

Don't Blame Us: Grassroots Liberalism in Massachusetts, 1960-1990

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(History)  
in The University of Michigan  
2010

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To my grandmothers  
Ruth Dangel  
&  
Barbara Geismer

### **Acknowledgements**

Reflecting on the many people who have been instrumental in bringing this project to completion makes me regret the countless times I have complained over the last few years about feeling all alone. In many ways this is a project that started and found its way back to Route 2. It was the wonderful teachers at Concord Academy, especially Bill Bailey, Sandy Stott and Hayden White Rostow, who nurtured my commitment to learning for learning's sake. At Brown University, I learned a great deal from Ken Sacks, James Patterson, and especially the late John Thomas who taught me to take care and pleasure in the process of writing history. Mike Vorenberg long ago surpassed any tenuous familial obligation and since our first long phone conversation more than ten years ago has repeatedly offered essential academic guidance. He, Katie, and Emma Vorenberg greatly enhanced my time in Providence and now my visits back.

I am not sure there is a better place to pursue graduate study in history than the University of Michigan. The History Department has offered an incredible academic community that has made it hard to spend so much of my time as a graduate student away from Ann Arbor. I am especially grateful for the chance I had to work with Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, Penny Von Eschen, Mary Kelley Martha Jones, and Geoff Eley, who each contributed in important ways to my academic development. The competent and patient History Department staff members Lorna Altsetter, Sheila Coley, Diana Denney and Kathleen King have repeatedly steered me away from crashing on the shoals of bureaucracy.

This project benefited tremendously from the unmatched archival collections in the Boston area and the archivists who maintain them. I owe particular gratitude to Joan Krizack of the Northeastern University Special Collections Department for not only for maintaining one of the best collections devoted to social justice just about anywhere, but for making the materials extremely accessible. I am thankful to Marisa Hudspeth, Michelle Romero and the rest of the staff in the department for their generous assistance during my extended time there. The enthusiasm and competency of Sarah Hutcheon and the staff at the Schlesinger Library made it an extremely pleasurable place in which to do research and made me contemplate altering my project just so I could stay there longer.

This project received financial support from a number of different institutions. Grants and fellowships from the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Michigan, the Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan, the Miller Center for Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the American Council of Learned Societies, generously allowed me the means to stay in Boston in order to complete the research and writing of this dissertation. I have been fortunate to serve as a Miller Center for Public Affairs Fellow this past year. It is been a pleasure to have the chance to meet the other fellows and graduate students at the University of Virginia. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to gain the guidance and insight of Brian Balogh and my “dream mentor” Nancy MacLean.

One of the most exciting and rewarding parts of this process has been the opportunity to meet and receive feedback from several wonderful scholars. I am especially thankful to David Freund, Cheryl Greenberg Todd Swanstrom, Andrew

Needham, Noam Maggor, Eduardo Canedo, Leah Wright, Andy Lewis, Bryant Simon, Lizabeth Cohen, Julian Zelizer, E.J. Dionne, Diana Selig, and Peter Siskind. Meg Jacobs has offered advice and perspective and talked me down from the ledge at several critical stages in the completion of this project. The extremely generous and encouraging Bruce Schulman took a variety of important steps to make me feel much less intellectually adrift in Boston. I am especially indebted to Bruce for also introducing me to the fantastic Boston University graduate students David Atkinson Anne Blacske, Katie Cramer Brownell, Kate Jewell and Scott Marr who embraced me as a “de facto” member of their cohort. The questions and suggestions from the members of the Miller Center Fellows, the Boston History Political History Seminar, Cornell American History Seminar, and the American History Workshop and the Metropolitan History Workshop at the University of Michigan have also undoubtedly strengthened this project.

I owe the largest gratitude to the members of my dissertation committee who have made an inevitably difficult process much less so. Tony Chen has reminded me of the people out there who still use words like “hypotheses.” He also offered crucial career advice, last minute airport rides, and overall humor. Matthew Countryman has repeatedly posed hard questions and observations that have helped to sharpen my analysis. I have profited tremendously both personally and intellectually from my many conversations with Matthew about the pros and cons about writing about where you grew up. Since my first semester of graduate school, I have benefited from the multifaceted support and guidance of Gina Morantz-Sanchez. Gina has been a model of academic and personal generosity and I have learned from her how to see the good in every project and every person. It is difficult to find the words to convey properly my appreciation to Matt

Lassiter. His imprint on this dissertation can be found from the foundational ideas down to the indefinite articles. I can say without a doubt that he has improved this project tenfold. I have also become a far better scholar and teacher by watching him and listening to his countless suggestions over these last six years. I do not think it would be possible to have a better advisor.

I have been fortunate for the chance to collaborate with a fabulous group of former and current graduate students at the University of Michigan. Drew Meyers, Aaron Cavin, Andrew Highsmith, Nathan Connolly, Molly Michelmore Josh Mound, Anthony Ross, Matt Ides, Brendan Goff, Dea Boster Minayo Nasiali, Monica Kim, Isa Quintana, Sam Erman, Rabia Belt and the other members of the Metropolitan History Workshop have over the years provided various forms of advice and encouragement. Tamar Carroll has been a constant source of support and guidance since I was deciding whether to come to graduate school at all. Clay Howard has been a champion of this project since the beginning and has offered important feedback and ideas especially in the final few months. Whether in Ann Arbor or a California highway, Lauren Hirshberg and Laura Ferguson have been unbelievably empathetic friends who helped me to deal with the anxieties and insecurities that accompany the graduate school experience.

Thank you to New York, Ann Arbor and Boston friends Carolyn Bachman, Kristin Heitmann, Emily Janney, Mike Rothman, Reed Weeden Minor, Laura and Nate Gray, Sarah Baker-Siroty, Liz Ryan, Leanne Hartmann, Molly Moeser, Sai Samant, Taylor Reilly, and Miles too, for reminding me that there is a world outside of my work and making the breaks a lot of fun. I owe particular thanks to Sai for her crucial last minute assistance in formatting this mammoth document. I owe much thanks to Meg Ostrum,

Karen Roubicek, Reid Rowe, Laurie Goldberger and Leslie Kogod, the Combs family, and generations of the Petrie clan for their support and hospitality. Mirra Levitt has been an intrinsic part of my own history and I am thankful to her for reminding me that it pays off to see the world in broken images. Thanks to Tom Combs for adding to his law school debt in overdue library charges on my behalf, for keeping me distracted and humbled through our ongoing Scrabble rivalry, and for all around doing his “thang.” I am too cynical to believe in fate, but it was the best of coincidences that brought Sarah Petrie and me to return to Boston at the same time. Anyone writing a dissertation should be lucky enough to have a best friend like Sarah.

Although I have accused them on more than once of being overbearing, none of this would be possible without the numerous forms of support and love from my family. My sister Sarah has been a much needed source of enthusiasm, intellectual curiosity and uncontrollable giggles. I cannot wait to be living near her once again next year. My mom, Susie Dangel, has always been a model of loving what you do. I owe her a great deal of thanks for rescuing me from many logistical crises. My dad, Alan Geismer, has encouraged me to set high standards for myself even as he has reminded me that usually I am my own harshest critic. I am particularly indebted to him for his crack last minute copy-editing assistance. These difficult last few months have made me even more appreciative of the opportunity that writing this dissertation gave me to live near them again, but the easiest part of leaving is knowing that my parents will always make Boston my home.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

Abortion Action Coalition (AAC)  
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)  
Citizens for Balanced Transportation (CBT)  
Citizens for Conservation and Safety (CCS)  
Citizens for Limited Taxation (CLT)  
Concord Home Owning Corporation (CHOC)  
Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)  
Citizens for Participation in Politics (CPP)  
Citizens for Participation in Political Action (CPPAX)  
Citizens for Responsible Education in Winchester (CREW)  
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)  
Fair Housing Practices Committee (FHPC)  
Governor's Commission on the Status of Women (GCSW)  
Greater Boston Committee on the Transportation Crisis (GBC)  
Massachusetts Citizens for Life (MCFL)  
Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)  
Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights (Federation)  
Massachusetts High Technology Council (MHTC)  
Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency (MHFA)  
Massachusetts Organization for Repeal of Abortion Laws (MORAL)  
Massachusetts Political Action for Peace (PAX)  
Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus (MWPC)  
Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO)  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)  
National Organization for Women (NOW)  
Newton Land Use and Civic Association (NLUCA)  
Newton Community Development Association (NCDF)  
Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR)  
Residents Opposed to the Urban Traffic Encouragement (ROUTE)  
Swamp Brook Preservation Association (SBPA)  
Suburbs United (SUN)  
Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW)  
Voice of Women-New England (VOW)  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

## Introduction

### “Don’t Blame Me”

George McGovern’s capturing of only the electoral votes of Massachusetts in the 1972 presidential election seemed to cement the reputation of the Bay State as the unrivaled bastion of American liberalism. The outbreak of the infamous busing crisis just a few years later, however, earned the state’s capital Boston the dubious and opposite status as “Little Rock of the North” and “the most racist city in America.”<sup>1</sup> The state earned national notoriety once again in 1988 with the resounding defeat of Democratic presidential candidate and Bay State Governor Michael Dukakis, which seemed to signal that the Northeast and its “limousine liberals” were out of touch with the rest of the country. The 1972 electoral map, the violence of the Boston busing crisis, and the failure of the Dukakis presidential bid have become signposts to symbolize the exceptionalism of the Bay State, the failure of New Deal/Great Society liberalism and the decline of Democratic Party. Through an examination of the political culture and grassroots activism in the liberal suburbs of metropolitan Boston between 1960 and 1990, this dissertation challenges those conventional explanations and recasts the narratives of modern liberalism, civil rights, suburban politics and electoral realignment.

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 1; Pam Belluck, “Boston Rises Above Unflattering Stereotypes,” *New York Times*, July 25, 2004.

“Don’t Blame Us” interweaves the stories of postwar suburban growth and inequality, grassroots social movements, and the transformation of both Massachusetts politics and the Democratic Party at the national level during the second half of the twentieth century. Many studies of twentieth century urban and political history have routinely demonstrated how postwar liberal policies both fueled the construction of suburbia and sowed the seeds for the creation of the Republican coalition. By inverting that paradigm, “Don’t Blame Us” investigates how the processes and politics of suburbanization also reshaped the ideology and policies of postwar liberalism and the Democratic Party. This examination of the suburbanization of liberalism revises existing scholarly assessments to demonstrate that the rise of the New Right and the Reagan Revolution in the 1970s and 1980s did not mark the demise of liberalism or the Democratic Party. Instead, it illuminates the increasing centrality of suburban voters outside of Boston and throughout the nation in remaking modern liberalism and the Democratic Party by reorienting both away from their roots in the labor union halls of Northern cities and the ideals of the New Deal State and toward white-collar communities in the post-industrial metropolitan periphery.

Massachusetts, one of the smallest and most suburbanized states in the nation, has long played a disproportionately large role in national politics and basked in its reputation as the stronghold of American liberalism. Yet metropolitan Boston provides perhaps the most notable example of a political and social development that has percolated in other knowledge-based metropolitan regions around the country since the late 1950s, ranging from Fairfax County, Virginia, the North Carolina Research Triangle, Boulder, Colorado to Silicon Valley, California. In 2002 political scientists John B. Judis

and Ruy Teixeira deemed these areas and their population the vanguard of an “Emerging Democratic Majority.” The realignment of white suburban professionals first became visible at the national level in the 1972 presidential race and steadily continued so that by 1988 a majority of the nation’s professionals supported Dukakis over Republican candidate George H.W. Bush. Voters in counties in which white collar professionals now disproportionately reside, such as Route 128 outside of Boston as well as New Jersey's Bergen County, Philadelphia’s Montgomery County, and California's Santa Clara County, have all shifted their political affiliation from Republican to Democrat during the last forty years as the white-collar post-industrial workforce has increasingly come to support Democratic candidates in national elections.<sup>2</sup> In 2008, Barack Obama overwhelmingly carried this voting bloc and won 50 percent of suburban voters across the nation, proving once again the importance of this constituency in ensuring the Democratic Party’s persistence at the national level.<sup>3</sup> Far from being exceptional,

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<sup>2</sup> John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority* (New York: Scribner, 2002); John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, “Majority Rules: The coming Democratic Dominance” *New Republic*, (August 5, 2002), 18-23. Judis and Teixeira define professionals as “highly skilled, white-collar workers, typically with a college education, who produce ideas and services. They include academics, architects, engineers, scientists, computer analysts, lawyers, physicians, registered nurses, teachers, social workers, therapists, fashion designers, interior decorators, graphic artists, writers, editors, and actors.” As the United States has moved away from a blue-collar, industrial economy toward a postindustrial one that produces ideas and services, the professional class has expanded from 7 percent of the workforce in 1950 to more than 15 percent by 2002.” Judis and Teixeira state that, “As the professional class has grown, its politics have shifted. Typically self-employed or working for small firms, professionals once saw themselves as proof of the virtues of laissez-faire capitalism. They disdained unions and opposed the New Deal and “big government.” In the 1960 presidential election, professionals supported Nixon over Kennedy 61 percent to 38 percent. Since then, however, their views have changed dramatically. In the last four presidential elections, professionals have supported the Democratic candidate by an average of 52 percent to 40 percent.”

<sup>3</sup> See John B. Judis, “America the Liberal, The Democratic majority: It emerged!” *The New Republic*, November 18, 2008 (<http://www.tnr.com/article/america-the-liberal>, last accessed April 28, 2010). Judis notes that while it is not clear exactly what percentage of professionals voted for Obama because the exit polls did not include professionals as a category. Using an approximation of people with advanced degrees who Obama by 58 to 40 percent. Moreover, Judis suggests that increase of the post-industrial knowledge based workforce has not just occurred in “traditionally liberal areas like Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco” but has also taken shape in parts of the South and West such as Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill Research Triangle, the northern Virginia suburbs, Orlando and South Florida, and the Denver-

therefore, the developments that took place in Massachusetts, especially its suburbs, embody both the progressive and problematic transformations of liberalism and the Democratic Party in the second half of the twentieth century.

The rise of Cold War military spending and corresponding demographic upheaval in the postwar period established the conditions for liberal political activity in the Massachusetts suburbs. During the two decades after World War II, the Route 128 highway encircling Boston evolved into a major node in the nation's growing high-tech economy. The construction of the highway and its related businesses drew a new generation of executives, engineers, professors with ties to the area's renowned academic institutions and post-industrial corporations to move to the suburban communities along its periphery. Many of these newcomers defied the conventional image of the apolitical or conservative suburbanite. These affluent, largely white residents aimed not to reject, but, rather, to deploy their identities as homeowners toward progressive causes. In the process, these residents helped to remake Bay State communities such as Brookline, Concord, Lexington Lincoln and Newton into some of the most socioeconomically exclusive and politically liberal suburbs in the state and the nation. By 1970, in an article entitled "Liberalism in the Suburbs," *Newsweek* characterized Newton and its neighbors as the "seedbed for liberal causes" such as civil rights, antiwar activism, environmentalism, and feminism.<sup>4</sup> The political activities of grassroots liberals, however, also made this set of affluent communities the sites for the major battles that established lasting constraints upon the ability to create racial, spatial, and economic equality.

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Boulder region, helps explain how the Democratic Party recaptured North Carolina, Virginia, Florida, and Colorado in 2008 election.

<sup>4</sup> "Liberalism in the Suburbs," *Newsweek* (July 6, 1970).

The rise of suburban liberal activism first emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s around the issues of fair housing and civil rights. Under the umbrella organization of the Massachusetts Federation of Fair Housing and Equal Rights, a web of groups spread rapidly through Boston's affluent suburbs as a response to both localized problems of residential segregation and a growing national concern over the issue of racial discrimination. This movement transformed the notion that African-Americans should have the right and opportunity to live anywhere from a fringe into a mainstream belief in American policy and society. Its individualist tactics ensured, however, that only a handful of middle-class black families ever moved into the elite suburbs of Boston and thereby actually did little to alter the structures of racial and economic segregation. In 1966, this coalition of white liberals spearheaded the formation of a voluntary one-way integration program called the Metropolitan Council of Educational Opportunity (METCO) that transported black students from Boston into predominately white suburban school systems. The program, which offered a symbolic solution to the systemic problem of educational inequality, would become one of the first and largest of its kind in the nation. In order to build support for the project, METCO's suburban advocates formulated an individualist argument that emphasized the particular educational benefits for white middle-class children by preparing them to operate in a multiracial world. This persuasive reasoning anticipated and contributed to the intellectual infrastructure leading to the adoption of Affirmative Action policies at the national level, creating both opportunities and constraints on the ongoing effort to create meaningful racial and economic equality.

The white middle-class residents of liberal suburbs like Brookline, Newton and Lexington also stood at the vanguard of peace and antiwar activism throughout the 1960s. Through activities such as the 1969 Vietnam Moratorium, the largest civil demonstration in the history of the United States, this movement successfully pushed opposition to the Cold War and Vietnam War from a fringe to a dominant belief within both the Democratic Party and the liberal-leaning suburbs. In the aftermath of this pivotal event, the suburban-based liberal leadership opted to focus its energy working more directly within the political system. In just a few years, liberal activists led successful campaigns for cutting-edge state legislation and in support of antiwar politicians that rested heavily on the mobilization of white middle-class voters in the suburbs. The state's lonely support for George McGovern in 1972 punctuated a decade of this mode of grassroots activism. The unbalanced results of the election expose the strength, not weakness, of the peace movement and the ways it helped to make the Democratic Party locally and nationally more attuned to suburban-centered issues and voters since 1972.<sup>5</sup> The Massachusetts antiwar movement's suburban-centered strategies and base, however, both expanded and limited its possibilities. By focusing primarily on mobilizing white middle-class suburbanites, these activists often excluded from its frame of focus lower-income and racial minorities and the issues that concerned them, which placed lasting constraints on peace and liberal politics at both the local and national levels.

The limitations of this grassroots liberal vision of individualist solutions and middle-class privileges became most pronounced when the nation's economic climate

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<sup>5</sup> For more on how the 1972 presidential election played a central role in making the base and ideology of the Democratic Party see Bruce Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment: The McGovern Insurgency and the Identity Crisis of the Democratic Party* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2007).

shifted following the 1973 recession. During this period, grassroots activists in several Route 128 suburbs fought hard to force their neighbors to accept responsibility for the problems of racial and spatial inequality by proposing the construction of small affordable housing developments in their respective communities. These residents, nevertheless, confronted another brand of local activists who relied on the delay measures built into new environmental laws to permanently thwart or significantly downscale the affordable housing projects. Likewise, bitter battles erupted over proposals to expand the METCO program and to impose a cap on property taxes in these same suburban communities. This reaction revealed the unwillingness of affluent white suburbanites from across the political spectrum to accept responsibility for the causes and consequences of racial segregation and metropolitan fragmentation. This resistance, however, did not so much mark the decline of suburban liberalism, but actually directly shaped the politics and policies of the national Democratic Party and its increasing articulation of market-based individualism and rejection of systemic solutions to the problems of structural inequality.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the Democratic Leadership Council aimed to reinvent the party and appeal to moderate suburbanites by depicting “the New Democrats” as centrist populists from the South and distancing them from the affiliation with the Northeast.<sup>6</sup> However, the political subjectivity of white suburbanites from Massachusetts and the policy decisions of technocratic politicians such as Michael

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the Democratic Leadership Council’s strategy, see Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 320-322; Judis and Teixeira, *Emerging Democratic Majority*, 29-30, 126-130; Kenneth S. Baer, *Reinventing the Democrats: The Politics of Liberalism from Reagan to Clinton* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2000); Jeff Faux, “The Myth of the New Democrats,” *American Prospect* (September 21, 1993), 20-29.

Dukakis fundamentally influenced the Democratic Party's embrace of a platform of fiscal conservatism, post-industrial corporate development, and quality-of-life issues. The worldview of these Massachusetts residents embodies the formation of a political sensibility that has emerged in the affluent communities in metropolitan regions across the country from the suburbs of New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Cleveland, Chicago, the college towns of Ann Arbor and Madison to the subdivisions of the Bay Area, Boulder, Seattle, and even Orange County outside of Los Angeles. The activities and voting patterns of suburban residents together have contributed in important ways to transformations of liberalism, the political realignment of the nation and the persistence of structural inequality over the last half-century.<sup>7</sup>

The suburban-centered ideology of middle-class entitlements and market-based individualism inserted a sliding scale of concerns into the center of the political agenda and worldview of liberalism. Residents in the liberal suburbs of Boston overwhelmingly supported peace politics, the antiwar movement, the national civil rights cause and mainstream environmentalism, each of which posed little potential threat to local property values. These residents demonstrated support for legislation and programs

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the national geography of suburban Democrats and liberals see Judis and Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, 69-116. For examples of works that have addressed various forms of suburban liberal activism in these places, see Reginald J. Damerell, *Triumph in A White Suburb: The Dramatic Story of Teaneck, NJ, The First Town in the Nation to Vote for Integrated Schools* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1968); Louise Nelson Dyble, "Revolt Against Sprawl: Transportation and the Origins of the Marin County Growth-Control Regime," *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (November 2007), 38-66; Samuel Freedman, *The Inheritance: How Three Families and the American Political Majority Moved From Left to Right* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); Matthew Klingle, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Marian J. Morton "The Suburban Ideal and Suburban Realities" *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 28 No. 6 (September 2002,) 671-698; William J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley At War: The Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Amy L. Scott, "Remaking Urban in the American West: Urban Environmentalism, Lifestyle Politics, and Hip Capitalism in Boulder, Colorado," in *Political Culture of the New West*, Jeff Roche, ed. (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2008), 251-280; Peter Siskind, "Growth and Its Discontents: Localism, Protest and the Politics of Development on the Northeast Corridor" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2002); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

promoting individualist solutions to rights-related issues such as fair housing, voluntary integration and the Equal Rights Amendment that also required limited financial sacrifice. Suburbanites across the political spectrum, nevertheless, exhibited the greatest resistance to issues such as affordable housing, two-way metropolitan integration, and progressive tax reforms that aimed to challenge structural inequalities and threatened their property values and entitlements of homeownership.<sup>8</sup>

By looking both at this cohort of grassroots liberal activists and the political culture of the suburban places they inhabited, this dissertation reveals how these two forces shaped each other and in the process the political landscape of Massachusetts and the nation. The friction between committed activists and their more moderate neighbors placed important limits on suburban liberal activism. Many of these more moderate suburban residents did not object to symbolic and limited solutions such as fair housing policies or METCO, but then fiercely protested against policies and programs like affordable housing or tax reform that asked them to assume financial responsibility for the costs of structural inequality. These conflicts also illuminate the political dynamics and tensions of the Boston suburbs and Massachusetts as a whole.

The physical and social geography of metropolitan Boston also informed the dynamics of liberal activism. In all of these campaigns, the symbolism of suburban residency mattered as activists used their homeowner-centered identities to provide various issues with a sense of white middle-class respectability. In some campaigns,

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<sup>8</sup> Political scientist Frank Levy's "Simple Theory of a Civil Rights Law" posits that "the probability of securing majority approval for a civil rights bill increases as the proportion of unaffected districts rises." (*Northern Schools and Civil Rights: The Racial Imbalance Act of Massachusetts*. Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1971, 12.) Likewise J Anthony Lukas observed that key to the success of any civil rights wrested on the maxim that "the probability of support for such legislation is inversely related to the proximity of its potential application." (*Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* New York: Knopf, 1986, 131). I borrow this basic concept, but expand its beyond application national civil rights legislation to a variety of the other liberal issues.

however, actual residency in the suburbs was more important than others. A few enclaves of middle and upper-middle class residents within the cities of Boston and Cambridge, such as Beacon Hill, Back Bay, the South End and the Brattle Street area outside of Harvard Square, shared the socioeconomic characteristics and political leanings of their liberal suburban counterparts. Many of the residents in these neighborhoods became integral parts of the campaigns for peace, feminism and liberal politicians also using their middle-class identities to advance these causes. White middle-class urban-based grassroots activists remained virtually absent, however, from the efforts more directly linked to property and taxation, such as affordable housing and metropolitan educational integration, which usually constituted fights among factions within various suburban communities.

The consistent ability of suburban liberal activists in Massachusetts to work effectively within the formal channels of the political system, especially at the state level, helps explain how this group's hierarchical worldview has become so influential in policy and politics. These grassroots activists mobilized their suburban social networks, identities as parents and taxpayers, and professional expertise as lawyers, professors, engineers, corporate executives and social workers in a series of landmark campaigns for the election of liberal politicians and the passage of pioneering state legislation. In addition, the federal government and national organizations have embraced many of the policies and initiatives first launched by suburban liberal activists in Massachusetts, including fair housing, Affirmative Action, inclusionary zoning, open space and growth controls laws, the Vietnam Moratorium, and single issue advocacy for abortion rights.

The strategies of suburban liberal activists had particularly profound ideological and policy consequences at the local, state and national levels. The architects of these grassroots liberal campaigns consistently adopted a pragmatic approach emphasizing moderate or token policy solutions to ensure the passage of pathbreaking laws and programs to reduce residential discrimination and to increase school integration and affordable housing opportunities. These programs often had sweeping symbolism, but in actuality represented just the first steps toward achieving more substantive reform. In order to receive support for these potentially controversial ideas, grassroots liberal activists also formulated a discourse that underplayed these policies as a remedy for historical racial and economic injustice. Instead, liberal activists focused more on the benefits of these policies for white middle-class suburban residents and their children. However, as state and national leaders enthusiastically embraced these individualist arguments and programs, the approach actually foreclosed the possibility for subsequent reform. The efforts of suburban liberal activists, therefore, did produce some small cracks in the structures of segregation, but ultimately fortified larger patterns of racial, spatial, and economic inequality in both Massachusetts and the nation.

