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## CITIZENS FOR EISENHOWER AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY, 1951–1965\*

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**ABSTRACT.** *Founded in support of Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1952 presidential candidacy, Citizens for Eisenhower took on an ambitious mission to revitalize the Republican party by expanding its activist ranks and by supporting the moderation of its conservative policy agenda. The organization proved unable to sustain the impressive momentum that it achieved during the 1952 campaign, however, instead helping to fuel factional opposition that informed the intraparty upsurge of conservatism during the 1950s and afterwards. The Eisenhower administration's efforts to encourage Citizens activists to join the party were flawed, and existing Republican activists often viewed such newcomers with hostility. More significantly, despite recruitment initiatives, in most cases activism in support of Eisenhower did not translate into enthusiasm for the party cause. The history of Citizens for Eisenhower therefore demonstrates the seriousness of Eisenhower's interests as president in boosting the Republican party's fortunes, but also the shortcomings of 'amateur' political activity in support of the party cause. It also sheds light on goals and activities of this era's moderate Republicans, together with their role in fostering the conservative resurgence that characterized the post-Eisenhower Republican party.*

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Citizens for Eisenhower was an extra-party, candidate-centred organization associated with the Republican party during the 1950s and early 1960s. It emerged in support of Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1952 presidential candidacy; Eisenhower's personal popularity remained the foundation of the Citizens organization.<sup>1</sup> The activism that Eisenhower inspired achieved unique strength in twentieth-century US politics by bringing the organization a membership of some two million Americans at the height of the 1952 campaign, and in

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<sup>1</sup> On Eisenhower's popularity as a politician, see Herbert H. Hyman and Paul B. Sheatsley, 'The political appeal of President Eisenhower', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 17 (1953–4), pp. 443–60.

remaining a significant electoral force throughout Eisenhower's time in the White House; no other personally focused political organization had success at such a scale. The cause, furthermore, involved the party as well as a political personality; it first involved a desire to take Eisenhower to the White House, but subsequently extended to a larger goal: that to support the reshaping of the Republican party according to Eisenhower's image, though this extension proved problematic to pursue. In the words of Peter Clayton, a leader of Citizens for Eisenhower, the organization needed 'to translate the enthusiasm which the Eisenhower name has created into a bigger, richer, Republican Party with a Republican President and a Republican Congress in office *long after Eisenhower leaves office*'.<sup>2</sup> The Republican party still languished in minority status, as it had done since the arrival of the Great Depression two decades earlier; the mission that Citizens assumed was to challenge that minority status as well as to secure presidential victories for Eisenhower. This article investigates the organization's activities and its impact.

The novelty of Citizens for Eisenhower does not involve its institutional character as a candidate-centred political organization connected with but also separate from a political party. In the 1950s, this kind of organization was by no means unusual in the United States; indeed, limitations on an individual campaign committee's spending encouraged the existence of such entities.<sup>3</sup> What was unusual was, first, the extent of Eisenhower's popularity on which the organization was based, and, second, the degree of institutional permanence that Citizens for Eisenhower achieved, which was connected with the larger goal of party revitalization that Peter Clayton outlined.

## I

Despite the strength of its grassroots organization and despite the boldness of its goals, Citizens for Eisenhower has attracted little scholarly attention. By contrast, historians have extensively studied conservative activism at the grassroots during this period, especially associated with the Goldwater movement of the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> This research underscores the significance of such political endeavour in explaining the rightward turn that took hold in US politics during the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> On the whole, however, insufficient attention has been paid to this era's liberal and moderate Republicans – those politicians and activists whose

<sup>2</sup> Clayton to unknown, 2 June 1955, Abilene, Kansas, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (DDEL), Thomas E. Stephens records, box 32.

<sup>3</sup> Hall to Roberts, 15 Sept. 1955, West Branch, Iowa, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, Thayer papers, political files, box 5.

<sup>4</sup> For James Q. Wilson, a contemporary scholar of political 'amateurs', the era's most outstanding example of this amateur spirit in politics was the Goldwater movement within the Republican party. James Q. Wilson, *The amateur Democrat* (1962; Chicago, IL, 1966), pp. viii–ix.

<sup>5</sup> Donald T. Critchlow, *The conservative ascendancy: how the GOP Right made political history* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban warriors: the origins of the new American Right* (Princeton, NJ, 2001).

influence both within and beyond the party experienced long-term decline as conservatives made political progress.<sup>6</sup>

Moderate Republicans differed from their conservative counterparts in more readily accepting an expanded government role in tackling socio-economic ills; they differed from most Democrats not only with the argument that their custody of government was more managerially efficient and less financially wasteful, but also with a greater preference for non-Washington solutions to those socio-economic ills and with a stronger stress on fiscal conservatism. Shortly after his 1956 re-election, Eisenhower spoke of ‘the responsibility of the Federal Government to take the lead in making certain that the productivity of our great economic machine is distributed so that no one will suffer disaster, privation, through no fault of his own’, a responsibility encompassing ‘the wide field of education and health, and so on’. Free enterprise and decentralization nevertheless remained important principles in this moderate vision.<sup>7</sup> ‘While I have recognized the necessity of the Federal government undertaking functions and responsibilities that far exceed those in which it was engaged forty years ago, yet I have consistently fought against the needless and useless expansion of these functions and responsibilities’, he wrote in 1957. ‘We believe in sound fiscal policies for the government, thereby helping to combat inflation and to preserve the purchasing power of the working man’s savings.’ This moderate Republican agenda involved ‘essentially conservative principles applied to 20th century conditions’, according to the president.<sup>8</sup> Eisenhower’s intraparty opponents, however, saw the agenda as inadequately conservative. Complaining in 1959 that ‘the Republican Party in many instances had adopted a course of action following the policies of the New Deal – Fair Deal’, Midwestern businessman Loren M. Berry asked, ‘What has happened to the Republican Party of sound money, balanced budgets, minimum of public debt, low taxes, protective tariff, competitive private enterprise, states rights and strict adherence to the

<sup>6</sup> Exceptions include Sara Fitzgerald, *Elly Peterson: ‘mother’ of the moderates* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2011), Geoffrey Kabaservice, *Rule and ruin: the downfall of moderation and the destruction of the Republican party, from Eisenhower to the Tea Party* (New York, NY, 2012), David Stebenne, *Modern Republican: Arthur Larson and the Eisenhower years* (Bloomington, IN, 2006), Nicol C. Rae, *The decline and fall of the liberal Republicans: from 1952 to the present* (New York, NY, 1989), and Richard Norton Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and his times* (New York, NY, 1982). Where scholars have investigated liberal and moderate Republicans, their emphasis has generally remained at the elite level. A book that looks at the conflict between conservatives and non-conservatives within the party, encompassing activists, is Michael Bowen, *The roots of modern conservatism: Dewey, Taft, and the battle for the soul of the Republican party* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Notes of press conference, 14 Nov. 1956, DDEL, Dwight D. Eisenhower Records as President: White House Central Files, Official file, box 717.

<sup>8</sup> Eisenhower to Alcorn, 30 Aug. 1957, DDEL, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers as President of the United States (DDEPP), Administration series, box 1. Acceptance of government activism also led to support for infrastructural development, notably including the 1956 act to fund interstate highways.

Constitution?’<sup>9</sup> Although Eisenhower believed that fiscal conservatism created common ground among Republicans, differences about the GOP (‘Grand Old Party’ or Republican party) response to ‘big government’ created intense conflict between party moderates and conservatives. Differences extended to foreign policy as well as domestic policy; in 1952, Eisenhower’s belief that Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio, the leading conservative Republican candidate for the party’s presidential nomination, inadequately supported Cold War systems of international co-operation (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in particular) spurred his decision to enter party politics.<sup>10</sup> During his time in office, the anti-internationalism that offended Eisenhower subsided within the party, but some conservative–moderate distinctions remained, with foreign aid, for example, a notable focus for disagreement.<sup>11</sup>

The history of Citizens for Eisenhower—in large part an effort to promote moderate Republicanism—merits study for a number of reasons. First, the neglect of non-conservative Republicans narrows our understanding of how the GOP responded to Democratic electoral dominance and New Deal liberalism during this period. To many in the party, it seemed that fidelity to conservative principle was likely to magnify the party’s problems, rather than provide any opportunity to achieve a comeback; such a belief usually guided the activism of Citizens. As Timothy Thurber has shown, even after the Goldwater candidacy of 1964 conservatism’s opponents remained more powerful in party circles than is generally appreciated.<sup>12</sup> Second, one of the main crucibles for the development of modern American conservatism was within the Republican party itself, within a bitter debate between those who advocated a stress on conservative rejection of New Deal liberalism and those who preferred accommodationism. Historical analysis of Citizens for Eisenhower not only sheds light on the significance of moderate activism within the Republican party, but also aids understanding of how conservative activists gained strength during the 1950s and beyond through counter-mobilization against its influence. An additional significance of Citizens for Eisenhower is the window it offers on concern among Republicans about their party’s organizational capacity that many among them deemed essential for GOP electoral success. Finally, the movement sheds light on contemporary anxiety about the health of American democracy and the efforts of activists to revitalize engagement and participation in politics.

