosperity. Arkhola Sand & Gravel Co. promised that "Positive Thinking back by Positive action can and will solve our economic problems." Merchants National Bank advised the community that prosperity "Starts With The Right Kind of People" and the "our part of the country has never suffered from the lack of these

[90] "City's Plea For Fort Scheduled," *Southwestern American*, Jan. 17, 1959.
[91] Cobb, *The Selling Of The South*, 83.

people." Dixie Cup's advertisement possessed a chipper note in stating that city's "attitude toward our business is most appreciated" and that the "climate and location are 'right.'"[92] These companies was certainly not referring to the weather, Fort Smith's geographical position, or innate characteristics of the people of the community but to the advantages the community possessed by having an influential Chamber of Commerce, right-to-work laws, and low operating costs. This kind of industrial jingoism would continue in the newspaper for the next couple of years wherein stories would celebrate the growth of industry and the prosperity it brought to the city. Plant managers would have short biographies written, stories would appear about the plants themselves and what was produced, as well as the major companies putting very large advertisements in the paper thanking the Chamber of Commerce and people of Fort Smith for their continued support for industry.[93]

The "Minute Men" scored a major success when they convinced the appliance manufacturer, Borg-Warner to relocate to Fort Smith. The company decided to build a $100,000 plant for its Norge Division on the south side of town and broke ground in January 1960.[94] When asked why Borg-Warner picked Fort Smith over other cities, Roy Ingersoll, company president, responded that it was the city's "good schools and churches," the positive attitude of the people, and the quality of labor.[95] The newspaper published a letter between Ingersoll and Arthur Hotly, U.S. Chamber of Commerce President, in which Ingersoll said that Fort Smith was not a "distressed area," but an "enterprising community" that could serve as an object lesson to other American

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[92] Arkhola advertisement, Dixie Cup advertisement, Merchants National Bank advertisement, "C of C Vital Force in City's Growth," *Southwestern American*, Oct. 11, 1959.
[93] Advertisements, *Southwest American*, Aug. 30, 1959. This edition of the paper is filled with corporations putting out ads that support Fort Smith and its drive toward industrialization. It was a measure used to both welcome new industry and to establish a pro-growth industrial culture.
[94] Roy Reed, *Faubus: The Life And Times Of An American Prodigal* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 260; Shaver, "An Economic Base Study of Fort Smith," 70.
[95] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 7, no. 12, May 1960.

cities to vigorously seek industry and not go "to Washington with tin cup in hand."[96] Norge would act as a beacon to other metal goods manufacturers interested in relocation and enable Chamber of Commerce members to argue that Fort Smith possessed the labor talent capable of handling more complicated work. The same month that Norge broke ground for its new plant, the state enacted legislation that would make Fort Smith and other Arkansas communities even more competitive in luring factories south.

In January 1960, Governor Orval E. Faubus signed into law a bill that allowed municipal governments to issue revenue bonds for the building or expansion of factories modeled on the type of bonds issued by Mississippi during the Great Depression. If a city was interested and could raise the bond, the municipality could then construct a building that it would lease to a corporation for whatever interest rate the parties agreed upon (usually very low). A corporation need not worry about accruing or borrowing a large amount of money to build its own infrastructure, it could begin by leasing a structure at extremely favorable rates. While not a magic bullet, it provided Arkansas municipalities a way to compete with other southern and western states that had already adopted such measures.[97] This was not, however, a wholly new development as Dixie Cup utilized a bond to operate its plant in 1947 and managed to pay back that bond in eleven months.[98] Such bonds allowed for tremendous industrialization in Fort Smith in the five years between 1957, when rumor of Fort Chaffee's closing began, and 1962. During this period Fort Smith added approximately 6,250 manufacturing jobs.[99]

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[96] Reprinted letter from Roy Ingersoll to Arthur Hotly from April 6, 1961, Southwestern American, Jan. 31, 1962.
[97] Reed, *Fabus*, 260.
[98] "Off the Record" editorial by C.F. Byrns, *Southwestern American* July 18, 1958.
[99] Shaver, "An Economic Base Study of Fort Smith," 56.

Because of the growth and shift in industry by the mid-1960s, Fort Smith and the Chamber commissioned numerous economic studies to understand this growth and guide its development. In 1964, Francis Shaver, a University of Arkansas graduate student in economics, produced an economic base study of the city for his master's thesis. Shaver stated that the study was undertaken "to organize the available economic information on Fort Smith by use of this technique (his methodology) so that community planners and businessmen would have a comprehensive description of the metropolitan economy." He hoped "city officials" would utilize his study to better understand the city's economy and use that information to inform the community of its successes.[100]

Following this wave of professionalization, the chamber's newsletter in the 1960s became better organized, more focused, and still proudly boasted about every new plant expansion and relocation. Highways, interstate construction, and river and airline connections all came to be touted as vitally important for the city's industrial future. Additionally, the Chamber and city hosted an ever-increasing number of leading politicians and businessmen. Senator John McClellan and, later, Governor Winthrop Rockefeller were present for such events as the chamber's annual installation banquet. In 1965, the guest speakers to this event were Sen. McClellan and a G.E. executive whose presentation theme of the evening was the industrialization of Arkansas.[101] Newsletter articles on the arrival of new industry became more in-depth as the Chamber expounded upon, not just the reasons for the location, but how the new plant fit in with existing industry and what affect that might have on the city's ability to attract related industries.

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[100] Ibid., 82-84.
[101] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 13, no. 4 Sept. 1965.

When the Gerber glass bottling plant arrived in 1964 the newsletter explained that Gerber's choice to locate in Fort Smith was due to the region's continued growth as a center for food processing and packaging, exemplified by the fact that the Gerber factory had the dual purpose of food processing and glass container production.[102] The arrival of different types of industries (like Gerber, Baldor Electric, and Dixie Cup) in Fort Smith strengthened its place in the region's market structure. Industrial development models can be divided into two broad categories: those that specialize in one industry (Detroit and the auto industry) or those that have varying types of industry like Fort Smith had. Both models have advantages, but companies located in cities with varied industries often engage in a mutually beneficial exchange of services with other non-competitive companies.[103] Gerber was persuaded to come to Fort Smith partly because the city possessed an existing food processing and packaging industry that its glass container production line could manufacture containers for. Newsletters show the Chamber recognized this process and sought to diversify the manufacturing base of the city as much as possible.

While Dixie Cup, Baldor Electric, and Gerber provided a diversified industrial base, the arrival of Whirlpool propelled the city's industrialization forward and soon became the city's largest single employer. Though the initial arrival of Norge was met with great excitement, for various internal reasons Borg-Warner never utilized the facility to its potential and decided to sell the plant to Whirlpool in 1965. Because the plant was already set up to produce Norge brand appliances, Whirlpool devoted its production lines to produce washers, dryers, and refrigerators.[104] The arrival of Whirlpool was a little different from other company arrivals in

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[102] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 13, no. 5, Oct. 1965.
[103] Andrew J. Krmenec and Adrian X. Esparza, "City Systems and Industrial Market Structure," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89, no. 2 (June, 1999): 267.
[104] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 13, no. 10 March 1966.

that Whirlpool was contracted with the AIW (Allied Industrial Workers).[105] It was rare for a factory to relocate to Fort Smith already under union contract, but there seems to have been no major conflicts between management and the unions during the early years of the plant's existence.

In honor of such a large and well known company coming to town, the chamber held a banquet for Whirlpool at which the emcee stated that, in addition to an abundance of natural resources and a loyal hard working population, "Fort Smith also occupies a key geographical and economic position in the burgeoning market that is the near Southwest."[106] This is a key term that was being bandied about by the Chamber in its newsletters, in editorials to the newspaper, and other publications since the mid-1950s. Though never defined, it is clear that the near Southwest was an area extending from Fort Smith to Tulsa and Oklahoma City and south to Dallas-Fort Worth. The idea that Fort Smith is part of the west harkened back to its frontier days, but Fort Smith's desire to be in the same category as those other urban centers evidences an eagerness by civic and business leaders to partake in the tremendous economic expansion of the Sunbelt.