In the aftermath of the 1972 election, a bumper sticker began appearing on cars throughout metropolitan Boston declaring “Don’t Blame Me, I’m From Massachusetts.” While the slogan clearly referenced the state’s sole support of George McGovern, its underlying meaning is equally important to understanding postwar politics and the place of suburban liberals. By unraveling the individualist, exceptionalist, and progressive meanings embedded in that seemingly unapologetic slogan, this dissertation explores both the constraints and possibilities of suburban liberalism. In doing so, it aims to prove

that both suburban liberals and Massachusetts need to be understood less for the reasons that they stood against the national tide and more for what they represent about American politics and society over the last fifty years.

### **The “Problem” of Liberalism**

For a generation historians in the subfield of twentieth century political history have engaged in an almost obsessive quest to understand Ronald Reagan’s victory in the 1980 presidential election. That singular focus has created a teleological view of postwar history that overemphasizes the binary relationship between the decline of the New Deal Order and the rise of the New Right. These spatially-rooted narratives tend to place the decline of the New Deal Order within the industrial centers of the North and Midwest, while ascribing conservative ascendance to the suburbs of the Sunbelt South and West. These analyses have provided both a distorted cognitive map of political realignment and an incomplete explanation of the persistence and contradictions in liberalism. Explaining Reagan’s victory either as a story of the decline of the New Deal Order or the ascent of the New Right has not supplied historians with an adequate argument to explain subsequent political developments. Rather, it draws a straight line between Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, Reagan and George W. Bush, skating over the two terms of Democratic control of the White House, progressive developments at the state and local levels. This teleological view of postwar history has not only solidified the assumption of the seeming demise of the Democratic Party but has also overlooked or minimized the importance of suburbanization in reshaping the parameters of liberalism, especially at the grassroots level.

A declension narrative has long posed a “problem” for the study of twentieth-century liberalism. The earliest accounts of postwar liberalism argued that the “excesses” of 1960s liberalism led to the “unraveling” of the New Deal Coalition. This argument placed the ending point of the coalition in the chaotic year 1968, amidst student radicalism, the antiwar movement, urban riots, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, and the rise of the “silent majority.” A group of leading political historians, largely through contributions to the influential edited collection *The Rise and the Fall of the New Deal Order*, have expanded this narrative of liberalism’s triumph and tragedy to show the problems of the Democratic Party did not suddenly emerge in the late 1960s, but had festered since the late 1930s with the Janus-faced agenda of the New Deal.<sup>9</sup> This “rise and fall” paradigm tracks the experiences of the white male union members in the blue-collar neighborhoods of the Rustbelt who served as the anchor of the New Deal Coalition from the 1930s through the 1960s, but by the 1970s had become increasingly disillusioned and shifted their political allegiances toward Reagan and the Republican Party.<sup>10</sup> This framework has wedded the travails of liberalism too closely

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<sup>9</sup> I borrow this summary from Thomas J. Sugrue’s *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), xix, 267-268. For examples of these arguments see Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); William L. O’Neil, *Coming Apart: An Informal History of America in the 1960’s* (New York: Quadrangle-New York Times Book Co., 1974).

<sup>10</sup> Fraser and Gerstle define the “New Deal Order” broadly to encompass economic and social institutions, ideologies and electoral coalitions. See Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Order, 1930-1980*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). x-xi. The contributors in the collection and others have built directly upon Alan Brinkley’s seminal work *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) in which he argues that New Deal policymakers’ embrace of Keynesian economic theory fueled the transition away from a producer to a consumer-oriented vision of political economy in the 1930s. This shift in economic policy assured the liberal order’s political power throughout much of the postwar period, but also sowed the seeds for its eventual demise during the economic recession of the 1970s. The influence of Brinkley becomes particularly apparent in Fraser and Gerstle, *Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*. For other works that have adopted certain key components of Brinkley’s periodization and arguments about consumer-oriented politics see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003) and Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). For a recent scholarly

with the “Reagan Democrats,” which not only reifies the working class as white male union members in the urban North, but also marginalizes other members of the New Deal Coalition, including suburban professionals who maintained their allegiance to the Democratic Party through this period of realignment.<sup>11</sup> By focusing on the Reagan election as the ultimate symbol of the decline of New Deal liberalism and the Democratic Party, this interpretation, therefore, does not account for the changes within the party and ideology after 1960, especially its increasing reorientation toward white-collar suburbanites and the priorities of market-based individualism.<sup>12</sup> In doing so, this urban

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debate about the meanings and legacy of the New Deal see Jefferson Cowie and Nick Salvatore, “The Long Exception: Rethinking the Place of the New Deal in American History,” and responses by Kevin Boyle, “Why Is There No Social Democracy in America?”; Michael Kazin, “A Liberal Nation In Spite of Itself”; Jennifer Klein, “A New Deal Restoration: Individuals, Communities, and the Long Struggle for the Collective Good”; Nancy MacLean, “Getting New Deal History Wrong”; David Montgomery, “The Mythical Man”; Jefferson Cowie and Nick Salvatore, “History, Complexity, and Politics: Further Thoughts” in *International Labor and Working-Class History* Volume 74 Issue 1 (Fall 2008), 3-69.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy MacLean provides an excellent discussion of problems associating “working-class” with white men in industrial unions in the urban North in “Getting New Deal History Wrong.” MacLean aptly argues that such association fails to show how men and women of color outside of the North have reinvigorated the labor movement and the New Deal vision. A series of works have shown how groups of color have tested, extended and reshaped many of the basic tenets of modern liberalism, see Dorothy Sue Cobble, “A ‘Tiger by the Toenail’: The 1970s Origins of the New Working-Class Majority,” *Labor 2* (Fall 2005); Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Ruth Milkman, *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Books, 2006); Annalise Orleck, *Storming Caesar’s Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Postwar Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2005); Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: University Press, 2003); Vanessa Tait, *Poor Workers’ Unions: Rebuilding Labor from Below* (Boston: South End Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Many of these authors maintain that the future Reagan Democrats did not defect from liberalism, but that it left them. See, Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992); Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*; Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985) and Jonathan Rieder “The Rise of the ‘Silent Majority’” in *The Rise and Fall of the New Order*. This argument has provided historians with a relatively straightforward and seemingly simple means to explain both the demise of liberalism and the rise of conservatism. Yet it is the very simplicity of this interpretation that makes it both inadequate for understanding either the failures of liberalism or the ascension or conservatism. This type of argument runs the risk of placing too much of the burden for the “fall of liberalism” on either a group of urban voters or a small group of politicians. Furthermore, it fails to allow room for the overlap of these two political forces and to recognize both the volatility of the conservative coalition and the persistence or changes in liberalism. By applying the new insights about the political economy of New Deal Order, Thomas Sugrue’s *Origins of the Urban Crisis* helped to significantly thicken this interpretation of social backlash and liberal decline by shifting the focus

and labor-centered analysis served to foreclose exploration of the contradictions and persistence of liberalism. Untangling the questions of “how did Reagan get elected?” and “what happened to liberalism?” shows both that liberalism did not die, but, rather, transformed and further exposes the increasingly important role of white middle-class suburbanites in that process.

The development of a counter-narrative of Reagan’s victory that emphasizes conservative coalescence at the grassroots level rather than the fracturing of the New Deal Order within the urban North has further marginalized inquiry into both the possibilities and limits in postwar liberalism and its reorientation towards the suburbs.<sup>13</sup> Grassroots-based studies of the rise of the Right by Lisa McGirr and others kindled a resurgence of the subfield and moved conservatism from the “orphan in historical scholarship” to its increasingly favored child.<sup>14</sup> Several of these studies locate the success of Reagan in the mobilization of New Right activists in Sunbelt suburban strongholds

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away from an emphasis on the race-specific policies of the Great Society and toward the consumer-oriented legacy of the New Deal. This revised interpretation suggests that government-sanctioned entitlements coupled with the economic insecurity of the 1970s propelled many working and middle class whites to shift their political allegiance to the Republican Party.

<sup>13</sup> See for example, Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and The Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). Jonathan Schoenwald *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Darren Dochuk, “From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Southernization of Southern California, 1939—1969” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2005); Michelle M. Nickerson “Domestic Threats: Women, Gender and Conservatism in Cold War Los Angeles, 1945-1966” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2003). For two good overviews of this literature see Darren Dochuk, “Revival on the Right: Making Sense of the Conservative Moment in Post-World War II American History,” *History Compass* 4 (2006) and Kimberly Phillips-Fein, “Right On,” *The Nation*, (September 28, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Alan Brinkley “The Problem of American Conservatism,” *American Historical Review* vol. 99, no. 2 (1994), 409. Several more recent works have helped to significantly enhance understandings of modern conservatism by shifting attention from the grassroots focus and demonstrate the importance of corporations, think tanks and economists in modern the Republican ascendance. See for example, Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Shane Hamilton, *Trucking Country: The Road to America's Wal-Mart Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Kimberly Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2009).

like Orange County, California, and Cobb County, Georgia.<sup>15</sup> This conceptualization treats the growth of the New Right and suburbanization as interchangeable processes, taking elements of suburban culture more broadly---such as the rise of the military-industrial complex, massive migration, federally-subsidized entitlements, exclusionary zoning, and racial homogeneity---and attributes them solely to Sunbelt conservatism. In doing so, this analysis has obfuscated not only the alternative political constituencies that exist in suburban settings but also the ways in which a similar set of factors created the context for liberal activism.

In his seminal 1994 essay, “The Problem of American Conservatism,” Alan Brinkley accused historians of a political prejudice by overlooking conservatives, but a similar allegation can now be leveled at the same scholars for a lack of attention to suburban liberals.<sup>16</sup> While earlier observers perhaps overstated the importance of liberals at the national level, the pendulum has increasingly swung the other way and most recent studies of the period after 1968 have largely neglected this constituency in its grassroots forms. Uncovering the story of grassroots liberalism demonstrates that the towns and residents in the Route 128 corridor outside of Boston, and their counterparts in other post-industrial metropolitan communities, are equally important to understanding national political realignment and postwar suburban politics as New Right strongholds in the South and West. This approach also reveals that the persistence and problems of both liberalism and the Democratic Party have increasingly come to lie largely in the suburbs.

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<sup>15</sup> McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 10-11.

<sup>16</sup> Brinkley “The Problem of American Conservatism.”

## **The Ideology and Geography of Suburban Liberalism and Massachusetts**

### **Exceptionalism**

“Don’t Blame Us” approaches liberalism as a category of political and social identity formation. It focuses on a of geographically, racially and class-specific set of suburbanites who largely self-identified and embraced the label of liberalism. Historians have struggled to find a coherent definition for twentieth century-liberalism. Gary Gerstle has characterized the “protean character” of liberalism defining it as both ever evolving and capacious.<sup>17</sup> Likewise Robert Self deems liberalism a “plastic” concept. Depending on who is deploying the term and what or whom is being described it can alternatively mean stimulation or regulation of the capitalist economy, racial equality or white privilege.<sup>18</sup> Many scholars find it easier to define liberalism through historical actors leading to a long list of people ranging from Robert Moses and the members of Kennedy and Johnson Administrations to Martin Luther King, Jr and Tom Hayden who would likely have been surprised to find themselves clustered together.

While white middle class liberal suburbanites did not demonstrate complete consistency, their political worldview did reveal some key commonalities. The ideology of this set of actors remained rooted directly in the complex legacy of the New Deal and its often contradictory advancement of the relationship between the role of the government and the rights of the individual. The suburban liberals at the center of this case study shared a belief in the power of the federal government to stimulate and regulate the market economy and to protect individual rights. Many of these suburban

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<sup>17</sup> Gary Gerstle, “The Protean Character of American Liberalism,” *American Historical Review* Vol. 99, No. 4 (Oct., 1994), 1043-1073.

<sup>18</sup> Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 13-14.

liberals had backgrounds in academia and other highly skilled and technocratic professions and therefore strongly believed in the power of experts and expertise to solve the problems of social, economic and racial inequality. This faith in expertise paralleled the tenets of the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century. In addition, like their Progressive predecessors, these suburban liberals articulated a firm commitment to government reform and a strong resentment of systems of patronage and corruption that defined traditional party politics.<sup>19</sup>

This set of principles led suburban liberals to advocate for policies and types of reforms that advanced individual rights, setting them against the class politics that had historically dominated the Democratic Party. While notions of individualism had long been at the center of liberal thought and philosophy, the increasing popularity of psychology in the 1940s and 1950s magnified their importance in the postwar period. Freudian psychology in particular injected a new emphasis of the self into the politics of liberalism.<sup>20</sup> Psychoanalytic theories became especially important to liberal ideas about race and racism during the postwar period. Gunnar Myrdal's work both represented and influenced this mode of thought. In 1944 *The American Dilemma*, Myrdal presented racism as the product of personal prejudice and moral deficiencies rather than state-sponsored policy. This branch of thought, which scholars have deemed "racial liberalism," became a crucial component of the suburban liberal worldview, leading its followers to advocate for government policies that created "equal opportunity" and

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<sup>19</sup> For discussions of the faith in expertise during the Progressive Era see Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1998); Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966); Michael Willrich, *City of Courts: Socializing Justice in Progressive Era Chicago* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> See Stephen Frosh, *The Politics of Psychoanalysis: An Introduction to Freudian and Post-Freudian Theory*, (New York: Macmillan, 1987).

“individual rights” rather than those that might eradicate the structural underpinnings of racial segregation and economic inequity.<sup>21</sup>

The consumer-oriented politics of the New Deal state further fortified this emboldened sense of individualism and resistance to structural reform among self-identified liberals in the Boston suburbs.<sup>22</sup> A series of works have forcefully proven how the deliberately discriminatory policies of state-sponsored suburbanization helped to make “homeownership” into, in the words of Thomas Sugrue, “an identity as much as a financial investment” for a generation of whites in the postwar period.<sup>23</sup> This newly emboldened identity led many white middle-class suburbanites to embrace the racially-specific benefits of homeownership as a fundamental right. These subsidies offered them both a defense against charges of racial discrimination and a way to remain exempt from accepting individual or collective responsibility for the problems of structural segregation.<sup>24</sup> Among liberal and moderate suburbanites in Massachusetts this abiding

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<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the *American Dilemma* and its influence on liberalism see Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*; Walter Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism, 1938-1987* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Daryl Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 93-160.

<sup>22</sup> There is a rich history documenting the forms of discrimination embedded in the federal government's housing policy throughout the twentieth century. See for example, Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Sugrue, *Origins*; David M.P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Arnold R. Hirsch, “Containment on the Home Front: Race and Federal Housing Policy from the New Deal to the Cold War,” *Journal of Urban History*, 26 (2000), 158-189; Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Sugrue, *Origins*, 213.

<sup>24</sup> Freund *Colored Property*. See also George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998). Likewise, this project builds upon the insights of historians like Matthew Lassiter and Robert Self who have argued that the investment of middle-class white suburbanites in their identity as homeowners, taxpayers and schoolparents evolved into a political worldview based more in the individualistic privileges of suburban residency than a clear affiliation to either the Republican or Democratic Party (Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 7-8; Self, *American Babylon*, 16). For more about suburban populism see Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992) which argues that this brand of populism committed to the

faith in individualism came to encompass contradictory commitments to ending racial and social inequality while benefiting from government-subsidized entitlements provided by homeownership. This dualistic interpretation of individualism illuminates why campaigns and programs that advocated for symbolic solutions and minimal financial sacrifice, such as fair housing law and the METCO program, experienced large-scale success and pride in metropolitan Boston's most liberal communities while efforts to create structural and metropolitan-based remedies, such as affordable housing and two-way busing, engendered enormous resistance within the very same towns.

Most scholars of postwar political metropolitan history have adopted a version of Massachusetts exceptionalism and have largely ignored the ways in which the Boston area has served as a "bellwether" of postwar suburban growth, urban retrenchment and "one of the key places where the military-industrial complex was born."<sup>25</sup> The sprawling new interstate highway system, generous Cold War military-industrial spending and corporate relocation that reshaped the geography of the nation particularly in the South and West, transformed the Bay State's Route 128 into one of the most prominent corridors in the post-industrial economy.<sup>26</sup> Studies that do acknowledge the rise of the

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"defense of home values and neighborhood exclusivity" represents a formidable social movement and political force based around a class identity more than an alliance with either political party (Davis, 159).

<sup>25</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, *Route 128: Boston's Road to Segregation*, (Washington: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1975), 3; Ann Markenson, Peter Hall, Scott Campbell, Sabina Detrick, *The Rise of the Sunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 118. Metropolitan Boston has received a great deal of scholarly attention in studies of the period before World War II especially in the late nineteenth century as the national model of urban development. See Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston (1870-1900)* Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) and Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*.

<sup>26</sup> For more about the Sunbelt see, Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development & The Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Lassiter, *Silent Majority*; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Carl Abbott, *The New Urban America: Growth and Politics in Sunbelt Cities* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice, eds., *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth since World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

high-tech economy within the suburbs of Boston treat it as “an exceptional case” and focus their inquiries elsewhere.<sup>27</sup> Massachusetts, nevertheless, did not stand apart from national patterns of suburbanization and Cold War defense spending, but in fact served as a representative and microcosmic case study of these processes.<sup>28</sup> The pro-growth policies of New Deal Liberalism and the Cold War military-industrial complex conspired with the rise of the research university to subsidize homeownership for white middle-class homeowners and expand defense-driven capital growth, making the suburbs along the highway into some of the most economically affluent and racially segregated communities not only in the state, but in the nation as a whole.

The combination of corporate and residential migration simultaneously transformed the city of Boston into a national model of urban decline. During the postwar period, Boston maintained a shrinking tax base, widespread demolition, large levels of poverty, and severe patterns of residential and educational segregation that contributed to the systemic discrimination and isolation of African-Americans and other minority groups.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See for example, Margaret Pugh O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 71-72; In explaining why she chose Silicon Valley rather than Route 128 as her model of success her study of “cities of knowledge,” “the universities of Boston were so uniquely privileged in the Cold War competition for scientific industry that the rule of economic development and economic competition that applied to other cities of knowledge (and would-be cities of knowledge) did not apply to them (*Cities of Knowledge*, 9).”

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*. 3, 36-46.

<sup>29</sup> In its 1982 study *Urban Decline and the Future of American Cities*, the Brookings Institution placed Boston at the bottom of its scientifically calculated list of declining cities below Detroit, Gary, Newark and Oakland. See Katherine L. Bradbury, Anthony Downs and Kenneth A. Small, *Urban Decline and the Future of American Cities* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982). Most studies of postwar urban structures focused on the other spaces that comprise the geography of Rustbelt. See, Howard Gillette, Jr. *Camden After the Fall: Decline and Renewal in a Post-Industrial City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), Andrew R. Highsmith, “Demolition Means Progress: Race, Class, and the Deconstruction of the American Dream in Flint, Michigan” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2008); Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), Self, *American Babylon*; Sugrue, *Origins*.

Studies of postwar Boston, however, concentrate almost exclusively on the busing crisis and often overlook this complex history of metropolitan development. Many of these accounts rest their logic on a set of religiously and ethnically overdetermined and reductionist assumptions about Irish Catholics, African-Americans and Jews to explain the “urban exodus” and later reaction to court-ordered busing that obscures the role of the growth-oriented and deliberately discriminatory policies of the federal government in both of those processes.<sup>30</sup>

The defense-spending imperatives of the Cold War fundamentally transformed the flows of capital and power across the United States, but this infusion of money shaped the social and political dynamics of the nation’s regions in different ways. In Massachusetts, Cold War contracts and investments primarily filtered initially through the area’s heavy concentration of universities such as Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In the decade after World War II, the federal government significantly increased its funding of scientific-based research projects at universities around the nation, but especially in metropolitan Boston. By 1963, MIT and Harvard ranked nationally first and third, respectively, in terms of annual federal funding for research and development in fields such as radar, missile guidance and navigation

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<sup>30</sup> For studies of about the busing crisis see for example Emmett H. Buell and Richard A. Brisbin, Jr. *School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods: The Boston Controversy* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1982); Jon Hillson, *The Battle of Boston* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977); Alan Lupo, *Liberty’s Chosen Home: The Politics of Violence in Boston* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977); J. Michael Ross and William M. Berg, *“I Respectfully Disagree with The Judge’s Order”’: The Boston School Desegregation Controversy* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981). The best of these works offer nuanced explorations of the events and grassroots actors surrounding the school desegregation dilemma. See J. Anthony Lukas’s poignant narrative and Ronald Formisano’s scholarly supplement each offer compassionate and important portrayals African-Americans and anti-busers caught in a tangled web of economic and spatial inequality. Lukas, *Common Ground*; Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*. For the clearest example of this tendency to focus on religion and ethnicity see Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). See also, John McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Joshua Zeitz *White Ethnic New York: Jews, Catholics, and the Shaping of Postwar Politics* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

systems.<sup>31</sup> These universities also spawned an explosion of electronics companies along the Route 128 highway ring that contributed to the reshaping of the social, political, culture structures of the area. The majority of these high-technology companies maintained close ties to these universities, which helped them both gain defense contracts and recruit educated employees and managers who wanted to work and live near renowned academic and cultural institutions.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, communities like Orange County, Colorado Springs, and Atlanta did not boast the same university presence and their allocation of Cold War funding primarily took the form of military bases and large aerospace companies. The anchoring of the South and West's economies in military bases and the manufacturing plants of DuPont, Lockheed Martin and Boeing helped to make the residents of these areas more amenable to free market ideology and social conservatism than those who lived in suburbs along Route 128 in the shadow of major research universities.<sup>33</sup>

The growth of the Cold War economy in both the Sunbelt and Northeast led to major influxes of new residents, but the geographic and social characteristics of these new migrants created important political and social distinctions. The people who moved with their families to work at the military bases, aerospace companies and related

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<sup>31</sup> National Science Foundation, *Federal Support of Research and Development at Universities and Colleges and Selected Nonprofit Institutions, Fiscal Year 1963* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), cited in O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*, 3; AnnaLee Saxenian, *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 14.

<sup>32</sup> In the *Rise of the Sunbelt*, the authors state "Universities, indeed, play a central role in the interregional redistribution of engineering and scientific talent." The authors further suggest that the proximity to Boston and MIT served as a key factor in recruiting top talent who want to stay in the Boston area, because of the "quality of the work" and "the potential to interact with university scientists" and the city's "cultural attributes." (Markenson et al. *Rise of the Sunbelt*, 42, 141.)

<sup>33</sup> McGirr describes how Orange County cities during enticed the U.S. Army and Navy to set up bases in the area so that by 1950 the military was "thoroughly entrenched (Suburban Warriors, 25). For another point of comparison about the role of the military reshaping the political culture see Kari Frederickson, "The Cold War At the Grassroots: Militarization and Modernization in South Carolina" in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, Matthew D. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino, eds., New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 190-209.

industries in the booming metropolises of the Sunbelt primarily traveled from rural towns in the Midwest and Deep South, often carrying with them strains of moralism, anti-communism and a predisposition to evangelical religion.<sup>34</sup> Most of the new arrivals to the Route 128 suburbs came from other parts of the Northeast or metropolitan Boston and many had attended college or graduate school in the area. Moreover, in the Sunbelt suburbs, residents moved into sprawling, mass developments of newly-built homogenous single-family homes, which Lisa McGirr has argued, “contributed to creating a hospitable terrain for the Right by reinforcing a search for alternative forms of community.”<sup>35</sup>

Route 128 suburbs like Concord and Lexington had rich histories dating back to the colonial era that provided them with well-established architectural patterns and civic, social and religious institutions. These existing settlement patterns and institutions helped to attract particular kinds of residents and dictated the type of activities in which they participated. The postwar migration to places like Southern California led to a flourishing of evangelical Protestants, especially Southern Baptists, which many scholars have argued established the foundation to the rise of the New Right.<sup>36</sup> Evangelical churches were virtually absent in the communities outside of Boston. Although the suburbs boasted a vibrant religious life, residents in suburbs like Lexington, Concord and Newton tended to worship at traditional Catholic, Jewish, mainline Protestant and Unitarian

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<sup>34</sup> While McGirr concentrates her analysis on migrants from the “heartland states” such as Iowa and Kansas, Darren Dochuk focuses on the massive out-migration of people from the South between 1940 and 1960 to California as a major force in fueling the rise of conservative politics in that state and the nation, Darren Dochuk, “Evangelicalism Becomes Southern, Politics Becomes Evangelical, *From FDR to Reagan*,” in Mark Noll and Luke Harlow, eds., *Religion and Politics in America, Second Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 300-301.

<sup>35</sup> McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 39.

<sup>36</sup> Dochuk, “Evangelicalism Becomes Southern, Politics Becomes Evangelical”; See also William C. Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), especially chapter 4; Daniel K. Williams, “From the Pews to the Polls: The Formation of a Southern Christian Right” (Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 2005).

churches. These institutions helped to foster a commitment to tolerance and social justice among many of their congregants, which proved crucial in the formation of grassroots activism related to the civil rights and peace movements.

