

Thoughts on the Legacy of Nelson Rockefeller

John H. Hinderaker '71

To many observers, the Republican Party's geographical shift west and south and ideological shift toward conservatism over the past few decades have spelled the demise of the Rockefeller Republican. Today's prominent Republicans, including those from the Northeast, like Mitt Romney and Rudy Giuliani, nearly universally portray themselves as heirs of Ronald Reagan, not Nelson Rockefeller. The conventional wisdom holds that the political defeat of the Rockefeller Republicans in the 1970s represented the defeat of the center—part of a process in which both parties came to be controlled by their more extreme wings.

But the highly partisan tone of political discourse today disguises the fact that the two major parties are as close together ideologically as they ever have been in American history. Far from being endangered, the political center is dominant.

The relatively narrow gulf that currently separates the major parties is illustrated by the last two administrations. To anyone who lived through the 1950s and 1960s, it is remarkable to have observed a Democratic administration whose proudest achievements were low interest rates and a prolonged boom in the stock market. Meanwhile, we have witnessed a Republican administration and a Republican Congress that presided over unprecedented levels of federal spending and, with measures like No Child Left Behind, extended federal policy into areas that traditionally have been the province of the states.

There are, of course, areas of significant difference between the political parties and between those who call themselves conservatives and liberals. The use of American military power abroad and the extent to which the federal government should control its citizens' medical care are probably the most hotly disputed issues. But these issues do not involve fundamental philosophical differences. Which is another way of saying that the center, and not any political or philosophical extremes, currently dominates American politics.

If that thesis is correct, the implications for Nelson Rockefeller's legacy are considerable. In the 1960s, there were moderates and hard-liners on both sides of the political spectrum. With 40 years' perspective, it is clear that on both



sides, it was the moderates—the center-right and center-left—who prevailed and shaped today's political landscape.

Far from being the leader of an extinct movement, Nelson Rockefeller left a rich legacy. His intellectual and political heirs are to be found in both political parties. If his influence is often overlooked, it is probably because the views for which he contended have passed into the national consensus and therefore are not part of our current political debate.

In foreign policy, Rockefeller was an internationalist, although internationalism was by no means a universal perspective, either on the right or on the left, during his time. Over much of our history, isolationism has been espoused by many political leaders and has been the *de facto* position of one or the other of our parties. Today, internationalism is the common assumption of the leadership of both parties. The parties tend to differ on the weight given to various tools of foreign policy, but no mainstream figure in either party questions the need to be fully engaged abroad.

In domestic policy, Rockefeller's most fundamental difference from his conservative rivals was his more expansive view of the role of government and his willingness to spend money and, if necessary, raise taxes. As governor of New

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Nelson Rockefeller during a campaign stop at Dartmouth in 1964

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York, he oversaw a public works boom and expanded welfare programs. At the same time, he was strongly pro-business, which the liberals of his time were not. The Rockefeller Republicans were generally viewed not as hostile to the Democrats' government programs, but as committed to executing them more efficiently and more effectively than the liberals were willing or able to do.

Nelson Rockefeller also was a leading proponent of environmental conservation. He oversaw creation of New York's Adirondack Park Agency, an early instance of mixed-use conservation with both public and private components. Again, Rockefeller's environmental policies (which were not, of course, unique to him) comprise an important part of today's bipartisan consensus.

In the years since Nelson Rockefeller retired from public life, there has been a convergence between the political parties and a general movement toward the center of the political spectrum. Republicans no longer are trying to undo the New Deal, and Democrats no longer dream of a socialist future. Republicans are resigned to an expanding federal role in domestic affairs, and Democrats look for ways to help American business. If there is any one politician of his time whose legacy can be traced in the consensus politics of our time, it is Nelson Rockefeller.

A graduate of Harvard Law School, John H. Hinderaker '71, J.D. has had a broad-based and varied commercial litigation practice for 30 years. He is a lawyer and partner with the Minneapolis law firm Faegre & Benson LLP. Minnesota Law and Politics has recognized him as one of the state's "Super Lawyers" and named him one of the top 40 commercial litigators in Minnesota. For more than a decade, Hinderaker and his former law partner, Scott Johnson, have written articles on public policy issues for publication in National Review, The American Enterprise, American Experiment Quarterly, and newspapers across the country. Hinderaker is on the Rockefeller Center Board of Visitors. He contributes to a blog at <http://www.powerline blog.com>.



