



Faithful Progress

A Newsletter for Religiously Progressive Oklahomans

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

DECEMBER 2013

Why I Support the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign

By Bruce Prescott

I support the Sierra Club's "Beyond Coal" campaign for four reasons. Those reasons are religious, humanitarian, ecological and economic.

Religiously, I am a Baptist minister. As a Christian I believe that we are to be responsible stewards and caregivers of all that God created. Nothing connected with the mining and burning of coal is associated with responsible stewardship. Coal mining destroys mountainsides and pollutes the water at a time when clean water is becoming an increasingly precious resource.

For humanitarian reasons I am opposed to using coal to generate power because it fills the air with mercury, sulfur and particulates. These pollutants are bad for everyone's health and are particularly dangerous for people with asthma, heart disease and lung diseases.

100,000 children in Oklahoma have asthma. 365,000 adults in Oklahoma have asthma. A lot of families here have at least one member of their family with the condition. My family



is no exception. My wife has asthma, diabetes, and heart disease. Pollution from coal aggravates all of these conditions. That means that the quality of the air we breathe is of utmost importance to my family and myself.

We owe our wives, our children and our grandchildren the cleanest air and water that we can give them. They deserve nothing less than the very best. That will require that we exercise the greatest caution in using sources of energy that will poison our planet.

Ecologically, I am opposed to burning coal to generate power because the same pol-

lutants that are bad for human health are bad for plants, animals, and the entire planet. Coal fired power plants are a major source of the carbon dioxide that is causing the global warming that is melting the ice caps and changing weather patterns all over the world.

Economically, I am opposed to spending nearly a half-billion dollars every year to purchase coal from other states when we have cleaner, cheaper and healthier sources of energy in abundant supply right here in Oklahoma. Natural gas, wind, and solar energy is abundant in Oklahoma. They represent the energy sources of the future. It is time to retire or retrofit all of our coal fired power plants.

I strongly encourage every Oklahoman to tell our elected leaders and our power companies that we want them to make the transition away from coal and toward cleaner sources of energy as soon as possible.

Our health and the health of our families depends on it.

Inside this issue:

Rise of the Religious Right in Oklahoma (Part Two)	2
Who's Who in the Religious Right (Part One)	3
Calling for Convicted Civility	4



**BEYOND
COAL**

Racism, the IRS and the Rise of the Religious Right

Dr. Bruce Prescott

Part one in our series on “The Rise of the Religious Right in Oklahoma” noted that opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment propelled many of Oklahoma’s conservative evangelical women into political action for the first time. The unexpected success of their efforts served to embolden religious conservatives around the country who believed that the government was interfering with their traditional values in other ways.

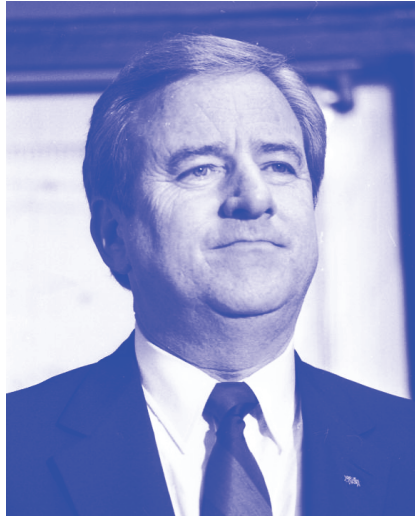
In 1972, the same year that Oklahoma became the first state to defeat the ERA, the U.S. Supreme Court rendered its *Green vs. Connally* decision. It ruled that institutions practicing racial segregation are not charitable. Such institutions no longer had standing as tax exempt charities.

In 1975, the IRS revoked Bob Jones University’s tax exempt status because it prohibited interracial dating and marriages among its students. The South Carolina school filed suit to retain its tax exemption.



Time Magazine pronounced 1976 “The Year of the Evangelical” and Jimmy Carter, a “born again” Southern Baptist, was elected President. Many reports attributed his election to a surge in political involvement among conservative evangelicals.

Oklahoma, however, was not among the states that Carter won. At least some of the credit for his narrow defeat in the state could be attributed to the political efforts of some of the same conservative evangelical women who had defeated the ERA. This time it was their opposition to Carter’s running mate’s efforts to secure federal funding to help working mothers with after-school child care.

In 1971, Mondale sponsored a bill that passed congress but was vetoed by President Nixon. By 1975, three out of every five mothers in the nation were in the workforce. His bill was poised to pass again in 1975.



Jerry Falwell (1933-2007)

Anti-ERA forces said Mondale’s bill undermined the family and parental authority. They claimed  parents would not even be able to  make their kids take out the garbage. In Oklahoma, they were successful in persuading the state’s PTA council to oppose Mondale’s efforts. Mondale’s bill passed in the Senate but died in the House.