Industrial expansion brought the city more than just factory jobs; it increased the amount and quality of both industrial non-industrial positions in the city and region. In recognition of the city's growth since 1961, the Arkansas Department of Labor decided to do an in-depth skills study in 1966. The department found there were not enough skilled employees to meet an expected growth rate similar to that from 1960-1965; most of the semi-skilled mechanical workers already found employment by this 1966. Though the companies that moved to Fort Smith needed a large low-skilled labor force, as existing plants expanded and new ones moved

[105] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 14, no. 2 July 1966.
[106] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 14, no 6, Nov. 1966.

in, the need for more skilled and semi-skilled workers exhausted the local supply of labor with the necessary knowledge and experience. If Fort Smith were to continue to develop more foremen, machine operators, mechanics, bench workers, electricians, painters, heavy equipment operators, and truck drivers had to be trained locally or enticed to move from somewhere else. The city needed nurses, school teachers, cooks, janitors, salespeople, and "salad girls" (who I assume worked in restaurants or cafeterias) to work in service and public sector jobs that catered to a growing population. The study noted that the most difficult positions to fill were those requiring a high school education, while three in ten jobs in Fort Smith required a college education.[107]

Though the chamber's activities enticed factories seeking low-skilled labor, educated individuals also benefitted from the chamber's attempts at creating an environment suitable for free enterprise. The Department of Labor recommended Fort Smith public schools find students with good vocational aptitude and steer them towards careers in nursing, teaching, engineering, and sales. It also recommended corporations begin internal studies to see if they would benefit from creating vocational training programs to develop talent from within.[108] Industry was thus transforming the public school system to fill specific skill sets much like the Chamber of Commerce was working to inculcate students with a free enterprise ideology through its Business Education Day. The need for clerical, sales, professional, and technical positions was expected to increase as well in both the public and private sectors. Job opportunities for those with little education were also needed due to the transition of those individuals then employed as

[107] Arkansas Department of Labor Employment Security Division, *Area Skills Survey* (Fort Smith, Akransas: Arkansas Department of Labor, 1966), 2.
[108] Ibid., 3.

janitors, nursing aides, and cooks to factory work.[109] Understanding the expected job growth and movement of individuals within the job market is critical to understanding of the development of Fort Smith and its political realignment.

The resulting employment opportunities were widely publicized as the result of the "Free Enterprise System" touted by the Chamber of Commerce, the city, and state government. More salespeople were needed as the overall prosperity of the city and region increased. Factory workers surely felt they had secure wage work that would sustain them in old age and allow for material comforts previous generations of Arkansans had been unable to imagine. Fundamentally, the system was working for the Fort Smith metropolitan area. Unemployment was low. Home and car ownership was up.[110] The "American Dream" was being lived by countless people who could finally imagine sending their children to college or helping them find honest factory work that would provide for their children the same was it was providing for the parents. From a pragmatic point of view, it made every sense to support the pro-business ideology that the business elites were pushing and they rewarded the business community through the election of individuals who espoused that ideology on the state and local level.[111]

Perhaps the single greatest achievement that the Chamber of Commerce took credit for was the rise in Fort Smith's average income. In 1960, Fort Smith had the highest family income with

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[109] Ibid., 24.

[110] Lorna Stokenbury Pryor, "A Source of New, Single Family Housing," Ph.D. dissertation (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas, 1966): 47-59.

[111] B. G. Hendrix, though a Democrat, proposed the law to allow the creation of City Administrator form of government as a representative. George Nowotny was interested in running for governor in 1970, but decided not to because Winthrop Rockefeller chose to run for a third term. Many of the Chamber members were concerned with business and did not run for office themselves.

$5,136 in the state. This was $1,952 above the state urban average of $3,184.[112] Additionally, the U.S. census showed that Sebastian County had the second lowest poverty rate of any county in Arkansas with 31% falling below the poverty line; Saline County were the resort town of Hot Springs is located was first with 29%. Of the roughly twenty-two thousand housing units in Fort Smith, about thirteen thousand, or sixty percent, were owned by the occupier. Comparatively, Little Rock had slightly more than sixty thousand housing units, with slightly over half owned by the occupier. Additionally, most Fort Smith residents owned washers (though not dryers), radios, televisions, and, at least, one automobile. These were the amenities that the Chamber of Commerce took credit for. Good paying factory jobs provided the wages that purchased these goods. The people of Fort Smith could participate in the national post-war consumer society because the people of Fort Smith trusted the Chamber of Commerce to lure industry from the north.[113]

[112] Shaver, "An Economic Base Study of Fort Smith," 6.; U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1950, Part IV: Arkansas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952), 4-46, Table 32; 4-47, Table 32a.; U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1970, Arkansas (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 5-169, Table 41; 5-170, Table 42; 5-252, Table 89.

[113] U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1960, Vol. 1, Part V: Arkansas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 5-15 – 5-18, 5-20 – 5-21,5-27 – 5-28;U.S. Census of Population and Housing: Population by Poverty Status in 1959; all counties.

Chapter 4

Republican Ascent

Historians have put forth many different theories regarding the reason for Southern realignment, but all agree that race was a primary motivator for whites leaving the Democratic Party. Evidence for the Third Congressional District suggests otherwise. John Paul Hammerschmidt commissioned a study of the district in order to hone his campaign message and was informed that the greatest concern for the region in 1966 was economic inflation, or as it was termed in the poll "cost of living increases," and not issues of race.[114] Hammerschmidt then abandoned his focus on "law and order" and adopted a platform similar to that of the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce. He began to criticize excessive government spending on social programs and foreign spending and tied the incumbent "Judge" Jim Trimble, to Johnson's Great Society and the inflation that came along with it. One of his advertisements simple states: "Say 'No' to LBJ Send Hammerschmidt to Congress."[115] Another says that "Federal Spending as voted by your present Congressman has been the greatest cause of the inflationary spiral we are facing."[116] Economic concerns were more important than racial issues in most Republican campaigns in the 1960s.

Likewise, Winthrop Rockefeller, the millionaire grandson of John D. Rockefeller, centered his gubernatorial campaign on improving the economic life of Arkansas through attracting industry. His plan for industrial development revolved around creating a friendly business

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[114] John Ward polling results, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, subseries 1, Box 15, Folder 27, University of Arkansas Special Collections, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[115] Hammerschmidt advertisement, *Southwestern American*, Nov. 8, 1966.
[116] Hammerschdmit advertisement, *Southwestern American*, Nov. 4, 1966.

climate similar to what the Chamber of Commerce was doing in Fort Smith and introducing policies of racial moderation to improve the image of the state to the rest of the nation. Tom Eisele, Rockefeller's campaign manager, summed up Rockefeller's advantage over his 1966 opponent, Jim Johnson, in spurring industrial development by saying that:

> "If Win Rockefeller is elected, the industrialists and the business leader of this nation will know they can enter into this state and take advantage of the opportunities here without any fear of political involvement … these men, whether we like it or not, are mostly Republicans. If a Republican governor can be elected in Arkansas for the first time in any southern state in this century, think of the dramatic effect that will have on those people who would like to see the Republican Party grow and expand."

Two of his other campaign issues involved improving state institutions, especially the educational and prison systems, and ending one-party rule. However, both campaigns constantly stressed in speeches and campaign material that it was okay to split a ticket. They knew old habits die hard and that if they were going to get any converts they had to let the public know they could still be Democrats and vote for a Republican candidate.[117] However, they had to first overcome the decades' long marginalization of Arkansas Republicans.

Prior to 1966, Little Rock, Fort Smith, Hot Springs, and a number of counties in the Ozarks were the only areas in the state consistently providing Republican votes.[118] In the Ozarks, Republicans had maintained a strong local presence and were described as mostly "post office" Republicans who sought patronage when a Republican president came into office or had made arrangements with Democrats that some low level offices would remain in Republican hands so long as they did not challenge Democrats for higher state offices. With such deals in place, the biggest concern for Republicans was that they were unable to run any candidate for office in

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[117] Campaign Material, Winthrop Rockefeller Papers, Series III, Box 22, Files 1a and 1b, University of Arkansas Little Rock Archives located in the Arkansas Studies Institute, Little Rock, Arkansas.

[118] John Paul Hammerschmidt Interview with the author.

numerous counties around the state.[119] Fort Smith, however, was not exactly the same as the Ozark counties.

The first crack in the Democratic hold over Fort Smith came in 1952 with the candidacy of Dwight D. Eisenhower who asked for the votes of the southern urban middle class, but did not attempt to convince them to become Republicans. Rather than ignore the South as previous Republican candidates had done, the Eisenhower campaign focused on areas outside the Deep South with higher percentages of white voters because they believed that these areas were less wedded to the conservative Democratic Party; Fort Smith exemplified the type of southern city Eisenhower hoped get votes from.[120] His campaign platform was careful to let popular New Deal policies, such as Social Security, stand, while he presented himself as a moderate.[121] During his presidency, Fort Smith benefited from increased federal defense spending as Camp Chaffee was prepared to be upgraded. The *Southwestern American* praised the administration for eschewing "political expediency" by awarding funds "on the basis of merit," even though the city lay within the Democrat controlled "Solid South" and for placing "patriotism above politics."[122] Though Republicans did not find success on the state level until the 1960s, Eisenhower established the hold of Republican presidential candidates over Fort Smith that continues to this day. Eisenhower was a Republican interested in reducing the size and scope of the federal government, balancing budgets, while still believing in the need to retain parts of the New Deal and Keynesian economic policies. Despite his vowing to respect state's rights, he (or rather his campaign) managed to retain the endorsement of the National Council of Negro

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[119] John Paul Hammerschmidt Interview with the author.
[120] Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 24-25, 61-62.
[121] Stanley B. Greenberg, *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority* (New York: Random House, 1995), 92.
[122] "A Proof of Government Based Solidly on Merit," *Southwestern American* March 25, 1956.