Centennial Events

Christine Todd Whitman

President, Whitman Strategy Group

Nelson Rockefeller: Still Influencing People, Power, and Politics

THURSDAY, APRIL 24

4:00 P.M. • MOORE THEATRE, HOPKINS CENTER

Richard Norton Smith

Scholar-in-Residence, George Mason University

The Surprising Nelson Rockefeller

FRIDAY, APRIL 25

4:30 P.M. • LOEW AUDITORIUM, HOOD MUSEUM

Richard D. Parsons

Chair of the Board and former CEO, Time Warner

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7

4:30 P.M. • FILENE AUDITORIUM

A Panel on Poverty and Welfare

MONDAY, MAY 19

4:30 P.M. • 3 ROCKEFELLER HALL

Going to Extremes: The Fate of the Political Center in American Politics

THURSDAY, JUNE 19–SATURDAY, JUNE 21

A Conference convened by Ronald G. Shaiko

Senior Fellow and Associate Director for Curricular and Research Programs, Rockefeller Center, Dartmouth College

GOING TO EXTREMES: THE FATE OF THE POLITICAL CENTER IN AMERICAN POLITICS

June 19 to June 21, 2008

The Rockefeller Center will host a faculty research conference, "Going to Extremes: The Fate of the Political Center in American Politics." The conference will bring scholars from across the country to the Rockefeller Center to present their research on the impact of political polarization on democratic governance and political representation. Professor Ronald G. Shaiko, senior fellow and associate director for curricular and research programs, is convening the conference. For more on the conference, visit <http://rockefeller.dartmouth.edu/centennial/gte.html>.

Centennial Speakers

Christine Todd Whitman

President, Whitman Strategy Group

Christine Todd Whitman is president of Whitman Strategy Group, a consulting firm that specializes in energy and environmental issues. She served as



New Jersey's 50th governor—the state's first woman governor—from 1994 to 2001 and was recognized by the Natural Resources Defense Council for instituting the most comprehensive beach monitoring system in the nation. Following her service as governor, she was appointed administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency by President George W. Bush. As EPA administrator, 2001–03, she promoted common-sense environmental improvements, such as watershed-based water-protection policies, and championed regulations requiring non-road diesel engines to reduce sulfur emissions by more than 95 percent. She also established the first federal program to promote redevelopment and reuse of “brownfields”—previously contaminated industrial sites.

Whitman is the author of *It's My Party Too: The Battle for the Heart of the GOP and the Future of America*, a *New York Times* best seller published in 2005. Currently, she co-chairs the Republican Leadership Council with former senator John Danforth (R-MO) and Lt. Gov. Michael Steele (R-MD). She is on the Eisenhower Fellowships board of trustees, the Council on Foreign Relations board of directors, and the Park City Center for Public Policy Governors Board. She also serves as an

advisor to the Aspen-Rodel Fellowships program and co-chairs the Clean and Safe Energy Coalition with Greenpeace co-founder Patrick Moore.

Whitman holds an A.B. from Wheaton College.

Richard D. Parsons

Chair of the Board and Former CEO, Time Warner

Richard D. Parsons is chair of the board of multimedia corporation Time Warner, a position he has held since 2003. He joined Time Warner as president in February 1995, later served as the company's co-chief operating officer, and, in May 2002, was appointed chief executive officer. As CEO, he led Time Warner's turnaround and set the company on a solid path toward achieving sustainable growth. In the process, he strengthened the company's balance sheet, simplified its corporate structure, and carried out a disciplined approach to realigning the company's portfolio of assets to improve returns. In its January 2005 report on America's best CEOs, *Institutional Investor* magazine named him the entertainment industry's top CEO.

Before joining Time Warner, Parsons was chairman and chief executive officer of Dime Bancorp Inc., one of the largest thrift institutions in the United States. Previously, he was the managing partner of New York law firm Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, and he held various positions in



state and federal government, including as counsel for Nelson Rockefeller and as senior White House aide under President Gerald Ford.

He is co-chair of the NYC mayor's Commission for Economic Opportunity, chair emeritus of the Partnership for New York City, and chair of the Apollo Theater Foundation. He serves on the boards of Howard University, the Museum of Modern Art, and the American Museum of Natural History.

He received an undergraduate degree at University of Hawaii and his legal training at Union University's Albany Law School.



Richard Norton Smith

Scholar-in-Residence, George Mason University

Richard Norton Smith is a familiar face to viewers of C-SPAN, ABC, and *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. A 1975 Harvard University graduate, Smith is the author of eight books, including *Thomas E. Dewey and His Times*, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1983. Prior to accepting an appointment in 2006 as scholar-in-residence at George Mason University's Department of History and Art History and School of Public Policy, he served as director of the Hoover, Eisenhower, Reagan, Ford, and Lincoln presidential libraries. Presently working on a definitive biography of Nelson A. Rockefeller, Smith is also part of the team creating ambitious new exhibits for Ford's Theatre.

“It is essential that we enable young people to see themselves as participants in one of the most exciting eras in history and to have a sense of purpose in relation to it.”