Although historians have neglected the study of Citizens, the organization itself and the larger trend in party politics that it represented seemed important

<sup>9</sup> Berry to Alcorn, 19 Jan. 1959, Bloomington, Indiana, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Charles A. Halleck papers, box 43.

<sup>10</sup> William B. Pickett, *Eisenhower decides to run: presidential politics and Cold War strategy* (Chicago, IL, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Mason, *The Republican party and American politics from Hoover to Reagan* (New York, NY, 2012), pp. 151–2, 163, 176–8.

<sup>12</sup> Timothy N. Thurber, ‘Goldwaterism triumphant? Race and the Republican party, 1965–1968’, *Journal of the Historical Society*, 7 (2007), pp. 349–84.

to the era's social scientists and political actors. In 1962, political scientist James Q. Wilson published *The amateur Democrat*, a book about a current phenomenon in grassroots politics that Wilson identified as important – new forms of activism that were emerging in the political parties. Offering a study of the reform-oriented urban club movement in the Democratic party, the book outlined a distinction between 'professionals' and 'amateurs' among political activists. Professionals were primarily interested in winning, and they found motivation for political engagement in the tangible rewards of activism – influence and power. Amateurs, by contrast, rejected such self-interest as an inadequate approach to party politics, caring about a cause instead of victory, about issues instead of patronage. For amateurs, 'principle, rather than interest, ought to be the motive of political action', Wilson wrote. At first sight, the amateurs' commitment to principle is more appealing than the professionals' straightforward interest in seeking 'majorities for whatever candidates and programs seem best suited to capturing public fancy'. But for Wilson, their dedication to a particular cause formed a flimsy foundation for effective politics because it undermined the likelihood of long-term investment in the necessary work of party politics. It also militated against compromise, thereby sapping the prospect of coalition-building, both within the party and among voters, that was an essential element of mid-twentieth-century American politics.<sup>13</sup> Such criticisms anticipated later analyses of the Democratic party; when a new breed of issue-oriented activists – the inheritors of the amateur spirit – became influential at the national level, especially in the aftermath of the McGovern–Fraser party reforms of the early 1970s, some saw their influence as attacking the party's ability to build a majority coalition.

According to Stephen A. Mitchell, Democratic national chair during the 1950s, the Republican counterpart to his party's urban clubs was Citizens for Eisenhower.<sup>14</sup> Mitchell posited the comparison on the grounds that the memberships of both organizations prioritized policy objectives and good government ahead of party concerns. Driven by principle rather than by patronage, they engaged with issues in a political style that fostered wide-ranging debate and effective outreach to the community. Writing in 1959, Mitchell argued that 'the old is characterized by exclusiveness, a minimum of party activity, and an absence of democratic procedures; the new is characterized by expansionism and independence which may approach the evangelical, greater activity, and a devotion to democratic procedures'.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Wilson, *Amateur Democrat*, passim.

<sup>14</sup> Over time, the organization's official name was subject to change – adding Nixon to the title, for example, on Richard Nixon's vice-presidential selection. At the national level, variations included the Citizens for Eisenhower Congressional Committee (in 1954) and the National Citizens for Eisenhower-Nixon 1958 Committee. Informally, however, the group remained known as Citizens for Eisenhower throughout the period.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen A. Mitchell, *Elm Street politics* (New York, NY, 1959), p. 26. In longer-term perspective, the clubs exercised a greater influence on the Democrats' policy direction.

Whereas Wilson disparaged this new form of activism, Mitchell saw it as a revitalizing force in party politics.

As the 1960s ascendancy of conservatism within the Republican party signifies, the Citizens challenge to professional Republicans of the 1950s did not end in victory. Eisenhower's popularity was sufficient to win the presidency, but not to effect any larger transformation of the GOP. The mobilization of Eisenhower activists in support of 'modern Republicanism' did succeed in scoring a few gains, but its larger impact involved the encouragement of a conservative counter-mobilization that went on to reshape the party in the 1960s – a different form of political amateurism. The paradox of the Citizens project is that what began in 1951–2 as a mass movement to achieve a popular transformation of the Republican party ended, more than a decade later, as an elite-based effort to hold back the rise of Goldwater-led and grassroots-driven conservatism. The results of this enterprise lend support to Wilson's sceptical evaluation of amateurs in politics, that the instability of their political engagement and its lack of realism reduced the prospect that they would exercise significant influence. The success of the Goldwater movement in promoting conservatism within the Republican party nevertheless suggests that amateur endeavour was not inescapably volatile in this way; the contrast between Citizens and the Goldwater movement, eventually, is that too many members of the former did not move beyond personality to embrace a party cause, while for the latter, support of Goldwater was a way to pursue a larger, party-modifying goal.

As Daniel Galvin has recently argued, Eisenhower identified the revitalization of the Republican party as a key goal of his presidency, despite the belief of many contemporaries and scholars that he neglected the party to concentrate on his personal fortunes.<sup>16</sup> Eisenhower saw the party's revitalization as dependent on two developments. First, the party needed to become less conservative. 'If we could get every Republican committed as a Moderate Progressive', Eisenhower told his friend Clifford Roberts, who played a leading role in Citizens, 'the Party would grow so rapidly that within a few years it would dominate American politics.'<sup>17</sup> Administration analysis suggested that independent or swing voters, crucial in deciding elections, were moderates rather than conservatives. 'From the standpoint of winning elections', concluded one aide in reviewing poll data, 'there is little doubt that the moderate pro-Eisenhower wing has a much broader base of appeal than the traditional right-wing

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Jonathan Bell, 'Building a Left coast: the legacy of the California Popular Front and the challenge to Cold War liberalism in the post-World War II era', *Journal of American Studies*, 46 (2012), pp. 61–71.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Galvin, *Presidential party building: Dwight D. Eisenhower to George W. Bush* (Princeton, NJ, 2010), pp. 41–69. See also Cornelius P. Cotter, 'Eisenhower as party leader', *Political Science Quarterly*, 98 (1983), pp. 255–83.

<sup>17</sup> Eisenhower to Roberts, 7 Dec. 1954, DDEL, DDEPP, DDE Diary series, box 8.



Republican group.’<sup>18</sup> This perspective helped to inform a project of modern Republicanism, rooted in the moderates’ vision for the party, and seeking a ‘middle-way’ balance between a conservative wariness of an expansive federal government and a much less conservative acceptance of programmatic innovation to tackle socio-economic ills.<sup>19</sup> Second, in Eisenhower’s assessment an expanded group of activists would also help the GOP in pursuing the essential goal ‘[to] organize itself far better than it has in the past, particularly at the precinct, district and county levels’.<sup>20</sup> To this end, he hoped that Citizens could be ‘a recruiting establishment for the Republicans’.<sup>21</sup>

For Eisenhower, the two goals necessarily went hand in hand; his central insight in encouraging Citizens emphasized the importance of grassroots strength to secure political change. In contemplating the transformation of the Republican party, he recognized the futility of a reliance on elite-level policy initiatives alone. ‘[T]o be a strong and effective organization’, he observed in 1957, ‘such a movement almost of necessity must be of grass roots origin. It cannot possibly be inspired “from the top,” so to speak.’<sup>22</sup> In his estimate, the Citizens organization was a way to share his own formidable popularity with the party at large via a bottom-up, rather than top-down, impetus. The organization’s mission, as explained to leading Republicans in the run-up to the 1956 re-election bid, was ‘[t]o identify in the minds of Americans the Eisenhower program and the Republican program as one and the same’, and ‘[t]o provide a co-ordinated program for those people who want to support Ike, but who are not yet willing to be active Republicans’.<sup>23</sup>

## II

The amateur, bottom-up nature of Citizens was evident at the organization’s birth. The prospect of an Eisenhower presidential candidacy had inspired grassroots activism before 1948 and returned in a more significant form as the 1952 elections approached. Two New Jersey businesspeople, Charles F. Willis and Stanley Rumbough, established the Citizens organization in 1951 in order to foster the creation of Eisenhower clubs nationwide. The new group participated in the successful effort to persuade Eisenhower to return from his North Atlantic Treaty Organization duties in Europe in order to run for president. By the time Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. of Massachusetts, a leading figure in the draft-Eisenhower effort, invited Willis and Rumbough to make it the volunteer arm of Eisenhower’s campaign for the nomination, the

<sup>18</sup> Masterson to Pyle, 17 May 1955, DDEL, Howard Pyle records, box 28.