Democrats and made progressive, if vague, promises about supporting equality for all.[123] The vote totals of Fort Smith's presidential, gubernatorial, and congressional elections from 1948-1968 show increasing support for Republican candidates beginning well before 1964.[124]

Perhaps the most striking evidence supporting the idea that realignment did not occur due to race comes from an examination of Fort Smith's voting wards. By comparing voting data and housing data, one can see that Republican voting consistently tended toward neighborhoods with upper incomes and those least likely to be effected by integration. The greatest mixed voting comes from Ward 1, which encompassed the oldest and most racially mixed neighborhoods in Fort Smith. During the Rockefeller and Hammerschmidt campaign, black voting precincts voted for Republicans, while white precincts voted for Faubus and the Democrats. When George Wallace ran for president, Ward 1 supplied him with the greatest levels of support, but only from those white precincts. Black neighborhoods voted Democrat. At the same time, Nixon's largest base of support came from the newer housing developments located in Ward 4 and Ward 5 (those furthest away from downtown) and in the upper income areas of Wards 2 and 3. Certainly, no single ward of precinct was unanimous in support for one candidate or the other; however Republicans in Fort Smith routinely outperformed their Democratic rivals in middle-class and upper-middle class neighborhoods. Working class neighborhoods that continued to support Democrats were usually those closest to the city's black neighborhoods and, thus, most likely to face integration. Standard interpretations of white backlash have argued that white

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[123] David A. Nichols, *A Matter of Justice: Eisenhower and the Beginning of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 17-22.; Geoffrey Perrot, *Eisenhower* (New York: Random House, 1999), 413-421.

[124] Film 1408 E-15-E32, Sec. of State Election Results microfilm, University of Arkansas Library. Regarding the results: for various reasons, the number of votes counted for each election is not equal for each race. My guess is that, in some instances, people chose not to vote for any candidate in a particular race. The overall trend of Republicans gaining votes is still sustained in Fort Smith.

individuals in those neighborhoods would be first to stop voting Democrat, but those areas in Fort Smith were usually the last to do so and only during the 1968 campaign of Georgennnnnnnn Wallace.[125]

Fort Smith Presidential Voting Pattern 1948-1968

	1948	1952	1956	1960	1964	1968
Republican	2,468	10,114	10,234	11,744	10,739	12,073
Democrat	3,907	7,802	7,489	8,726	8,240	6,320
State's Rights	689					
George Wallace						8,649

Fort Smith Gubernatorial Election Results 1948-1968[126]

	1948	1950	1954	1956	1958	1960	1962	1964	1966	1968
Rep.	3,850	3,199	8,007	5,172	4,050	9,285	6,062	12,599	12,022	16,476
Dem.	4,833	10,970	6,540	12,660	8,098	11,522	8,724	11,644	6,155	10,463

Fort Smith Congressional Election Results 1948-1968[127]

	1948	1950	1952	1954	1956	1958	1960	1962	1964	1966	1968
Rep.	1,545	N/A	8,193	N/A	8,495	N/A	N/A	5,361	12,710	11,110	20,184
Dem.	8,541		9,398		9,681			9,170	11,662	6,802	7,208

[125] Film 1408 E15-E32.: Lorna Stokenbury Pryor, "A Source of New, Single Family Housing."
[126] Film 1408 E15-E32.: Film 1408 E-17. In 1952, there was no Republican contender. The Fort Smith vote went 9,086 for Francis Cherry and 3,460 for incumbent Sid McMath.
[127] Rep. Jim Trimble ran unopposed in 1950, 1954, 1958, and 1960.

Pratt Remmel was the first Republican in twentieth century Arkansas to make a major impact on state politics with his gubernatorial campaign against Orval Faubus in 1954 on a platform of fiscal responsibility, institutional reform, allowing for the issuance of municipal bonds (not passed until 1960). He had successfully served two terms as mayor of Little Rock winning his first race with sixty-eight percent in 1951 and fifty-nine percent in 1953.[128] In his run for governor, Remmel, an evangelical, argued that America was straying from its constitutional roots and that only a return to religion could help restore the United States. He was first to argue that it was Arkansas' devotion to one-party, factional politics that impeded economic development.[129] Republican candidates would repeat this line of reasoning and argue that the reform Arkansas most needed was the creation of a two-party system. Remmel lost the election, but won Fort Smith with 55% of the vote.[130] Aside from Remmel, however, Republicans found difficulty in fielding respectable candidates throughout the 1950s.

Fort Smith had been represented in congress since 1945 by "Judge" Jim Trimble who was, even in a district with greater than usual Republican support, a formidable opponent. In 1956, Trimble defeated a serious challenge by Republican Bill Spicer who lost to the "Judge" by three percent. However, the "Judge" ran unopposed in his next two elections.[131] Trimble had made rural devlopment projects his primary legislative focus and could be classified as a conservative New Deal Democrat who signed the Southern Manifest and opposed the Civil Rights Act. He believed in government funded rural infrastructure improvements, bringing rural communities

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[128] Bill Hathorn, "Pratt Cates Remmel: The Thrust Toward Republicanism in Arkansas, 1951-1955," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 4 (Winter, 1984): 306.
[129] Ibid., 309, 315-317.
[130] Film 1408 E-15, Sec. of State Election Results microfilm, University of Arkansas Library.
[131] Arkansas History Commission, election results, microfilm rolls MG 00020 1956 and 1958 election and MG00021 1960 elections.

electricity at low cost, and voted almost completely with the party throughout his career.[132] Trimble benefited for most of his career from enfeebled Republican opposition, but that began to change in the mid-1950s.

Three events occurred during this period that caused the Republican Party to renew its efforts to expand and win elections. First, Orval Faubus' handling of the 1957 Central High Crisis spurred his political enemies to more energetically oppose him. Central High damaged the state's reputation across the nation especially when Faubus shut down the Little Rock school system for a year. As a result, no major industry moved to the city until the crisis was resolved. Though popular with many Arkansans, Faubus' actions lost him political friends and created new Democratic and Republican enemies. The crisis would not have spurred anti-integrationist whites to leave the Democratic Party, but it angered progressives enough to oppose Faubus openly.[133]

Second, was the arrival of Winthrop Rockefeller to Arkansas. He had settled in Arkansas because it had a more permissive divorce law than New York and allowed him to hide from the ensuing scandal and vicious society gossips. Rockefeller had vacationed in Arkansas years earlier on the advice of an Arkansan friend and made repeated trips to enjoy the state's hunting, fishing, and rural beauty. It was not an unfamiliar place to restart his life. Such an illustrious and wealthy individual from one of the most, if not the most, famous family in the United States caused a stir in the poor, largly rural state.[134]

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[132] Brent J. Aucoin, "The Southern Manifesto and Southern Opposition to Desegregation," in *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* vol. 55, no. 2 (Summer, 1996): 173-193, 192.;, "Trimble Files For Eleventh Term, Says Health Is Fine," *Southwestern American*, March 17, 1964.
[133] Reed, 214-215, 240, 286, 304.
[134] Dale Bumpers, *The Best Lawyer in a One Lawyer Town: A Memoir* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2004), 176-177; John L. Ward, *The Arkansas Rockefeller* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 15, 27-29.

Third was a major shake-up in Republican Party leadership led by John Paul Hammerschmidt and several of his close associates. The Republican Party had been dominated by Pratt Remmel and his family who, as Robert Taft style Republicans had opposed Eisenhower's presidency and his modern orientation. More in line with Eisenhower, Hammerschmidt was nevertheless elected chairman of the state's finance committee and thus was given an automatic seat on the Republican Party's National Finance Committee. He and several other Republicans interested in removing the Remmel's from power managed to put themselves in positions where they could change party procedures. They managed to limit the influence of Remmel's follower's and get Rockefeller, who had been leery of the Arkansas Republican Party before then, interested in becoming its standard-bearer. Once the coup had been finalized, John Paul Hammerschmidt was elected party chairman in 1962.[135]

Yet, this period of inter-party turmoil saw a significant and growing minority of voters supporting Republican candidates and so Republicans renewed their efforts to field candidates against Jim Trimble. Cy Cavanaugh ran a small campaign against Trimble in 1962 and won only thirty-eight percent. Jim Hinshaw, a northwest Arkansas businessman (and much stronger candidate), challenged Trimble in 1964.[136] During the campaign, Jim Hinshaw, attacked Trimble's devotion to public works projects and party line voting, but spent the majority of his time attacking Trimble's health and support for national Democratic civil rights policies, a decidedly odd attack considering Trimble signed the Southern Manifesto and voted against the

[135] Hathorn, "Pratt Cates Remmel," 452-454.; John Paul Hammerschmidt Interview with the author.; John Paul Hammerschmidt interview conducted by Scott Lunsford of the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual Interviews, conducted March 30, 2009.
[136] John Paul Hammerschmidt interview with the author.