These words by Nelson Rockefeller challenged a generation to seek careers for the common good. Like the man for whom it is named, the Rockefeller Center stands against the prevailing tide of cynicism and indifference. Through a comprehensive program of study, both in and out of the classroom, the Center aims to spark and nurture a lasting interest in civic engagement and public policy among Dartmouth students.

First-Year Initiative. The Initiative's main objective is to build significant curricular and co-curricular skills and opportunities early in Dartmouth students' experience so that they can grow and apply this knowledge in their subsequent three years. First-year students are encouraged to begin their public policy minors by enrolling in a signature introductory course on the policy-making process in the winter term and to complete the methods prerequisite to the minor. Select students are then paired with Dartmouth alumni mentors in summer internships in Washington, D.C.



“The First-Year Fellowship definitely enhanced my Dartmouth experience. It really helped me realize what I want to do with my life, which helped me structure my Dartmouth plans and goals to pursue a public policy minor and focus on social policy-related issues.”

—Jessica Guthrie '10

Public Policy Minor. The public policy minor provides a unique opportunity to study a policy issue thematically, combining courses offered by the Center with those from several departments. Guided by the Center's staff, students design a plan of study and research that allows them to comprehensively explore a specific problem in the realm of public policy, including topics from law, health, education, poverty, and the environment.



“Nowhere else can undergraduate students get an opportunity to directly influence the formation of policy, especially in the real world. Due to the practical nature of the programs and the diversity of policy issues discussed, the public policy minor is a fantastic complement to your major, no matter what your interests may be.”

—Brian McMillan '08

The Policy Research Shop. Students directly contribute to the public policy debate in Vermont and New Hampshire by providing valuable, non-partisan research to legislators on critical issues facing each state. Projects begin in a fall term public policy research course and often culminate with testimony before state legislative committees during the winter and spring.



“The Policy Research Shop has given me the unique opportunity to obtain practical experience doing actual policy research. I found testifying in front of the Vermont State Legislature to be particularly rewarding because I could not only see how the legislative process works firsthand but also participate in that process. Undergraduates rarely have the chance to apply their academic efforts to real issues, but working in the PRS has allowed me to do exactly that.”

—Allyson Bennett '10

Civic Skills Training. This five-day intensive program, offered three times a year in Washington, D.C., provides a group of 12 to 15 students with practical skills to better prepare them for internships; links their internship experiences to broader civic awareness; and increases their understanding of careers in the public sector.



“Through Civic Skills Training, I acquired knowledge of the political system, which helped me in my internship and my courses. I had a marvelous time in Washington, D.C., and made many new friends.”

—DeVon Mosley '09

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THE DIRECT LINE

by Andrew Samwick, Director

This edition of the Rockefeller Center newsletter celebrates the past and looks to the future. This year marks the 100th anniversary of Nelson Rockefeller's birth and the 25th anniversary of the Center's founding. The theme for our yearlong celebrations of these milestones is that Nelson Rockefeller's political and policy legacy is alive and well. John Hinderaker '71, a member of the Center's board of visitors, provides an overview in his essay. We demonstrate and honor this legacy through a Centennial Lecture Series, which continues this term with public programs featuring

former New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman, noted historian Richard Norton Smith, and chair and former CEO of Time Warner Richard D. Parsons, himself a veteran of Nelson Rockefeller's time in office. Looking ahead, the Center's staff and I will continue to carry out its mission of educating, training, and inspiring the next generation of public policy leaders through the programs that we highlight at the end of the newsletter. I invite you all to join us in our celebrations this year and our programs in the years ahead.



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Public Policy Internships. The Rockefeller Center awards grants to nearly 40 students each year to enable them to gain direct experience at nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies, or other public offices at the local, state, and national levels. These unpaid leave-term internships introduce students to the public policy process and offer them the opportunity to work on a variety of projects, each of which is intended to help them become better advocates for the causes about which they feel passionately.



"My internship was in a small enough office that often my work was written and sent out to clients in the same day. As an intern coming right out of my freshman year, that was a lot of responsibility that was very exciting to have."

—C. Clark Warthen '10

Student Organizations, Discussion Groups, and Programs. The Center sponsors a number of events each year in which students interact with alumni and other visitors who serve as role models and mentors for careers in the public policy realm. Students get involved through six different weekly discussion groups, contributing to and editing *Dartmouth Law Journal*, and, for select seniors who have demonstrated leadership potential in their years at Dartmouth, the Center's signature Leadership Fellows Program.



"I think Rocky is a perfect example of how easy it is to get involved in a range of activities at Dartmouth. From casual dinner discussion groups to research to public lectures to funding for off-terms, Rocky has been a consistently positive part of my Dartmouth experience since freshman fall."