The mythology and cognitive geography of Massachusetts exceptionalism has further obscured the similarities and differences between metropolitan Boston and other parts of the nation.<sup>37</sup> Bay State residents have long adopted the mythology of the Puritans' christening of Boston as "the city on a hill" as a means to distinguish themselves above rest of the nation. The American Revolution offered the region the reputation as the "birthplace of liberty" as well as the complex legacy and meanings of that watershed period. During the Civil War era, the ideology and discourse of Massachusetts exceptionalism relied on images of the South as a racist and slaveholding backwater to promote the moral superiority and racial progressivism of the state's residents. The forces of the postwar era reinvigorated and recast this set of fraught values. Many Massachusetts residents employed claims of historical superiority and progressive enlightenment to deflect charges of racism and conservatism onto the South. Although not fully disavowing the existence of racial discrimination in the North, this blindered conceptualization made clear that discrimination operated in degrees: the Deep South, not New England, was the far more pressing concern.<sup>38</sup> This self-aggrandizing discourse gained increased relevance after the state's singular support for McGovern in 1972, and

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<sup>37</sup> This discursive frame builds upon what William Chafe has incisively dubbed the "Progressive Mystique" to describe race relations in Greensboro, North Carolina. William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University, 1979), Chafe suggests that white leaders in the traditionally "progressive" city "engaged in a series of cosmetic concessions that altered the appearance of racism, but ... left completely intact the structure and foundation of racism (Chafe, 240)."

<sup>38</sup> This discussion of Massachusetts Exceptionalism is strongly influenced by the introduction to the edited collection *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*. Authors Matthew Lassiter and Joseph Crespino provide cogent discussion of the investment in and problems with the narrative of Southern Exceptionalism; see "Introduction: The End of Southern History" in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, 3-22.

then intensified after Nixon resigned amidst the Watergate scandal. The busing crisis disrupted this linear narrative and geography of progress and enlightenment with the United States Civil Rights Commission ruling that “Boston has become for the 1970’s what Mississippi represented in the 1960’s.”<sup>39</sup> However, even this comparison relied on regional distinctions and Northern Progressivism that normalized Southern racism and treated acts of racial violence and politics in places like Boston as aberrations.<sup>40</sup>

By inserting the label “Massachusetts Liberal” into the American political lexicon, the presidential campaign of Michael Dukakis in 1988 mended these tears in the state’s mythology. Many conservative and centrist commentators have adopted the moniker, pejoratively conflating the travails of Massachusetts candidates for the presidency with the national Democratic Party in order to suggest that both have become increasingly “out of touch” with the rest of the country.<sup>41</sup> Many liberal residents in Massachusetts, nevertheless, have proudly embraced the label and the sense that they have stood against the increasingly conservative national tide. The popularity of the red state-blue state framework to understand national political polarization has further reinforced this sense of liberal distinctiveness. By emphasizing the ways that Massachusetts stood outside and above the rest of the nation this discourse also makes exceptional how such a progressive place could have pervasive racial and spatial

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<sup>39</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, xi.

<sup>40</sup> Lassiter and Crespino note that the trope adopted by scholars, journalists and politicians of invoking the South in acts of racial backlash outside the region “treats acts of racism and racial violence to the social and political structures of the region while portraying similar events elsewhere as anomalous incidents that really should have happened in Mississippi or Alabama (Lassiter and Crespino, Introduction, 9).

<sup>41</sup> For examples of the use of the “Massachusetts Liberal” label see Jon Keller, *The Bluest State: How Democrats Created the Massachusetts Blueprint for American Political Disaster* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007); Thomas Oliphant, “Holding Back the Counterpunch Dukakis Ignores Repeated Bush Attacks—For Now,” *Boston Globe*, June 19, 1988; Robert L. Turner, “The State We’re in Massachusetts Still Gets Labeled ‘Liberal’, But the Truth is More Complicated,” *Boston Globe*, October 18, 1998; Susan Page and Jill Lawrence, “Does ‘Massachusetts liberal’ label still matter?” *USA Today*, July 26, 2004.

segregation, the most restrictive abortion laws in the country in the 1970s, and a tax revolt in 1980. Exploring that history, nevertheless, reveals that these events are equally important vectors of the state's liberal past.

The embrace of Massachusetts's reputation as "bluest of the blue states" has also distorted the relationship between partisan affiliation and political ideology in the Commonwealth, especially with respect to the white middle-class suburbs. In Massachusetts state politics, suburban liberalism and the Democratic Party have not always gone hand-in-hand. From the late nineteenth century through World War II, metropolitan Boston exhibited a consistent voting trend that divided neatly along spatial lines. The city remained overwhelmingly Democratic while Republican support stayed concentrated in the suburbs. Beginning in the 1950s, many suburban voters gradually moved away from an affiliation with the GOP in national elections, while at the state level still actively supporting Republican candidates who promoted their blend of government reform, lower taxes, and increasing social liberalism. Francis Sargent, a Republican who served as governor between 1969 and 1974, opposed the Vietnam War, instituted a moratorium on the construction of highways and supported eradicating exclusionary zoning laws, owed his success and popularity to the same base of suburban residents that led George McGovern to victory in the Bay State in the 1972 election. Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century the fiscally conservative and socially moderate agenda of a series of Republican governors including, William Weld and Mitt Romney, has earned the bipartisan endorsement of suburban homeowners in Massachusetts. These same voters, nevertheless, have eschewed the seeming "cowboy conservatism" and family values agenda of the national Republican Party consistently favoring Democratic candidates for

positions in Congress and the White House that support a more social liberal vision. Other heavily suburbanized states such as Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and California have increasingly demonstrated a similar set of political preferences consistently electing candidates at the national level who advocate progressive policies in foreign and domestic affairs and politicians for state office that promote fiscal conservatism and limited taxation.

Further complicating the political geography, Massachusetts also retained strong tradition of conservative Democratic politicians at the state level such as Edward King the governor between 1979 and 1983. Politicians like King have relied on the steady support archetypal blue-collar “Reagan Democrat,” but in national elections these voters have been far less consistent supporting candidates from both political parties.<sup>42</sup> In addition, many white-collar suburbanites in metropolitan Boston have begun to shy away from affiliation with either political party and have increasingly chosen to formally label and identify themselves as independents. This label has allowed them greater flexibility to vote along an allegiance to their taxpayer interests rather than along formal party lines. The red-state-blue-state framework frequently obscures these bifurcated and volatile voting patterns which are crucial to gaining a full understanding of the processes of political realignment and the persistence of yet more contradictions in modern liberalism.

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<sup>42</sup> This framework coupled with the use of the backlash also obscures the fact that while Reagan did win Massachusetts in the 1980 election as discussed in Chapter 10, his support came from middle-class suburbs, while Jimmy Carter actually carried the working and middle-class vote in Boston. The volatility of the so-called Reagan Democrats is not unique to Massachusetts. Lower middle-class voters in the South, Midwest supported the Democratic Party in many of the elections of the last thirty years, see Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 319-321, Stanley B. Greenberg, *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority, Revised and Updated Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Judis and Teixeira, *Emerging Democratic Majority*, 63-67.

## Expanding the Boundaries of Political History

In order to probe these questions about liberalism this project relies on the community-study model, which a group of political historians has demonstrated provides a useful way to examine the dialectical relationship between federal policymaking and grassroots actors, the structural underpinnings of political realignment, and the multifaceted dimensions of postwar liberalism.<sup>43</sup> This community study of grassroots suburban activism in Massachusetts, nevertheless, reconfigures the framework popularized by historians of metropolitan political economy in four important ways. First, despite Thomas Sugrue's astute observation that "the politics of liberalism was ineluctably a politics of place," few historians of metropolitan politics have sought to explore the ways in which postwar liberal politics operated in a single place.<sup>44</sup> Second, scholars who have adopted this approach have tended to focus either on activities at the national or municipal level and have largely overlooked developments in state government. This project provides new ways of understanding the interplay between the government and grassroots movements by exploring how suburban liberals worked most effectively at the state level to produce policies that aligned with their worldview.

Third, the so-called "spatial turn" within American political history has provoked a reconsideration of the standard timeline of postwar politics by showing that the tensions in liberalism began in the 1940s and 1950s. "Don't Blame Us," in contrast, begins in

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<sup>43</sup> This model combines grassroots methodology traditionally employed by social historians and the structural arguments of urban studies. For examples of works see Countryman, *Up South*; Freund, *Colored Property*; Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Kruse, *White Flight*; Lassiter, *Silent Majority*; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Sugrue, *Origins*. See also Thomas J. Sugrue, "Preface to the Princeton Classic Edition" in *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> Thomas J. Sugrue, "All Politics is Local: The Persistence of Localism in Twentieth-Century America" in *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History*, Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, Julian Zelizer, eds. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 302.

1960 at the very point that many other scholars end their respective analyses and concludes in 1990 in order to counter both the declension narrative embedded in studies of the New Deal Coalition and the exceptionalist depictions of Massachusetts politics. This revised timeline reveals that liberalism and Massachusetts politics during the 1970s and 1980s were far more complicated and contradictory than the electoral map of 1972 suggests and the ways in which they embodied and influenced broader national developments. Finally, many metropolitan-based accounts have also concentrated strictly on issues of property, education, and taxation, thereby overlooking other facets of postwar politics. By drawing on the insights of gender, environmental and foreign policy studies, this project expands the focus and demonstrates how the issues and movements surrounding housing, education, civil rights, feminism, environmentalism, and antiwar activism interacted and shaped one another. Simultaneously, this metropolitan-based approach to liberalism revises many of the historiographical assumptions about civil rights, feminism, environmentalism and the peace movement. Connecting these literatures not only provides a means to revise prevailing understandings of postwar liberalism but also redraws the traditional analytic boundaries of both urban and political history.

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This dissertation is a two-part community study, consisting of ten chronologically and thematically arranged chapters. Part I traces the development of various forms of grassroots liberal activity among many white suburban residents in metropolitan Boston during 1960s. Chapter 1 establishes the geographic, cultural, political and structural context and foundations of the overall study, paying particular attention to the importance

of the construction of Route 128 as a central axis in the Cold War high-tech and post-industrial economy, leading its surrounding suburbs to become some of the most attractive and exclusive communities in the country.

Chapter 2 examines the development of the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights, which arose in the suburbs in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Beginning in 1964, many white suburban members of the fair housing movement expanded the grassroots structure and strategies they had developed to fight against residential discrimination and applied them to the effort to desegregate Boston's public schools, which is the subject of Chapter 3. The chapter focuses on the grassroots liberal contributions to the effort to desegregate the Boston Public Schools and on the creation of METCO in 1966. This chapter explores how METCO's suburban advocates formulated for the program a persuasive argument about the particular educational benefits for white middle-class children that influenced and anticipated a key rationale for the adoption and preservation of Affirmative Action. It also analyzes how METCO inadvertently embodied and contributed to the development of the bifurcated political outlook of many white middle-class liberals.

By examining the peace politics movement that emerged in suburbs of Boston in the early 1960s, Chapter 4 offers a more ideologically, demographically and chronologically expansive vision of the opposition to the Vietnam War. This grassroots peace movement emerged during the same historical moment and geographical space as fair housing and civil rights activism and relied on similar social networks and tactics. This chapter concentrates on these antiwar groups' efforts to work within the political system in order to influence both fellow suburbanites and the Democratic Party's position

on the war. In the process, these antiwar activists helped to make opposition to the Cold War and Vietnam War from a fringe to dominant belief within both the Democratic Party and the suburbs, culminating in the Moratorium in 1969.

Chapter 5 discusses the involvement of suburban liberal environmentalists in the broader effort to stop highway construction in metropolitan Boston. First, it examines the development of this form of suburban activism committed to preserving open space in the decades after World War II. In the late 1960s, these suburban-based environmentalists shifted their focus to opposing highway construction, joining a racially, economically, and spatially diverse coalition already trying to prevent plans to place a large highway through the city. The participation of suburban activists played a crucial role in transforming the highway revolt from an urban-based fight about housing displacement into a metropolitan-wide movement for environmental protection. In the process, the politics of environmentalism and of liberalism changed by solidifying quality-of-life issues and class-based exclusivity as central components of both movements.

Part II begins with an examination in Chapter 6 of the factors leading to McGovern's singular victory in Massachusetts in the 1972 election. The aim is to illustrate the ways the election further emboldened the exceptionalist view of both the Massachusetts political landscape and the suburban liberal identity. The subsequent chapters collectively reveal that both suburban liberalism and Massachusetts politics during the 1970s and 1980s were more complicated and contradictory than the election results suggested.

Chapter 7 next examines a series of conflicts over affordable housing that took shape during the late 1960s and early 1970s in the same affluent suburban communities

most vocally against the Vietnam War and in support of George McGovern. Similarly, Chapter 8 explores the tensions in suburban liberals' commitment to racial and spatial equality by looking at their reactions to the Boston busing crisis and the METCO program. In response to the violent urban reaction to court-ordered busing, many suburban communities sought to get involved in voluntary integration initiatives or to increase the number of students transported to their towns. When the state government could not afford to finance this increase in demand, fierce battles erupted in many of the area's most liberal suburbs, which tested residents' commitment to the limited one-way integration and racial equality more broadly. Chapter 9 traces the evolution of mainstream feminism in Massachusetts as a means to elucidate the continuity and changes in both suburban liberalism and state politics during the 1970s.

Finally, Chapter 10 challenges the periodization of and assumptions about political realignment, liberalism and economic restructuring in both Massachusetts and the nation in the 1970s and 1980s. The chapter looks at both the career of Michael Dukakis, from his victorious election as governor 1974 to his ill-fated run for the presidency in 1988, and battles surrounding the passage of the controversial tax limitation measure Proposition 2 1/2 in 1980. This dual analysis dispels the images of both the demise of the Democratic Party and Massachusetts's overwhelming liberalism in the 1970s and 1980s. Ultimately, the chapter, like the dissertation as a whole, reinforces the thesis that Massachusetts in fact provides a model for, rather than the exception, to understanding major political, economic and social trends of the last decades of the twentieth century.

## **Chapter 1: The Hub of the Universe**

### **Introduction**

Since the late nineteenth century, Boston has basked in its reputation as the “hub of universe” for its superior academic and cultural institutions. The results of the construction in the 1950s of Route 128, a highway encircling Boston, recast the meaning and spatial orientation of the label. Industrial parks filled with the corporate headquarters of the nation’s leading technology companies, large defense-related research laboratories and burgeoning residential subdivisions housing a generation of white collar technocrats along the highway transformed Boston’s suburbs into a major hub in the modern universe. Route 128 literally and figuratively embodied the Cold War spending patterns, high-tech economy, demographic shifts, and increased racial and structural inequality all heavily underwritten and sanctioned by the federal government in the decades after World War II. These factors earned the roadway the labels both as “America’s Technology Highway” and “Boston’s Road to Segregation.”<sup>1</sup> The subdivisions and office parks also created new forms of grassroots liberal activism and structural inequality that together reshaped the economy, social order and political culture of Massachusetts and influenced the nation as a whole.

The changes triggered by Route 128 spurred the emergence of new forms of suburban politics and grassroots activism in the affluent communities along its periphery.

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<sup>1</sup> Vanessa Parks, “Signs of the Times Gone from Route 128,” *Boston Globe*, May 9, 2002; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128: Boston’s Road to Segregation*.

In the 1970s, observers on both sides of the political spectrum popularized the broad term “New Class” to describe the highly educated professionals who supported a liberal political agenda.<sup>2</sup> This political movement did not suddenly appear on the national scene in the 1970s but had been steadily taking root in the affluent suburbs of Boston in the decades after World War II. These white collar professionals with ties to the area’s high-tech companies and academic institutions helped to fundamentally transform the economy, culture and politics of the suburbs surrounding Route 128 and the state as a whole. In the early 1960s, political scientist Edgar Litt aimed to revise the traditional narrative of Massachusetts’s political culture to take into account the changes engendered by Route 128-related industry. Litt asserted, “Massachusetts is part of a post-industrial society that emphasizes technical, clerical and professional skills to man the burgeoning scientific, defense, educational and administrative institutions.” He aptly observed the “new suburbs of white-collar and professional people have done much to shape the political strata within the state” making the state’s political economy and culture “ever more wedded to that of the nation.”<sup>3</sup> This process reoriented the ideology of liberalism and the composition and agenda of the national Democratic Party.

The structural and social factors that produced a new climate for liberalism simultaneously created new and persistent forms of inequality. This chapter explores the role of suburbanization in remaking the spatial, racial, social and political dynamics of Massachusetts. It demonstrates that the combination of New Deal liberalism and the Cold

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<sup>2</sup> For an excellent discussion of the notion of the “New Class” see Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 144-195. Ehrenreich shows how Neoconservatives and the New Right increasingly used this label interchangeably with the term “liberal elite.” In one of the earliest uses of the term, Irving Kristol defined the “New Class” as consisting of “scientists, teachers and educational administrators, journalists and others in the communications industries, psychologists, social workers, those lawyers and doctors who make their career in the expanding public sectors.” See Irving Kristol, *Three Cheers for Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 27.

<sup>3</sup> Edgar Litt, *The Political Cultures of Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1965), 201, 3.

War military-industrial complex accelerated both metropolitan growth and the ideology of Massachusetts distinctiveness, which together established the conditions for suburban liberalism to flourish and structural inequality to harden. Focusing particularly on Brookline, Concord, Lexington, Lincoln and Newton, an archipelago of suburban communities that stood at the vanguard of this grassroots movement, illustrates the historical and demographic factors that helped to create both the favorable conditions for suburban liberal activism as well as the impediments that later thwarted efforts to reduce structural segregation.

### **City on a Hill**

The physical and cultural landscape of metropolitan Boston and eastern Massachusetts directly reflects the state's rich past and sense of historic distinctiveness. The sites of many key events during the American Revolution including Boston Common, the Old North Church, Faneuil Hall and Boston Harbor, the site of the Tea Party, are contained within the city's official boundaries. Just across the Charles River in Cambridge stands the ivy-lined walls of Harvard University, while 10-15 miles westward along the route of Paul Revere's famous ride sit the towns of Lexington and Concord first founded around 1640. Further north lies the city of Lowell whose textile factories served as the birthplace of the nation's Industrial Revolution, and further south lies the famous former whaling port of New Bedford.

During the nineteenth century Boston became an industrial and cosmopolitan center that relished in its reputation as the "Athens of America" and the "hub of the universe." The topography of Boston, with its hills, marshes, rivers and ocean, had initially prevented easy physical expansion. The introduction of the new forms of

industry, however, brought with them a significant growth in population. Between 1850 and 1900, metropolitan Boston shifted from a small merchant city of 200,000 into a metropolis of more than a million people.<sup>4</sup> The rise of industrialization in Boston and its surrounding communities coupled with its location on the Atlantic Ocean to make the city a favorable destination for European immigrants. In the middle of the century a steady influx of Irish, Italian and Jewish immigrants caused spatial changes and the increased economic, social and physical division in the city.<sup>5</sup> In the first decades of nineteenth century, the neighboring villages of Roxbury, West Roxbury and Dorchester had served as the site for the summer homes of many wealthy families, but by the Civil War, new railway lines helped the expanding numbers of middle-class merchants, salespeople, lawyers, school teachers, clerks and contractors commute daily downtown from single-family homes in these “streetcar suburbs.”<sup>6</sup> During the mid-nineteenth century, civic leaders engaged in a discussion about the benefits and drawbacks of formally integrating these communities into the city.<sup>7</sup> After an extended debate, in the decade after the Civil War, Boston doubled its size by engulfing the towns of Roxbury, Dorchester, Charlestown, West Roxbury, Allston and Brighton through promises of superior municipal services and greater economic opportunity.<sup>8</sup>

This trend of consolidation abruptly ended in 1873, when the town of Brookline, which sat adjacent to Boston, became the first municipality in the nation to vote against annexation and to remain a separate entity. The residents of the self-appointed “richest

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<sup>4</sup> Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 80.

<sup>6</sup> Warner *Streetcar Suburbs*, 116 -117.

<sup>7</sup> For more about the complex debate surrounding metropolitan integration and development in Boston during the nineteenth century see Noam Maggor, “Zone of Emergence”: Boston's Lower Middle Class and the Politics of Property, 1865-1917” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> Roxbury, for instance, opted to join Boston as a means to solve a sewer problem, see Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 146-147.

town in the world” were not swayed by the prospect of access to Boston’s services since Brookline had already possessed its own waterworks and superior education facilities. The vote demonstrated Brookline residents’ determination to have more control over the physical and social environment of their community, a reluctance to assume the financial burdens of an expanding and heterogeneous urban population, and a fear that a loss of local autonomy would threaten the quality of the services the town had begun to offer residents.<sup>9</sup> The decision effectively ended the drive for expansion of Boston as most other communities on the city’s outer ring soon followed the model of Brookline and opted for independent incorporation. The decision for independent incorporation also set off a chain reaction in other communities throughout the urban North.<sup>10</sup> This trend had particularly physical and social effects on Boston in the century to come, because, in words one scholar, it “superimposed a fragmented political system on the spatially differentiated population of the metropolis.”<sup>11</sup>

The rejection of annexation meant that upper-class communities sharing as many as two or three borders with Boston remained separate entities. Independent incorporation provided a way for Brookline and other affluent communities not only to remain exempt from sharing the burdens of urbanization, especially the growing population of low-income residents, but also to create new mechanisms for excluding lower-income and

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<sup>9</sup> Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 147; Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs* 163-164; Ronald Dale Kerr, “Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb,” *Chicago History* (Summer 1984), 36-47.

<sup>10</sup> For example in town of Belmont, just west of Cambridge basis for incorporation rested “upon the desire of a group of affluent taxpayers and real estate speculators to create a residential enclave free from the cost of services for other classes of citizens.” Matthew Edell, Elliott D. Sclar and Daniel Luria, *Shaky Palaces: Homeownership and Social Mobility in Boston’s Suburbanization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 232.

<sup>11</sup> Michael N. Danielson, *The Politics of Exclusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 17. Edell et al, *Shaky Palaces*, 64-67; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 138-144. By the twentieth century, the land area of Boston’s core remained 46 square miles as opposed to Houston, which included 483.5 square miles and Boston’s share of the metropolitan population fell continuously from 46 percent in 1880 to 35 percent in 1940.

poor people, which provided real meaning to the imaginary lines separating city and suburbs. These communities used other forms of material and ideological class differentiation such as architecture to further define their separation from the city and its residents. Politics provided an additional marker of social distinction, throughout the period. The residents of suburbs like Brookline and Newton remained overwhelmingly loyal to Republican patrician candidates who embodied a similar elite identity and values and were distrustful of the Democratic machine-style politics that dominated the city.<sup>12</sup> Thus, by the early twentieth century, the political map of Boston featured a densely Democratic city surrounded by a solid ring of Republicanism. The increasing popularity of the automobile and the building of new roadways in the first decades of the twentieth century quickened the pace of metropolitan development and extended these patterns to include previously rural towns including Belmont, Lexington and Wellesley to the West, and Ipswich to the North.<sup>13</sup> During the interwar period, the automobile caused Belmont to expand by 90 percent from 10,749 to 21,748, Needham to grow by 50 percent and Wellesley by 80 percent.<sup>14</sup> The pervasive practices of formal restrictive covenants in residential deeds and informal “gentlemen’s agreements” ensured that these new towns remained overwhelmingly Protestant, white, and affluent.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For more on the Massachusetts Republican Party in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see Duane Lockard, *New England State Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

<sup>13</sup> In more established older suburbs like Brookline and Newton, the rise of the automobile enabled construction of cheaper homes away from the streetcar lines, which helped to slightly expand these town middle-class populations, but only to those who could afford a car (Edel, *Shaky Palaces*, 60).

<sup>14</sup> Edel et al, *Shaky Palaces*, 59-60.

<sup>15</sup> Barry Bluestone and Mary Huff Stevenson, *The Boston Renaissance: Race, Space, and Economic Change in an American Metropolis* (New York: Russell Sage Foundations, 2002), 79. In 1948 the Supreme Court officially outlawed the use of such formal restrictions. Prior to that time the practice was condoned by the federal government. The 1938 Federal Housing Authority’s manual encouraged the use of such covenants in sale contract and deeds involving mortgage insurance in order to preserve racial homogeneity (Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 208; Danielson, *Politics of Exclusion*, 13).

In order to further preserve their physical characteristics and economic exclusivity maintained through resistance to annexation and these exclusionary agreements, many of these suburbs in the interwar period embraced newly established zoning and municipal planning laws. The push for municipal zoning in Massachusetts first emerged at the turn of the twentieth century as part of the broader effort to pursue the Progressive era agenda of order, control and public safety. The enabling zoning legislation passed in Massachusetts in 1920 channeled this progressive discourse, empowering municipalities to establish zoning “for the purpose of promoting the health, safety, convenience, morals or welfare of its inhabitants.”<sup>16</sup> This notion of public good rested on a set of racialized and class-coded ideals intended to exclude undesirable segments of the population. The zoning ordinances of the suburbs extended these ideals using one-acre lot size minimums to pursue a land use control agenda that reflected class and racialized attitudes about the ideal natural, built and social environments.<sup>17</sup>

Suburban development dramatically intensified following World War II, reorienting the social and political landscape of metropolitan Boston even more toward the periphery and significantly heightening patterns of racial, spatial and economic inequalities. The increasing availability of government loans through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veteran’s Administration (VA) encouraged homeownership for returning

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<sup>16</sup> *Philip Simon v. Town of Needham* 311 Mass. 560 (1942), 562. For an excellent discussion of the ways in which these early 20<sup>th</sup> century zoning advocates inscribed racialized assumptions into land use politics, see Freund, *Colored Property*, 45-98, for an excellent discussion of the ways in which these early 20<sup>th</sup> century zoning advocates inscribed racialized assumptions into land use politics.