Civil Rights Act.[137] Despite general support and goodwill, Trimble's health had been poor during the 1962-1964 congressional session, which caused him to miss nearly half the votes that session. Against Hinshaw's aggressive campaign, Trimble rarely responded and insisted that an individual's legislative accomplishments spoke for themselves.[138] Hinshaw's racial attacks failed to motivate a large percentage of the voting public of Fort Smith, even though he won by a thousand votes.[139] While trying to paint Trimble as a racial progressive, Hinshaw also ran on the same type of pro-business arguments as Rockefeller's. Despite Democratic victories, the good showing of the Republican Party in 1964 made it more vibrant and aggressive in its opposition.

Two years later, when John Paul Hammerschmidt ran on a platform that did not include racist appeals and that stressed a conservative economic message support for Trimble fell by half.[140] As a businessman from the Ozarks, Hammerschmidt represented the type of individual involved in Republican Party politics in Arkansas before and during the Rockefeller years. A decorated World War II pilot and community leader, Hammerschmidt soon made his way into the ranks of the Republican Party in the 1950s as a leading individual from the Ozarks.

In a well practiced story, Hammerschmidt told how he and other Republicans decided 1966 that the results of the 1964 election meant that it was a good year to be a Republican (Hinshaw having done better than expected in the general election) and spent months trying to find someone to run for Third District. Though Hammerschimdt encouraged Hinshaw to run again,

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[137] "Trimble Files For Eleventh Term, Says Health Is Fine," *Southwestern American*, March 17, 1964.
[138] Northwest Arkansas Times, "Jim Trimble Sees Bright Future For Area." Floyd Car. Jr. Nov. 2, 1964.; *Fort Smith Times Record*, July 27, 1964.; "Old Friends Oppose Each Other in Election," *Fort Smith Times Record*, Oct. 28, 1964. These articles refer to Trimble's campaign style as unchanging and reference previous elections.
[139] Film 1404 E- Sec. State Election Results, University of Arkansas microfilm collection.
[140] Ibid.

Hinshaw declined saying he did not wish to campaign.[141] Urged by the party to deny Trimble the luxury of an uncontested election, Hammerschmidt agreed to run against Trimble and paid the filing fee a few days before deadline. Jim Trimble again chose to ignore his opponent, prefering to let his legacy carry the day. Since Hammerschmidt had not filed till the last minute, the campaign was relativly short, which makes his victory seem all the more impressive considering he began the campaign with only twelve percent name recognition.[142] He decided to campaign on a very moderate platform that incorporated Remmel's argument regarding the need for a two-party system in Arkansas, while repeatedly stating his willingness to represent the district's and not his own interests. This is a surprisingly important point that Hammerschmidt repeated in campaign speeches and interviews after his retirement. Hammerschmidt described Trimble as an older type of politician who stayed in Washington and only visted his district two or three times a year. This seemingly innocuous campaign promise lent Hammerschmidt's campaign and later political career an air of modernity, devotion, and respect for the people that Hinshaw's severely lacked.

Despite the greater show of interest in serving his constituency, Hammerschmidt initially followed Hinshaw's approach in obliquely referencing Trimble and the national Democrats' pro-civil rights stance. An early radio campaign advertisement was meant to raise fears about "law and order":

> "My opponent, Jim Trimble, has gone all the way with LBJ. He has spent all the way with LBJ. What does this mean? … it means a spreading increase in the cost of living. To the people of America, it means a crime rate growing six times as fast as the population. To the voters of America, it means a

[141] John Paul Hammerschmidt interview with the author.
[142] Ibid.

> future of inadequate representation. Yes, Jim Trimble has gone all the way with LBJ…And look where they have taken us…to one of the most unsettled and insecure periods in American History."[143]

His references to increased crime and insecurity are consistent with tactics that many Republicans used in 1968 to court voters disaffected by the Democrats' civil rights agenda. This rhetoric can be construed to appeal to racial conservatives so that Hammerschmidt could walk the line between making overt racist appeals and being seen as too liberal on race. Of course, there was an element of truth to the increase in crime rates during the 1960s, so there was some factual basis to his message. He also complained that the "subservient Congress" was being steamrolled by the Johnson administration and passing legislation without "adequate debate."[144] Throughout the summer of 1966, Hammerschmidt espoused this type of conservative rhetoric to gain traction with the public, but Hammerschmidt also understood the need for targeted polling. He commissioned John Ward to take a detailed poll of Third District voters; on September 28th, he received a fifteen page report that caused him to shift his campaign tactics.

Because Hammerschmidt was running for a U.S. congressional seat, Ward directed the poll toward national rather than local issues. The majority of respondents felt the situation in the country was "confusing" and "a mess." Yet, Ward wrote that the "Rubber stamp attack doesn't work too well" because the people were not angry at Trimble for supporting Democratic policies. Ward tallied a series of agree/disagree/no opinion responses and found that: 49% disagreed that Trimble was a "rubber stamp," 74% agreed that Congress should be more concerned with spending, and 95% agreed that cost of living increases were their primary concern. In response, Ward suggested Hammerschmidt campaign on reducing inflation, creating jobs, improving

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[143] John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, radio advertising text, Series II, Box 13, Folder 19, University of Arkansas Special Collections, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[144] John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II Box 13, Folder 19, newspaper clipping from unknown newspaper, April 26, 1966.

roads, and reducing federal spending. Finally, when breaking down Hammerschmidt's "heat" with certain groups, Ward found Hammerschmidt's greatest initial support lay with individuals who were urban, educated, female, and those slightly below the median income.[145] In response, Hammerschmidt began produced commercials targeted at the specific economic concerns of urban voters with slightly below average incomes, such as supporting the Ozarka Dam project to ensure that the Fort Smith continued to have access to cheap utilities. When asked if he would support a wage-price freeze, he answered:

> "Dictatorial wage and price controls rob and shackle the people and impose no restraint on unnecessary federal spending. I am opposed to them except in the case of real national emergency."[146]

He also stated that Fort Chaffee's stand-by status "will always be a source of instability and indecision." Hammerschmidt vowed to try to get the base reopened permanently or to close it permanently so that the land could be sold off and developed privately.[147] Additionally, his campaign correspondence sought to drum up support from local business leaders, bankers, and ministers by beginning his form letters with a mention of being named Harrison's "Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year" in 1965 and peppering his campaign letters with statements about his concern over federal spending: "that in accepting this type of financial help, there is always the danger of federal encroachment on the right of cities and individuals, guaranteed us under our Constitution." He sought to tie himself to the Rockefeller image of moderation, pro-business

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[145] John Ward polling results, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, subseries 1, Box 15, Folder 27, University of Arkansas Special Collections, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[146] "*Here Is How The Candidates Answered The Questions Our Readers Asked*," *Southwestern American*, Nov. 7, 1966.
[147] Bill Kennedy, "Hammerschmidt Wants 'Balance' In Congress," *Fort Smith Times Record*, October 31, 1966.; Hammerschmidt commercial for Fort Smith region, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, subseries 1, Box 13, Folder 19, University of Arkansas Special Collections, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

policies, and economic developments even though the two campaigns rarely coordinated their activity.[148]

Hammerschmidt did not distance himself completely from negative campaigning, making subtle swipes at Trimble's age and health while traveling furiously around the district meeting voters. His stump speeches described his willingness to serve his constituents regardless of party and desire stay in contact with the district to better represent it in Washington. One topic he did not discuss, even when asked directly, was the controversy over the damming of the Buffalo River. "Judge" Trimble was a dam builder; he introduced legislation helping dam every river in northwest Arkansas to produce cheap electricity and prevent runoff from depleting Ozark soils. By 1966, the Buffalo River was the only free flowing river in the region and was scheduled to be damed by the Corps of Engineers once impact studies were completed. A vocal minority opposed this measure and Hammerschmidt wisely chose not to involve himself in this issue. It is difficult to quantify what kind of damage this did to Trimble's campaign, but it certainly did not help.[149]

Most importantly, Hammerschmidt's most negative campaign tactic was tying Trimble to President Johnson and the Great Society: "Mr. Trimble has put his allegiance to President Johnson above his obligation to you."[150] His attacks on Trimble and the Great Society were not focused on programs designed to help minorities, but on fiscal waste and the rise in inflation caused by massive government spending. Hammerschmidt probably chose to do this because of several specific findings of the Ward Poll: that people in the Third District were concerned with

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[148] Undated Form letter for regional Chambers of Commerce, Oct. 25 campaign mailing, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, Subseries 1, Box 1, Files 1,2,3.
[149] John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, Subseries I, Box 15, Folder 27, University of Arkansas Special Collections, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[150] Hammerschmidt Campaign Mailing, Oct. 25, 1966, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, Box 1, Subseries 1, File 2, University of Arkansas Special Collections, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

federal spending, cost-of-living increases, that only 46% said they believed Trimble voted for their interests, and that "we are reminded again and again that voters are not for or against Trimble for specific reasons. There is a vagueness – a lack of specificity about his support."[151] Throughout the rest of the campaign, Hammerschmidt labeled Trimble as a supporter of Johnson's out-of-control federal spending projects that hurt the voters of the Third District. When Hammerschmidt officially opened his campaign in early September, he said that a congressman has two jobs: "keeping the country safe and keeping it sound." He planned to do this by supporting plans to reduce foreign aid expenditures and to end as many of Johnson's Great Society programs as possible.[152] One of his twenty second radio ads sums up this aspect of his campaign:

> "The cost of living is still going up. Why? Jim Trimble is a part of the problem. He and others voting with LBJ on virtually every issue have set the stage for a frightening national disaster. You are not being represented in Washington…and I am ready to do something about it."[153]

The apogee of his campaign, however, was when Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford came to stump for Hammerschmidt in late October.