<sup>19</sup> Stebenne, *Modern Republican*; Steven F. Wagner, *Eisenhower Republicanism: pursuing the middle way* (DeKalb, IL, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Eisenhower to Paley, 14 Nov. 1956, DDEPP, Name series, box 25.

<sup>21</sup> Eisenhower and Bridges transcript, 21 May 1957, DDEPP, DDE Diary series, box 24.

<sup>22</sup> Eisenhower to Baker and Baker, 7 Aug. 1957, DDEPP, DDE Diary series, box 26.

<sup>23</sup> RNC to leading Republicans, n.d., DDEPP, Campaign series, box 3.

Citizens movement had become a network of some 800 clubs under 38 state chairs.<sup>24</sup> Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr, its new chair, defined the organization's purpose as being 'to consolidate mass sentiment for the general'.<sup>25</sup> Drawing on enthusiasm for Eisenhower, Citizens counted a membership of 250,000 in some 29,000 clubs by the end of 1952's bitterly factional and fiercely contested GOP nomination struggle. Many credited the organization with an essential role in the victory of its champion over Senator Robert A. Taft, hero of conservative Republicans – 'Mr. Republican'.<sup>26</sup>

As soon as Lodge made Citizens the volunteer arm of the Eisenhower campaign, however, the movement lost some of its amateurism. An elite group of Eisenhower associates now provided it with technical expertise, notably involving television, and organizational advice.<sup>27</sup> Despite Citizens' public reputation as a grassroots political force, therefore, the nature of the behind-the-scenes leadership qualified the meaning of this amateurism; there was 'professionalism' behind the amateurism.<sup>28</sup> With fatal consequences for the fortunes of the Citizens project, the elite component became more important and the mass component less important over time. In 1952, however, the grassroots strength of Citizens was powerful enough to encourage the belief that it might change the larger fortunes of the Republican party and perhaps transform the nature of party politics.

Despite this professional dimension, the Citizens movement always asserted its essentially amateur nature. Like Wilson's 'amateur Democrats', the organization aimed to promote a different form of political engagement – more high-minded, less self-interested than that practised by the more traditional breed of party workers. Its activists proudly differentiated themselves from the party professionals. According to Clifford Roberts, writing in 1955, theirs was 'a name under which all the mavericks can gather'.<sup>29</sup> When Eisenhower spoke to a Citizens audience during the 1952 campaign, he praised this spirit of amateurism as embodying 'honesty, integrity and decency in government', even comparing it with the zeal that Oliver Cromwell had inspired among

<sup>24</sup> Jane Dick, *Volunteers and the making of presidents* (New York, NY, 1980), p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> *New York Times* (NYT), 8 Feb. 1952, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*, 27 Sept. 1952, p. 53; Leonard W. Hall, foreword, in Mitchell, *Elm Street politics*, p. i; Dick, *Volunteers*, p. 110; NYT, 1 Aug. 1952, p. 6. For a rich, detailed exploration of Eisenhower's nomination quest, see Paul T. David, Malcolm Moos, and Ralph M. Goldman, eds., *Presidential nominating politics in 1952* (Baltimore, MD, 1954).

<sup>27</sup> Those with close links to regular Republican activity retained a distance from Citizens, seeking not to undermine that volunteer identity. Herbert Brownell with John P. Burke, *Advising Ike: the memoirs of Attorney General Herbert Brownell* (Lawrence, KS, 1993), p. 107; Robert F. Burk, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: hero and politician* (Boston, MA, 1986), p. 117; Craig Allen, *Eisenhower and the mass media: peace, prosperity, and prime-time TV* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1993), pp. 16–17, 20–1, 78–81.

<sup>28</sup> NYT, 27 Jan. 1952, p. E8.

<sup>29</sup> Roberts to Hall, 24 June 1955, DDEPP, Name series, box 27.

his followers.<sup>30</sup> The cause of ‘good government’ was one that Citizens for Eisenhower identified with its agenda and employed as a rationale for activism in support of the Eisenhower administration.<sup>31</sup>

Contemporary media characterizations of the Citizens also played on the amateur tag. According to one reporter, the organization was youthful, fresh, and vigorous, but also ‘a burr in the pants of the regulars’.<sup>32</sup> Another noted that regulars saw them as ‘much too modern in their modern Republicanism’.<sup>33</sup> In an unflattering allusion, journalist George Creel described Citizens in 1952 as ‘rank amateurs who want to run their own show’. In common with a Democrats for Eisenhower organization that operated in his home city of San Francisco, it was ‘a Mexican army; all generals and no privates’.<sup>34</sup>

The amateurs’ distinctiveness had a gender dimension. The grassroots nature of Citizens for Eisenhower ensured that the organization drew significantly on the contribution of women. ‘The women are being counted on to do heavy work for the Eisenhower cause’, a journalist reported during the 1952 campaign.<sup>35</sup> The world of party politics was one where women possessed little decision-making power, but they were responsible for much of the essential work of grassroots organization.<sup>36</sup> The era’s male Republican leaders consequently recognized that the expansion of the party’s activist base depended on women, even though they continued to exclude women from most leadership roles. The less established and more fluid structures of the Citizens movement, as well as its emphasis on grassroots organization, seem to have created new opportunities for women to participate in politics. Evidence suggests that in many areas women provided much of the vitality within the local Citizens organization.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the target of much Citizens activity was an audience of women, creating an arena of political debate and activism for women. Just as women played an important role in the

<sup>30</sup> *NYT*, 14 Sept. 1952, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Citizens for Eisenhower pamphlet, n.d., Yorba Linda, California, Richard Nixon Library and Museum, Richard Nixon papers, series 320, box 152; Houghton to Nixon, 22 Apr. 1957, Nixon papers, series 320, box 356; *Los Angeles Times* clipping, 23 Sept. 1958, Nixon papers, series 320, box 422. Houghton urged the use of the good-government rationale as a way to encourage Citizens to join the Republican party.

<sup>32</sup> *Corpus Christi (TX) Caller-Times*, 22 Aug. 1954, p. 24.

<sup>33</sup> Connellsville, PA, *Daily Courier*, 3 June 1959, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Creel to Nixon, 4 Oct. 1952, Nixon papers, PPS 10.706.

<sup>35</sup> Danville, VA, *Bee*, 11 Sept. 1952, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Paula Baker, ‘“She is the best man on the ward committee”: women in grassroots party organizations, 1930s–1950s’, in Melanie Gustafson, Kristie Miller, and Elisabeth I. Perry, eds., *We have come to stay: American women and political parties, 1880–1960* (Albuquerque, NM, 1999), pp. 151–60.