By 1979 conservative evangelicals across the country were lining up with Oklahoma’s religious conservatives to oppose a second term for Carter and Mondale. Inspired by the example of the conservative Oklahoma women who opposed the ERA, many of them felt compelled to organize politically to preserve their traditional values. This time the values they were preserving involved the racist overtones of Southern culture as well as the purity of their patriarchal family life.

Many Southern evangelicals assumed that President Carter, a child of the South, would assist Bob Jones University in its attempt to preserve its tax exempt status. They felt betrayed when his administration weighed in against the school.

A number of prominent preachers and evangelists determined to organize and actively oppose Carter’s re-election. As many of them tell their story, abortion was the issue that compelled to become active politically. That account, however, does not square with the testimony of political activists like Paul Weyrich, a right-wing organizer who had been working for nearly a decade to enlist evangelicals in politics (see quotation on page 3).

First and most prominent among a number of premier think tanks and organizations established by Weyrich was the Heritage Foundation. It was founded with funding from Colorado beer magnate Joseph Coors, Pennsylvania banking billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife, and Oklahoma oil and gas tycoon Edward E. Noble.

Weyrich was also a co-founder of the Moral Majority. In fact, he is credited with devising the name for the organization. He came up with the name in 1979 as he other “New Right” leaders met with Jerry Falwell to convince Falwell to lead an organization that would mobilize fundamentalist Christians to vote for GOP candidates.

Ironically, Edward E. Noble was defeated in the 1980 GOP primary for a Senate seat by a thirty-two year old Oklahoman concerned about cutting taxes and reducing what he believed to be government hostility to religion. Ruth Murray Brown, former professor of political science and sociology at the University of Oklahoma, credits Don Nickles’ election, the youngest Republican ever elected to the U.S. Senate, to the combined influence of the Anti-ERA forces and the Moral Majority in Oklahoma.

*Next Issue: Part Three —
Southern Baptists and the
Rise of the Religious Right in Oklahoma.*



Paul Weyrich (1942-2008)

Who's Who in the Religious Right

Paul Weyrich, a Catholic deacon, was a key organizer of the self-described "New Right." He founded think tanks and organizations that have profoundly influenced politics in the U.S.

Founded by Weyrich in 1973, the Heritage Foundation has become one of the most influential think tanks in American politics. Currently, under the leadership of former South Carolina Senator Jim DeMint, the Foundation promotes the tea party agenda calling for a sustained government shutdown and risking a potentially catastrophic default on the national debt.

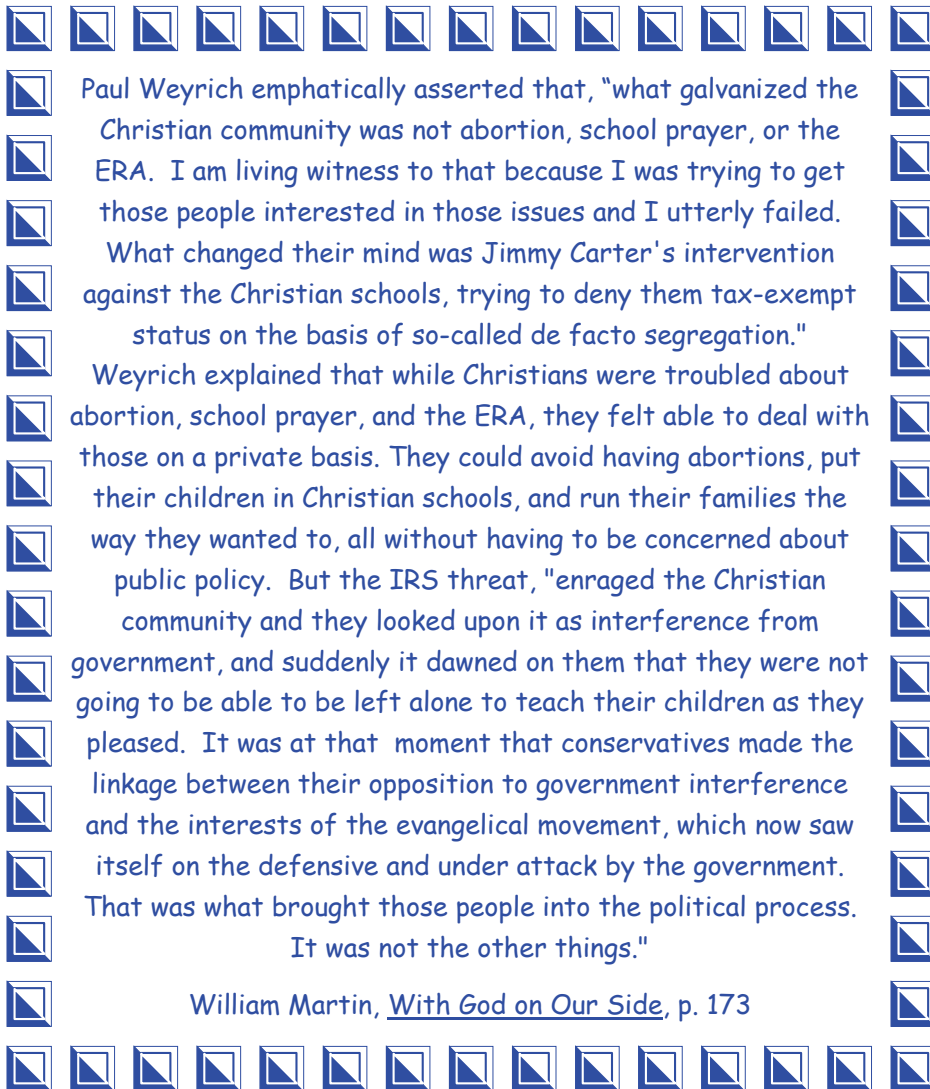
In 1973 Weyrich helped found the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) which is an organization of politically conservative state legislators. The organization drafts model legislation reducing corporate regulation, promoting tax cuts and school vouchers, and tightening voter identification laws. Recent estimates say that as many as 200 bills drafted by ALEC are being passed each year in state legislatures.