<sup>17</sup> The state court consistently upheld these large-lot zoning ordinances. In 1942 in the case *Simon v. Town of Needham* the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in sanctioned local zoning power and the benefits of one-acre plots to prevent “overcrowding of land,” provide “a better opportunity for rest and relaxation,” and protect the “public welfare” (*Philip Simon v. Town of Needham* 311 Mass. 560 (1942), 563). *Simon* also established an important precedent in both Massachusetts and the entire nation as suburban municipalities following World War II began to adopt an extremely subjective definition of the “public welfare” (Freund, *Colored Property*, 231).

veterans and other upwardly mobile white families. While the metropolitan area as a whole grew 17.6 percent, adding 282,976 new people between 1940 and 1960, Boston lost 100,000 residents, 13 percent of its population, the majority of them white. Metropolitan Boston also added 200,000 units of new housing, but only 16 percent were in the city itself.<sup>18</sup> Relying on the maps outlined by the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), local banks classified as “depressed” and “blighted” many of Boston’s older neighborhoods and annexed former “streetcar suburbs” such as South Boston, Charlestown, Dorchester and Roxbury and refused to grant mortgages in these communities. This policy effectively forced veterans with G.I. Bill loans and other individuals with government-underwritten mortgages to seek new housing primarily outside the city.<sup>19</sup> The vast majority of loan recipients fulfilled the preferences of the FHA, VA and private mortgage companies by purchasing single-family detached homes in the suburbs. The Supreme Court’s formal outlawing of restrictive covenants in 1948 created new opportunities for white ethnics to move into the suburbs. The federally sanctioned forces of suburbanization, moreover, operated to expand the definitions of middle-class and whiteness, and many Irish Catholics, Italians and Jews who migrated to the Boston suburbs after World War II benefited from these recast categories of race and class.<sup>20</sup> Many of these new white suburban migrants had roots in the city’s ethnic enclaves concentrated in South Boston, Charlestown, North End, Roxbury and Dorchester.

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Gladstone, “Downtown Boston: Market Studies for Urban Renewal” Prepared for Boston Redevelopment Authority, May 1963. Washington, DC: Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1963; Edel, *Shaky Palaces*, 69.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas O’Connor, *Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal 1950-1970* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 67.

<sup>20</sup> Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 35-36; Sugrue, *Origins*, 231-258.

These discriminatory federal policies excluded African-Americans from suburban homeownership and left them largely confined within the boundaries of Boston. The city had contained a small black population since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. While the community had established important educational, social, cultural religious institutions, it had never reached the scale of other northern urban centers. The lack of manufacturing jobs available in the middle decades of the twentieth century made Boston a much less desirable destination for participants in the Great Migration. Following World War II, however, the city did experience a surge in African-American migrants. Although not the near majority of other metropolitan areas like Chicago, Cleveland and Detroit, this new influx of population made African-Americans an increasing presence in Boston. Until 1960, Boston's black population remained 9 percent of the city's population with 63,000, residents, and then increased to 100,000 between 1960 and 1965. By the late 1960s, 60 percent of the city's black population had lived in Boston for less than 16 years, the average age of the immigrants was 22 and most came from rural backgrounds.<sup>21</sup>

The combination of FHA policy and equally discriminatory Boston Housing Authority practices left African-Americans across the economic spectrum with only the options of living in deteriorating houses in the former streetcar suburbs of Roxbury and Dorchester.<sup>22</sup> Although a half century earlier these neighborhoods housed much of the area's middle-class white population, by the 1950s they remained largely in disrepair.

The 1960 census reported that almost one half of all African-American residences in

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<sup>21</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, 20-21.

<sup>22</sup> For more on Boston public housing, see Lawrence Vale, *From the Puritans to the Projects* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) and Lawrence Vale, *Reclaiming Public Housing: A Half Century of Struggle in Three Public Neighborhoods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2002). When city officials eventually sought to address the housing shortage through urban renewal projects in the mid-1960s, it merely led to the relocation of low-income African-American from one declining and segregated neighborhood to another. See, Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, "The Voice of the Ghetto" (Washington: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1967). 4.

Boston were “dilapidated” or “deteriorating” housing compared to 18 percent of white residences.<sup>23</sup> Landlords took advantage of the fact that African-Americans had few options by significantly overcharging for rent.

Boston’s urban renewal efforts compounded the problems of racial and residential African-Americans and the city as a whole. Postwar out-migration coincided with and intensified a period of extended downturn for Boston.<sup>24</sup> The former financial capital of the colonies had the lowest bond rating of any large American city in the 1950s and even Boston Common and the Public Gardens, the beautiful and historic green landmarks in the center of the city, remained overgrown and untended, reflecting the overall sense of decline.<sup>25</sup> In response, the city launched an aggressive urban renewal program based on maintaining white-collar industry downtown that raised \$1 billion in federal, state and private funds for construction of Government Center, the Prudential Center, and several other landmark projects.<sup>26</sup> The effort sparked a spurt of skyscraper development in the downtown area that once again made Boston an international center for of business, law, and medicine. These construction projects added over 8 million square feet to the skyline

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<sup>23</sup> Massachusetts State Advisory Committee “The Voice of the Ghetto,” 4.

<sup>24</sup> “Seven Years of Progress” A Final Report by Edward J. Logue Boston Redevelopment Authority, August 4, 1967.

<sup>25</sup> John Stainton, “Urban Renewal & Planning in Boston: A Review of the Past and a look at the Future,” November 1972 (Boston, MA: Citizens Housing and Planning Association, 1972); Lukas, *Common Ground*, 35.

<sup>26</sup> For more about urban renewal in Boston see Lizabeth Cohen “Renewal in American Buying into Downtown Revival: The Centrality of Retail to Postwar Urban Renewal in Cities” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (2007). On the site of the former flophouse district, Scollay Square, the city placed the \$200 million Government Center project, a sixty-acre modernist complex of concrete and brick structure. The project served as “the jewel in Boston’s urban renewal crown” and reflected city officials’ goals of stimulating public and private investment in the center of Boston. The city also sponsored the construction of the Prudential Center on a set of unused tracks and included a large office building, luxury apartment high-rise and a shopping center, which eventually served as the backbone of a thriving new Back Bay shopping district that attracted suburban residents into the city on the weekends. See Cohen, *Renewal in American Buying*, 59; John Fenton, “Boston Economy Gets New Spurt,” *New York Times*, December 25, 1961; “Cities: The Renaissance,” *Time* (March 23, 1962); Barry Bluestone and Mary Huff Stevenson, *The Boston Renaissance: Race, Space and Economic Change in American Metropolis* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000), 81-91; Ada Louise Huxtable, “Complex in Boston Is Radically Designed” *New York Times*, November 12, 1963.

in the 1960s complementing historic sites like the gold dome of the State House and the white steeple of the Old North Church.<sup>27</sup> Despite the skyline's seeming unification of tradition and progress, the urban renewal program actually compounded the racial segregation and physical fragmentation of the city and exacerbated a sense distrust and alienation among low-income black and white residents.<sup>28</sup> The combination of formal and informal forms of racial segregation further decreased geographic and social mobility of African-Americans in Boston. By the early 1960s, 80 percent of the city's black population remained largely confined to 15 contiguous census tracts in the South End, Roxbury and North Dorchester.<sup>29</sup> A large contingent of white residents sought to outpace dilapidation and displacement and joined the broader white middle-class exodus out moved out of the city.<sup>30</sup> This out-migration toward the suburbs made the Boston white neighborhoods demographically poorer and less religiously and ethnically diverse than two decades before. In places like Charlestown, South Boston and Hyde Park the changes engendered by suburbanization and urban renewal, moreover, increased among residents a sense of neighborhood allegiance, resentment of the government, and distrust of newcomers.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Stainton, "Urban Renewal & Planning in Boston"; Ada Louise Huxtable, "Renewal in Boston: Good and Bad," *New York Times*, April 19, 1964.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, 14; Bluestone and Stevenson, *Boston Renaissance*, 91. Many people have argued that urban renewal played an important part in established the conditions for busing crisis of the 1970s, see Thomas O'Connor, *Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal 1950-1970* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), xii, 291-297; Thomas O'Connor, *The Boston Irish: A Political History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 237; Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 120-125.

<sup>29</sup> Sadelle Sacks, "An Open Door to Integrated Housing in Metropolitan Boston" 1966. Box 55 Folder 2230, Box 58, Folder 2519, Freedom House Inc. Records, Archives and Special Collections Department, Northeastern University (hereafter: "FH").

<sup>30</sup> Edel et al, *Shaky Palaces*, 31.

<sup>31</sup> In the inaugural urban renewal project, city officials used the power of eminent domain to raze the West End, a forty-eight acre multicultural neighborhood where waves of immigrants had lived since the nineteenth century. The officials placed on the site of the former neighborhood a set of high-rise luxury apartment buildings called Charles River Park Complex and part of the Government Center Complex. The

## America's Technology Highway

The expanded mortgage market helped finance the migration of white residents out of Boston, but state and federal investment in highway construction literally made it possible. In 1948, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation released an ambitious plan to remake the state's roadway system by expanding upon the existing radial network of roadways and parkways. The funding from the 1956 Federal Highway Act transformed these plans into reality. The windfall of government money led directly to the construction of several new expressways in the Boston area. These new roadways included the eight-lane Massachusetts Turnpike, or Interstate 90, which ran directly from the center of Boston through the suburbs of Newton, Weston, Framingham and Natick to the state's western border where it continued across the country. The Central Artery consisted of a fusion of tunnels and elevated roadways, which cut the center of Boston off from the waterfront and was visually unattractive, but made commuting exponentially easier for people who worked downtown to live in the suburbs northeast and south of the city. Developers quickly built new subdivisions, industrial parks, and strip malls in the forests and meadows by the future roadways.<sup>32</sup> The highways, therefore, helped shift homes, businesses, shopping, and people from the city center to its margins. Between 1955 and 1965, the population increased in the suburbs of Burlington by 272.2 percent, Sudbury by 198 percent and Wayland by 137 percent. By the end of the 1950s, suburban

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project caused huge amounts of displacement and resentment by city residents at local officials. For more about the conflicts between residents of, see Herbert Gans, *Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian Americans* (New York: Free Press, 1962); Lukas provides a good discussion of this process in Charlestown (*Common Ground*, 139-159).

<sup>32</sup> John H. Fenton, "Boston Suburbs Beset by Zoning," *New York Times*, January 17, 1954.

residents outnumbered urban dwellers 2 to 1 and 80 percent metropolitan of Boston's white population became dispersed through its outer ring.<sup>33</sup>

These varied ingredients of suburbanization collapsed into the singular form of Route 128. The combination of corporate decentralization, federal defense spending, and metropolitan fragmentation, all embodied by Route 128, served, according to one government commission, as a “bellwether for certain national trends in suburban growth.”<sup>34</sup> Transportation developers initially intended for the road to ease commuting into Boston by connecting a collection of existing roadways and to help vacationers travel north to New Hampshire and Maine and south to Cape Cod. Skeptics deemed Route 128 “the road to nowhere” because of its semicircular shape.<sup>35</sup> A key intervention changed the fate of the highway and offered it several more affirmative nicknames such as the “magic semi-circle” and “ideas road.”<sup>36</sup> In the late 1940s, executives at real estate investment and development company Cabot, Cabot and Forbes (CCF) recognized that the construction of Route 128 opened up new sites for development that would be ideal for the burgeoning technology industry that was growing out of and around the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard in Cambridge and Boston where there was little room for physical expansion.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Gladstone “Downtown Boston: Market Studies for Urban Renewal”; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, 4.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Susan Rosegrant and David R. Lampe, *Route 128: Lessons from Boston's High-Tech Community* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 107.

<sup>36</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, 3.

<sup>37</sup> For more on Cabot, Cabot & Forbes, see “Mills Now Built on ‘Package Plan,’” *New York Times*, January 3, 1956; the primary architect of CCF's development of Route 128, was a young executive named Gerald Blaklely who was the son of an MIT professor, see Russell B. Adams, Jr. *The Boston Money Tree: How the Proper Men of Boston Made, Invested and Preserved Their Wealth from Colonial Days to the Space Age* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1977), 288-289; Bluestone and Stevenson, *Boston Renaissance*, 93-94.

This recognition exposed the increasingly important role of major universities in shaping the economy, society and culture of metropolitan Boston in the postwar period. The area had served as a college town since the seventeenth century, but following World War II the region boasted one of the densest concentration of academic institutions of anywhere in the world.<sup>38</sup> Metropolitan Boston contained more than 60 colleges and universities, including Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Boston College, Boston University, Northeastern University, Tufts University, Wellesley College and the recently founded Brandeis University. The G.I. Bill increased college enrollment significantly in both undergraduate and graduate schools throughout the nation as a whole and in Massachusetts in particular.<sup>39</sup> The financial largesse led to the construction of new buildings and hiring of new faculty in all departments. Further fueling the expansion in the decade after World War II, the federal government significantly increased its funding of scientific-based research projects at universities throughout the country. Beginning with the Morrill Act in 1862, the federal government had provided funding for the advancement of science and technology, but the Cold War greatly enlarged the scope of endeavors it considered worthy of subsidy.<sup>40</sup> The federal government did not disperse this money evenly across the country but instead strongly favored institutions and area with established patterns of science research, which made Boston at the receiving end of

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<sup>38</sup> For more on the history of universities in Massachusetts see Richard M. Freeland, *Academia's Golden Age: Universities in Massachusetts, 1945-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>39</sup> Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 67. For instance, the student body at Boston College had doubled by 1948.

<sup>40</sup> Margaret Pugh O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 19.

an enormous windfall of millions of dollars annually in fields such as radar, missile guidance and navigation systems.<sup>41</sup>

No institution played a more central role than MIT in the expansion of metropolitan Boston's post-industrial economy and the rise of Route 128. The rapid growth of industry connected to the university proved to at least one observer that "M.I.T. is Boston's greatest asset."<sup>42</sup> Since its founding in 1860, MIT had served as a site of scientific and technological innovation for the federal government, but that role became magnified during World War II when the university became "the nation's unofficial center for wartime research."<sup>43</sup> MIT received the contracts for several of the government's largest defense projects including the development of radar and microwave technology, which behind atomic energy served as the second most significant scientific breakthrough of the war. As the military aimed to maintain the U.S. technological edge at the dawn of the Cold War, the relationship between the university and the Pentagon flourished.<sup>44</sup> MIT boasted the largest defense research budget of any university in the nation throughout the postwar period. In the 1950s the university opened four new research centers devoted to life, space, earth and materials sciences as well as Lincoln Laboratory in Lexington near the Hanscom Air Force Base.<sup>45</sup> The lab, fully underwritten by the government, employed close to the 4,000 people who together achieved some of

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<sup>41</sup> National Science Foundation, *Federal Support of Research and Development at Universities and Colleges and Selected Nonprofit Institutions, Fiscal Year 1963* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968) cited in O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*, 3; AnnaLee Saxenian, *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 14.

<sup>42</sup> Henry R. Lieberman, "Technology: Alchemist of Route 128," *New York Times*, January 8, 1968.

<sup>43</sup> Rosengrant and Lampe, *Route 128*, 80.

<sup>44</sup> John H. Fenton, "M.I.T. Offers Spur the Area Economy," *New York Times*, January 15, 1961.

<sup>45</sup> Roger Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge: American Research Universities Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 63.

the earliest innovations in computer technology.<sup>46</sup> Many of the researchers used the ideas first germinated in these laboratories as the launching point for development of successful and lucrative private smaller companies.<sup>47</sup> An internal report in the 1960s revealed that just three MIT academic departments and four laboratories had created 129 companies during the postwar decades. “MIT has spawned more spin-off companies than any other single institution in the country, ” Susan Rosengrant and David Lampe later speculated.<sup>48</sup> Most of these spin-offs moved to the research parks on Route 128.

Even before the Route 128 ribbon-cutting, CCF developed plans for this coming revolution in real estate and industry. Executives from the company simultaneously lobbied several suburban municipalities encouraging them to rezone land by the unfinished highway for commercial development and approached Cambridge and Boston-based technology firms and labs urging them to relocate to these new sites. The company’s first park in Needham called the New England Industrial Center sat on a 200-acre development and included 16 buildings. In the next few years, CCF and developed several other parks primarily in the 30-mile section of the roadway between Dedham in the South and Danvers in the North, with the densest concentrations at the interchanges of Route 128 and the Massachusetts Turnpike in Waltham and Route 2 in Lexington. Aware of its client base in the knowledge industry, CCF designed the parks to resemble college campuses with low detached structures and pastoral landscaping surrounded by trees.<sup>49</sup> Many of the companies that opted to move cited cheaper and more land with the

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<sup>46</sup> In 1958, the university expanded the work at Lincoln Lab through the creation of a large nonprofit corporation called the MITRE Corporation that worked primarily on air defense and missile warnings systems. Fenton, “M.I.T. Offers Spur the Area Economy.”

<sup>47</sup> Saxenian, *Regional Advantage*, 13.

<sup>48</sup> Rosengrant and Lampe, *Route 128*, 15; See also Fenton, “M.I.T Offers Spur to Economy,” 72.

<sup>49</sup> Margaret O’Mara notes that the parks followed a similar path of market-based and government incentives that had pulled people to move to the suburbs in the first place which also made them appealing

opportunity to relocate to a “good looking industrial park” and to be part of “ a good looking industrial community” as key factors in the decision to relocate.<sup>50</sup> Many of these executives also realized that the location of the “garden-type” industrial centers “near Boston but out of Boston” would provide a means to attract high-quality and well-trained technical workers who already lived in the suburbs.<sup>51</sup> The revolutionary construction techniques, government incentives, convenient locations and reasonable price of the real estate helped make Route 128 the “biggest and fastest growing science-based complex in the U.S.”<sup>52</sup> The names of the corporations filling the modernist structures sounded as if they came from the plots of science fiction novels, companies such as Digital, Trans-Sonics, Tracerlab, Dynametrics, Bose, AVCO, High Voltage and Wang Laboratories provided the symbols of the beginning post-industrial age and placed Route 128 at the vanguard of the emerging electronics and computer industries.

Many observers placed the rise of high-tech industry in the discourse of Massachusetts exceptionalism citing “Yankee ingenuity” as the key ingredient, and obscuring the role of Cold War federal investment.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the majority these companies served the explicit demands of the Department of Defense. During the 1950s, Massachusetts firms received more than \$6 billion in Defense Department contracts and

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to a suburban sensibility (*Cities of Knowledge*, 10-11). The CCF vision served as a model of research park development around the nation predicated on the notion that scientific endeavors were best achieved in pastoral locations set apart from urban spaces (O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*, 74-75).

<sup>50</sup>A.J. Bone and Martin Wohl, “Economic impact study of Massachusetts Route 128: industrial development survey (preliminary report),” project conducted by Transportation Engineering Division of Civil and Sanitary Engineering Department of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Annual Meeting of the Highway Research Board, Washington, DC, January 8, 1958, Francis Loeb Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Design (hereafter: “Loeb”);

<sup>51</sup> Everett J. Burt, Jr, “Labor Supply Characteristics of Route 128 Firms,” Research Report No.1-1958 Federal Reserve Bank of Boston (Boston, MA: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 1958).

<sup>52</sup> “Electronics, The Ideas Road,” *Time* (July 13, 1959).

<sup>53</sup> John Fenton, “Yankee Ingenuity Helps Stem New England Industrial Blight,” *New York Times*, May 24, 1959.

that amount increased annually by \$1 billion throughout the 1960s.<sup>54</sup> By 1962 the Defense Department and federal government accounted for fully half of the sales of Route 128 and Massachusetts ranked third in Pentagon contracts nationally.<sup>55</sup> Raytheon, a defense contractor and missile-maker, became the state's single largest beneficiary of Cold War money. In the 1950s, Raytheon opened twenty-five additional plants that employed 36,000 people within a thirty-five mile radius of downtown Boston as well as a large new headquarters along Route 128 in Lexington.<sup>56</sup> That Raytheon engineers developed missile within just miles of where the Minuteman fired muskets on the Lexington Battle Green and the Old North Bridge in Concord reveals the juxtaposition of modernity and history at the center of the defense-related industry along Route 128 simultaneously representing patriotic progress and a betrayal of the ideals of the American Revolution.

Massachusetts aimed to repackage the spectacular rise of the high-tech industry and its related business on Route 128 into a form of civic boosterism to lure more people and companies to the state. Like other areas across the country, Massachusetts used a combination of tax breaks and advertising to draw businesses to Route 128 and the state as whole. A Chamber of Commerce pamphlet from the early 1960s touted Massachusetts as the "Nucleus of the Northeast" drawing a map that directly mimicked the arc of the highway.<sup>57</sup> In addition, Chamber of Commerce officials emphasized that Greater Boston had the largest concentration of skilled professional and technical personnel of "any

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<sup>54</sup> Rosengrant and Lampe, *Route 128*, 93.

<sup>55</sup> Saxenian, *Regional Advantages*, 17.

<sup>56</sup> Fenton, "M.I.T. Offers Spur the Area Economy."

<sup>57</sup> Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, *Massachusetts Factbook*, 1963 Papers of Edward Lampiere, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Box 3, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, MA; For more on these campaigns in other parts of the country see O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*, 81-92.

metropolitan area in the free world” including more than 30,000 engineers and scientists.<sup>58</sup> The marketing and incentives clearly worked. By 1967, the number of companies located on or near the highway rose to 729 and collectively employed 66, 701 people.<sup>59</sup> In addition to several start-ups, established companies like Polaroid decided to shift their headquarters to land along the highway in Waltham because the new site offered “good roads and adequate parking for workers cars.”<sup>60</sup> National companies such as Xerox, Sylvania and General Electric also opted to open branches and plants on or near Route 128. A profusion of other science-based companies and government-underwritten laboratories appeared at sites removed from the actual highway, but the name “Route 128” came, according to the *New York Times*, to “symbolize the technological boom in the Greater Boston area.”<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the highway revived the area’s financial services industry, sparking the creation of several venture capital firms, investment funds and consulting firms primarily located in downtown Boston.<sup>62</sup>

The Massachusetts government and other observers confidently believed the rise of high-tech industry provided the answer to the region and the nation’s economic problems.<sup>63</sup> Projecting a faith in the growth liberal consensus of the postwar period, the Chamber of Commerce and other boosters optimistically predicted that the new companies would seamlessly replace the declining manufacturing industry that had long served as the mainstay of the Massachusetts economy. This attitude overlooked the fact

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<sup>58</sup> Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, “The New Boston, Its People, Its Places, Its Potentials” (Boston, MA: Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, 1961).

<sup>59</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, 37-38.

<sup>60</sup> Lester Smith, “Operation 128: Boston’s History-Laden Industry Blooms Anew in Suburban Towns,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 21, 1954.

<sup>61</sup> Henry R. Lieberman, “Technology: Alchemist of Route 128,” *New York Times*, January 8, 1968.

<sup>62</sup> Bluestone and Stevenson, *Boston Renaissance*, 64-65; Adams, *Boston Money Tree*, 274-310.

<sup>63</sup> For more on these optimistic predictions see, Massachusetts Factbook; Fenton, “Yankee Ingenuity”; “New England’s Big Comeback: Latest Success Story,” *U.S. News & World Report* (February 14, 1966); Smith, “Operation 128.”

that much of the new industry appearing along Route 128 demanded highly skilled labor and thereby excluded from employment large sectors of the population. Moreover, the location of these companies along the highway made automobile ownership virtually a prerequisite for employment and precluded many poor people in the city from seeking or obtaining employment in the new corporations. These areas along Route 128 overwhelmingly lacked access to adequate public transportation and likewise most of these transit schedules served suburban commuters going into the city rather than the reverse.<sup>64</sup>

Among companies that relocated from Boston and Cambridge, a large number of urban workers did not follow their employers to their new suburban sites. Studies by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston in 1958 and 1961 discovered that relocated firms reported the highest rates of resignations among unskilled or part-time staff, and female clerical and production workers who lived in the city.<sup>65</sup> As one human resources executive declared, “You can hardly expect girls on the production line to commute 22 miles a day for \$1.20 an hour.”<sup>66</sup> These companies, particularly those which moved to affluent suburbs, had an especially difficult time finding employees to fill the clerical and production openings traditionally held by women. This statistic offers just one example of the way that corporate and residential migration to Route 128 exacerbated the racial and economic inequality of the metropolitan region.

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<sup>64</sup> Burt, “Labor Supply Characteristics of Route 128 Firms.”

<sup>65</sup> Everett J. Burt, Jr. “Changing Labor Supply Characteristics Along Route 128,” Research Report to Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, No. 17, 1961 (Boston, MA: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 1961).

<sup>66</sup> Burt, “Changing Labor Supply Characteristics Along Route 128.” The companies best able to retain female labor either had unusually high wages or were good access to public transportation.