The national Republican Party took greater interest in Hammerschmidt's and, to a lesser extent, Rockefeller's campaigns as polls indicated Arkansans may be willing to elect Republicans. Gerald Ford was sent to northwest Arkansas by the national Republican Party to speak at several local events, while Richard Nixon held a large campaign rally in Fort Smith for Hammerschmidt; during which Rockefeller and several other Republican candidates were also

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[151] John L. Ward Polling Result, Sept. 28, 1966, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, Subseries 1, Box 15, File 34, University of Arkansas Special Collections, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[152] "JPH Formally Opens Campaign," *Fort Smith Times Record*, Sept, 13, 1966.
[153] Hammerschmidt radio campaign advertisement, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, Subseries 1, Box 13, File 19, University of Arkansas Special Collections, University of Arkansas Fayetteville, Arkansas.

given an opportunity to speak. Ford claimed that "The federal government is the cause of inflation with its non-war excessive spending" and repeated several of the Hammerschmidt campaign's criticisms of Trimble.[154] It was, however, the Nixon rally that exceeded all Republican expectations as over three thousand people turned out for the event; so many, in fact, that a second room in the Fort Smith convention center was opened and a PA system set up so that they could listen to the speeches. Nixon spoke for forty-five minutes on the need for Republicans to challenge the Democrats and support Americans whose concerns revolved around "'peace, prices, and crime.'"[155] As Hammerschmidt had dropped the "law and order" rhetoric from his campaign, Nixon's words were more reflective of the national Republican platform rather than something tailored for Fort Smith. However, Nixon supported the Hammerschmidt campaign's focus on inflation by blaming President Johnson for the three dollar increase in shoe prices over the past year and promised that "The Great Society will become the barefoot society if you don't kick the spenders out of Congress."[156] Hammerschmidt then spoke, saying that the Republican Party was the alternative for Democrats disaffected with the government's overreach and that the majority of people were fed up with federal spending. He also spoke on local issues (un-ironically supporting the federally funded Fort Chaffee and Ozarka Dam Project), he spoke against Trimble, but his biggest applause line of the night came when he said he voted for Goldwater.[157] Such support from Nixon and Ford at a crucial time late

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[154] "Rep. Ford Boosts Trimble Opponent," *Fort Smith Times*, Oct, 28, 1966.
[155] Peggy Robertson and Bill Lewis, "Arkansas Can Bring Two-Party System To Life, Nixon Says," *Fort Smith Times*, October 29, 1966.
[156] Bobbie Forster, "Nixon Urges GOP Rally 'Kick the Spenders Out,'" *Arkansas Democrat*, October 29, 1966.
[157] Ibid.; Bill Kennedy, "Nixon Assails LBJ Record in Talk," *Fort Smith Times*, October 29, 1966.

in the campaign when they could have been speaking for other candidates evidences the national party's belief in Hammerschmidt and for Republicans' future prospects in Arkansas.

Newspaper accounts began suggesting that Hammerschmidt had a very good chance of becoming the first Republican to win in the Third District since 1874, which motivated Trimble to belatedly take Hammerschmidt's insurgency more seriously, but his effort was too little too late. Hammerschmidt won the congressional district with 53% or about 9,000 votes.[158] Most of his support came from the urban Republican counties (Sebastian, Washington, and Benton), while Fort Smith awarded Hammerschmidt an even higher sixty-two percent majority.[159] Newspapers suggested Hammerschmidt's fierce campaigning and Trimble's lethargy were the main reasons behind the race's outcome, but that overlooks what Hammerschmidt's pollsters knew; that Hammerschmidt's agenda of pro-business policies, relative silence on racial issues, and personal and fiscal responsibility won him the election.[160] This was the same message the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce had been pushing for eight years that had proven successful in bringing jobs and prosperity to the city. Throughout his campaign, Hammerschmidt ran on his credentials as a business man and his work with the Harrison Chamber of Commerce. He discussed his reservations about accepting federal money for municipal improvements, but that "in this day and age, for cities to grow and compete, it is almost a necessity to accept it."[161] Compared to Jim Trimble, John Paul Hammerschmidt was more in tune with changing political

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[158] 1966 Election Results, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, subseries 1, Box 13, Folder 33, University of Arkansas Special Collections, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[159] 1966 Election Results, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, Subseries I, Box 20, Folder 19.
[160] 1966 campaign material, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, Subseries I, Box 13, Folder, 19. This folder is filled with newspaper clippings about Hammerschmidt's victory.
[161] Campaign letter to Chambers of Commerce around the Third District, November 4, 1966, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, Subseries 1, Box 1, File 3. Similar letters were sent out to banks, savings and loans, city councilmen, and prominent local businessmen.

thought about the purpose of government and the need to support the industrialization of Fort Smith and the region. The other major race of 1966 involved Winthrop Rockefeller who possessed similar, if slightly more progressive, ideas to Hammerschmidt.

Rockefeller's arrival in the state had fanned the hopes of state Republicans. It is not surprising then that he found himself wrapped up in politics soon after settling down at WinRock Farm west of Little Rock. Orval Faubus tapped Rockefeller as a resource to lure industry to the region and, in 1955, appointed Rockefeller director of the recently formed Arkansas Industrial Development Committee (here on AIDC).[162] While not possessing strong speaking abilities or having an outsized personality like many southern politicians, Rockefeller's moderation and name recognition convinced companies to consider relocating to Arkansas for its friendly business environment. During his early years as head of the AIDC, Rockefeller and Faubus got along seemingly well, however the growing respect and acceptance of Rockefeller by Arkansans soon made Faubus suspicious and envious of the New York millionaire.[163] The ideas Rockefeller brought to the AIDC and that became its basis for success were the same type of ideas being developed and adopted by the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce: tout Arkansas' right-to-work laws, low operating costs, and friendly business environment.

He and the AIDC did this mostly through personal contacts and developing broad based programs that they could help implement throughout the state. One of the principal efforts of the AIDC was to create a group of "skilled sales representatives" to push the "AIDC growth concept" of creating a state regulatory environment favorable to business, assuring them that Arkansas possessed the "manpower, location, transportation facilities, electrical power, climate,

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[162] Reed,*Faubus*,139 .
[163] Ibid., 140.

and a host of other factors" to insure profitability.[164] One of the AIDC's first actions was to develop a six point plan for cities to implement in order to attract business that required cooperation between the AIDC and the city government. Much of it involved AIDC doing information gathering statistics on labor, available resources, and helping develop financial planning so that a city could best sell itself to potential industry.[165] Over the course of Rockefeller's career as head of the AIDC, wages for manufacturing increased by eighty-eight percent, while roughly fifty thousand jobs were created. Though originally welcomed by Gov. Faubus, the two had a falling out when Rockefeller criticized Faubus' handling of school integration.[166]

Rockefeller, like many Arkansans, grew disillusioned with Faubus's rule after the Central High crisis and lack of reform in the state, while media coverage convinced him that he possessed the popularity and name recognition to challenge Faubus. Rockefeller brought his family's history of racial moderation to the Arkansas Republican Party, which set it apart from parties in other southern states. Winthrop Rockefeller fundamentally transformed the Arkansas Republican Party, but he would not have succeeded if there were no other Republicans willing to support him. Part of their support was probably opportunistic, but it cannot be denied that many in party officials (John Paul Hammerschmidt most prominent among them) believed in the type of Republicanism Rockefeller represented. This can be no better summarized than through

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[164] AIDC, *Arkansas Industrial Development Committee and its 1956 Advertising Program: A Memorandum Submitted by "U.S. New & World Report,"* Thomas C. Hockersmith Advertising Agency, October 1955.; AIDC Report, Winthrop Rockefeller Papers, Jan. 1963, Series III, Box 14, File 6b, University of Arkansas Little Rock archives at the Arkansas Studies Institute Little Rock, Arkansas.

[165] AIDC, *AIDC a limited edition reprinting the 23 local advertisements run as a public service by the newspapers of Arkansas from January through December, 1959, for the Arkansas Industrial Development Committee*, Feb. 10, 1960, University of Arkansas Special Collections.

[166] Cathy Urwin, *Agenda For Reform: Winthrop Rockefeller As Governor Of Arkansas, 1967-1971* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1991), 27-29.

Rockefeller's 1961 speech to the Republican Central Committee where he laid out the guiding principles of the new Arkansas Republican Parry:

> "We believe that government best discharges its responsibilities for the general welfare of the people by initiating programs that have the maximum of private and local participation and the minimum of centralized expense and control."…"we are Conservatives. While we act, we want it known that our purpose is to conserve ideals and traditions. We seek to conserve our American tradition and resist oppressive centralization of government. We seek to conserve our tradition of a classless society where every citizen can make a success of his life free from inherited handicaps. We seek to conserve our right to speak and read and see the truth – and we reserve the right to ourselves to determine what the truth is.[167]

Though such statements about private rights and local government could be construed as supporting segregation, little in Rockefeller's biography would lend credence to such an interpretation.