He established the Free Congress Foundation in 1974 to train conservatives in the basic techniques of political action and election campaigning.

In 1977 Weyrich co-founded an organization called Christian Voice to mobilize Christian voters to support candidates with conservative values. It initiated the use of "candidate score cards" and "congressional report cards" to guide Christians toward candidates with approved values.

In 1979 Weyrich was one of the founders of the Moral Majority. Its mission was to get fundamentalist Christians out-to-vote and mobilize them for political action.

In 1981 Weyrich co-founded the Council for National Policy (CNP) with Tim LaHaye. LaHaye is the author of the "Left Behind" series of books. The CNP is a secretive, exclusively conservative Christian lobbying group that meets three times a year. They bring influential conservative Christian leaders together behind closed doors with America's most powerful conservative politicians, journalists, lawyers, and industrialists to strategize about politics and public policy. Membership is by invitation only and annual dues are several thousand dollars. Guests attend meetings only with the unanimous approval of the executive committee. The membership list of the CNP is a veritable Who's Who of the Religious Right



Paul Weyrich emphatically asserted that, "what galvanized the Christian community was not abortion, school prayer, or the ERA. I am living witness to that because I was trying to get those people interested in those issues and I utterly failed. What changed their mind was Jimmy Carter's intervention against the Christian schools, trying to deny them tax-exempt status on the basis of so-called de facto segregation." Weyrich explained that while Christians were troubled about abortion, school prayer, and the ERA, they felt able to deal with those on a private basis. They could avoid having abortions, put their children in Christian schools, and run their families the way they wanted to, all without having to be concerned about public policy. But the IRS threat, "enraged the Christian community and they looked upon it as interference from government, and suddenly it dawned on them that they were not going to be able to be left alone to teach their children as they pleased. It was at that moment that conservatives made the linkage between their opposition to government interference and the interests of the evangelical movement, which now saw itself on the defensive and under attack by the government. That was what brought those people into the political process. It was not the other things."

William Martin, *With God on Our Side*, p. 173



**P.O. Box 6371
Norman, Oklahoma 73070**

**Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Oklahoma City, OK
Permit No. 1999**

**VISIT OUR BLOG!
OKFAITH.BLOGSPOT.COM**

The Oklahoma Faith Network is a project of
Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists
bprescott@mainstreambaptists.org

Calling for Convicted Civility

Dr. Martin Marty, America's premier church historian, once issued a call for a "convicted civility." He said, "People who have strong convictions these days aren't very civil, and people who are civil often don't have very strong convictions. What we need is 'convicted civility.'"

Democracies depend upon citizens who conscientiously participate in political processes. They need citizens who are well informed, who engage in civil dialogue and debate about the issues, and who are concerned to promote the common good for all members of society.

Unfortunately, our society is currently beset by citizens who are preoccupied with their own personal interests. Many are either uninformed or misinformed whenever they engage in political processes.

The Oklahoma Faith Network exists to promote a fully informed interfaith network of citizens who are concerned about the common good and who engage in political processes with a convicted civility.

We encourage those who are of like mind to join us.

**This is our final
complimentary issue.**

**Please become
a member of the
Oklahoma Faith Network**