## **Route 128: The Road to Segregation**

The construction of Route 128 and attendant business growth rapidly intensified the processes of suburban migration and patterns of inequality already underway in the adjacent communities. The growing demand by technology companies to settle in industrial parks along Route 128 hardened the distinctions not just between Boston and its suburbs, but also within suburban communities along its path. This process encouraged a sense of localism and lack of cooperation among suburban governments and intensified the long New England tradition of home rule. Lizabeth Cohen observed that the post- New Deal expansion of the federal government particularly in the housing market provided a moment of opportunity to repudiate localism and provincialism, but in these suburbs the opposite occurred and residents “set out not just to replicate the New England small town, but to improve upon it.”<sup>67</sup> This response of various suburbs to Route 128 development, therefore, inscribed clear boundaries and socioeconomic distinctions into the physical landscape of the area and the cognitive cartography of many citizens.

Suburbs adjacent to Route 128 including Needham, Burlington and Waltham recognized the potential benefits of commercial development as means to enhance local property values and tax base and recruited technological companies to their communities.

<sup>68</sup> Needham led the wave. After World War II, the largely white-collar residential community experienced an expanding population, especially of school-aged children, which had led to a soaring tax rate. Needham thereby agreed to zone a large tract of land

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<sup>67</sup> Cohen, *Consumer's Republic*, 229. For more on metropolitan fragmentation also Jon C. Teaford, *City and Suburbs: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Thomas J. Sugrue, “All Politics is Local: The Persistence of Localism in Twentieth Century America,” in *The Democratic Experiment*.

<sup>68</sup> Smith, “Operation 128.” An observer reported the new plants had led land worth \$50-100 an acre before were by the mid-1950s worth \$4000 to 5,000 acre.

for CCF to build its first industrial park. The land proved ideal for this purpose since Route 128 itself separated the plot from the rest of the community and it was never prime residential property. Other communities soon followed Needham's model of rezoning residents, accepting the assurances of CCF and other developers that the industrial park was an "anti-factory" whose design seamlessly fused industry into the suburban landscape.<sup>69</sup> Several upper middle-class towns like Lexington, Wayland, Winchester, and Sudbury allowed for small amounts of industry, but actively limited the construction to corporate headquarters rather than large manufacturing plants and relegated these offices to the periphery of their municipal boundaries. Towns with a history of industrialization were more receptive. For instance, by 1961, Waltham, which sat between Newton and Lexington, boasted 64 firms in industrial parks and other locations directly along or adjacent to the roadway and further north Burlington added 50 new companies during the decade.<sup>70</sup>

In several largely residential towns like Concord and Lexington that had roots dating back before the American Revolution, the new population and commercial pressures created by Route 128 raised concerns about the loss of their physical and ideological distinctiveness and increases in local tax rates. These towns therefore decided to rigidly restrict residential and commercial development through zoning and forms of growth control.<sup>71</sup> Many towns had zoning codes in place prior to World War II, yet with the outlawing of racial covenants and the rise of suburbanization, these laws took on even

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<sup>69</sup> O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*, 65.

<sup>70</sup> League of Women Voters of Lincoln, "A Study of the Impact of Light Industry on the Character and Economy of Nine Boston Area Towns," April 1963, Box 2, Folder 24, League of Women Voters of League of Women Voters of Lincoln Massachusetts Collection, Lincoln Archives, Lincoln Public Library, Massachusetts (hereafter: "LWVL"); Waltham Chamber of Commerce, "Firms Located on Route 128, Waltham, Massachusetts," January 1, 1961, Loeb.

<sup>71</sup> John H. Fenton, "Boston Suburbs Beset by Zoning," *New York Times*, January 17, 1954.

more salience as a means to control land development and increase social exclusivity. In the decade after the war, several municipalities along the Route 128 established 40,000 square foot minimums (i.e. one-acre) for more than half the land in their respective towns. In 1955, Lincoln went even further in its effort to remain a “country town” by setting an 80,000 square foot (roughly two acres) minimum and establishing a rule that a house could only cover 25 percent of the lot.<sup>72</sup> Many of its wealthy counterparts like Dover and Weston quickly followed suit.<sup>73</sup> These policies constituted a form of nascent environmental protection by slowing the pace of growth and maintaining the low density of their towns, which they buttressed through conservation zoning and open space acquisition. The zoning ordinances in many upper middle-class communities directly contributed to a severe housing shortage within metropolitan Boston, especially within the low-income and middle-income brackets. In 1958, the Massachusetts Department of Commerce discovered that the intensification of zoning restrictions had reduced the capacity for residential development in Boston’s suburbs by 39 percent between 1946 and 1956.<sup>74</sup> These ordinances did not just effectively freeze population growth in many affluent suburbs, but made the costs of those attractive plots available extremely high.

Several towns increased their own exclusivity and the housing shortage of the state by inscribing into their zoning codes strict limitations on the types of dwellings deemed acceptable. The affluent communities of Concord, Dover, Sherborn, Sudbury and Weston prohibited the construction of all multi-family and non-detached dwellings,

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<sup>72</sup> League of Women Voters of Lincoln Massachusetts, “Lincoln: Guide to Government, 1963,” Box 3, Folder 31 LWVL.

<sup>73</sup> “Lincoln: Guide to Government, 1963.”

<sup>74</sup> Massachusetts Dept. of Commerce and the Urban and Regional Studies Section of MIT, “The Effects of Large Lot Zoning on Residential Development,” *Urban Land Institute Technical Bulletin*, No. 32 (July 1958), 8.

which purportedly undermined the social values and physical environments of their communities.<sup>75</sup> Many other suburbs, such as Lexington, Wayland, and Wellesley, allowed some non-single-family homes, but relegated them to marginal districts or required special permits from local zoning boards for construction. The establishment of local historic preservation policies supplemented the priorities of these zoning codes. These ordinances gave town officials wide oversight to restrict over-development and mass-produced housing that would allegedly violate the historical integrity of the community.<sup>76</sup> These laws, therefore, further maintained the historic charm and social exclusivity of places like Lexington, Concord, Weston and Wellesley, but at an unspoken social cost.

The reach of these zoning policies extended beyond housing and industry and into other areas as well. Weston and Lincoln for instance both prevented all industry and restricted commercial enterprises to small grocery stores, plant nurseries, and farm stands, forcing residents to do most retail, employment entertainment functions in neighboring communities.<sup>77</sup> The actions, therefore, placed the burdens on less affluent suburbs of not just industrial plants, corporate headquarters, and multifamily housing development, but also visually unattractive gas stations, grocery stores and strip malls. A report by the Civil Rights Commission in the 1970s, observed, “in those towns which had the time and the funds, physical planning succeeded almost too well. Those town are

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<sup>75</sup> Metropolitan Area Planning Council, “Residential Zoning in the MAPC Region” (Boston, MA: Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 1972).

<sup>76</sup>Richard Kollen, *Lexington: From Liberty's Birthplace to Progressive Suburb* (Portsmouth, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 145; See also “Report of the Historic District Study Committee to the Lincoln Historical Society,” c. 1967, Box 4, Folder 50, Town of Lincoln Environmental Records, Lincoln Archives, Lincoln Public Library, Massachusetts (hereafter: “LER”).

<sup>77</sup> “A Study of the Impact of Light Industry on the Character and Economy of Nine Boston Area Towns”; Peter T. Siskind, “Growth and its discontents: Localism, Protest and the Politics of Development on the Postwar Northeast Corridor” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2002).

beautiful, although their beauty was paid for, in part, by the ugliness, of others.” The very conscious zoning practices also ensured the superior municipal services of these exclusive bedroom communities. By allowing only large lot zoning and limited industry, towns like Weston, Lincoln, Lexington and Concord had a smaller school population, less demand for police, fire and road maintenance and therefore offered excellent services at lower rates.<sup>78</sup> The reverse result occurred in Boston and the less affluent suburbs that allowed for significant commercial development because the rise in population, lower tax base and breaks for industry meant less municipal services at higher costs.

The decision to embrace or restrict commercial development effectively produced different trajectories and class standing even among towns that sat adjacent to one another, further enhancing the spatial distinctions between them. For instance, Burlington became the fastest growing town in the Boston area with its population raising from 2,672 in 1945 to 13,000 in 1960, which placed tremendous burden on its municipal services, particularly its school system.<sup>79</sup> Adding further pressures, commercial enterprise comprised 60.6 percent of the town’s real estate, but due to deals between the companies and town officials it only amounted to 25 percent of taxable property. In contrast, the nearby town of Winchester remained 93 percent residential and the eight new firms that opened in specially zoned areas had little impact on the community, its property values or school system.<sup>80</sup> The Civil Rights Commission concluded, therefore, that within the

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<sup>78</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 231.

<sup>79</sup> “A Study of the Impact of Light Industry on the Character and Economy of Nine Boston Area Towns.”

<sup>80</sup> “A Study of the Impact of Light Industry on the Character and Economy of Nine Boston Area Towns.”

communities around Route 128 “the locations of jobs and housing have become separated and the distribution of resources within the suburbs themselves unequal.”<sup>81</sup>

The strict zoning policies of this archipelago of affluent suburbs gave homeowners and aspiring residents a sense that these physical and economic distinctions ran ideologically as well. The rolling fields, architecturally distinctive homes and absence of commercial development in places like Concord or Lincoln enabled white middle-class residents to set themselves apart from the average conformist, homogenous and politically disengaged suburbanite who lived in the bland “cookie cutter” postwar subdivisions discussed in the cultural criticism of C. Wright Mills, David Riesman, and William Whyte and represented on TV shows like *Leave It To Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*. Lincoln residents Paul and Susan Brooks proudly described their town as a suburb merely “by accident of geography.”<sup>82</sup> While this naturalized notion of superiority shaped the “happy few” identity of these communities, the process of maintaining that mythology was clearly far more deliberate. Mr. and Mrs. Brooks celebrated how their local rigid housing code prevented “jerry-built ‘Colonials’ and ‘Capes’ (that no colonist or cape would be caught dead in).” The couple overlooked the fact that the combination of zoning and building policies did not just restrict mass-produced housing, but also excluded the vast majority of lower-income and even middle-income families who could not afford to purchase a well-built single-family home on a one-acre plot. Their attitude shows how this maze of land control decisions incubated both a sense of liberal distinctiveness and entitlement at the same time it hardened structural inequality and metropolitan fragmentation.

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<sup>81</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, 42.

<sup>82</sup> Paul and Susan Brooks, “Town With Room for Living,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

## The Social World of the Suburbs

The combination of Route 128 industry and double-edged zoning policies brought to the affluent suburbs along the highway an influx of new upwardly mobile citizens who had the means to purchase homes in these physically attractive, socially exclusive communities that offered easy access to Boston, Cambridge, and corporate headquarters or outposts of businesses along the roadway. These residents could and wanted to expend additional money for the advantages that came with living in Lexington or Newton as opposed to the more affordable, denser subdivisions in places like Waltham or Burlington. Most of the affluent suburbs along the semi-circle had contained large white-collar populations before the construction of Route 128, but who were not necessarily tied to the high-tech and defense-related industries. The highway's arrival, therefore, changed the occupational profile of most of the towns along Boston's outer ring. In 1950, one in five employed Lexington residents worked as operative or service workers, yet one in three who moved to the suburb in the next six years listed their occupation as professional or technological worker.<sup>83</sup> A decade later, Lexington planning officials announced that 70 percent of the scientists and workers in the high-tech industry had decided to live either there or a surrounding community.<sup>84</sup>

Most of new arrivals to the Route 128 suburbs participated in a regional reshuffling rather a national diaspora.<sup>85</sup> These new engineers, executives and other

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<sup>83</sup> Bluestone and Stevenson, *Boston Renaissance*, 93.

<sup>84</sup> Lexington, "100% Perfect for Research Development," *Lexington Minute-Man*, March 14, 1963.

<sup>85</sup> For more on postwar migration patterns particularly in and out of the South and Midwest and into the Sunbelt, see James Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) and Darren Dochuk, "Evangelicalism Becomes Southern, Politics Becomes Evangelical," *From FDR to Reagan*, in Mark Noll and Luke Harlow, eds., *Religion and Politics in America*, Second Edition (New York: Oxford

professionals overwhelmingly came from other parts of the Northeast and often other places in metropolitan Boston. In direct contrast to the employee profiles of companies in Orange County and Silicon Valley, where the vast majority of workers had moved to California from other parts of the country, the majority of Route 128 engineers and executives who moved to the Boston suburbs “were from New England, many had attended local educational institutions and their identities were already defined by familial and ethnic ties.”<sup>86</sup> A survey of people who moved to Newton between 1957 and 1958 showed that the largest percentage relocated from Brookline or Boston and those who migrated from out of state mostly came from New York and Pennsylvania.<sup>87</sup> Synthesizing the typical new migrant, a local reporter in 1958 produced the archetype of a “youngish sales-engineer, possessor of one child, one car, seeking the good schools, municipal services, suburbia at its best atmosphere.”<sup>88</sup> The new population of Concord during the same year reflected a similar composite prototype. The majority of new male residents were engineers, physicists, professors or sales managers, married to a woman who stayed at home, and had moved either from an inner-ring suburb of Boston or an eastern seaboard state.<sup>89</sup> A large portion of these new professional suburbanites had attended college or graduate school in metropolitan Boston and decided to remain, enlarging the areas of academia, law, medicine, finance, teaching, social work and science-based industry.<sup>90</sup>

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University Press, 2007), 297-325; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*.

<sup>86</sup> Saxenian, *Regional Advantage*, 60.

<sup>87</sup> Phyllis Newton, “Study Shows Who’s Moving to Newton and From Where,” *Newton Graphic*, January 30, 1958.

<sup>88</sup> Newton, “Study Shows Who’s Moving.”

<sup>89</sup> Registrars of Concord “List of Persons Residing in Town of Concord on January 1, 1958,” 1958, Loeb.

<sup>90</sup> Henry R. Lieberman, “Technology: Alchemist of Route 128,” *New York Times*, January 8, 1968. The growth of the rise of the regional high-tech industry served as most enticing factor providing engineers and other technologically orientated professional access to well-paying jobs and opportunity to “rub elbows”

The suburbs along Route 128 also boasted a high number of academics employed by area universities. One booster speculated that metropolitan Boston had “more Ph.D.’s per acre... than any other place in the country.”<sup>91</sup> While there is not statistical evidence to confirm that observation, the expansion of universities during the first decades after the war increased the demand for professors, many of who opted to live in the suburbs. The new highways not only made it easy for white-collar professionals to move in and in out of Cambridge and Boston, but also for professors who taught at Harvard, MIT and Boston University to live in the suburbs. For instance, *Man, Women and Child*, Erich Segal’s novel about suburban marriage, featured several scenes of Ken Beckworth a professor of statistics at MIT, commuting back and forth along Route 2 from his home in Lexington to his office along the Charles River in Cambridge.<sup>92</sup> Beckworth’s ability to move to the suburbs was not just because of the increase in roadway accessibility but the rise in faculty salaries at places like Harvard, MIT, Tufts and BU in the 1950s and 1960s. In the late 1950s a commission sponsored by President Eisenhower had encouraged universities to increase their faculty salaries in order to ensure that these institutions remained cutting-edge. Harvard President Nathan Pusey made improving faculty incomes a top priority and by 1967 the university had the highest average salaries in the nation.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, many science, engineering, and economics professors supplemented their salaries through consulting income from Route 128-related companies.<sup>94</sup> For instance in 1959, Raytheon kept 30 to 40 academic professors “on tap,” paying them retainers up to

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with other leading scientists and entrepreneurs; “New England’s Big Comeback”; O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*, 88.

<sup>91</sup> “New England’s Big Comeback.”

<sup>92</sup> Erich Segal, *Man, Women and Child* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980).

<sup>93</sup> Freeland *Academia’s Golden Age*, 93-95, 149-150, 206-208.

<sup>94</sup> “Ideas Road”; Lieberman, “Alchemist of Route 128.”

\$10,000 per year. Through the 1960s these figures increased dramatically. The Cambridge-based consultant firm Arthur D. Little, Inc. employed 200 professors as consultants with some making as much as \$40,000. Prior to the war, most academics lived in smaller homes closer to the campuses of Harvard, MIT and Boston University, but the increase in funds now made it financially feasible for many professors like the fictionalized Beckworths to live in the affluent suburbs. By the early 1960s, the local weekly newspapers in Brookline, Lexington and Newton featured articles about local residents winning scholarly prizes and gaining tenure side by side by reports of Little League games and Kiwanis Club meetings. The commuting practices of these academics helped to solidify the links between certain suburbs and the area's universities and to bolster these communities' liberal reputations.

The professors, engineers and other white-collar professionals who migrated to Brookline, Concord, Lexington, Lincoln, and Newton expanded and altered the social culture of the suburbs, remolding them into strongholds of liberalism. These communities, moreover, already had well-established religious, social, cultural and political networks that provided the infrastructure for these forms of grassroots liberal activism to emerge. A 1950 booklet distributed to new Lexington homeowner featured a long list of church groups, benevolent societies, civic organizations, and sporting clubs.<sup>95</sup> These institutions provided recently relocated married couples in Lexington and elsewhere an instant sense of community and belonging in their new homes.<sup>96</sup> Annelise Siberian described the social world of engineers and executive employed by high-tech companies on Route 128 as centered on “church local schools, tennis clubs and other

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<sup>95</sup> Evening Alliance of the First Parish Church, *Directory of Organizations in Lexington and Bus Schedules*, 1950, Loeb.

<sup>96</sup> Lisa McGirr makes a similar point about another group of suburbanites, see *Suburban Warriors*, 48.

civic and neighborhood institutions” in their local suburbs.<sup>97</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s, in Concord, Lexington and elsewhere engineers, executives and other white collar professionals regularly engaged in forms of socializing such as bridge, tennis, coffee klatches, garden clubs, dinner parties and church groups where they forged relationships with neighbors and other members of the community who generally shared their socioeconomic characteristics and political outlook.<sup>98</sup>

In the Route 128 communities that became important incubators of grassroots liberal activism, religion served as a particularly important component of residents’ identity and social world. The church steeple had anchored the social world and values of places like Concord and Lexington since the colonial period, but by the nineteenth century, their congregations had abandoned Puritanism for Unitarianism and other less rigid denominations which emphasized commitment to democracy, rational thought and social justice. The population explosion in the postwar decades spurred construction of new churches and renovation of older ones in the cities and towns throughout metropolitan Boston. Unlike the Sunbelt metropolises like Los Angeles, where postwar migration led to a flourishing of evangelical Protestants especially Southern Baptists, outside of Boston the new expansion remained largely in the mainline tradition. While fifty-one new Baptist churches launched in Orange County between 1950 and 1960, in the mid-1950s in Lexington the sole Baptist church became nondenominational and

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<sup>97</sup> Saxenian, *Regional Advantage*, 61.

<sup>98</sup> For instance Jackie Davison recalls that when she and her husband moved to Lexington from Boston in 1954 they “got involved with tennis and we met people in various interest areas, and so we got to know the town very quickly, and became very comfortable.” see Jackie Davison Interview, interview conducted by Norma McGavern-Norland, October 6, 1992, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed November 11, 2009); See also Saxenian, *Regional Advantage*, 61.

strictly committed to promoting a spirit of inclusiveness.<sup>99</sup> The divergence in church construction exposes deeper differences between the new residents who came to the suburbs outside of Boston and those who settled in southern California and post-industrial other nodes. While many of the migrants and existing residents in Orange County had a proclivity toward fundamentalist, strict moralist and anti-liberal ideas, suburban residents in metropolitan Boston who gravitated from other parts of New England were more inclined to the less rigid doctrines of the mainline Protestant tradition that preached about tolerance and collective action.<sup>100</sup>

The significant influx in Catholic and Jewish residents during the postwar period, moreover, altered significantly the religious composition of the Route 128 suburbs. These communities had contained small enclaves of Catholics since the nineteenth century and most had at least one Catholic church by the turn of twentieth century. Following World War II, the number of Catholic residents and churches grew significantly. Belying the often-repeated suggestion that Catholics either remained in cities to stay by their parishes or commuted back into the city on Sunday, the suburbs of Boston experienced a flood of new church construction in the decade and a half following World War II. Between 1944 and 1959, the Archdiocese of Boston approved the building of 75 new churches, the majority of which it proudly declared occurred “in small historic communities in the midst of which no church steeple bore the cross.”<sup>101</sup>

Jews also accounted for a large percentage of the new residents and houses of worship in metropolitan Boston after World War II, which was representative of a

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<sup>99</sup> Kollen, *From Liberty's Birthplace*, 150.

<sup>100</sup> For more about the new forms of religious that took shape in California after World War II, McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, especially 45-51, and Dochuk, “Evangelicalism Becomes Southern,” 297-325.

<sup>101</sup> McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 84.

broader national “exodus” of Jewish people and institutions toward the suburbs.<sup>102</sup> Levels of observance shaped the suburban settlement patterns of many Jewish families. Most observant families sought to live close to the newly-built synagogues, religious schools and kosher grocery stores and therefore opted to live in Brookline, and Newton, both of which had large concentrations of Jewish residents. Less observant Jews often opted to live in communities that had a tradition of tolerance but not necessarily an established Jewish community.<sup>103</sup> A study conducted in the suburbs surrounding Route 2 such as Lexington, Lincoln, Concord and Belmont found that most of the Jews who lived in these communities were third or fourth generation Americans who had recently moved to the Boston area, did not have mostly Jewish friends, did not oppose the intermarriage of their children and tended to participate socially in non-Jewish activities.<sup>104</sup> Sylvia Gold of Concord who came to the community during the postwar era later remembered: “My husband and I while not really religious have a strong Jewish identity, but some other families did not.” Gold observed that she often was not aware of who was Jewish or not in Concord and that “common interests rather than religion” dictated social interactions.<sup>105</sup>

This set of upper middle-class suburbs around Route 128 all demonstrated a great deal of interfaith collaboration establishing the connections and infrastructure upon which

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<sup>102</sup> A 1959 study estimated that two-thirds of Jews in the United States resided in suburban counties see, Joshua A. Fishman, “Moving to the Suburbs: Its Possible Impact on the Role of the Jewish Minority in American Community Life,” *Phylon*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2nd Qtr., 1963), 150; For more on this process in Boston see Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>103</sup> For more on the experiences of Jews in suburban Boston see Albert I. Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1959).

<sup>104</sup> Sherry Israel “Moving Apart and Growing Together 1967-1994” in *The Jews Of Boston: Essays On The Occasion Of The Centenary (1895-1995)* edited by Jonathan D. Sarna & Ellen Smith (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 107-120.

<sup>105</sup> Renee Garrelick, Conantum Neighborhood Oral History, Fall 1986, Box 4, Folder 18, Records of the Kalmia Woods Corporation, Concord Special Collections, Concord Free Public Library, Concord, MA (hereafter: “KWC”).

activism especially related to civil rights, and peace later flourished. During the postwar period, communities like Lexington, Newton, and Brookline reported a large amount of interfaith activity among both clergy and their congregations. In Lexington, the physical proximity of several of the older and newer churches on the periphery of the Battle Green encouraged various forms of interfaith collaboration.<sup>106</sup> A rabbi from Newton described the relations between clergy of different faiths there in 1959 as “excellent.”<sup>107</sup> The interfaith community in Newton even developed a Social Action Program where the officiates from Jewish, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches each selected ten couples who met to discuss issues of religion as well other areas of community life including “racial and social relationships.”<sup>108</sup> The wife of a Brookline minister recalled that beginning in the 1950s members of the various local religious congregations would meet weekly for informal discussion. By the end of the decade these conversations began to take on an increasingly political charge, focusing primarily on civil rights, and led many clergy and congregant to become active participants in the local and national movements.

The suburbanites in the Route 128 communities demonstrated a range of religious commitment from devout to more secular forms of practice. For instance, a young engineer in Lexington named Albert Wilson earned national attention when he persuaded the minister at the Hancock Congregational Church to support a group of couples who would gather for Bible study as an antidote to the primarily secular focus of the parish.<sup>109</sup> By 1963, the church had ten groups of more dedicated parishioners who met

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<sup>106</sup> John Beuhrens Interview, interview by Nancy Earsy, May 25, 1994, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed November 11, 2009).

<sup>107</sup> Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*, 24.

<sup>108</sup> Newton Chamber of Commerce, “Brightest Spot on the Golden Circle” Pamphlet, 1969, Newton Collection, Newton Public Library, Newton, Massachusetts (hereafter: “NPL”).

<sup>109</sup> “Churches: The Apostolic Few,” *Time* (May 24, 1963).

outside of their homes, a practice replicated in several communities throughout the area. The levels of religious commitment often took on a spatial dimension dictating which of the various houses of worship individuals opted to attend. The divide was particularly noticeable in Lexington where more devout and doctrinal Catholics attended Church of the Sacred Heart in East Lexington, while those residents more committed to a secular and social justice interpretation worshipped at Saint Brigid, which sat just off the Battle Green and became a leading force in the civil rights movement.<sup>110</sup> One resident reduced the distinction between Saint Brigid and Sacred Heart “to the liberal versus the conservatives.”<sup>111</sup> This distinction underscores the ways in which churches helped to cluster ideologically like-minded people, a prerequisite for grassroots mobilization for social and political causes. Thus, while Saint Brigid served as a launching pad for civil rights, peace and affordable housing activism, Sacred Heart would later encourage residents to join conservative causes such as the pro-life movement. This type of dichotomous split became replicated throughout suburban Boston.