<sup>37</sup> For example, Citizens leader Clifford Roberts concluded that women sometimes made an important difference to the organization’s success in 1956, noting that ‘in some states, the woman Co-Chairman is doing work that in part makes up for the weak [male] Chairman’. Roberts to Nixon, 22 Oct. 1956, Nixon papers, series 320, box 645.

conservative world of 1960s Orange County portrayed by Lisa McGirr, they were also therefore a critical element in the activism of 1950s moderate Republicans.<sup>38</sup>

Citizens sought to extend the reach of political organization by adopting a domestic focus. As well as coffee meetings, Citizens promoted a signature version of supper-hour political meetings in people's homes by offering a recipe for Eisenhower beef stew, exemplifying the inclusive mass activism that the organization sought, by reaching out to individuals and by taking political discussion into neighbourhoods and households.<sup>39</sup> 'We want to reach into every home to talk about our great President . . . his team and the vital issues which are at stake', Citizens leaders wrote to activists in 1956, in explaining the rationale for such events.<sup>40</sup> On one day alone in Los Angeles County during that campaign, activists staged about two thousand coffee hours.<sup>41</sup> Activists in the packing-house area of Omaha, Nebraska, reported two thousand requests for the stew recipe.<sup>42</sup>

If amateur enthusiasm made Citizens for Eisenhower a promising and innovative political force, tensions with professionals or regulars constituted an obstacle to the fulfilment of its potential. Republican factionalism suffused the emergence of Citizens. Despite the enthusiasm he elicited from the amateurs, Eisenhower was also the candidate of the 'Deweyite' regulars against their 'Taftite' counterparts.<sup>43</sup> The connections between Citizens and moderate Republicans ensured them the enmity of the conservative regulars, which proved a durable obstacle to the achievement of the Eisenhower project.<sup>44</sup> In 1957 Eisenhower noted that there was 'so much resentment' within the party because, he recognized, he was 'forced down the throats of a lot of people in '52'.<sup>45</sup> He similarly recognized that tensions between Citizens and regulars were likely at the local level.<sup>46</sup> One activist observed that factional tensions were likely to be yet more acute in marginal districts, though most in need of Citizens help, because 'the established Republican Party leadership in a marginal district, aware of its precarious position, is apt to become hypersensitive, jealous of its prerogatives and suspicious of outsiders'.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Citizens for Eisenhower, 'Advance', 16 May 1956, and Citizens for Eisenhower-Nixon, 'Crusader', 28 June 1952, Nixon papers, series 320, box 152; McGirr, *Suburban warriors*.

<sup>39</sup> *Time*, 11 June 1956.

<sup>40</sup> Citizens campaign material, n.d., Nixon papers, series 320, box 422.

<sup>41</sup> Report on Southern California, 25 Sept. 1956, Nixon papers, series 320, box 157.

<sup>42</sup> Report on Nebraska, 23 Oct. 1956, Nixon papers, series 320, box 151.

<sup>43</sup> The Deweyites were those associated during the 1940s and early 1950s with support for the moderate agenda of New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey; during the same period, the Taftites preferred Dewey's conservative rival for party dominance, Ohio Senator Robert A. Taft.

<sup>44</sup> Hugh A. Bone, *Party committees and national politics* (Seattle, WA, 1958), p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> Notes, 15 May 1957, DDEPP, DDE Diary series, box 24.

<sup>46</sup> Minutes, 25 July 1956, DDEPP, DDE Diary series, box 16.

<sup>47</sup> Unknown to Kilpatrick, 7 Feb. 1956, Stephens records, box 32.

## III

At first, Citizens enjoyed success in challenging the regulars. Its grassroots strength gave Citizens an early victory in a crucial struggle with the professionals of the Republican National Committee (RNC). With the nomination secured, Eisenhower looked to promote party harmony in order to run an effective campaign against Adlai Stevenson, his Democratic rival for the presidency. Leading members of the national committee tried to use this moment to assert the RNC's dominance over the amateur group, but they found themselves thwarted. During the campaign, the Citizens had a status equal to that of the national committee, with important responsibilities. The RNC was tasked with mobilizing Republicans, Citizens with doing the same for Democrats and independents – arguably a more important role in light of the GOP's minority status. Moreover, the Citizens victory involved strategy as well as organization. Citizens leaders defeated the assumptions of the RNC strategy that called for the mobilization of a 'stay-at-home' vote of conservatives. Instead, the campaign embraced the Citizens belief that the party needed to fashion an appeal to disaffected Democrats and to independents who were moderate and not conservative, though of course without alienating Taft enthusiasts. This was a moment of amateur success in challenging the professionals' power, in elevating the role of the candidate's personal organization at the party's expense.<sup>48</sup>

After Eisenhower's victory in 1952, any larger success for the Citizens project depended on the achievement of what leading activists labelled integration; it depended on the decision of Citizens activists to join the Republican party in order to boost its organizational capacity, to advocate moderation in party channels, and to promote ideals of good government via enhanced participation in politics. Citizens leaders consequently promoted this integration. After the 1952 elections, Walter Williams urged Citizens members to keep their movement's 'spirit' alive 'by infusion of that "spirit" in the form of people – live, pulsating, forward-looking Citizens – into the Republican Party'.<sup>49</sup> Williams recognized the challenges that the goal involved, however; asked by reporters whether Citizens could straightforwardly join the party, Williams answered, 'Impossible'.<sup>50</sup> The issue was one of degree: the extent to which Citizens activists would join the party and therefore change it.

The way in which the White House followed up Williams's rhetorical flourishes was imperfect, thus failing to maximize the potential of the integration goal. To be sure, Charles F. Willis, a Citizens leader who joined

<sup>48</sup> *NYT*, 15 July 1952, pp. 1, 9; *NYT*, 20 July 1952, pp. E1–E2; *NYT*, 23 July 1952, p. 9; Harold Lavine, ed., *Smoke-filled rooms: the confidential papers of Robert Humphreys* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1970), pp. 15–31; Herbert S. Parmet, *Eisenhower and the American crusades* (New York, NY, 1972), p. 111.

<sup>49</sup> Williams to Citizens members, 31 Dec. 1952, Nixon papers, series 320, box 822.

<sup>50</sup> *Time*, 24 Nov. 1952.

the White House as an assistant to chief of staff Sherman Adams, looked after the sensitive area of patronage matters and promoted the integration of Citizens with the national committee as a way to diffuse Eisenhower Republicanism throughout the party.<sup>51</sup> However, it was only in the aftermath of the disappointing 1954 midterm elections – when the Republicans lost control of the House and the Senate – that mechanisms were put in place to achieve such integration between Citizens and the party, identified then by national chair Leonard Hall as key in tackling the party's problems. These measures included the assignment of Clancy Adamy, another Citizens leader, to the RNC as Chairman's Consultant on Enrollment of New Republicans and the creation of an advisory board that featured other leading members of the organization.<sup>52</sup> Later, after Eisenhower's re-election, Hall's successor as Republican national chair, Meade Alcorn, who had chaired Citizens in Connecticut in 1952, was firmly identified as an 'Eisenhower type'. Alcorn's appointment was part of larger efforts to place strong Eisenhower supporters in party offices, 'to give it a strong Eisenhower family resemblance', in the words of one journalist.<sup>53</sup>

The quest for integration had some success in working effectively in some localities as a conduit for moderate attacks on conservative leadership at the party's grassroots.<sup>54</sup> By 1955, this progress was enough to encourage confidence among Eisenhower supporters that forces in favour of modern Republicanism controlled the party.<sup>55</sup> Eisenhower was, according to one report, 'slowly reshaping his party... quietly, without hullabaloo', as his supporters weakened conservative control of the party at the local level.<sup>56</sup> Trying to persuade Eisenhower to seek a second term, Leonard Hall assured him that the party organization 'was beginning to be rid of the old moss backs which hampered it so long', and that another four years of Eisenhower leadership were sure to complete the task of transformation.<sup>57</sup>

Any such success was incomplete and transient, however. More often, activist interest in Eisenhower did not easily transfer to interest in the party at large. Private analyses did not share the public optimism about the fortunes of the Eisenhower project for party revitalization. 'The Republican Party has been *unsuccessful* during the past three and a half years in transferring the Eisenhower popularity to Republican party popularity', noted Sigurd Larmon, chair of advertising agency Young & Rubicam and a leading figure in Citizens,

<sup>51</sup> Cotter, 'Eisenhower as party leader', pp. 268–9.

<sup>52</sup> Hall to Eisenhower, 20 June 1955, Dwight D. Eisenhower Records as President: White House Central Files, Official file, box 710. On Eisenhower's increasing attention to political matters at this time: *Life*, 28 Feb. 1955, p. 31. <sup>53</sup> *NYT*, 27 Jan. 1957, p. E7.

<sup>54</sup> Mike Bowen, 'Purging the Right: moderate Republicans and party factionalism in the 1950s', paper presented at the 121st meeting of the American Historical Association, Atlanta, GA, 4–7 Jan. 2007.

<sup>55</sup> *Newsweek*, 4 Apr. 1955, pp. 27–30.

<sup>56</sup> 'Kiplinger Washington letter', 9 July 1955, Stephens records, box 10.