—Adam Halpern-Leistner '10

Rockefeller Leadership Fellows Program. In their senior year, a select group of students who have demonstrated leadership potential at Dartmouth are chosen for the Rockefeller Leadership Fellows (RLF) Program. The program is designed to prepare Dartmouth students for leadership roles in their communities and their careers. RLF helps students make connections between their own unique experiences and the complexities of leadership issues in today's global society.

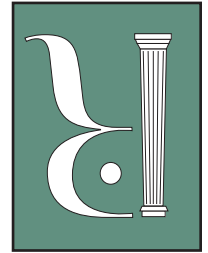


"RLF has been a defining experience of my senior year. It has provided an opportunity to get to know and share ideas with some truly amazing people. I have learned to conceptualize leadership in entirely new ways. Learning about leadership from people who have been there, in various walks of life, is a uniquely valuable opportunity and I feel privileged to have been a part of it."

—Michael T. Heslin '08

STUDENTS: UPCOMING APPLICATION DEADLINES

First-Year Fellowship	Rockefeller Leadership Fellows	Summer 2008 Internship Grants	Summer 2008 Civic Skills Training	Discussion Leader	Student Assistant	Senior Honors Thesis Grants
Tuesday April 1, 2008	Friday April 4, 2008	Thursday May 1, 2008	Thursday May 1, 2008	Thursday May 8, 2008	Thursday May 8, 2008	Friday May 30, 2008



Spring 2008 ■ Public Events

Simon Wilson

*Former Middle East Bureau Chief for BBC News
Harvard Nieman Fellow 2008*

Reflections on Reporting the Middle East

THURSDAY, APRIL 3

4:30 P.M. • 3 ROCKEFELLER HALL

The Bernard D. Nossiter '47 Lecture

Randall L. Kennedy

Michael R. Klein Professor of Law, Harvard University

Thaddeus Stevens as a Good White Man

THURSDAY, APRIL 10

4:30 P.M. • 3 ROCKEFELLER HALL

The Roger S. Aaron '64 Lecture

Co-sponsored by the Dartmouth Legal Studies Faculty, the Dartmouth Lawyers Association, and the Rockefeller Center for Public Policy & the Social Sciences

Former Congresswoman Beverly B. Byron (D-MD) and Former Congressman Mickey Edwards (R-OK)

Electing One of Their Own: A Senator in the White House

MONDAY, APRIL 14

4:30 P.M. • 3 ROCKEFELLER HALL

Congress to Campus Series

Co-sponsored by Dartmouth's Department of Government and the Rockefeller Center for Public Policy & the Social Sciences

Christine Todd Whitman

President, Whitman Strategy Group

Nelson Rockefeller: Still Influencing People, Power, and Politics

THURSDAY, APRIL 24

4:00 P.M. • MOORE THEATRE, HOPKINS CENTER

A Nelson A. Rockefeller Centennial Series Lecture

The Class of 1930 Fellow Lecture

Richard Norton Smith

Scholar-in-Residence, George Mason University

The Surprising Nelson Rockefeller

FRIDAY, APRIL 25

4:30 P.M. • LOEW AUDITORIUM, HOOD MUSEUM

A Nelson A. Rockefeller Centennial Series Lecture

Jed S. Rakoff

U.S. District Judge, Southern District of New York

Science and the Law: Uncomfortable Bedfellows

THURSDAY, MAY 1

4:30 P.M. • 3 ROCKEFELLER HALL

The William H. Timbers '37 Lecture

Co-sponsored by the Dartmouth Legal Studies Faculty, the Dartmouth Lawyers Association, and the Rockefeller Center for Public Policy & the Social Sciences

Richard D. Parsons

Chair of the Board and former CEO, Time Warner

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7

4:30 P.M. • FILENE AUDITORIUM

A Nelson A. Rockefeller Centennial Series Lecture

The Portman Lecture in the Spirit of Entrepreneurship

Stephen Brooks

Associate Professor of Government, Dartmouth College

America's Place in the World

THURSDAY, MAY 8

4:30 P.M. • 3 ROCKEFELLER HALL

Co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of the Upper Valley and the Rockefeller Center for Public Policy & the Social Sciences

A Panel on Poverty and Welfare

A Nelson A. Rockefeller Centennial Series Event

MONDAY, MAY 19

4:30 P.M. • 3 ROCKEFELLER HALL

In support of the Dartmouth Centers Forum 2008 theme, "Class Divide"

Going to Extremes: The Fate of the Political Center in American Politics

THURSDAY, JUNE 19—SATURDAY, JUNE 21

A Conference Convened by Ronald G. Shaiko

*Senior Fellow and Associate Director for Curricular and Research Programs
Rockefeller Center, Dartmouth College*

<http://rockefeller.dartmouth.edu/centennial/gte.html>