For many residents these churches and synagogues primarily became sites for socializing and meeting people in the community. In the postwar period, many of the local churches increasingly sponsored secular activities during the week, such as dances and card games. The array of different activities, most segmented by age group, became so extensive and secular at Hancock Congregational Church in Lexington that residents

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<sup>110</sup> Under the direction and encouragement of Monsignor George Casey, several Saint Brigid priests and congregants became active participants and leaders in the local and national civil rights movement. A fellow Lexington clergy member later described the longtime Monsignor as “quite a radical in many ways, an old Socialist who had gone to seminary with Cardinal Cushing and therefore had been protected.” (Buehrens Interview). As discussed in the following chapter Reverend Father Thomas MacCleod of Saint Brigid became the head of the statewide Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights, led a delegations to the March on Washington, and a year later got arrested for his civil rights activity in the South (McGreevey, *Parish Boundaries*, 152).

<sup>111</sup> Marion Colletta Interview, interview by Nancy Earsy, November 1, 1993, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed November 11, 2009).

jokingly renamed the religious institution “The Hancock Country Club.”<sup>112</sup> Several temples also revised traditions and began hosting more suburban-centered activity such as couples clubs, brotherhoods, sisterhoods, and PTAs, which offered increased chances for socializing and feeling connected. These activities proved particularly important for residents who had recently settled in the area. For instance, Norma McGavern-Norland recalled that growing up in New York City, “I had never been involved even with a church before.” But upon moving to Lexington, encouraged by a local Unitarian minister, she decided participating in the church would be a good way to meet people, perform organized community service and “might be fun.”<sup>113</sup> The positive experiences of church participation inspired her to get involved in the League of Women Voters and later several other liberal causes and groups. Norma McGavern-Norland’s story reflected a common pattern among suburban residents who got involved in forms of grassroots activism, particularly among female participants.

In the 1950s, the migration of new residents to the upper middle-class communities along Route 128 reflected the broader reaffirmation of domesticity and reinscription of distinct gender roles and responsibilities that characterized the national postwar patterns of suburbanization.<sup>114</sup> The cohort that came to the affluent suburbs were predominantly married couples where husbands worked in white-collar professions and

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<sup>112</sup> “Churches: The Apostolic Few.” Hancock church included 11 different clubs included three youth groups and two different dinner and entertainments clubs for married couples (Evening Alliance of the First Parish Church, Directory of Organizations in Lexington).

<sup>113</sup> Norma McGavern-Norland Interview, interview conducted by Eugenia Kaledin, August 22, 1991, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed November 11, 2009).

<sup>114</sup> For more on marriage and gender norms of the 1950s see Elaine Tyler May *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War*, Revised Edition (New York Basic Books, 1999).

wives stayed at home to take care of their children.<sup>115</sup> Though they perhaps did not share occupational profile of their husbands, many of these women did share their education level. A disproportionate number of these women had also attended elite colleges and universities, which had often been where they had met their husbands.<sup>116</sup> Many of these recent college graduates looked for ways to continue their education and intellectual engagement while simultaneously performing traditional household duties. Older religious and civic institutions as well as newer organizations became crucial spaces to meet other women with similar outlooks and experiences.<sup>117</sup> “I and a lot of other people who became my friends, all had young children around the age of my children,” Norma McGavern-Norland later explained. “We were all united by childcare and interest in what was going on in the world. I suppose we gravitated to the same organizations because we cared for the same things. And we were friends, so it was a very natural thing to do.”<sup>118</sup> These connections established the foundations for many subsequent grassroots liberal campaigns.

Throughout the affluent suburbs of Boston, the League of Women Voters served as a major magnet of female activism and the launching pad for later forms of political engagement. Most of these towns had existing League chapters by the 1930s. In Newton, a group of women including a professor of Zoology at Wellesley College, two future state representatives, the wife of the Director of Admissions at MIT and the wife of a

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<sup>115</sup> For instance in Newton, 65.8 percent of residents reported employment in white-collar occupations. While 65.6 percent of those employed were male and just 5,364 married women were engaged in the paid labor force, 1960 census (U.S. Census Data for Newton, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980)

<sup>116</sup> Segal, *Man, Woman and Child* provides a fictionalized account of one such meeting.

<sup>117</sup> For instance, Bonnie Jones who moved to Lexington in the early 1960s got involved in civil rights and fair housing in order to make friends within the community who shared her interests and outlook (Bonnie Jones, interview conducted by Norma McGavern-Norland, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc., [www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed April 3, 2009).

<sup>118</sup> McGavern-Norland Interview.

former attorney general, had launched a local League chapter in the mid-1930s to “promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government.”<sup>119</sup> In the postwar period, broader demographic shifts led to a flourishing of the organization and Massachusetts emerged as the largest state chapter in the country. The League’s longstanding focus on studying key local and state issues and presenting facts in a dispassionate and objective tone, offered these educated and involved women a way to continue their intellectual pursuits, widen their knowledge base, and participate in various levels of government. Through such efforts, many suburban women came to learn much about the inner-workings of the policy and governmental process, which they applied to both related League activity and other grassroots liberal campaigns. At the same time, these younger League members also shifted the priorities of the League at the local, state and increasingly toward more progressive issues.

The League provided clear social advantages for the young mothers who made up the largest portion of newer members. Louise Haldeman recalled that she answered an advertisement from the League in the local newspaper when she moved to Lexington because she found herself “a young mother with a baby at home and needed some intellectual companionship.”<sup>120</sup> Haldeman stated that the League “opened the door and got me out of the house back when we had one car.” Norma McGavern-Norland later explained she got involved in the League and other liberal causes to experience a sense of camaraderie. She described the organization as a “support group” that helped her and her

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<sup>119</sup> League of Women Voters of Newton “A Historical Review of the League of Women Voters of Newton,” May 1953, NPL.

<sup>120</sup> League of Women Voters -- 80th Anniversary of Women’s Suffrage interviews with Barbara Anthony, Debbie Barr, Nancy Beecher, Louise Haldeman, Annabelle Sheperd, interviewed by Renee Garrelick, May 12, 2000, Concord Oral History Program Collection ([http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin\\_Aids/OralHistories.htm](http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin_Aids/OralHistories.htm), last accessed November 11, 2009).

friends keep their “sanity” while they “had small children and weren’t working full-time.” These social organizations also offered these women a means to reconcile their domestic duties and political views.<sup>121</sup> Discussing her activist experiences, McGavern-Norland described that the women usually brought their young children to meetings since it offered them a chance to get their children to socialize as well. “They played together,” she stated, “while mothers plotted and planned and talked about higher-level issues that sometimes included children, too.”<sup>122</sup> These forms of social activism represented often an extension, not a rejection, of parenting.

Despite often wanting relief from child-rearing responsibilities, these women expressed through their activism a concern for the future of their progeny and became involved in issues of education at the local and state levels. Quite a few female volunteers had worked as teachers, which gave them a particularly interest in improving the quality their children’s education. Carl Koch later explained that in Concord many “mothers had gone to Smith and Vassar and places like that joined the PTA, and took the school by a storm. Test scores went up.”<sup>123</sup> In addition, through the League these women often lobbied for educational reform at the state level. This sense of concern for their children also led many of these women (as well as their husbands) to become involved in peace, civil rights, environmentalism and the campaigns for various local state and national political candidates.

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<sup>121</sup> For more on the ways in which women in the 1950s and 1960s aimed to fuse domestic duties and political activity see Michelle Nickerson “Moral Mothers and Goldwater Girls” in *The Conservative Sixties* edited by David Farber and Jeff Roche (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 53 and Rhoda Lois Blumberg, “White Mothers as Civil Rights Activists: The Interweave of Family and Movement Roles” in *Women and Social Protest*, Guida West and Rhoda Lois Blumberg, eds (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>122</sup> McGavern-Norland interview.

<sup>123</sup> William A. Davis, “Conantum’s Search for Utopia,” *Boston Globe* April 6, 1995.

A 1960 *Time* magazine cover article celebrating suburbia described the average housewife as an “aproned activist” whose main role was a “keeper of the suburban dream.”<sup>124</sup> The women in the Route 128 suburbs often acted as “aproned activists” though perhaps not in the same way as *Time* intended. The shared experiences of white middle-class women in communities like Concord and Newton challenged the image of the trapped and apolitical housewife widely popularized with the publication of Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique*, as well as more positive depictions such as the *Time* article.<sup>125</sup> The white-middle class female residents who became active in progressive causes were women who helped to remake the boundaries of traditional gender roles and suburban political activism. These activities also placed their communities at the vanguard of grassroots suburban liberalism.

### **Bastions of Liberalism**

Brookline, Newton, Lexington, Concord and Lincoln served as the primary incubators of Massachusetts suburban liberalism. Grassroots activism flourished in other affluent communities as well, but in this set of suburbs demographic patterns converged with a specific history and identity to create favorable circumstances for such activity. All of these towns boasted active civil rights and fair housing chapters, constituted the founding participants in the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO), engaged in a variety of antiwar and peace activities, stood at the vanguard of the environmental movement, and vigorously supported liberal candidates in state and

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<sup>124</sup> “Americana: The Roots of Home,” *Time* (June 20, 1960).

<sup>125</sup> Michelle Nickerson makes a similar point about conservative female activists in Southern California in the postwar period, see Nickerson, “Moral Mothers and Goldwater Girls,” 51-62. The similarity of techniques and outlook of conservative and liberal female activists in the 1950s points to the need to revise popular and often scholarly misconceptions of the gender roles during the period.

national elections. There were important spatial and social differences even between these communities, tied to their respective locations and histories. For instance, Lexington's location meant that it had a higher concentration of engineers than Brookline while Lincoln demonstrated a greater commitment to environmentalism than Newton, which was denser and closer to the city. Moving from Brookline, the most dense by population and socioeconomically diverse community to Lincoln, the most spacious and exclusive, brief case studies of each of these five municipalities illustrate how and why these particularly suburbs became central sites for liberal activism and tensions in the 1960s and 1970s.

### *Brookline*

The resistance to annexation in 1873 provided Brookline with a unique sense of independence and exceptionalism. Since its incorporation, Brookline had embraced the religiously-laden idea that it was “a favored town.”<sup>126</sup> In an article entitled “Ideal Suburb” published in *Harpers Magazine* in 1898, James Locke deemed it “the richest town in the United States, with an annual income greater than the whole state of New Hampshire.”<sup>127</sup> Brookline residents proudly embraced these designations promoting it as “the wealthiest town in the world” and appropriated the nickname “the wealthy towners” for the high school football team, a derisive name provided by opponents. During the postwar period, while other suburbs experienced a surge in new populations, Brookline, actually witnessed the reverse trend. The population of Brookline decreased from 57,589 to 54,044 between 1950 and 1960. The well-established patterns of housing and

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<sup>126</sup> One local booster even drew on the label for the title of his 1897 book about the town's history. Charles Knowles Bolton, *Brookline: The History of a Favored Town* (Brookline, MA: CAW Spencer, 1897).

<sup>127</sup> Brookline Council on the Aging, *Our Brookline Essay and Observations*, 2005, Brookline Collection, Brookline Public Library, Brookline, Massachusetts (hereafter: “Brookline”).

commercial sites made Brookline, which is contiguous to Boston, denser and lacking in available land for new development. Many families living in Brookline began to move farther away to newly built homes in Wellesley, Weston and Newton where they could obtain larger houses on more acres of land.<sup>128</sup> Although the community still retained many of its large mansions and affluent residents, this demographic shift meant that postwar Brookline no longer held claim to the title as the richest suburb in the world or even the wealthiest in Boston.

Brookline did, however, remain an appealing location for many people. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Brookline became an increasingly popular residential choice among wealthy Catholic and Jewish families. The town had long contained a concentration of Irish-born Catholics who worked as day laborers or domestic servants but who lived largely separate from their white Protestant employers.<sup>129</sup> However, that population expanded as affluent Irish Catholic families began to move into houses in close proximity to Brookline's Brahmins.<sup>130</sup> In fact, Brookline served as the birthplace and childhood home of John F. Kennedy, the first Catholic president, which further fueled the town's sense of historic importance and pride in the early 1960s. In the decades before World War II, Brookline also experienced an influx of upwardly mobile Jewish families lured from the dense triple-decker enclaves of Roxbury and Dorchester by the open space, good schools, and exclusive reputation of the community. One resident who moved stated about the reasons her parents sought to move there: "It was where WASPS were. It was a clean beautiful town. Bucolic splendor, green grass. The public schools were like private schools. We had French in the sixth

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<sup>128</sup> Edel et al, *Shaky Palaces*, 97.

<sup>129</sup> Kerr, "Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb," 37-38.

<sup>130</sup> Kerr, "Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb," 46.

grade.”<sup>131</sup> In 1930, 8,000 Jews lived in the town, comprising 17 percent of the population.<sup>132</sup> Several of Boston’s most established and wealthiest synagogues decided to follow their congregants and move to Brookline, which made the town an even more attractive destination for upwardly mobile middle-class Jews. By 1950 the number of Jews had increased to 19,000, a third of the town’s overall population.

During the postwar period, Brookline’s diverse housing stock of smaller single-family homes and larger apartments made it a particularly desirable locale for young married couples. These families also selected Brookline because of its strong school system. Brookline had long boasted nationally recognized schools, but the stagnating population in the 1940s and 1950s enabled the town to focus its resources on improving on that reputation. It developed an excellent nationally acclaimed college-oriented curriculum directed at advanced and gifted students.<sup>133</sup> This set of factors helped attract a new type of resident and thereby fortified the progressive reputation of the community. Longtime resident Eleanor Kaplan explained that during the postwar decades middle-class professionals, business people, and tradesmen “came to raise their families in this gracious, well-run, education oriented community and brought with them a liberal point of view.”<sup>134</sup> Many young professionals and professors were part of this wave of settlement. Urban planner Robert Kramer recalled that he and his wife had moved there following “a post-graduate idyll in Cambridge.” Like many young couples, the Kramers “needed affordable housing and good schools” and as “committed ‘urbanites’, they had

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<sup>131</sup> Bruce Arlan Phillips, “Acculturation, Group Survival and the Ethnic Community: A Social History of the Jewish Community of Brookline, Massachusetts, 1915-1940” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 1975).

<sup>132</sup> Gamm, *Urban Exodus* 192-194.

<sup>133</sup> Edel et al, *Shaky Palaces*, 157.

<sup>134</sup> Brookline Council on the Aging, *Our Brookline*.

additional requirement of “easy access to center-city Boston.” These preferences made Brookline an ideal choice.<sup>135</sup> Psychologist Thomas Cottle and his wife were also academic transplants from Cambridge who wanted to find a good community in which to raise their children with convenient access to his job as a professor at Harvard and hers at Wellesley College. Reluctant to leave Cambridge, Cottle, not a native of the Boston area, recalled that many of his college friends had come from Brookline, which led him to believe it had superior schools and progressive values. Although himself a Christian, Cottle felt that the fact that town had a well-established Jewish community inferred it was “welcome” place that would not be “parochial and isolationist.” New residents like Kramer and Cottle became active in civil rights and other progressive causes that helped Brookline maintain its identity as a favored town and a liberal bastion. Despite the renewed progressivism of these new migrants, by 1960, Brookline counted just 15 African-American families among its 60,000 residents, which simultaneously caused it to retain its identity as an elite suburb.<sup>136</sup>

### *Newton*

While other Massachusetts communities drew their distinctiveness from ties to various elements of the state and the nation’s past, few historic events or battles occurred in Newton and instead the municipality long based its elevated self-image on the fact that it was an “ideal” and “exceptional” suburb. Sitting just west of Brookline, the 18 square-mile city of a dozen separate villages followed in the steps of its neighbor and resisted

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<sup>135</sup> Brookline Council on the Aging, *Our Brookline*.

<sup>136</sup> For these celebrations of Brookline’s liberal reputation see, “*Brookline Tab Celebrates Brookline’s 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1705 to 2005*,” November 2005, Brookline; Jean Kramer, *Brookline: A Pictorial History* (Boston, MA: Historical Publishing Group, 1989). “Property Values Don’t Fall When Negroes Move In,” *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, April 7, 1960.

annexation by Boston. Although the community did contain several pockets of domestic laborers and immigrant families, its close proximity to Boston and easy accessibility by the railroad made it a favored location for area's wealthy and upper-middle class families. By the late nineteenth century it became designated as the "bedroom of Boston."<sup>137</sup> Newton also gained a reputation as the "Garden City" for its large Victorian and neo-classical homes and impeccably manicured yards. In 1935, a local enthusiast promoted Newton as "Suburban Living at Its Best," stating it was "distinctly a Boston suburb, a place where most of the residences are single houses with ample grounds, where people can own their own homes; where the large apartment house is almost unknown."<sup>138</sup> Following World War II, its location at the interchange of Route 128 and the Massachusetts Turnpike only seven miles outside of Boston made Newton an even more desirable location. Between 1940 and 1960, the population increased from 69,873 to 92,384 and younger married couples comprised the majority of these new residents.<sup>139</sup> Developers took advantage of this new need for housing and rapidly started to buy up the town's older estates and farmland turning them into subdivisions of large single-family homes.<sup>140</sup> Acknowledging the demand for new housing especially among veterans, the city of Newton itself entered the construction business building the new village of Oak Hill, which consisted of 315 largely uniform ranch houses, an elementary school, a small shopping area and recreation space. Despite the building boom, Newton preserved its

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<sup>137</sup> Jeffrey Hutchins, "Four Decades of Newton Politics, 1930-1970," May 1973, NPL.

<sup>138</sup> John R. Prescott, *The Story of Newton Massachusetts: Its Natural Beauty Attractive Homes and Historical Associations*, 1936, NPL.

<sup>139</sup> For more on this phenomenon nationally see May, *Homeward Bound* and Clay Howard, "Closet and the Cul de Sac: Sexuality and Culture War in Postwar California" (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, forthcoming).

<sup>140</sup> There were 4,086 new units built in Newton between 1950 and 1960 ("U.S. Census Data for Newton, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980" c. 1980, NPL).

reputation as the “Garden Suburb” through zoning ordinances that ensured single-family homes on sizable lots and a continued scarcity of apartments or rental units.<sup>141</sup>

If the population increase did not change the type of housing built, it did significantly alter the ethnic and religious composition of the community. Like Brookline, where Catholic and Jews who had moved in the first decades of the twentieth century, Newton became a desirable place for many upwardly mobile white ethnics. By 1958, 40.4 percent of the households in Newton were Catholic, 36 percent Protestant and 20.4 percent Jewish. This rise in Jews marked the most notable and rapid change. In 1920 Newton had only a few hundred Jewish residents, by 1930 that number increased to 1,400; and by 1950 8,000 and the number expanded steadily over the course of the next decade.<sup>142</sup> Between July 1, 1954 and December 31, 1955 fully 35 percent of homes purchased in Newton were by Jewish buyers who overwhelmingly came from Boston, Roxbury or Brookline.<sup>143</sup> Collectively, this new diversity of religious backgrounds helped to project the image that Newton maintained a commitment to openness and pluralism. Yet, while the community contained more socioeconomic heterogeneity than many other Boston suburbs, it remained a predominantly upper-middle-class white community. In 1960 65.8 percent of Newton residents were employed in white-collar occupations and 43.8 percent of households earned over \$10,000 and Newton’s racial composition, nevertheless, remained 98.1 percent white both before and after World War II.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> In 1960, 20, 297 families owned own home (“U.S. Census Data for Newton, 1940, 1950 1960, 1970, 1980” c. 1980, NPL), see also Newton Tricentennial Corporation “Newton Massachusetts 1688-1988: A Celebration of Three Hundred Years,” 1988, NPL.

<sup>142</sup> Gamm, *Urban Exodus*, 194-195.

<sup>143</sup> Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*. 26-27.

<sup>144</sup> U.S. Census Data for Newton, 1960, NPL.

Many of these white middle-class migrants selected Newton because of its nationally recognized school system, which during the postwar period provided the suburb with its strongest sense of identity and community pride. Journalist Peter Schrag described Newton as a “loose amalgam of ten postal addresses held together by prestige and an outstanding school system. Education is Newton’s central topic of conversation, its basic industry, and its most compelling reason for existence.”<sup>145</sup> Schrag himself visited the town as part of the research for a book project on American education using Newton as his case study of an outstanding suburban public school system. The town had a tradition of academic excellence dating back to 1848, when Horace Mann moved the nation’s first normal school there and the community had an equally long history of sending a disproportionately large percentage of graduates down the Charles River to Harvard. Following World War II that commitment to excellence and relationship to Harvard and the Ivy League increased considerably. In the postwar period, the school system underwent rapid growth, which led the city to spend \$19 million on improving its physical plant, adding a second high school, several elementary schools and renovating and expanding existing buildings.<sup>146</sup> However, the school department actively refused to “mistake physical growth for educational progress” and during this period also intensified its dedication to providing quality instruction. Superintendent Charles Brown recruited teachers directly from the area’s many universities and developed a close relationship with the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which often used the Newton schools as a laboratory for cutting-edge teaching techniques. In developing curriculum, Newton teachers often consulted with “university types” from across the country. These steps

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<sup>145</sup> Peter Schrag, *Voices in the Classroom: Public Schools and Public Attitudes* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 99.

<sup>146</sup> “Teaching: Island of Change,” *Time* (January 24, 1964).

helped to place Newton at the top of lists ranking it the best school system in the country, and in 1964, *Time Magazine* observed that Newton was “the most creative school system in the U.S. today.”<sup>147</sup>

The quality instruction, nevertheless, did not come free and led to a heavy local tax rate and high property values. In order to place the financial burden in tangible terms, Peter Schrag contended, “A \$30,000 house in neighboring Needham becomes a \$36,000 house in Newton.”<sup>148</sup> In fact by the late 1960s, 60 percent of tax revenue went to school financing, by far the largest municipal budget item, and the school superintendent earned a significantly larger salary than the mayor.<sup>149</sup> These financial factors insured that many of the newer families who moved to Newton shared a commitment to both excellent and experimental education. Schrag concluded that one reason for this heightened investment in the public schools was the large influx of Jewish residents, who traditionally placed a strong emphasis on quality education. Taking his religiously deterministic hypothesis a step further, he argued that many Jews did not have positions in the managerial hierarchy of large national corporations, which often required frequent corporate relocation.<sup>150</sup> Instead, Jews worked in more geographically stable professions like law, medicine, and small businesses, which enabled them to develop more of a stake in local institutions, especially the schools. While there is no firm evidence to support Schrag’s characterization, it was true that Newton attracted Jews and instilled a strong sense of the importance of preserving and advancing high quality education in residents from all ethnic groups and middle-class professions.

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<sup>147</sup> “Teaching: Island of Change.”

<sup>148</sup> Schrag, *Voices in the Classroom*, 99.

<sup>149</sup> League of Women Voters of Newton, “Newton: Garden City” Pamphlet, 1973, NPL; “Teaching: Island of Change.”

<sup>150</sup> Schrag, *Voices in the Classroom*, 114-115.

The schools also served as a key space for social interaction among members of the Newton community. Schrag reported that the education-related events served as one place where various religious groups in the community interacted, stating that in the suburb “education is religion and almost everyone is a true believer.”<sup>151</sup> The schools, moreover, served as the launching pad for other forms of collaboration and civic and social engagement. Activists like Jerome Grossman cited involvement in the PTA and concern about the quality of the Newton public schools as the springboards for action. They often used the contacts they made through educational activities to expand the membership and volunteer networks for key political and social campaigns. Newton liberals frequently invoked the issue of schools and children when trying to impel other residents to support a variety of progressive causes, most notably the METCO program.

The new population of socially engaged citizens also reshaped the political landscape of Newton. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century Newton was consistently the most Republican city for its size in all of Massachusetts voting solidly against Franklin D. Roosevelt in each of his presidential races.<sup>152</sup> However, the new postwar migrants spurred by larger changes in local, state, and national politics, helped push the pendulum in the other direction. In 1960, the community voted for Kennedy over Richard Nixon, initiating a permanent realignment within Newton toward the Democratic Party in national elections. Rather than downplay the community’s shift away from its “Yankee” identity, the city began to turn the changes into a form of affirmative marketing to lure more liberal residents to purchase homes there. In a pamphlet entitled the “Brightest Spot on the Golden Circle” from the 1960s, the Newton

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<sup>151</sup> Schrag, *Voices in the Classroom*, 100.

<sup>152</sup> Hutchins, “Four Decades of Newton Politics, 1930-1970.”

Chamber of Commerce aimed to fuse the community's liberal politics, affluence, and proximity to Boston into a promotional discourse.<sup>153</sup> The Chamber touted Newton as “remarkable place,” and “the most affluent and progressive of suburban cities,” classifying its residents as “committed to social betterment and change” and bearing “few traces of parochial self-centeredness.” The Chamber also boasted that Newton was a “Suburban City in Touch with the World” stating “descriptive terms and phrases that characterize Newton just don't apply to other places,” dubbing citizens as socially “responsible as they are affluent.” As we will see in later chapters, this reputation and identity both impelled and at other points limited the commitment of Newton residents to grassroots liberal activism.