Rockefeller believed it was possible to defeat Orval Faubus, who was still associated with massive resistance, as long as he stressed his new brand of Republicanism, but made several rookie mistakes. Rockefeller tried to shore up support with racial conservatives in Arkansas by opposing the Civil Rights Act, but there was little doubt that those white voters motivated primarily by racial animus, would, of course, support Faubus. Rockefeller's campaign lacked a well-developed and experienced campaign organization to answer the many negative attacks hurled by Gov. Faubus. Instead, Rockefeller ran a mostly positive campaign on a platform of creating a "Two Party System" to reduce corruption, improve education, and emphasized his AIDC record.[168] These issues formed the core of his platform throughout his next three campaigns, with his AIDC experience expanded upon to include his successes as governor. On

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[167] Rockefeller speech to the Arkansas Republican Central Committee, May 24, 1961, Winthrop Rockefeller Papers, Series III, Box 14, File 5, University of Arkansas Little Rock archives at the Arkansas Studies Institute Little Rock, Arkansas. Underlined words are his.

[168] Bill Hathorn, "Friendly Rivalry: Winthrop Rockefeller Challenges Orval Faubus in 1964," in *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (Winter, 1994), 459.

the campaign trail, he argued that corruption and lack of development in Arkansas could be linked to a century of one party rule similar to what Remmel had argued in 1956.[169]

He also touted his successes as head of the AIDC to garner support from those whose priority was economic development. Since Rockefeller's assuming AIDC leadership, Arkansas had led the nation in the increase, per capita, in the number of factory openings in the state between 1955 and 1961. Rockefeller claimed that, under his leadership, five hundred and twenty-three plants opened in Arkansas.[170] Without any previous experience in public office, Rockefeller relied upon his name, his platform, and his reputation as a businessman as proof that he could run a state government.

This would serve him well in the campaign as private polling showed that fifty-two percent of likely voters in west and central Arkansas rated industrial development as a very important issue. This was in stark contrast to eastern Arkansas where only twenty-nine percent responded similarly. The company that did the polling noted that "the person who is most apt to be a Republican is a young person with a business connection who was born outside of Arkansas."[171] While Arkansas had seen some migration to the state after World War II, there were certainly not enough to rely solely upon, so the research indicated that Rockefeller must rely upon his business experience to convince voters to switch from Democrat to Republican. Rockefeller also seems to have based his campaign off of this specific suggestion from the company report: "I would

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[169] Winthrop Rockefeller, "Democrats for Rockefeller," Rockefeller Papers, Series III, Box 9, File 1, University of Arkansas Little Rock archives at the Arkansas Studies Institute Little Rock, Arkansas; John Paul Hammerschmidt interview with the author; John Paul Hammerschmidt campaign materials, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Series II, Box 12, Folders, 14 and 31.
[170] AIDC Report, January, 1963, Series III, Box 14, File 6b, Winthrop Rockefeller Papers, University of Arkansas Little Rock archives at the Arkansas Studies Institute Little Rock, Arkansas.
[171] Report from Belden Associates Research and Counsel in Marketing and Public Affairs, Jan. 28th-Feb. 11th, 1964, Series IV, Box 73, File 1a, Winthrop Rockefeller Papers, University of Arkansas Little Rock archives at the Arkansas Studies Institute Little Rock, Arkansas.

suggest a major theme of Jobs and Education (a Future for Arkansas) with more emphasis on jobs (WR has most of the intellectual vote now), and a minor theme of Cleaning up Corruption with appropriate variations around the state." [172] These facts and suggestions molded both Rockefeller's campaign and his eventual two terms as governor.

Recognizing the seriousness of this tactic, Representative Jim Trimble suggested Faubus needed to campaign harder in the Third District than in any previous race "because the Third District is the nearest thing to a two-party district that the state has."[173] Whether Faubus followed Trimble's advice or not is difficult to discern, but, Faubus' attacks on Rockefeller were pointed and personal. Faubus accussed Rockefeller of being an outsider, referenced his scandalous divorce, played up Rockefeller's racial moderation as a negative, and used a story about Rockefeller's supposed desecration of a cemetery in an attempt to paint Rockefeller as an individual who did not share Arkansas' values.[174] Faubus also made baseless accusations regarding the Rockefeller campaign bugging the offices of his political enemies. Additionally, Faubus told voters that WIN (Rockefeller's nickname and campaign slogan) stood for "Wants Integration Now" and linked Winthrop to his brother Nelson's more liberal attitude toward black civil rights.[175] Though Faubus knew his support among middle class urban residents was in trouble, he played up his segregationist past to traditional rural white voters.

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[172] Ibid. There is, unfortunately, no author mentioned on or in the document. It just says that it was compiled by Belden Associates.

[173] Unknown newspaper clipping, MC557, Box 16, Series 8, Box 16, Folder 2, James W. Trimble Family Papers, University of Arkansas Special Collections, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville, AR.

[174] Bumpers, *The Best Lawyer in a One Lawyer Town*, 177-178. The cemetery story grew out of an incident that occurred on Rockefeller's property when a machine operator accidentally ran over a headstone in an overgrown cemetery while preparing a field for Rockefeller. The headstone was repaired, but Faubus made political hay out of it by running a television commercial showing a bulldozer destroying a cemetery.

[175] Hathorn, "Friendly Rivalry," 458-460.

If Fort Smith whites were motivated by racial animosity, Faubus would have continued to win large white majorities. While Faubus won the election by fifty-seven percent he lost Little Rock, Sebastian County, and northwest Arkansas. Fort Smith had been trending Republican for several years and awarded Rockefeller a slim fifty-two percent victory.[176] The 1964 elections were a critical turning point for the Republican Party in Arkansas showing that, with strong candidates, Republicans could seriously threaten established Democrats for public office. Though there were many significant state level issues that compelled voters to turn out, Barry Goldwater's campaign provided momentum for Republicans to become more active in getting out the vote.

The Goldwater-Johnson presidential election did not necessarily influence the Rockefeller campaign because the two candidates represented different wings of the Republican Party, though both did well in Fort Smith. While Goldwater won several southern states, he, unlike Eisenhower and Nixon, did not do well in traditionally Republican northwest Arkansas, but he did find support in Fort Smith winning by almost twenty-five hundred votes.[177] His appeal to the residents of Fort Smith should not be construed as racist support for his statements that the federal government had no right to interfer with segregation. If that were the case, then Fort Smith would have voted for Orval Faubus and would have supported the segregationist Jim Johnson for governor two years later. Goldwater received the most support from Fort Smith residents living in areas with higher incomes, which was reflected in the fact that his largest margins came out of the new and expensive housing developments of Ward 4. Johnson, on the other had, received most of his support from Ward 2; one of the oldest areas of town where

[176] Reed, *Faubus*, 304; 1964 Election results by county microfilm roll MG0023, Arkansas Historical Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas.
[177] Film 1408 E-15-E32, Sec. of State Election Results microfilm, University of Arkansas Library.

working class whites and blacks lived.[178] Poor whites, as argued by Lassiter and Kruse, were first to be forced to integrate and so first to politically realign themselves according to the standard historiography. Yet, in Fort Smith and northwest Arkansas they were least likely to support Rockefeller. Racial animosity does not explain why this region of the South supported a racially moderate gubernatorial candidate. Though Rockefeller and Goldwater lost their campaigns, three Arkansas Republicans found victory at local levels, all of whom were from western and northwest Arkansas.[179] The 1964 election represents the beginning of a trend where candidates who argued for less government and more free enterprise found success in northwest Arkansas and Fort Smith.

Learning from his 1964 defeat, Winthrop Rockefeller worked to increase his base of support over the next two years. Polls indicated he had impressed many voters and had an even better chance at defeating Faubus in 1966. In the interim, Rockefeller marshaled support from moderate Democrats and African Americans in Little Rock (who had voted eighty percent in favor of Rockefeller) looking to unseat Faubus.[180] The voting pattern of African Americans in the 1964 election can be seen partly as the result of the Rockefeller campaign's failure in publicizing his racially moderate position to those outside the capital. Once his views were made known to blacks throughout the state, they became one of his most loyal constituencies even though Rockefeller had opposed the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Rockefeller's campaign stressed the need for African American support and attempted to influence the black vote by targeting community leaders to spread the message that Rockefeller's policies would help black

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[178] Arkansas History Commission, 1964 election results microfilm roll MG 00022.
[179] Hathorn, "Friendly Rivalry," 469-471.
[180] Reed, *Faubus*, 303-304.

communities.[181] While African Americans and moderate Democrats were being groomed by Rockefeller's campaign committee, Gov. Faubus made a surprise announcement that he would not seek reelection. Rockefeller, the Republicans, and the public were stunned as they had always assumed Faubus would seek another term. Both parties scrambled to figure out what candidate they would back and what strategies to employ in the wake of such momentous news.[182]

Jim Johnson, former state senator and Supreme Court justice, defeated his racially moderate fellow justice, Frank Holt, to win the Democratic nomination. Johnson narrowly won that primary by four percentage points in Fort Smith, which Dale Bumpers suggested was the result of moderate Democrats and Republicans voting for Johnson out of the belief that Rockefeller would have an easier time defeating an arch-segregationist.[183] Johnson was the son of a small town grocer, but made his way into politics when he served on Strom Thurmond's 1948 presidential campaign. There he met and was schooled by such southern luminaries as Sen. Richard Russell of Georgia and, especially, Sen. James Eastland of Mississippi. He gained notoriety as a segregationist when he was one of the first to oppose the integration of an elementary school in Hoxie, Arkansas and, later, co-founded one of the first Citizen's Councils in Arkansas. Johnson believed the civil rights movement was the work of communists attempting to undermine Southern society and using African Americans as their willing dupes.