<sup>57</sup> Notes, n.d., DDEL, James C. Hagerty papers, box 8.

in 1956.<sup>58</sup> Four years later, at the close of the Eisenhower years, Walter N. Thayer, another Citizens leader, concluded that ‘the Republican Party, for whatever reason, during the past eight years has not found the way to avail itself of the energy and enthusiasm these people have to offer’.<sup>59</sup>

Amateur motivation did not easily support an integration project. ‘You can’t simply tell the Citizens to “go into the Republican Party”’, Peter Clayton wrote insightfully in early 1957. ‘If they were all equipped to gently go there, there would have been no need for them in the first place.’<sup>60</sup> As Sherman Adams, White House chief of staff, observed, the transformation of the RNC was possible ‘only through the heroic efforts of a sufficient number of volunteers working effectively together, who are resolutely determined to obtain results’.<sup>61</sup> This was a condition that was never met. Another problem, noted by Eisenhower himself on the basis of work by his political aides, was ‘that it is impossible to sustain political interest by amateurs throughout the period from election to election – that it is far more profitable to rekindle the flame than to keep it burning!’<sup>62</sup> Their experience in leading Citizens operations encouraged Valley Knudsen and Henriette Cowgill to determine that this kind of activist was prepared to ‘come in on a Crusade for a Candidate or on an issue and work hard for a short time but wanted to be relieved of any Party organization responsibility’.<sup>63</sup> Recognizing the lack of allure for Citizens activists of party activism, leaders sometimes softened the call for integration by suggesting generalized, non-partisan political activity as an alternative outlet for their post-Citizens interests in politics – therefore also softening the potential of Citizens to reshape the party.<sup>64</sup> Even more pessimistic about the durability and stability of amateur endeavour, Ohio party workers did not believe that it was possible to sustain engagement among Citizens activists in intense campaigning for more than ten days.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, despite the White House’s interest in encouraging Citizens activists to join the Republican party and in looking for Eisenhower supporters as nominees to appointive office, leading members of Citizens complained of neglect – that too few Citizens won appointment to the administration.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Larmon to Clay, Hobby, Kilpatrick, Roberts, Stephens, Weinberg, July 1956, Stephens records, box 31.

<sup>59</sup> Thayer to Nixon, 5 Dec. 1960, Thayer papers, political files, box 7.

<sup>60</sup> Clayton to Pyle, 25 Jan. 1957, Dwight D. Eisenhower Records as President: White House Central Files, Official file, box 716.

<sup>61</sup> Adams to Hoffman, 22 Nov. 1954, Dwight D. Eisenhower Records as President: White House Central Files, Official file, box 709.

<sup>62</sup> Eisenhower to Baker and Baker, 7 Aug. 1957, DDEPP, DDE Diary series, box 26.

<sup>63</sup> Knudsen and Cowgill to Nixon, 4 Nov. 1958, Nixon papers, series 320, box 422.

<sup>64</sup> Williams to Citizens members, 31 Dec. 1952, Nixon papers, series 320, box 822.

<sup>65</sup> Clayton to Stephens, 11 Oct. 1956, Nixon papers, series 320, box 157.

<sup>66</sup> Roberts to Eisenhower, 29 Jan. 1959, DDEPP, Name series, box 28; *NYT*, 4 May 1958, p. 74.

The desire to change the Republican party via the Citizens organization therefore confronted the key problem that many Citizens activists lacked motivation to support the Republican cause, as opposed to the Eisenhower cause. This problem, crucially significant to the fortunes of the goal to transform the party, first became sharply evident during the 1954 midterm campaign. It had been the perception of the Republican party's enduring weakness in mobilizing support beyond the loyally partisan that had encouraged the establishment of a new Citizens committee in 1954—a White House initiative—seeking unsuccessfully to keep Congress in Republican hands, defined by this committee as supportive of Eisenhower.<sup>67</sup> This was a consequential reinterpretation of Citizens's mission, because in 1952 its leaders had carefully defined the election of the national ticket alone as their goal; the campaigns of other Republicans were the responsibility of the regular party.<sup>68</sup> Now there was an effort to achieve Citizens-party integration by stating that the Eisenhower cause and the Republican cause were the same. But tensions between the party and the president had scarred Eisenhower's first years in the White House, especially on questions of foreign policy. As a result of those tensions, and in recognition of Eisenhower's popularity, many Democratic candidates in 1954 stressed their superior support for the president on international questions, by comparison with their Republican rivals. Within this context, the rationale of an Eisenhower-supportive Congress did not prove weighty enough to facilitate the transfer of enthusiasm for the president to the party at large.<sup>69</sup> One official concluded that the Citizens congressional committee was 'a very expensive instrument that did not achieve its goal'.<sup>70</sup> The project revealed the ineffectiveness of Citizens when Eisenhower's fortunes were not directly at issue.<sup>71</sup> The failure to recreate 'much of the original 1952 Citizens support and enthusiasm' was because 'a good many former Citizens felt that the 1954 campaign was too much a "Republican" rather than an "Eisenhower" type undertaking', noted two leading members of Citizens.<sup>72</sup>

If the 1954 campaign demonstrated the obstacles to recapturing the initial enthusiasm of the Citizens movement, there also remained ample evidence of resistance among party regulars to the newcomers. Sounding out local GOP opinion in southern California when developing plans for the 1956 campaign, Murray Chotiner, political adviser to Vice President Richard Nixon, found mixed views toward the Citizens but generally strong opposition to their remaining a separate organization. When positively inclined toward Citizens,

<sup>67</sup> *NYT*, 13 Dec. 1953, p. 61; *NYT*, 13 June 1958, sec. iv, p. 3; *NYT*, 17 July 1953, p. 10.

<sup>68</sup> Williams to Chotiner, 27 Sept. 1952, Nixon papers, PPS 10.656.

<sup>69</sup> Mason, *Republican party*, p. 150.

<sup>70</sup> Clayton to Thayer, 21 Mar. 1955, Nixon papers, series 320, box 151.

<sup>71</sup> Lawrence, 4 Jan. 1957, Dwight D. Eisenhower Records as President: White House Central Files, Official file, box 716.

<sup>72</sup> Lamb and Clayton to Kilpatrick, 27 Feb. 1956, Stephens records, box 32; diary entry, 5 Mar. 1956, DDEPP, Ann Whitman Diary series, box 8.



Republican activists saw their role as subsidiary and supportive.<sup>73</sup> This was thus different from the view among Citizens activists, who saw their organization as much more important.

The elections of 1956 were then a crucial moment for the Eisenhower project of party revitalization, an opportunity for Eisenhower amateurs and Republican professionals to work together in search of a common goal. The White House developed plans that aimed to maintain amateur enthusiasm while avoiding factional conflict. The framework for the reactivated Citizens movement included institutional mechanisms that sought to preserve the independence of Citizens but to include personnel, at the state and local levels, supportive of work for Republican congressional candidates as well as for Eisenhower.<sup>74</sup> The formula was awkward, not least because the strategy underlying the television campaign run by Citizens rejected references to the party—much less popular than the president—in favour of fostering ‘an emotional preference for Eisenhower and his principles, for Eisenhower the great leader, the great human being’.<sup>75</sup>

Testifying to a further difficulty pertaining to integration, Republican leaders generally stressed the straightforwardly organizational contribution of Citizens ahead of all else. National chair Leonard Hall later praised the effectiveness of Citizens for Eisenhower ‘in doing the political chores of a campaign—the doorbell-ringing, baby-sitting, poll-watching, fund-raising activities that take hundreds of hours in every campaign’.<sup>76</sup> This observation reflected deep-seated concern that the GOP was trapped in minority status because its activist base was neither large enough to fight a campaign effectively, nor strong enough to identify all Republican supporters and then to bring them to the polls on election day. In reality, however, polling data suggest that no organizational disparity divided the parties and indicate that Republican efforts often reached more voters during campaigns than did Democratic efforts.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, concern about the party’s lack of organizational capacity increased, rather than decreased, during the 1950s, especially because of alarm among Republicans about what they saw as the political power of organized labour in support of their Democratic rivals. In emphasizing Citizens as a group of activists ready to do organizational work supportive of the party, Hall identified a potential counter-strategy in response to this putative labour power, but challenged their self-definition as engaged in a different form of politics. This perhaps fostered regulars’ acceptance of the Citizens newcomers, but it also undermined the organization’s crusade-like rationale.

<sup>73</sup> ‘Stockton–9–16’, ‘Fresno–9–18’, ‘Bakersfield, 9–18’, ‘LA–9–21’, ‘Santa Rosa, 9–23’, ‘Sacramento, 29th Sept’, Nixon papers, PPS 300.313.2.

<sup>74</sup> Lamb and Clayton to Kilpatrick, 27 Feb. 1956, Stephens records, box 32; diary entry, 5 Mar. 1956, DDEPP, Ann Whitman Diary series, box 8.