### *Lexington*

Just seven highway exits northwest of Newton, at the interchange between Route 128 and Route 2, stood the town of Lexington. Since 1775, when members of the community famously defended the town and colony against British incursion, a sense of historic duty and patriotic sacrifice infused both the physical landscape and attitudes of Lexington residents. The Battle Green located in the town's center served as a constant reminder of the community's revolutionary roots, while the cast-iron statue of James Parker with a musket by his side perched at the edge of the Green strengthened this sense of historic responsibility. The site held a deeply symbolic place within the collective imaginations of many Americans. Thousands flocked to the town each April to watch a reenactment of the first Revolutionary war battle.

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<sup>153</sup> Newton Chamber of Commerce, “Brightest Spot on the Golden Circle.”

While park rangers and the town historical society ensured that the Green retained its pristine historical authenticity, the town around it did not remain immune from the massive changes to the metropolitan landscape in the middle of the twentieth century. In the decades before World War II, Lexington retained many of the characteristics from its colonial past. Primarily rural with a vibrant agricultural base, the community was also predominately white, affluent and staunchly Republican. Lexington residents had converged on the Battle Green in 1934 to protest New Deal policies that they perceived as both anti-business and infringements on local autonomy. Federally financed programs after 1945, nevertheless, radically changed the demographic and political composition of the community, transforming it from a quaint New England town into a booming postwar suburb.

Lexington's convenient location for those working downtown and along the Route 128 corridor combined with easily available federal loans and the town's historic charm to lure many new residents after World War II. Between 1940 and 1960 the population of Lexington more than doubled, from 13,113 to 27,691. This influx accompanied the construction of new subdivisions on former farmlands as real estate developers transformed the historic community's reputation into a commodity for upwardly mobile white homebuyers to purchase. Daniel Wheeler, vice president of Cabot, Cabot & Forbes, declared that "Lexington's historical address appeals to companies as well as individuals, and is a status for attracting and holding workers."<sup>154</sup> He complained, however, that the limited allotment for commercial development had turned the town into "the hardest address to move into in the Boston area."<sup>155</sup> The attractiveness of Lexington, maintained

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<sup>154</sup> "Lexington, 100% Perfect for Research Development."

<sup>155</sup> "Lexington, 100% Perfect for Research Development."

by strict zoning and historic preservation measures, became another reason that residents cited for opting to settle there and many companies wanted to as well. Longtime resident Nancy Earsy later stated she had moved to Lexington because it was convenient to her husband's job in adjacent Bedford and was "green" and "pretty." Bruce Gordon had grown up nearby and after leaving the Army he and his wife lived in a basement apartment Brookline while he completed Master's Degrees in English Literature and Guidance Counseling. Describing his reason's for selecting Lexington, Gordon stated "when I was a kid in Medford and pedaling through Lexington and looking at the green and so on, I said if I ever settle down anywhere its going to be in Lexington."<sup>156</sup>

Similar to those in Brookline and Newton, many of these upwardly mobile residents selected Lexington because of the quality of its schools. Marion Colletta and her husband selected a house in Lexington in 1950 "because it had a fairly decent school system." Jackie Davisson described that when she and her husband moved in 1954, "There were a lot of young families coming as we did from Boston, wanting to move to a school system that was interesting, challenging and would be worth the move to the suburbs, because we liked the city. So we moved for the children."<sup>157</sup> The school department sought to take advantage of this interest in education as well as the high intellectual caliber of local residents. A teacher launched a program to create a directory of residents willing to speak to classrooms about their jobs. The curriculum subsequently included presentations by bankers, book editors, chemists, geologists, engineers and scientists.<sup>158</sup> The project

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<sup>156</sup> Nancy Earsy Interview, interview conducted by Richard Robbat, July 1, 1991, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed November 11, 2009); Bruce Gordon Interview, interview conducted by Nancy Earsy, August 24, 1992, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed November 11, 2009).

<sup>157</sup> Marion Colletta Interview, interview by Nancy Earsy, November 1, 1993 Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed November 11, 2009); Davisson Interview.

<sup>158</sup> "Education: Experts on Call," *Time*, (September 21, 1959).

punctuated both the nation's increased faith in expert knowledge in the postwar periods and the ways in which Lexington's new population of academics and technology professionals had helped to reshape and enhance established local institutions.

Many of these white-collar younger migrants brought with them a more progressive outlook, altering the political fabric of the community.<sup>159</sup> The increasingly liberal reputation itself became a factor that led many new residents to settle in Lexington. Bonnie Jones theorized, "Lexington has a lot of university connections to Cambridge and Harvard and MIT and professional people who are perhaps a little more on the liberal side of things than maybe some of the other communities. And like-minded folks tend to move into the same communities." Attorney Julian Soshnick described that he decided to settle in Lexington because of the "wall-to-wall Ph.D's, and the doctors and the lawyers."<sup>160</sup> He stated that he and others believed that these professionals made Lexington "a very nice, sensitive, caring community where you could raise a family and deal with intelligent people at all levels of the community." These new and old residents remained deeply committed to preserving and extending the ideals of the Revolution and the physical charm of the town, but fulfilling those twin goals created possibilities and tensions throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

### *Concord*

A Concord natural resource guide proudly boasted: "Concord differs from most towns in that it is a precious national asset."<sup>161</sup> This statement succinctly captured the

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<sup>159</sup> Kollen, *Lexington*, 1.

<sup>160</sup> Julian Soshnick Interview, interview conducted by Nancy Earsy, August 15, 1991, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed November 11, 2009).

<sup>161</sup> Concord Natural Resources Commission, Natural Resources Report, July 1972, Concord Pamphlet Collection, Concord Special Collections, Concord Public Library, Concord, MA (hereafter: "CPC").

town's exceptionalist understanding of itself and its land. Local residents recognized that since Concord represented a "special case" as a "unique piece of national heritage," they had a duty to "sustain both the pride of its residents and the expectations of its visitors."<sup>162</sup> With its gracious colonial homes and pastoral scenery, the town's physical terrain in the postwar period looked much as it had during the battle of the Old North Bridge of the American Revolution and when Louisa May Alcott and her sisters lived in Orchard House in the nineteenth century. Dating back to the era when Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau and their fellow Transcendentalists traipsed through its meadows, rivers, and ponds, Concord had a long tradition of prideful appreciation of and concern for its natural landscape. The community drew both its property and ideological values from these past luminaries. Situated 18 miles outside Boston along Route 2, near Route 128 and adjacent to Lexington the community experienced the same developmental pressures as other postwar suburbs. Following a 1958 survey of the community, the town officially aimed to put into practice residents' desire to preserve the physical appearance of the town, to maintain an excellent school system and to restrict commercial development through very rigid zoning policies. The effort slowed the rate of population growth, reduced the level of socioeconomic diversity, and increased the economic affluence of new residents. Throughout first half of the twentieth century, though overwhelmingly white, Concord had relative socioeconomic balance. The town did contain many wealthy residents, but the median family income was only slightly higher than the average of metropolitan Boston (\$3,250 compared to \$3,042). However, by 1960 the mean had increased to \$8,538 and in 1970 it was \$16,460, and 38 percent of families had an income over \$15,000, which made it one of the most affluent

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<sup>162</sup> Concord Natural Resources Commission, Natural Resources Report.

communities in metropolitan Boston.<sup>163</sup> These new residents were not just more affluent, but more politically liberal, which further altered the town's identity.

The construction of Concord's first planned development played a central role in changing the social and political dynamics of the town. In the late 1940s, MIT economics professor W. Rupert McClurin grew worried about the potential consequences of poorly planned mass suburbanization and decided to develop an "affordable utopia" and "antidote to postwar tract developments like Levittown." He aimed for the project to serve as a model for designing better suburbs establishing a plan for a "clustered development" of reasonable-priced homes in a country setting with proximity to Boston, which would preserve the rural characteristics through low density and substantial common land. McClurin purchased a plot of land along the Sudbury River in Concord and decided to name the development Conantum.<sup>164</sup> In order to make his plan into a reality, McClurin enlisted the help of several fellow MIT faculty members, including architect Carl Koch, an innovator of pre-fabricated building. Koch developed a design for 100 homes on the 200-acre plot experimenting with cost and energy efficient techniques and leaving room for a great amount of open and shared space, large pine trees, and scenic views of the river.<sup>165</sup> McLaurin had sought to create Conantum as a community primarily for academics and executives who worked either at universities in Cambridge and Boston or at firms along the city's outer ring. Thus, he promoted the development by

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<sup>163</sup> Charles M. Haar and Demetrius S. Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia: Public Policy at the Grass Roots* (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1974), 133, 140.

<sup>164</sup> Robert Butman, "The Conantum Saga," 1995, Box 4, Folder 6, KWC; Davis, "Conantum's Search for Utopia." McLaurin did live to see fully the fruits of his labor. He committed suicide in 1959 at a point when it seemed that Conantum was headed toward bankruptcy. The name of the development derived from the Indian word that Henry David Thoreau gave to the area on which it sat.

<sup>165</sup> Karl Koch Interview, interview by Renee Garrelick, August 10, 1992, Concord Oral History Program Collection ([http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin\\_Aids/OralHistories.htm](http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin_Aids/OralHistories.htm), last accessed November 11, 2009).

sending postcards to Harvard and MIT faculty and placing advertisements on the universities' billboards promising not simply "a house" but "a community" just 22 minutes from Harvard Square.<sup>166</sup> At least half the initial homeowners had an affiliation with MIT as either alumni or faculty members and most had a background in science and engineering. The community half jokingly awarded a gold star to men living there with no connection to Harvard, MIT or Lincoln Laboratory. Only fifteen out of a hundred men were eligible.<sup>167</sup>

The deeds on the chalet-like structures included a non-restrictive clause specifying no limit on purchasing a home in the development on the basis of race, national origin, creed or color, which was a novel concept in the early 1950s, especially in Concord which was almost exclusively white and Protestant. Roughly eight Jewish families moved in which increased the Jewish population of Concord more than eightfold.<sup>168</sup> This heavy concentration of academics and handful of Jewish residents were younger and more Democratic than the average Concord citizens, giving Conantum a reputation and identity as a liberal oasis in the traditionally Republican town. "Within the town we were sometimes seen as the radicals, the intruders," Pat Sterling, the wife of a Raytheon engineer and an early Conantum resident, later declared. "Our community of

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<sup>166</sup> "Conantum in Concord," advertisement, c. 1950s, Box 5, Folder 4, KWC.

<sup>167</sup> Carl Koch later recalled in an oral interview that having so many engineers in the initial group of buyers proved to be a "mixed blessing" since they tried to conduct their own tests of the building materials. He remembered one cement driver complaining "that he wasn't going to make another delivery while those damn scientists were poking around (Garrellick, Conantum Neighborhood Oral History)." Engineer represented the most popular profession followed by professor, physicist and architect and boasted having collectively published 33 articles and 33 books (Conantum Questionnaire, Results 1952-1965, 1965, Box 5, Folder 2, KWC).

<sup>168</sup> Leonard Orkin and Nat Arkin Interview, interviewed by Renee Garrellick, December 10, 1998, Concord Oral History Program ([http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin\\_Aids/OralHistories.htm](http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin_Aids/OralHistories.htm), last accessed November 11, 2009); Conantum Neighborhood Oral History.

new PhDs definitely were not the country club set.”<sup>169</sup> Over the course of the postwar period that outsider label began to fade. Many of the Conantum residents became actively involved in local affairs, helping to transform both the ideological bent and political balance of Concord as a whole. The members of the neighborhood were at the forefront of the community’s civil rights efforts, affordable housing drive, and antiwar movement. Indeed, one resident served as the chairman of Eugene McCarthy’s Massachusetts campaign in 1968. Increasingly, Concord came to attract other liberally minded citizens who settled beyond the boundaries of Conantum. While the shift in political identification became a more gradual process in Concord as a whole, by the early 1960s the town had an active civil rights, peace, environmental movements and had enthusiastically joined the METCO program.

### *Lincoln*

On June 13, 1971, the *New York Times* featured a paean to the upper-middle-class suburb of Lincoln. Written by Paul and Susan Brooks, the praise-laden article entitled “A Town With Room for Living” explained how their community had maintained its “rural charm in the face of urban pressure, . . . preserved its open space, and successfully resisted the type of ruthless exploitation that treats land merely as a commodity in the market.”<sup>170</sup> Situated between the more nationally known communities of Lexington and Concord, the 5,000-resident town had preserved most of the meadows, pastures, ponds and old-growth forests that had dominated its landscape since the American Revolution. Dating back to the late nineteenth century when Lincoln had served as the summer retreat for wealthy Bostonians, the community had articulated a celebration of the beauty and distinctiveness

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<sup>169</sup> Garrelick, Conantum Neighborhood Oral History.

<sup>170</sup> Paul and Susan Brooks, “Town With Room for Living.”

of its physical landscape. “The unique character of our town is dependent upon one factor above all others: Open Space,” a 1958 town planning document asserted.<sup>171</sup> The fact that Lincoln’s eastern corner sat at the interchange of Route 128 and Route 2 made its resistance to suburban overdevelopment even more impressive. During the two decades following World War II, Lincoln’s white, upper middle-class citizens adopted a combination of tactics, including large-lot zoning and building codes as well as an ambitious land preservation agenda, to ensure that Lincoln avoided resembling most suburban municipalities. By the time the *Times* article appeared the town had preserved more than a thousand acres of land and received the most government assistance for its agenda of any municipality in the Commonwealth. These efforts had made Lincoln, in the poetic boosterism of the Brooks’, “one of the last green islands in an encroaching sea of urban sprawl.” The residents of Lincoln viewed their community’s success in preserving open space as a model for the nation.<sup>172</sup>

In the postwar period, Lincoln’s opposition to development and large lots increased its desirability for many of metropolitan Boston’s most prominent citizens including architect Walter Gropius and critic Bernard DeVoto, the editors of both the *Boston Globe* and *Christian Science Monitor*, not to mention many Harvard and MIT professors and executives at Route 128 firms.<sup>173</sup> These new residents provided the town with a reputation as a liberal and exceptional community. The combination of its open space agenda, concentration of cultural and social leaders and commitment to liberal causes enabled Lincoln to maintain its sense of distinctiveness and exceptionalism and

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<sup>171</sup> Charles W. Eliot and Planning and Renewal Associates, “Planning for Lincoln Report” December 1, 1958, Box 3, Folder 46, LER.

<sup>172</sup> “Carlisle and Lincoln: Careful...” *Boston Globe*, April 18, 1978.

<sup>173</sup> “Carlisle and Lincoln: Careful...”

offered a means to define itself as different from the average suburb. Residents even viewed themselves as distinct from the residents of towns like Dover, Wellesley and Weston, which were equally wealthy and spacious, but did not have the same tradition of liberal activism.<sup>174</sup> One citizen declared:

“Lincoln is not a typical suburb by any shake of the stick. We get very angry at being lumped with towns like Dover, Sherborn, Wellesley and Weston. We think we are a lot more socially consciously than they are. We think we are a lot more open to new ideas than they are.”<sup>175</sup>

The sense of exceptionalism even enticed suburban critic Robert Woods who lived in Lincoln in the 1950s and 1960s. At the outset of *Suburbia*, Woods avoided accusations of hypocrisy and questions of why he chose “to live in a place I criticize so strongly” by declaring that Lincoln was by no means the typical suburb. “Lincoln is undoubtedly an anachronism,” he disclaimed using a discourse of distinctiveness, “But it is a pleasant and hospitable anachronism and while it exists I am quite happy to indict myself.”<sup>176</sup> The factors that made Lincoln so aesthetically and socially “pleasant,” however, did not just contribute to the town’s exceptionalism, but also factored in the significant rise in both real estate values and average family income after 1945. These escalating prices ensured that Lincoln avoided the labels, physical features, and socioeconomic dimensions of the typical suburb.

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<sup>174</sup> For more about the socioeconomic characteristics of Lincoln in comparison to Dover, Sherborn, Wellesley and Weston in the postwar period see Edel et al, *Shaky Palaces*, 351-358.

<sup>175</sup> “Carlisle and Lincoln: Careful...”

<sup>176</sup> Robert C. Wood, *Suburbia: It’s People and Places* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1959), vii-vii. Wood did move into Boston in the 1970s.

## Massachusetts Political Culture

The migration of white-collar residents and their new forms of socializing and civic engagement led to the reshaping of the political landscape of the Route 128 suburbs and the state of Massachusetts as a whole. Scholars initially predicted that the postwar suburban migration would prove a windfall for the Republican Party at the local and national levels. Writing in 1958, sociologist Robert Wood observed that postwar demographic had produced a Republican “suburban majority” and a severe crisis for the Democratic Party. Dwight Eisenhower’s majority victory in the suburbs of Boston and across the nation forced concerned observers to take seriously the warning of Senator Robert Taft who proudly declared in 1952: “The Democratic Party will never win another national election until it solves the problem of the suburbs.”<sup>177</sup> Many other observers feared that suburbanization would mark the end of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts and perhaps the nation. However, these predictions proved overstated as many of the area’s formerly Republican strongholds increasingly developed into bastions of suburban liberalism.

Kevin Phillips and other observers have often argued that the suburbs of Boston became increasingly Democratic because of the large numbers of white ethnics, especially Catholics, who brought their party loyalties with them when they moved out of the city.<sup>178</sup> This explanation, however, only partially explains the party realignment of the middle-class suburbs of Boston. Political scientist Edgar Litt has contended that in Massachusetts a new generation of suburban residents were the products of the “New Deal and the Fair Deal that provided access for the offspring of immigrants to the

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<sup>177</sup> Wood, *Suburbia*, 139.

<sup>178</sup> For an example of this argument see Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington Publishing House, 1969), 68-82.

professional scientific technical and administrative positions in society” and that also offered them access to suburban residency and at the same time fueled their allegiance to the Democratic Party.<sup>179</sup> Litt’s observation more aptly underscores that the transformation of suburban party allegiances lay more in the contradictory policies and ideals of New Deal Liberalism. Future congressman and Concord resident Chet Atkins similarly observed that in his hometown and in neighboring communities in the 1950s “there were a lot of professors and a lot of people from around the country, a mobility you hadn’t seen before, who were coming in and teaching at MIT, Harvard, Tufts, Boston University who were Democrats...coming out of the whole New Deal experience.”<sup>180</sup>

The actual people who brought about the political realignment of the Route 128 suburbs reflected a broad spectrum of past experiences and ideological convictions. Several leading grassroots liberal activists emerged from backgrounds rooted in the leftist politics of the Popular Front and the Progressive Party of the 1930s and 1940s. Jerome Grossman of Newton who became a leader in peace and liberal politics in the 1960s and 1970s, came from a family that was long active in the state and national Democratic Party.<sup>181</sup> Grossman, nevertheless, described himself as a “maverick” who deviated from his family’s political views following the death of Franklin Roosevelt. A graduate of Brookline High and Harvard, Grossman had begun reading *The Nation* when he was fourteen which he later explained, “gave a political context to my lifelong identification with the deprived” and “distrust of power.” During the 1930s the New Deal’s promotion

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<sup>179</sup> Litt, *Political Cultures*, 20.

<sup>180</sup><sup>180</sup> Chet Atkins Interview, interviewed by Renee Garrellick, November 8, 1993, Concord Oral History Program Collection ([http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin\\_Aids/OralHistories.htm](http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin_Aids/OralHistories.htm), last accessed November 11, 2009).

<sup>181</sup> His father had close ties to storied Boston Mayor John Curley and served as an executive in the Office of Price Administration during the New Deal and was later penal institutions commissioner for the state of Massachusetts and the vice chairman of the state delegation to Democratic national convention in 1948.

of social welfare and organized labor came to further define “his political consciousness.” These convictions steered Grossman to become active in the campaign of Henry Wallace, whom he believed “articulated and updated the Roosevelt vision” and argued against the “militaristic policies” of the Truman administration. “I was like a sailor lost on the sea,” Grossman stated, “until the Progressive Citizens of America (PCA) appeared in 1946 and proclaimed, “Land ho.”<sup>182</sup> Yet after the Wallace campaign fell short, Grossman became increasingly less excited about the party and more involved in the peace and anti-nuclear efforts of the late 1950s.

Brookline resident Phyllis Ryan, who, along with her husband William, became a leader of the fair housing and civil rights movements, was born 1927 to Russian Jewish immigrants and had grown up in Brookline. She first became interested in political activism during college as a member of Students for Henry Wallace, which came to inform her political viewpoints and later forms of grassroots activism. Likewise, several of the women who became leading members of the peace movement had past experience in leftist politics. Alice Aronow and her husband had both been active members of the Progressive Party, and Mary Berger became involved in the Wallace campaign as well as several efforts to counter the Red Scare in the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>183</sup>

Several grassroots activists later described not becoming politically engaged until moving to the suburbs. Lexington resident Marion Colletta, who had grown up in East Boston, always supported Democratic candidates but did not become politically active until she moved to Lexington in the early 1950s when one of her neighbors invited her to

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<sup>182</sup> Jerome Grossman, *Relentless Liberal* (New York: Vantage Press, 1996), 8-21.

<sup>183</sup> See Voice of Women-New England, 30 Years Later: Voice of Women Questionnaires, Box 1, Folder 51, Voice of Women-New England Records, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University.

a meeting of “Volunteers for Stevenson.” Colletta recalled that at the time Lexington was “very Republican” and she joined a group of young women from the community going door-to-door for Stevenson, many of whom had recently graduated from Radcliffe or other elite institutions. “I guess they were kind of surprised to find that we weren’t all dirty and from the slums,” she stated at the reaction of the town’s Republican residents. “I guess they thought only people from the slums were Democrats.”<sup>184</sup> While these volunteers did not lead presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson to victory at the local or state level in 1952 or 1956, their efforts did help many of their neighbors to see the party in a different light. The door-to-door campaigns of the Stevenson forces reached people like Jackie Davison, who was a Republican when she moved to Lexington, but through activities like tennis and the League of Women Voters, she made friends who revised her party allegiance. “It was interesting to meet some Democrats for the first time in my life and learn that they had ideas,” Davison later explained of her Democratic neighbors. “They had the issues that were the most appealing. So I left the ranks of my childhood and became—may not as vicious in some sense as some “born Democrats---but as a “born-again Democrat, I got to be rather enthusiastic.”<sup>185</sup>

Concord real estate developer James Craig, who later became a leader in the affordable housing movement of the late 1960s, also described a political conversion once in the suburbs and inspired by his neighbors. Craig stated that he and wife were “cradle Republican[s],” growing up in Connecticut and Vermont respectively. Craig later said of his wife “I don’t think she’d ever really met a Democrat until we moved to Conantum.” Of the neighborhood, however, he stated, “living here changed our political

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<sup>184</sup> Colletta Interview.

<sup>185</sup> Davison Interview.

views. We became radical Democrats, real McGovernites.”<sup>186</sup> This group of committed activists, nevertheless, only represented a small minority of residents even in the liberal strongholds of Lexington, Concord, Newton, Brookline or Lincoln.

The pro-government, pro-business influence of the high-tech industry ensured that political moderation increasingly defined the political culture of the Route 128 suburbs in the postwar period. In 1962, the *New York Times* sent a reporter to Lexington to examine the ways in which the rise of the high-tech industry was changing national politics. The article highlighted the fact that many of the “nuclear age engineers” creating “new arsenals of space weaponry” worked “in an atmosphere of identification badges and restricted admittance,” making many of the engineers more inclined to support executive privilege and Cold War secrecy.<sup>187</sup> However, several of the Lexington engineers interviewed did express a weariness at the “vacillating foreign policy” that had existed since the end of World War II, and some advocated a more realistic approach to the Cold War than that offered by the federal government during the late 1950s and early 1960s. This moderate pragmatic viewpoint differed from Lisa McGirr’s interpretation of the political ideology of employees in defense-related industries in Orange County. McGirr contends that the fact that many middle-class residents depended on the Cold War for the livelihoods heightened their anticommunism that made them more inclined to a conservative political platform.<sup>188</sup> Even if the products they helped to develop served defense goals, most of the engineers and white collar professionals in the Route 128

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<sup>186</sup> Davis, “Conantum’s Search for Utopia.”

<sup>187</sup> John H. Fenton, “Lexington, Mass Voters Show Wider Interest in the Morals of Politics,” *New York Times*, October 18, 1962.

<sup>188</sup> McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 53-54.

industries had a less direct relationship to the military than their counterparts in Orange County, which perhaps tempered what would have likely been more hawkish views.

The cohort of Lexington engineers interviewed by the *New York Times* railed most vocally not against communists, but, rather, against corruption within the Massachusetts government and the state Democratic Party. Massachusetts had a long tradition of political corruption, but in the 1950s, the state government and the particularly the Democratic Party boasted a long rap sheet of patronage, bribery and other illegal activities which led to high taxes and other forms of inefficiencies.<sup>189</sup> Many of the interviewed new executives in these Cold War-related industries came from out of state and voiced frustration at the high taxes and mismanagement prevalent in the Massachusetts political system. “I was born and raised in Chicago, which is no lily-white political atmosphere, but I am dismayed,” declared a Raytheon engineer in reference to the problem of state-level corruption.<sup>190</sup> Edgar Litt compared the outlook of these professionals to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Progressive movement as they both demonstrated a “commitment to the rational ordering of the environment” and “equal opportunities” based on merit rather than “personalized reward,” which made them not squarely in step with either political party.<sup>191</sup>

Historian and Massachusetts resident James MacGregor Burns defined this group of white-collar suburbanites as “mugwumps,” resuscitating a label from the late nineteenth century political lexicon used to connote the reformist and independent

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<sup>189</sup> See for example, John H. Fenton, “Bay State Agency is Under Inquiry,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1960; Anthony Lewis, “Massachusetts is Aroused by Corruption Scandals,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1961; Anthony Lewis, “Reforms Pressed in Massachusetts,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1961. Political observers placed Massachusetts in the dubious company of Texas and West Virginia in a list of the most “most squalid, corrupt and despicable” states in the country. See, Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1960* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1961), 97.