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[181] Undated letter from A. Marriot to Rockefeller 1966 election, Winthrop Rockefeller Papers, Series III, Box 36, File 3a, University of Arkansas Little Rock archives at the Arkansas Studies Institute Little Rock, Arkansas

[182] Bumpers, *The Best Lawyer in a One Lawyer Town*, 178-182.

[183] Ibid., 181; Arkansas History Commission, 1966 election MG 00024.

He was apparently heavily influenced by Sen. Eastland's in this regard and continued holding this belief throughout his life.[184]

Throughout the 1966 campaign, he never disavowed his racism and ran partly on returning Arkansas to its traditional values, which was probably code for segregation. The Rockefeller campaign attacked him in an advertisement the day before the election with a reprinted newspaper story from a KKK rally in Star City where the Grand Dragon issued a statement of support for Jim Johnson, Lurleen Wallace (George Wallace's wife), and Lester Maddox in their gubernatorial races. Johnson replied the next day by saying that, though he was not a racist, he thought "race mixing" had never benefitted anyone.[185] Johnson attacked Rockefeller's character as Faubus had done in 1964, while Rockefeller campaigned on his history of attracting business as chairman of the AIDC and improving Arkansas' business climate. During a radio interview, Rockefeller again reiterated that he was looking to improve industry in Arkansas, but that Johnson was impeding this process by stoking racial fears and animosity.[186] Johnson's attacks centered around portraying Rockefeller as an effete northerner who lacked the common sense possessed by average Arkansans (such as his childishly referring to Rockefeller as "sissy-pants"). Yet, except for the name calling, Johnson's campaign possessed a veneer of respectability. Johnson made standard campaign promises about jobs, state infrastructure, and improved education without providing any concrete details. Rather than run on a strong

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[184] Elizabeth Jacoway, "Jim Johnson of Arkansas: Segregationist Prototype," in *The Role of Ideas In The Civil Rights South*, ed. Ted Owensby (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2002), 138-144.; Urwin, *Agenda For Reform*, 54-55.

[185] Rockefeller advertisement, Southwestern American, Nov. 5, 1966.; Urwin, 54-55.;

[186] Rockefeller Radio Remarks, KTAL, Shreveport, October 10, 1966, Winthrop Rockefeller Papers, Series III, Box 35, File 5, University of Arkansas Little Rock Archives at the Arkansas Studies Institute, Little Rock, Arkansas.

platform, Johnson seemed more interested in acting the "good-ole boy" in an attempt to win votes by presenting himself to be a typical Arkansan.[187]

Rockefeller's campaign had spent the previous two years improving his messaging to African Americans throughout the state, so that they became one of Rockefeller's key constituencies. Not only did Rockefeller pursue a course of racial moderation, he promised that he would appoint more African Americans to state positions than any previous governor, which he accomplished by September, 1967 by hiring one hundred fifty-six African Americans to various positions around the state.[188] At the same time, Rockefeller spent a great deal of time, money, and effort assuring Democratic voters it was okay to split their ticket. He promised that, unlike other administrations, he would not replace his predecessor's appointees in government with his supporters (similar to the old spoils system of 19th century politics). Rather, those that were not doing a good job (mostly political appointees) would be replaced by individuals who had succeeded in lower positions. Appointment based on merit went hand in hand with Rockefeller's campaign to fight corruption within the government as evidenced by the deplorable prison system and illegal, but unofficially condoned, gambling in Hot Springs.[189]

Overall, his campaign can be summed up with a promise to improve the lives of Arkansans by attracting business, which would have spoken directly to the people of Fort Smith and their growing support for industrialization. This could be accomplished by ending corruption, improving state institutions, enhancing the image of the state through racial moderation, and

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[187] Various political speeches and speech notes, 1966 campaign, Winthrop Rockefeller Papers, Series III, Box 21, File 1a, Box 22, Files 1a, 1b, Box 30, Files 1 and 3, Box 36, Files 4 and 5, University of Arkansas Little Rock Archives at the Arkansas Studies Institute, Little Rock, Arkansas.

[188] Urwin, *Agenda For Reform*, 104-105.

[189] Various political speeches and campaign material, Winthrop Rockefeller Papers, Series III, Box 153, Files 4, 5, and 6, Box 154, File 4, and Box 155, File 1, University of Arkansas Little Rock Archives at the Arkansas Studies Institute, Little Rock Arkansas.

creating a business friendly environment; all of which were tied into Rockefeller's ethos of personal and fiscal responsibility. This was exactly the message that the people of Fort Smith and western Arkansas wanted to hear and so gave their support to Rockefeller by wide margins. One surprising example of Rockefeller's attempt at spreading the business friendly ethos is shown by his October, 1966 meeting with AFL-CIO to solicit their support. An open supporter of Arkansas' Right-To-Work Law, Rockefeller argued that:

> "Before you can organize you must have something to organize. Before we can have the wage increases we so desperately needed, there must be competition for the workingman's services. I say to you in all humility that I can do more to further the economic progress of Arkansas—to increase the per capita income if I am elected governor—than my opponent."

Rockefeller followed this up by exclaiming that he believed in collective bargaining rights, the minimum wage, and promised that his administration would not try to curtail either.[190] Attempting to woo labor would have been difficult for Rockefeller as Jim Johnson had been a supporter of labor since his time as a state senator.

Despite Rockefeller's attempts at courting labor, it was his economic policies, not racial conservatism that won him the greatest support in Fort Smith. Richard Nixon supported Rockefeller's racially moderate position when being interviewed on *Meet the Press* in late October by saying that Jim Johnson was "riding the white backlash."[191] At the Fort Smith political rally where Nixon supported Hammerschmidt, Rockefeller spoke out against Jim Johnson and let the audience know that the Republican Party "recognizes the value of the free

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[190] Speech October 22, 1966 Hotel Marion, Little Rock, AR, Remarks to AFL-CIO Cope Convention, Winthrop Rockefeller Papers, Series III, Box 36, File 5, University of Arkansas Little Rock Archives at the Arkansas Studies Institute, Little Rock Arkansas.
[191] Bill Kennedy, "Nixon Speaks Here Tonight," *Fort Smith Times Record*, October 28, 1966.

enterprise system."[192] Amazingly, Johnson only won a single ward (Ward 2) in Fort Smith and that by approximately fifty votes. The support that Fort Smith voters gave to Rockefeller can, in no way, be attributed to animosity toward the national Democrats' support for black civil rights.

It is clear from Fort Smith's support of Rockefeller and Hammerschmidt against the segregationist Jim Johnson and Jim Trimble (signer the Southern Manifesto and opponent of the 1964 Civil Rights Act) that political realignment in the city was not based on animosity toward the national Democratic Party's support of African American civil rights. Political realignment in Arkansas did not simply start with the election of 1966; rather it was the culmination of well over a decade of political, social, and economic developments throughout Arkansas. It began in Fort Smith with the presidential election of 1952 and continued, with fits and starts, throughout the rest of the 1950s well before either party differed much from each other on questions of race and the civil rights movement. Rather, considering the events surrounding the integration of Central High, the Democratic Party of Arkansas remained the party of resistance to integration. Despite the power of the Arkansas Democratic Party, economic and political changes throughout Arkansas, but especially in western Arkansas, created a new context in which Arkansas politics would be played out.