<sup>75</sup> Young & Rubicam, Inc., 10 Sept. 1956, Stephens records, box 10.

<sup>76</sup> Hall, foreword, in Mitchell, *Elm Street politics*, p. i.

<sup>77</sup> Charles O. Jones, *The Republican party in American politics* (New York, NY, 1967), p. 67.

Nevertheless, the 1956 effort to harness Citizens activism in support of the party as well as the president achieved a certain success, at least according to the analysis of Citizens operatives. Their generally buoyant field reports often noted both good Citizens-party relations and effective organizational work being undertaken by Citizens.<sup>78</sup> The cost of such harmony, however, was the distinctiveness of the Citizens operation: 'it was difficult on many occasions to maintain a true Citizens character to our activities', concluded William M. Robbins of Citizens.<sup>79</sup> In Vermont, a state in which the Republican party was especially strong, there was 'little to distinguish between the Citizens activity and the regular-line Republican organization'. The Connecticut chair of Citizens, Ted Ryan, was a Republican state senator seeking re-election; consequently, 'liason [sic] between Citizens and the State Republican Organization is very strong', it was noted.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, Citizens in Oregon '[was] *very* closely coordinated with the Republican Party Organization, sharing headquarters in an unused theater in downtown Portland', reported Betsy Taubman.<sup>81</sup> At the centre, Citizens officials judged the Oregon organization as excellent, because of an energetic programme of campaigning and because of this harmonious relationship with the regular party.<sup>82</sup> But from the perspective of amateur endeavour, the result of such co-ordination was negative. According to Edgar Eisenhower, the president's brother, state-level Citizens support for the organization in his home area of Pierce County, Oregon, was under the control of a Republican organization that was unsympathetic to the Citizens project. With regard to winning over independents and disaffected Democrats, he concluded, 'we will have a great deal of difficulty if the organization is tainted with Republicanism'.<sup>83</sup>

Overall, therefore, in 1956 Citizens achieved organizational effectiveness in many states, usually avoiding tensions with the local Republican party, but at the cost of its distinctive amateurism. Meanwhile, at the elite level, Citizens efficiently raised funds and oversaw a successful television operation, run by Young & Rubicam's Sigurd Larmon. But what these organizational successes might lead to was unclear. Peter Clayton, who ran the field operation, concluded that 'to the extent that we have made it possible for many of these people to translate their newly found political interests and enthusiasms into work within the Republican Party... we have materially succeeded'. The question remained an open one, however. Moreover, attributing the

<sup>78</sup> State field reports, 2 and 11 Oct. 1956, Stephens records, box 31. See also Clayton, 'National Citizens for Eisenhower-Nixon: Field Organization Department: summary report, 1956', Pyle records, box 45.

<sup>79</sup> Robbins, 'National Citizens for Eisenhower-Nixon: Vice-Chairman's Office: summary report, 1956', Pyle records, box 45.

<sup>80</sup> Robbins, reports, 25 Sept. and 9 Oct. 1956, Stephens records, box 31.

<sup>81</sup> Taubman, report, Sept. 1956, Stephens records, box 31.

<sup>82</sup> Clayton to Stephens, 23 Oct. 1956, Nixon papers, series 320, box 151.

<sup>83</sup> Eisenhower to Eisenhower, 17 Sept. 1956, DDEPP, DDE Diary Series, box 17.

movement's success to its function as an outlet for those outside the Republican party, Citizens chair John Reed Kilpatrick did not see clearly how to take the organization forward.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, despite the stress on harmony between Citizens and the party, resistance to newcomers remained. 'I have almost lost my Republican rating', wrote Dorothy Houghton, after running the Citizens women's division in 1956, even though she had a long record of party service before taking on that assignment.<sup>85</sup>

Beyond organizational matters, the larger impact of Citizens in 1956 was less successful. The definitive contemporary academic account of the 1956 campaign does not mention the Citizens movement at all.<sup>86</sup> Its reactivation in support of Eisenhower's re-election did not recreate the 1952 spirit.<sup>87</sup> In challenging the distinctiveness of Citizens, the quest for amateur–professional harmony stripped away the sense of a crusade.<sup>88</sup> The crusade-like spirit was difficult anyway to recreate; one of the problems that the Citizens movement faced after 1952 was that its founding mission no longer had the same sense of urgency now that Eisenhower was in the White House.

Just as the disappointments of 1954 increased the White House's commitment to an integration project, the shortcomings of 1956—when Eisenhower achieved re-election by a landslide but the Republican party remained the minority in both the House and the Senate—spurred renewed interest in the potential of Citizens to transform the party. Eisenhower announced that his re-election victory marked a mandate for his agenda but added that 'the United States has not yet been convinced that modern Republicanism is with us and is going to be the guiding philosophy of the Republican party', implicitly suggesting that action in this regard was necessary.<sup>89</sup> There was some appetite among Citizens leaders to go back on a crusade against factional enemies within the party. Peter Clayton, for example, advocated a sharper-edged use of Citizens to oppose the re-nomination of Senate Republicans unfriendly to Eisenhower, notably Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin and William Jenner of Indiana, and to encourage the emergence of younger, better candidates within the party.<sup>90</sup> 'I can think of nothing more proper than the rebuilding of the Republican Party along the very democratic lines along which parties are meant to be built', wrote Clayton in December 1956. 'The Citizens of many states are well qualified

<sup>84</sup> Clayton, 'National Citizens for Eisenhower-Nixon: Field Organization Department: summary report, 1956', Pyle records, box 45; Kilpatrick and Burn, 'National Citizens for Eisenhower-Nixon: Chairman's Office: summary report, 1956', Pyle records, box 45.

<sup>85</sup> Houghton to Nixon, 22 Apr. 1957, Nixon papers, series 320, box 356.

<sup>86</sup> Charles A.H. Thomson and Frances M. Shattuck, *The 1956 presidential campaign* (Washington, DC, 1960).

<sup>87</sup> Bone, *Party committees and national politics*, p. 31.

<sup>88</sup> Dick, *Volunteers*, pp. 136–7.

<sup>89</sup> *Beaver Valley* (PA) *Times*, 24 May 1957, p. 18; *NYT*, 15 Nov. 1956, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Clayton to Adams, 10 Dec. 1956, Dwight D. Eisenhower Records as President: White House Central Files, Official file, box 716.

to lead the fight for the kind of candidates that they think most clearly identifiable with the Eisenhower leadership.’<sup>91</sup>

As party leader, however, the president could not endorse such a divisive campaign.<sup>92</sup> In his memoirs, Eisenhower noted that in 1954 he used the promise of organizational support from Citizens for Eisenhower to encourage Joseph Meek, the party’s Senate candidate in Illinois, to quiet his criticisms of the administration’s foreign policy and his support for Joseph McCarthy.<sup>93</sup> However, the incident offers a reminder that the president’s power as party leader is limited; such one-off, low-profile, and small successes do not add up to the larger-scale transformation of the party that Eisenhower sought. Nor does it suggest either a capacity or a willingness to embark on the more aggressive approach that Clayton advocated, which recalled Franklin Roosevelt’s failed ‘purge’ effort against conservative Democrats in 1938.

#### IV

Eisenhower’s challenge to Meek’s conservatism indicates his desire to use Citizens to promote his vision of the Republican party, one that involved its turn in the direction of moderation – the goal of modern Republicanism. To some activists, the appeal of Citizens was the opportunity to garner support for this moderate version of the Republican party; the recruitment of Citizens activists to the Republican party promised to infuse the party with Eisenhower’s modern Republicanism. As Representative Jacob K. Javits of New York put it to Eisenhower, their permanent recruitment to party ranks offered the prospect of party transformation because ‘the indefatigable worker is rarely to be denied’.<sup>94</sup> For many of the leading figures in Citizens, the personal dimension of the project was important.<sup>95</sup> Henry Cabot Lodge told Eisenhower, after the 1956 elections, that the party ‘should as speedily as possible make itself over into your image’ in order to ‘become the majority party in America’.<sup>96</sup> Also in response to the disappointments of 1956, Walter Williams of Citizens underlined the imperative ‘to sell better than ever before the idea of tying the “image of Eisenhower” to the Republican Party’.<sup>97</sup> Paul Hoffman, another Citizens leader, emphasized ‘the image of Eisenhower’ as the essential characteristic for a revitalized party.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Clayton to Kilpatrick, 13 Dec. 1956, Dwight D. Eisenhower Records as President: White House Central Files, Official file, box 716. <sup>92</sup> Mason, *Republican party*, ch. 5.

<sup>93</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House years: mandate for change, 1953–1956* (Garden City, NY, 1963), p. 433.

<sup>94</sup> Javits to Eisenhower, 27 Dec. 1954, Special Collections, Frank Melville, Jr, Memorial Library, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York, Jacob K. Javits collection, series 5, sub-series 2, box 3. <sup>95</sup> Bowen, *Roots of modern conservatism*, p. 186.

<sup>96</sup> Lodge to Eisenhower, 7 Nov. 1956, DDEPP, Administration series, box 24.

<sup>97</sup> Williams to Eisenhower, 14 Nov. 1956, DDEPP, Official files, box 708.

<sup>98</sup> Eisenhower to Hoffman, 6 Jan. 1953, DDEPP, Administration series, box 19.

It is important to qualify the contribution of the Citizens movement to the moderate cause, however. Citizens was by no means straightforwardly in favour of the modern-Republican project. The organization had special responsibility for the mobilization of Eisenhower support in the South, where a non-partisan emphasis was clearly much more promising than any Republican identity.<sup>99</sup> (The label in 1952 was sometimes Citizens and sometimes Democrats for Eisenhower; in 1956, the national organization promoted the latter label.<sup>100</sup>) These efforts often sought conservative, even segregationist, support. In 1952, Donald Richberg, who had chaired the National Recovery Administration during the early New Deal years, campaigned as a leading Democrat for Eisenhower in Virginia, placing special emphasis on attacking the Truman administration for its liberalism on race, its disregard for states' rights.<sup>101</sup> In Greensboro, North Carolina, during the same campaign, Citizens distributed leaflets that were more assertively segregationist in tone.<sup>102</sup> Four years later in Memphis, Citizens used the Confederate battle flag in pamphlets designed to woo segregationist sentiment.<sup>103</sup> In the South, therefore, Citizens aimed to foster Eisenhower activism, to reach out to voters who did not normally support the Republican party. But Citizens did not promote moderation within the Republican party, instead even aligning the party with segregationists.

Even at the national level, the message of Citizens for Eisenhower was sometimes not so moderate. In 1955, in soliciting funds for Citizens, Peter Clayton emphasized opposition to 'creeping Socialism'—a rallying cry among conservative Republicans—as a cause that united Citizens and regular Republicans, calling the alternative to Republican victory in 1956 'terrifying'.<sup>104</sup> By 1958, the idea of an Eisenhower crusade was no longer visible in Citizens rhetoric; by then, the national organization stressed a conservative message, little different from that of mainstream Republicans. Lloyd MacMahon, who led Citizens in 1958, sought to mobilize activists by warning of the Democrats' drift to socialism and by promoting, by contrast, the virtues of free enterprise.<sup>105</sup> This rhetoric was nevertheless consistent with Eisenhower's own message at this time, which posited a 'critical choice' between 'spendthrift

<sup>99</sup> NYT, 12 Aug. 1952, p. 13.

<sup>100</sup> Adamy to Hall, 22 Mar. 1956, DDEL, Republican National Committee Office of the Chairman (Leonard W. Hall) records, box 104.

<sup>101</sup> Richberg, 8 Oct. 1952, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Donald R. Richberg papers, box 24.

<sup>102</sup> Julian M. Pleasants, "Call your next case": H. F. "Chub" Seawell Jr., the gubernatorial election of 1952, and the rise of the Republican party in North Carolina', *North Carolina Historical Review*, 76 (1999), p. 88.

<sup>103</sup> G. Wayne Dowdy, *Crusades for freedom: Memphis and the political transformation of the American South* (Jackson, MS, 2010), p. 56.

<sup>104</sup> Clayton to Citizens supporters, 16 May 1955, Stephens records, box 32.

<sup>105</sup> MacMahon to Citizens activists, 15 Oct. 1958, Dwight D. Eisenhower Records as President: White House Central Files, Official file, box 716; see also, for example, 'Advance', 6 Oct. 1958, Nixon papers, series 320, box 152.

government [and] responsible government' in 1958; a severe economic downturn had encouraged the administration to stress fiscal conservatism rather than policy innovation, thus shedding the gloss of modern Republicanism.<sup>106</sup>

Citizens activists, moreover, were not uniformly in the moderate camp. One of their South Carolina leaders, Micah Jenkins, managed his county's 1954 write-in campaign to return segregationist Strom Thurmond to the Senate and later promoted the Republican party as a conservative force in his state.<sup>107</sup> In Arizona, Citizens leader Stephen Shadegg ran Barry Goldwater's 1952 and 1958 Senate campaigns and became a key figure in his 1964 presidential campaign that renounced the modern-Republican inheritance.<sup>108</sup>

That Citizens still existed as late as 1958 starkly indicated its failure to transform the Republican party, though this longevity also underlined its organizational power. The institutional continuity that Citizens for Eisenhower achieved after 1952 showed that it had not adequately acted as a conduit for the mobilization of new activists and then as an agent for the promotion of modern Republicanism. Citizens leaders recognized that, though some activists may have joined Republican ranks, many were reluctant to do so, and that their organization's continued existence was necessary to maintain an adequate appeal to the independent voter.<sup>109</sup> In the recession-blighted midterm campaign of 1958, the movement experienced still more problems. By late August, the organization had raised only \$28,000, compared with \$500,000 at the same stage four years earlier.<sup>110</sup> 'Regular GOP leaders, ... while expressing gratification at its fast-vanishing power, would prefer to witness its complete burial', reported the conservative *Human Events*. This publication fretted that factional plans such as those outlined by Clayton might become real, that Citizens leaders might use the organization's wealth to oppose Eisenhower's intraparty foes.<sup>111</sup> But Citizens no longer had any wealth; when Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, a moderate, requested financial assistance, he was told that the organization had no funds to give.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, Citizens leaders in California discovered that it was the conservative 'right-to-work' cause in opposition to labour rights that absorbed business contributions, suggestive of the moderates' accumulating difficulties and the conservatives' developing

<sup>106</sup> Iwan W. Morgan, *Eisenhower versus 'the spenders': the Eisenhower administration, the Democrats and the budget, 1953-1960* (London, 1990), pp. 93-126 (quotation, p. 123). Eisenhower even grumbled about the reluctance of congressional Republicans to stress adequately the issue of spending: 'Seemingly the disease of Congressional spending is not taken very seriously by candidates for the Congress', he wrote. Eisenhower to Burns, 29 Sept. 1958, DDEPP, DDE Diary series, box 36.

<sup>107</sup> *Human Events*, 12 May 1962, p. 343.

<sup>108</sup> Jason Crabtree LaBau, 'Phoenix rising: Arizona and the origins of modern conservative politics' (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern California, 2010), pp. 253-4, 266.

<sup>109</sup> Houghton to Nixon, 22 Apr. 1957, Nixon papers, series 320, box 356.

<sup>110</sup> Roberts to Eisenhower, 28 Aug. 1958, DDEPP, Name series, box 28.

<sup>111</sup> *Human Events*, 18 Aug. 1958, News section, pp. 3-4.

<sup>112</sup> McWhorter to Nixon, 15 Sept. 1958, Nixon papers, series 320, box 680.

ascendancy.<sup>113</sup> The campaign of 1960, moreover, would provide clear evidence that the professionals' vision of amateurs as a subsidiary, supportive group of organizational workers had achieved a larger victory. In that year, Volunteers for Nixon-Lodge aimed to recreate Citizens in support of the national ticket; mindful of the criticisms that Citizens had encountered, however, those in charge of the Nixon campaign emphasized that Volunteers would disband after the election.<sup>114</sup>

The Citizens movement therefore faltered as a way to revitalize the activist ranks of the Republican party, as did its moderating agenda. Despite the factional advances of the mid-1950s, there was no larger victory for modern Republicanism. This setback for moderation, in turn, was likely to reinforce the Republican party's lack of appeal to these potential new recruits. It is true that in some respects the Eisenhower administration transformed the policy agenda of the Republican party. In 1953 and 1954, congressional Republicans decisively shifted away from the anti-internationalism that had been important in encouraging Eisenhower to challenge Taft for the 1952 presidential nomination.<sup>115</sup> A similar change was visible among the party's supporters within the electorate, who were much more likely than before to approve of Cold War bipartisanship.<sup>116</sup> These successes were significant in checking the party's isolationist inheritance that especially offended Eisenhower, but larger progress towards modern Republicanism was less significant. Congressional Republicans as a whole did turn modestly more moderate during the 1950s, but this was not enough to secure the enactment of Eisenhower's middle-way agenda, which usually fell victim to a formidable combination of both liberal and conservative opposition.<sup>117</sup> During Eisenhower's second term, even though it began with a pledge of commitment to modern Republicanism, the pursuit of this moderate agenda also fell victim to the economic downturn. The administration's response to the recession placed an emphasis on cautious conservatism, rather than any programmatic advances.<sup>118</sup> The lacklustre impact of Citizens within the party's activist ranks by no means had the key responsibility for the disappointing fortunes of modern Republicanism. But it does reveal the hollowness of the high hopes that party moderates invested in what they saw as the promise of Citizens.