The 1960s were a defining period in Arkansas political history when Republican Party was restructured under John Paul Hammerschmidt and others, the old Faubus machine lost power, and the number of Republican candidates steadily increased. On a practical level, during Hammerschmidt's and Rockefeller's first two terms, they controlled much of the patronage positions, both federal and state, in Arkansas.[193] None of this would have been possible without

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[192] Peggy Robertson and Bill Lewis, "Arkansas Can Bring Two-Party System To Life, Nixon Says," *Fort Smith Times Record,* October 29, 1966."
[193] Urwin, *Agenda For Reform,*168-169.

the increasing support of the people of Fort Smith for Republican policies and a growing disillusionment with the Democratic establishment responsible for the Little Rock Crisis which caused much of the nation to see Arkansas as backward and racist. Time and the efforts of both African Americans and white moderates brought about the fall of the Faubus political machine. However, race alone did not cause this fall. Rather, the adoption of a pro-business ideology based upon the need for progressive institutional reform and attracting outside money to the state drew support away from the Democrats. The people of Fort Smith and northwest Arkansas, by and large, were not swayed by the racist platforms of Jim Johnson and George Wallace who represented a past filled with poverty and corruption. Such platforms may have appealed to white individuals in the delta region of Arkansas who failed to benefit from the arrival of industry, but Republicans and moderate Democrats understood the South and the nation were changing. The people of Fort Smith saw that future growth and prosperity could be obtained by the adoption of a pro-business ideology that sought to both lessen government regulation, while attracting outsiders through the creation of a more moderate and integrated society. To achieve that goal, they began to change their voting patterns. First, they supported Eisenhower and continued to support Republicans for president. Then, they voted for pro-business racial moderates to combat the damage done by Orval Faubus and his machine. Fort Smith voters began supporting the ever increasing numbers of Republicans running for office at the local, state, and federal level with the majority of voters doing so ever since.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Fort Smith saw itself as an up and coming city of the future. Its citizens prospered and were represented by those who were expected to governern in the same efficiency driven manner that supposedly pervades the corporate world. The Chamber of Commerce espoused the notion that a person prospered because of their intelligence, talent, and work ethic and not because of any advantage conferred by birth or circumstance. Industry moved to Fort Smith because the people of Fort Smith were willing to work. Many in Fort Smith began to think that business helped to guarantee a freer and more equal society. It was a grand ideology that, in many ways, harnessed the American Dream as a way of being acceptable to the citizens of Fort Smith and the Sunbelt. It was an optimistic ideology that melded well with the United States' self-perceived role as guardian of freedom and liberty across the globe.

This faith in American execptionalism caused many to overlook problems in the community. In Fort Smith, the white racial majority gave little credence to the idea of redressing the systemic bias faced by African Americans even after Jim Crow laws had been removed. Such an ideology opposed the belief that the government needed to address racial problems in American society.[194] Government was seen as almost inherently wasteful and something that needed to be run as a results oriented business.[195] The leadership of the city and the citizens who voted repeateadly for pro-business candidates came to believe that the role of government at all levels was to aid in

[194] Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 303-304.
[195] C.F. Byrns, "Off The Record," *Southwestern American*, Apr. 23, 1965.

developing transportation networks, implement policies to attract business, and refrain from regulating corporations as much as possible.

In ways similar to other cities across the Sunbelt, Fort Smith found it could attract better paying jobs by promoting an anti-union climate, labor rich environment, and pro-business legislation. This strategy was successful for nearly forty years before economic and technological changes altered the U.S. manufacturing sector in the 1990s. Though factory expansions slowed in the 1980s, plenty of jobs existed that paid a living wage that did not require higher education. Westark Community College provided education at the vocational level and for jobs requiring more skill such as nursing or electronics for those workers looking to work at more skilled blue collar type work. Civic and business leaders attempted to promote industrial and commercial advances by both imitating successful programs of emerging Sunbelt metropolises and establishing innovative programs themselves.

While very similar in some respects to other Sunbelt metropolises, Fort Smith had some unique characteristics that both aided and hindered its growth and prosperity, yet many adopted the conservative business based ideology that had developed throughout the Sunbelt. Unlike Atlanta, Dallas, or Phoenix, Fort Smith did not experience the income draining suburbanization allowing most of the public's tax dollars to stay in the city. Most arriving industry were not oriented toward technology, but, rather, basic metal bending industries and food processing. This is understandable as the region lacked an educated labor force and did not possess the political weight or population to persuade the federal government to invest in the city's industrial development during World War II. Rather then having white collar workers relocate to the city to take advantage high-tech industry like Charlottesville or Dallas, Fort Smith experienced the arrival of blue collar workers from surrounding regions and some northerners whose jobs had

moved south. Despite recent works looking at grassroots movements that began in churches, schools, and neighborhoods, Fort Smith's political realignment occurred partly on the urging of civic and business leaders who convinced the population that their ideology would provide more advantages than their previous reliance upon the federal government. The real success of this promotion came with the arrival of industrial jobs to the city. Once people could see the concrete results achieved by the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce, they began supporting the types of Republican candidates who promised to bring industry to Arkansas and whose ideologies mirrored that of chamber members. Success was not simply measured by how many jobs there were, but also by how much money industry brought it. By 1957, the city had an average income of $1,750; the highest in the state.[196]

The Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce revolutionized its own understanding of its role in the community. Its members changed from passivily accepting the role the federal government, through Camp Chaffee, as guarantor of prosperity to an aggressive organization seeking to attract industry to the city. Success in industrializing the city determined the city's economic, social, and political development. Chamber members' quiet coup succeeded due to the chamber's ability to convince an already favorably inclined populace that government run on business principles provided the best services, had the least amount of waste, and (most importantly) brought prosperity to the community. The elections of 1966 were the result of years of budding support for such ideologies espoused by the Republican Party. After many starts and stops, Republican political realignment largely hinged on finding the right candidates.

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[196] Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, vol. 4, no. 11, November 1957. Fort Smith had conducted a special census on its own to understand the effects of the 5th Armored Division's being decommissioned.

John Paul Hammerschmidt and Winthrop Rockefeller were exactly the kind of individuals able to adapt to and shape the changing economic and political environment of Arkansas. When viewing the extremely conservative modern Republican Party and the centrist moderate Arkansas Republicans of the 1960s, it is sometimes difficult to see the connection between then and now. It is equally difficult to believe that the Republican Party of Arkansas in 1966 would have seemed very progressive compared to the traditional southern Democrats. It was this progressivism that attracted many voters to the party in the first place. Winthrop Rockefeller's and John Paul Hammerschmidt's pro-business moderation allowed them to carry Fort Smith and much of northwest Arkansas and mold that region into a Republican stronghold. Their promises of prosperity and forward thinking resonated with an area that did not have the same ratios between whites and blacks, which limited the degree to which integration affected the community as a whole (poor whites still faced integration though). More importantly, it should be understood that it is important to take seriously the rhetoric of Rockefeller and Hammerschmidt and how it played to Arkansans. For the people of Fort Smith and the surrounding rural region, neither the New Deal nor federal military spending had brought about sustained prosperity; anti-unionism, deregulation, and the industrial bond program did. This prosperity came as free from racial concerns as possible to find in the South because there were fewer African Americans in the region, not because they were better people.

Republican political realignment began in Arkansas in the 1950s by making gains in Fort Smith, Little Rock, Hot Springs, and northwest Arkansas. By 1966, western and northwest Arkansas became the strongest base of support for Republicans in Arkansas. Fort Smith's support was based on their adoption of pro-business ideology and not a reaction to (either openly or covertly) the racial issues playing out in the nation at that time. This ideological adoption was

an expression of the desire by the people to attract industry and improve their lives as a direct result of losing the city's main economic engine: Fort Chaffee. The economic instability that the military base caused over its seventeen year existence led city leaders to abandon their reliance on the federal government. Their slow but successful start at industrialization produced a city full of grand visions of growth and prosperity. This prosperity reached its peak in the late 1960s and 1970s, but throughout the 1980s industrial development stagnated. In the late 1990s industries began an exodus abroad looking for lower manufacturing costs just as northern industries had done in the 1960s by moving to the South.

When looking back on the deindustrialization of the United States, it is difficult not to see the trend beginning with the actions of southern states in the Great Depression and post-war years. It must be remembered that in the 1950s and 1960s no one would have predicted the movement of jobs to Mexico, India, and China. All three faced major economic and political instability and embraced socialist policies (China more obviously than the other two). In the 1960s, few could have fathomed that pushing an American pro-business ideology would lead to Ronald Reagan's triumph over Jimmy Carter, Newt Gingrich and the Contract With America, or the rise of neo-conservatives.

The modern Republican Party is a combination of conservative economic theory and social beliefs formed from the coalition of Sunbelt Republicans. Though Fort Smith would later adopt social conservatism as part of its philosophy, its support for Republican principles originated in its embrace of a pro-business ideology and a view of the federal government as a fickle friend at best. Fort Smith had experienced economic hardships throughout its history with the comings and goings of the federal government; first with the origional fort, then with the federal court under Judge Parker, and finally with the openings and closings of Fort Chaffee. To survive, the

people of Fort Smith turned to the business community and put their hopes and faith in luring northern industry south. The promises that Reagan made in 1980 to restore faith in the American system and to unleash the transformative power of business through deregulation had its basis in the same promises made by the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce to the people of Fort Smith in the late 1950s. At his first inaugural address, when Ronald Reagan said: "In this present crisis, Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem," he espoused an idea that the people of Fort Smith had come to believe in twenty years before, even if this did not apply to those expenditures that benefitted the city and its people.[197]

[197] Ronald Reagan, "1st Inaugural Address," Jan. 20th, 1981, video recording, accessed 7/5/11, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, http://www.reaganfoundation.org.

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