<sup>113</sup> Knudsen to Nixon, 23 Aug. 1958, Nixon papers, series 320, box 422.

<sup>114</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 24 Aug. 1960, p. 15; *Time*, 23 Nov. 1959.

<sup>115</sup> Gary W. Reichard, *The reaffirmation of Republicanism: Eisenhower and the eighty-third Congress* (Knoxville, TN, 1975), pp. 69–96; Pickett, *Eisenhower decides to run*, pp. 96–7.

<sup>116</sup> Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American voter* (New York, NY, 1960), p. 199.

<sup>117</sup> Kevin S. Price, 'The partisan legacies of preemptive leadership: assessing the Eisenhower cohorts in the U.S. House', *Political Research Quarterly*, 55 (2002), pp. 609–32; Wagner, *Eisenhower Republicanism*.  
<sup>118</sup> Morgan, *Eisenhower versus 'the spenders'*, pp. 74–151.

More importantly, developments were at work in the party not in support of modern Republicanism, but decisively in opposition.<sup>119</sup> Examples of such opposition could be found on the Lincoln Day following Eisenhower's 1956 landslide, when Eisenhower had tried to define that landslide as a victory for modern Republicanism. Many Lincoln Day speeches discussed modern Republicanism, but some of them challenged prevailing understandings of the term. Representative Richard M. Simpson of Pennsylvania, chair of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, commented, for example, 'The Modern Republicanism in which I believe is the Republicanism of Lincoln and Taft.'<sup>120</sup> An RNC survey in 1957 of party leaders in the Midwest revealed, overall, an insistence that conservatism, rather than moderation, was necessary to improve party prospects. Asked how to strengthen the party's electoral prospects, one respondent wrote, 'Get rid of Modern Republicans.' According to another, asked for comments on the president, 'I voted for a Republican and got a New Dealer!'<sup>121</sup> Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona was emerging as a leader of this new conservatism. Goldwater won election to the Senate in 1952 as an Eisenhower Republican, but modern Republicanism disappointed him and encouraged him to become an advocate of conservatism instead. His belief in the electoral promise of conservatism involved in part the insight, supported by his experience of Arizona campaigning, that staunch opposition to New Deal liberalism energized activists; their work at the grassroots helped to bring victory.<sup>122</sup> That insight was opposite to that informing the Citizens project, which insisted that moderation and not conservatism impelled the kind of activism likely to bring victory for the party.

## V

Eisenhower's departure from the White House did not end the Citizens project, however beleaguered by that point. The movement instead met a different end, one of factional ignominy. In the early 1960s, conservatism was firmly on the march within the Republican party, and a group of leading Eisenhower supporters tried to resuscitate the organization in 1962 as the National Republican Citizens Committee.<sup>123</sup> Eisenhower praised the effort 'to recruit to the Republican cause and to retain a spark of life in the old Citizens' groups of 1952, '56 and '60', thus boosting the party.<sup>124</sup> Again, the goal was the recruitment of Eisenhower activists and now Nixon activists for the Republican

<sup>119</sup> Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the sixties: the conservative capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1995).

<sup>120</sup> *Gettysburg* (PA) *Times*, 13 Feb. 1952, p. 7.

<sup>121</sup> Guylay to Alcorn, 28 May 1957, Pyle records, box 42.

<sup>122</sup> Goldwater to Javits, 25 May 1960, Javits collection, series 5, sub-series 2, box 9.

<sup>123</sup> It was later renamed the Republican Citizens Committee of the United States.

<sup>124</sup> Eisenhower to Thayer, 9 Feb. 1962, Thayer papers, political files, box 5.



party.<sup>125</sup> The Citizens leaders argued that organizational revitalization was not enough to boost the party's fortunes; there was a need, too, for policy development, so Milton Eisenhower, the president's brother, launched a research offshoot, the Critical Issues Council.<sup>126</sup> Conservatives attacked the return of the Citizens movement.<sup>127</sup> According to Katharine Kennedy Brown, an Ohio member of the RNC, the re-launch was a left-wing effort to take over the party.<sup>128</sup> Barry Goldwater said that its leaders were 'the same people who caused most of our present Party troubles' – for side-lining Republican regulars, for downplaying Republican principles during the Eisenhower administration.<sup>129</sup> The conservatives were right to see the re-launch as an effort to promote moderation within the party. But they had nothing to fear. It was not long before the organization dissolved into irrelevance. The new Citizens operation inherited a mailing list of 300,000 names, but by summer 1963 it had fewer than 300 members.<sup>130</sup> The Critical Issues Council had little success, too. Unable to mobilize moderation, what was now called the Republican Citizens Committee simply offered, in the name of unity, its rather meagre resources to the party's presidential campaign when Goldwater won the nomination.<sup>131</sup> In 1965, after the Goldwater defeat, a final effort to bring the movement back to life collapsed, lacking both supporters and money.<sup>132</sup> This iteration of the Citizens movement did not have mass support; it relied on the elite strand of Eisenhower associates and Citizens leaders – not enough to exercise any meaningful influence on the development of the Republican party. The final paradox of Citizens, therefore, is that what began with the belief that grassroots enthusiasm could turn the party toward election-winning moderation, drawing on the energies of large numbers of activists, ended with an elite challenge to amateur endeavour among Republicans.

The factional ignominy that surrounded the decline of Citizens for Eisenhower sharply revealed the shortcomings of the vision that this candidate-centred organization might transform the party at large thanks to an infusion of Eisenhower activists. Many of these Eisenhower activists showed little inclination to become Republican activists, to promote modern Republicanism. In such ways, these amateur Republicans shared what Wilson

<sup>125</sup> Tobin, Jr, to Thayer, 4 June 1962, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, William Safire papers, box 18.

<sup>126</sup> 'Republican Citizens Committee of the United States: Progress Report #1', June 1963, Thayer papers, political files, box 5; 'Republican Citizens Committee of the United States Progress Report', Oct. 1963, 'Political Files National Republican Citizens Committee 1963', Thayer papers, political files, box 5. <sup>127</sup> Brennan, *Turning Right in the sixties*, pp. 55–9.

<sup>128</sup> Brown to Miller, 12 July 1962, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, William A. Rusher papers, box 155.

<sup>129</sup> Goldwater to Miller, 5 July 1962, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, Barry Goldwater papers, series P&P 1, box 4.

<sup>130</sup> Von Stade to Sheffield and Thayer, 22 Aug. 1963, Thayer papers, political file, box 5.

<sup>131</sup> Thayer to Goldwater, 4 Aug. 1964, Thayer papers, political file, box 5.

<sup>132</sup> Rees to Thayer, 10 Nov. 1965, Thayer papers, political file, box 5.

saw as the shortcomings of his amateur Democrats; they were unwilling to move beyond their narrower cause in support of a wider party agenda. Furthermore, the involvement of a Citizens elite in the struggle against Goldwater activism underlines the wrong-headed nature of the assumption that amateur endeavour within the Republican party was consistent with any quest for moderation. Eisenhower activists were often reluctant to become Republican activists; existing Republicans were often unwilling to accept their arrival except, at best, as ideologically neutral contributors of organizational muscle. The bold ambition to transform the party was misplaced. In his memoirs, Eisenhower concluded that he achieved only 'slight' success in pursuing his goal 'to unify, and strengthen the Republican Party'.<sup>133</sup> In time, the amateur tendency in which he invested confidence helped not to consolidate his vision of modern Republicanism, but instead to inform conservative opposition to that vision. The next generation of Republican amateurs would support Barry Goldwater and a very different vision for the party's future, one that would prove to have much more significance in the longer term.

<sup>133</sup> Wagner, *Eisenhower Republicanism*, p. 132.