<sup>190</sup> Fenton, “Lexington, Mass Voters.”

<sup>191</sup> Edgar Litt, *Political Cultures*, 2.

inclinations of a group of white middle class voters from the Northeast.<sup>192</sup> In a 1962 article, Burns explained that these postwar Massachusetts “mugwumps” were “the independents who the P.T.A’s, League of Women Voters, taxpayers’ associations, good government leagues and a multitude of specialized reform groups such as the Civil Liberties Union and civil rights organizations. But they are not to be found in the organization of the two political parties.”<sup>193</sup> Instead he reduced, their priorities to “civil liberties, education, civil rights, urban renewal, conservation and the need for honest and effective government.” Burns stressed that this reform-minded and educated constituency was “neither apathetic nor alienated” but they had “simply taken a long, hard look at both parties and found them inadequate to their political aims.”

The set of convictions and lack of party loyalty adopted by this white collar constituency made the political geography of Massachusetts more complicated and bifurcated than it had been prior to World War II.<sup>194</sup> On the whole, white-collar professionals in the Route 128 suburbs tended to vote in national elections for the Democratic Party, which projected their sense of foreign policy pragmatism and equal opportunities on domestic issues, while in Massachusetts elections they supported the Republican candidates who stressed the importance of government reform and fiscal moderation. This pattern also defined the preferences of many self-identified suburban “Yankee Republicans” who felt increasingly alienated from the national party, which over the course of the postwar period was gradually moving farther geographically

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<sup>192</sup> For more about the “Mugwumps” see Geoffrey T. Blodgett, “The Mind of the Boston Mugwump” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* Vol. 48, No. 4 (March, 1962), 614-634; Gordon S. Wood, “The Massachusetts Mugwumps,” *The New England Quarterly* Vol. 33, No. 4 (December, 1960), 435-451.

<sup>193</sup> Burns, “A Mugwump Runs in Mugwump Territory.”

<sup>194</sup> Robert Wood discusses the difficulties of determining since residents tended to vote differently depending on the type of election, *Suburbia*, 149-153.

southward and westward and ideologically rightward.<sup>195</sup> Moreover, many upwardly mobile suburban residents had traditionally embraced the Republican Party as a marker of an elite status. However, the presence of John F. Kennedy in state and national politics helped make the Democratic Party acceptable to the same group of voters. In 1960 and afterwards, Democratic candidates consistently won the presidential contests in Massachusetts, providing the state with a national reputation as “a great bastion of the Democratic Party.”<sup>196</sup>

These election results, however, did not indicate the “steady retreat” of the Republican Party in Massachusetts and other New England states.<sup>197</sup> Strengthened by its associations with reform and fiscal responsibility and support from moderate suburbanites, the Republicans remained a vibrant force at the state level throughout the postwar period. Moreover, the state Democrats continued to focus on working-class and ethnic minorities and ignored serious outreach to middle-class residents, which hindered the success and power of the Democratic Party in the increasingly suburbanized state.<sup>198</sup> The stance of the state Democrats led many self-identified liberals to maintain similar dualistic voting preferences as their more moderate counterparts. For instance, a 1965 survey of residents in the Conantum neighborhood of Concord, which served as a stronghold of progressive activism throughout the postwar period, revealed that while 60 percent of residents generally voted Democratic and 40 percent Republican in national elections, in state races many residents reversed party affiliations and 30 percent voted

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<sup>195</sup> Kevin Phillips depicts this transformation. Writing in the aftermath of the 1968 presidential election, Phillips argued, “From the peak years of the New Deal, the power of the Northeast within the Republican Party has been declining as the influence of the South has been rising... The Republican Party is no longer the party of the Northeast (*Emerging Republican Majority*, 186).”

<sup>196</sup> Alec Barbrook, *God Save the Commonwealth; an electoral history of Massachusetts* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), 58.

<sup>197</sup> Lockard, *New England State Politics*, 136.

<sup>198</sup> Litt, *Political Cultures*, 2.

Democrat and 70 percent voted Republican.<sup>199</sup> This bifurcated voting tendency reveals that following World War II in Massachusetts, and especially the suburbs of Boston, party and ideology consistently did not collapse into a single straight line.

These voting patterns suggest, nevertheless, that the political, social and physical landscape of Massachusetts looked undoubtedly different by 1960 than they had just fifteen years earlier. The rise of the post-industrial economy and racial and spatial inequality embodied by Route 128, produced tensions not only between both core and periphery as demonstrated in the battles over housing and school desegregation, but also within the various suburbs, conflicts that would come to a head in the fight over passage of the property tax limitation measure Proposition 2 ½ discussed in the final chapter. However, this set of structural, cultural and political changes did establish the foundations for grassroots activism on fair housing, school integration, peace, environmentalism and liberal candidates, which the following chapters explore.

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<sup>199</sup> Conantum Questionnaire, Results 1952-1965.

## Chapter 2: Fair Housing

### Introduction

On August 31, 1963, during the same week as the March on Washington, thirty members of the Boston chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) stormed onto the Lexington Battle Green, the site of the famous “shot heard round the world” and the mythical birthplace of the American Revolution. The protestors challenged the conventional image of civil rights activists. Singing “We Shall Overcome,” the group of predominately white women protestors marched beneath the iconic statue of John Parker, the leader of the Minuteman and a symbol of the suburb’s prominent past. Walking the picket line, they carried homemade signs with messages emblazoned such as “Birthplace of American Liberty??,” “Jim Crow Must Go,” and “Lexington Live Up to Your Name.”<sup>1</sup> The protest intended to draw attention to the case of James Parker, against whom a Lexington real estate agent had allegedly discriminated when the African-American Foreign Service officer sought to rent a cottage in the affluent suburb for himself and his family. Placing its outrage in spatial terms and the cognitive map of Massachusetts distinctiveness, CORE distributed leaflets to curious onlookers declaring: “There is Discrimination in the North! It Exists in Lexington too!”<sup>2</sup>

The protest became front-page news drawing attention to the issue of racial discrimination in the Northern suburbs and the large movement that had emerged to

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah V. Murphey “In Lexington, Pickets Claim Bias on Rental,” *Boston Globe*, September 1, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Lukas, *Common Ground*, 95-99.

combat it. The controversy created embarrassment for a town that had prided itself as a bastion of liberalism. Officials worked to reach a swift conclusion and the Parkers settled into their new home in time to enroll their children in the first day of school.<sup>3</sup> Despite this rapid resolution, the Parker case had wide reaching repercussions within this suburban-based movement that exposed its competing definitions of “fair housing.”

Most historians have been largely dismissive of the white middle-class activists who led the fair housing movement throughout the North and West relegating their activities to a footnote about the naïve and integrationist impulses of northern liberals in the early 1960s. This grassroots movement constituted more than simply a form of white naiveté and deserves serious consideration. In metropolitan Boston the network of white-collar professionals and housewives that first took hold in traditionally liberal Route 128 suburbs like Lexington in the late 1950s came to include 3500 members and 37 chapters by the mid-1960s.<sup>4</sup> Fusing a belief in the racial liberal mission of changing hearts and minds with a commitment to working within the channels of the government, these committees fought to raise tolerance for residential integration among their fellow suburbanites and to help individual African-American families find homes in their communities. They proved most effective at working within the political system to promote and enact policies prohibiting discrimination in housing, thereby ensuring that Massachusetts had the most extensive fair rights laws in the nation by the mid-1960s. While other scholars acknowledge the Massachusetts’ fair housing laws as evidence of the state’s progressive position on civil rights in the postwar period, none have examined

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<sup>3</sup> “Probable Bias Found in Lexington Case,” *The Boston Globe*, September 9, 1963.

<sup>4</sup> Although Boston had the first and largest network, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Seattle and Los Angeles also had substantial movements. See “Grassroots Activities in Housing” Fair Housing Key, Vol. 1 No. 1, July 1963, Lexington Civil Rights Committee Collection, Cary Memorial Library, Lexington, MA (hereafter: “LCRC”).

the role of suburban groups securing the passage of this legislation.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, these groups joined a much broader biracial and metropolitan coalition that fought to assure the state's vanguard position on housing discrimination in the 1960s.

Tracing the evolution of the Massachusetts fair housing movement provides a way to rethink liberal politics and policies surrounding racial equality and housing discrimination in three important ways. First, it offers new insights into both the dialectic relationship between government policy and grassroots social movements surrounding race and housing. Second, it reveals the existence of a form of grassroots politics in these affluent suburbs fighting for housing law that upheld an individualist and class-based vision of racial equality. Finally it contributes to the scholarly project to push the story of civil rights into the North, but expands that framework to reveal the biracial and metropolitan dimensions of those efforts. By examining these issues, the chapter reveals how this movement laid the foundation for many of the major accomplishments and tensions within both the civil rights and liberal coalitions in metropolitan Boston in the 1960s and beyond.

Fair housing activism has been largely neglected in studies of civil rights history and policy. Traditionally when scholars have addressed the issue they focus either on the efforts of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Chicago or on white working- and middle-class resistance to fair housing in Cicero and California.<sup>6</sup> These interpretations fail to

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<sup>5</sup> See for example: Stephen Grant Meyer, *As Long As They Don't Move Next Door: Segregation and Racial Conflict in America's Neighborhoods* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2000); 161; Robert G. Schwemm, *Housing Discrimination: Law and Litigation* (St. Paul, MN: West Group, 2002), 157. Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African-American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 222.

<sup>6</sup> Brian J.L. Berry, *The Open Housing Question: Race and Housing in Chicago 1966-1976* (Cambridge: Ballinger, 1979); James R. Ralph, Jr. *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); On Proposition 14 in California, see Self, *American Babylon*, 167-168.

recognize activities at the grassroots level in the early 1960s and the central role of white middle-class suburbanites in fighting *for* rather than only against fair housing laws. Scholars who have addressed legal and policy efforts to combat discrimination in housing have tended to focus on Washington and the drive that culminated in the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968.<sup>7</sup> Attention to state action is particularly crucial, for understanding both the legislative and grassroots response to the problems of residential segregation in the 1950s and 1960s.

Civil rights advocates recognized the virtual impossibility of influencing the adoption of fair housing laws at the federal level in the 1950s and turned instead to the states where they found much greater success.<sup>8</sup> In fact, by the time Congress passed the 1968 Fair Housing Act, many states, particularly in the North and West, had longstanding and wider-reaching laws restricting residential discrimination. Thomas Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* has created a crucial framework for understanding the interplay between federal housing policies and grassroots actors by exposing the ways in which the very localized issues of property and neighborhood assumed a new political prominence in the postwar period.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, scholars who have adopted this important paradigm have tended to focus on activities either at the national or municipal level and have largely overlooked developments in state government. Bringing developments at the state level into an analysis of the interplay between the government and grassroots movements offers a more complete and dynamic portrait of the laws,

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<sup>7</sup> Charles M. Lamb, *Housing Segregation in Suburban America Since 1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), especially Chapter 2.

<sup>8</sup> Meyer, *As Long As They Don't Live Next Door*, 158.

<sup>9</sup> Sugrue, *Origins*. For works that have refined and extended this framework see Freund, *Colored Property*, Kruse, *White Flight*, Lassiter, *Silent Majority* and Self, *American Babylon*.

policies, and social activism that sought to eradicate racial inequality in housing in the decades after World War II.

Attention to the suburban fair housing movement in metropolitan Boston also complicates many of the traditional interpretations of grassroots homeowner politics and suburban political culture in the postwar period. Scholars have tended to focus on the emergence of a form of reactionary populism among white middle-class suburbanites invested in property values, consumer entitlements and racial segregation that became a key force in both the fracturing of the New Deal Coalition and the success of Republican Party.<sup>10</sup> However, examining the views of members of the fair housing committees reveals that not every suburbanite saw African-Americans as a direct threat to their financial and ideological investment in homeownership. These white middle-class suburbanites along the Route 128 corridor, in fact, deployed their identities as homeowners around the cause of fair and open housing, joining a broader coalition in Massachusetts that bridged racial and spatial boundaries to place the issue at the forefront of the local civil rights agenda in the early 1960s.

These forms of biracial and metropolitan-based activism around the concept of fair housing provide a distinctly different perspective on the battle for racial equality before 1966. Standard narratives of the postwar civil rights movement tend to depict the South as the nation's sole venue of racism and activism, ignoring places like Boston, which had both a small African-American population and an enlightened and progressive reputation.<sup>11</sup> Recent pathbreaking studies of the freedom struggle in the North provide an

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<sup>10</sup> Davis, *City of Quartz*; Kruse, *White Flight*; Lassiter, *Silent Majority*; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Self, *American Babylon*; Sugrue, *Origins*.

<sup>11</sup> For good overviews of this argument see Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," *American Historical Review* 96 (April 1991), 456-471;

essential corrective to the Southern exceptionalism of the civil rights story. They show that groups in the urban centers above the Mason-Dixon line emerged more in response to local economic and political structures of discrimination than to the developments in the South.<sup>12</sup> Examining the fight for fair housing in Boston shows that structural interpretations of racial inequality, did not just suddenly appear in the middle of the decade with Martin Luther King, Jr's march through Chicago and the rise of Black Power, but had been a fundamental feature of civil rights politics throughout the postwar period. In fact, until the middle of the 1960s, housing constituted the central arena of concern most civil rights organizations in the Bay State. Historians of the civil rights saga who have shifted their gaze toward Boston, however, have concentrated almost exclusively on the issue of school desegregation and the infamous busing crisis in the 1970s.<sup>13</sup> By failing to pay closer attention to the housing movement in Massachusetts, earlier accounts obscure a longer and more nuanced history of civil rights activity that bridged both the racial and urban-suburban divides. Applying a metropolitan framework to the study of postwar civil rights and politics underscores the ways in which economic

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Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham, "Foreword" and Jeanne Theoharis, "Introduction" in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), vii-xiii. Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past" *Journal of American History* 91 no. 4 (March 2005), 1233-1263.

<sup>12</sup> See for example Martha Biondi, *To Stand and to Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) Countryman, *Up South*; Theoharis and Woodward, *Freedom North*; Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, ed. *Groundworks: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Sugrue *Sweet Land of Liberty*; Jeanne Theoharis, "Hidden in Plain Sight: The Civil Rights Movement outside the South" in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*.

<sup>13</sup> In her contribution in the *Freedom North* collection, Jeanne Theoharis chastises scholars like J. Anthony Lukas and Ronald Formisano who fail to acknowledge the crucial role of African-American activists in pushing for school desegregation starting in the 1950s. Despite this important point, Theoharis's work reifies the assumption that school desegregation constituted the sole concern of civil rights activists. Jeanne Theoharis, "I'd Rather Go to School in the South: How Boston's School Desegregation Complicates the Civil Rights Paradigm," in *Freedom North*, Theoharis and Woodard, eds, 140-144. See also Jeanne Theoharis, "'They Told Us Our Kids Were Stupid'"; Ruth Batson and the Educational Movement in Boston" in *Groundworks*, Theoharis and Woodard, eds.

structures did not tie these spaces together, but also provided the mechanisms to create coalitions, campaigns and outlooks among residents that both transcended and reified racial and spatial boundaries.<sup>14</sup>

Despite their role at the center of this coalition to abolish residential discrimination, many white suburban activists did not wholly reject a political outlook of middle-class entitlements, market-based individualism, and normative notions of family and gender. The agendas and policies these participants supported remained rooted in a suburban-centered ideology of equal opportunity and gradual integration that ultimately succeeded in helping only handful of primarily middle-class African-American families like the Parkers move into the suburbs. While these results did have symbolic importance, they failed to significantly alter the political, spatial or racial structures of metropolitan Boston. By 1963, many of individuals and groups involved in the campaign recognized the limitations in these types of fair housing law and activism and sought to revise their agenda accordingly. These more urban-minded activists, particularly those in the Congress of Racial Equality and Fair Housing Inc., began moving away from a legal and individualist interpretation of the concept of fair housing and toward a more economic-based approach that emphasized improving the housing conditions of lower income African-Americans. Yet this shift produced divisions within and across metropolitan lines that revealed fundamental differences in how the various members of this coalition interpreted the concepts of fair housing, racial equality and suburban activism. Examining these fissures and tensions ultimately exposes the potential and limits of both the fair housing movement and suburban liberalism to create meaningful solutions to the problem of residential segregation.

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<sup>14</sup> This metropolitan paradigm builds directly on Robert Self, *American Babylon*.

## Good Neighbors

“‘They should have the protection of the law like everybody else,’ Frank said, “...I don’t approve of discriminatory legislation and that’s what the Massachusetts Fair Housing Bill is. It deprives the homeowner of his right to chose. The constitution my dear Irene, tries to guarantee equality of *opportunity*, not equality of status.’

Irene said, “Status and opportunity are inseparable.”

‘Can’t we shut them up?’ Eddie Constantine asked

‘It’s sex for Irene’, Carol told him.’”<sup>15</sup>

This exchange comes from a cocktail party scene in *Couples*, John Updike’s salacious story of marriage and adultery set in the fictionalized suburb of Tarbox north of Boston in 1962. Amidst tennis dates, dinner parties and extramarital escapades, Irene Saltz, wife of an engineer at one the firms along Route 128, tries to recruit the members of her set to join the town’s Fair Housing Committee, but their activity amounts to little more than forms of foreplay and cocktail banter. Though this movement did evolve from a suburban-centered worldview, it was more than simply a byproduct of housewife ennui. The founders possessed a genuine concern about the restrictions that African-Americans confronted in the housing market. Combining the tenets of racial liberalism and market-based individualism, they sought to creating “open access” to suburbs by simultaneously promoting “tolerance” and “interracial understanding” among their neighbors and assisting African-Americans purchase homes in their communities.<sup>16</sup>

The first committee began in Natick in early 1957 after an accountant named Robert Brainerd heard an African-American at his Unitarian Church outline the difficulty and humiliation that his family endured in the quest to obtain housing in Boston’s

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<sup>15</sup> John Updike, *Couples* (New York: Fawcett Books, 1996), 229.

<sup>16</sup> Richard O’Donnell, “How Negroes Fare in the Bay State” Growing Population Needs Homes,” *Boston Globe*, May 23, 1961.

suburban ring. Outraged, Brainerd gathered other local residents to create the Natick Committee on Homes for Minority Groups.<sup>17</sup> By 1960, these types of committees had spread to 18 communities and in 1961 these local committees formed the Greater Boston Federation of Fair Housing Committees in order coordinate activities and create a united front.<sup>18</sup> The creation of the Federation lent the issue of fair housing the structure and legitimacy of an organized movement. The same year, the *Boston Herald* reported that “more than 2000 Massachusetts residents have joined a new grassroots campaign to eradicate racial discrimination—not in distant Alabama but in their own backyard.”<sup>19</sup> The article touted the rise of a cluster of fair housing committees in the archipelago of suburbs of along the Route 128 such as Belmont, Brookline, Concord, Newton, Lexington, Wellesley and Needham. The nascent coalition was led by both liberally minded middle-class professional residents who “decided that they wanted to do more than just ‘feel guilty’” and interpreting residential segregation as community problem sought to convince their fellow neighbors that ‘discrimination is ‘legally and morally’ wrong.”

The scene from *Couples* does accurately portray how the initial leaders of the suburban fair housing movement relied on their social contacts and networks to build the movement by recruiting fellow co-workers, neighbors, school parents and church and synagogue members to join the movement through events such as coffees klatches, cocktail parties and informal individual discussion. The early membership involvement of the committees mirrored the traditional and heteronormative gender roles of postwar

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<sup>17</sup> George Forsythe, “Housing Laws Do They Work?” The Negro in Boston Series reprinted from *the Boston Traveler*, 1962. Box 55, Folder 2231, FH.

<sup>18</sup> Eph Weiss, “Informal Report to the Members of the L.C.R.C.” February 3, 1961, LCRC. Fair Housing Federation of Greater Boston, “Excerpts from Statements of Viewpoint Prepared for the Osgood Hill Conference, October 20-21, 1961” Box 3, Folder 9, Phyllis M. Ryan Papers, Archives and Special Collections Department, Northeastern University (hereafter: “PMR”).

<sup>19</sup> “200 Join Move for Fair Housing in State,” *Boston Sunday Herald*, June 4, 1961.

suburban life. Many married couples got involved together, expanded and even reshaped their traditional gender roles and familial responsibilities.<sup>20</sup> Since many of the men had full-time jobs, women disproportionately formed the backbone and behind-the-scenes-momentum of the movement.<sup>21</sup> Usually college-educated and in their late 20s and 30s, these women extended a long tradition of Northern middle-class female activism dating back to the nineteenth century and the abolition movement, as well as their more recent experiences in organizations like the League of Women Voters. The suburban fair housing movement, however, did not fall in complete symmetry with the “men led, but women organized” paradigm.<sup>22</sup> Women like Phyllis Ryan of Brookline, and Sadelle Sacks of Belmont became leaders at both the local and metropolitan level. Ryan, in fact, later became a major figure in the local civil rights movement, serving as community relations person for the Fair Housing Federation and soon after as the press representative for CORE, the Massachusetts Freedom Movement, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Several men actively contributed to day-to-day activities as well. They included academics, lawyers and business executives who used their knowledge bases and contacts to create the intellectual and institutional infrastructure for the cause. This application of professional expertise would become one of the key and distinguishing features of the fair housing movement specifically and suburban liberalism a whole.

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<sup>20</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*.

<sup>21</sup> Sociologist Rhoda Lois Blumberg has suggested In her study of white mothers in the North who became involved in the civil rights movement, sociologist Rhoda Lois Blumberg has suggested that most of these women “considered their ideological commitments to motherhood and to the cause of racial justice complementary and reinforcing rather than conflicting.” Rhoda Lois Blumberg, “White Mothers as Civil Rights Activists: The Interweave of Family and Movement Roles” in *Women and Social Protest*, Guida West and Rhoda Lois Blumberg, eds (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> See Charles Payne, “‘Men Led, But Women Organized’: Movement Participation in the Mississippi Delta” in *Women and Social Protest*, 156-165.

Religious organizations proved equally important in the formation and infrastructure of this grassroots movement. By the late 1950s, the national leadership of most mainstream dominations had disseminated general statements in support of “open housing,” influencing the imperatives of many congregations in the Boston area.<sup>23</sup> Members and observers usually emphasized the “indigenous,” “spontaneous” and “grassroots” origins of the suburban housing groups, and while these adjectives were not misnomers, external organizations, particularly religious organizations, undoubtedly sped their pace of development.<sup>24</sup> The New England Regional Office of the American Friends Service Committee created a Community Relations Committee in 1958 to work on race relations and housing discrimination in the suburbs. The Friends hired a paid staff to worked with AFSC members living in the suburbs to “spark” interest and worked with other religious leaders at both the local and metropolitan level.<sup>25</sup> One reporter described “religious leaders of all three major faiths” as the “driving force behind” the fair housing movement.<sup>26</sup> Clergy such as Father Thomas Macleod of St. Brigid’s Church in Lexington encouraged their congregations to get involved and in many cases served as the early chairs of the local committees. These clergy also provided both a religious imperative and a language of morality to the cause.<sup>27</sup>

The movement also revealed the clear influence of the notions of racial liberalism described in Gunnar Myrdal’s seminal 1944 work, *An America Dilemma*, and the broader surge of social science literature concerning discrimination in the postwar period. In the

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<sup>23</sup> Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 242.

<sup>24</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Report on Massachusetts: Housing in Boston* (Washington, DC: United States Commission on Civil Rights, December 1963), 31. “Grassroots Activities in Housing” Fair Housing Key; “200 Join Move.”

<sup>25</sup> American Friends Service Committee, New England Regional Office, “Proposal for Long-Range Work on Education Issues in Boston, June, 1975,” Box 34, Folder 1188, FH.

<sup>26</sup> Richard O’Donnell, “Committees on Housing Work for Racial Harmony,” *Boston Globe*, May 24, 1961.

<sup>27</sup> See for instance “Fair Housing,” *The Pilot*, March 3, 1962.

*American Dilemma*, Myrdal presented racism as the product of personal prejudice and moral deficiencies rather than state-sponsored policy. He stressed that racism should be eradicated not through restructuring the market economy and the political system but, rather, through changing the “hearts and minds” of individuals.<sup>28</sup> Embracing this idea, the liberal residents who spearheaded the fair housing movement ascribed to the belief that the clearest way to overcome the problem of racial segregation was by implanting interracial tolerance and understanding in their neighbors.<sup>29</sup> The fair housing movement’s grassroots emphasis on working at the neighborhood level demonstrated their recognition that racial discrimination was not just a Southern problem, but operated in the Northern suburbs as well. However, in their first years of operation most of the members of the organization repeatedly distinguished the purpose of “fair housing” from that of “civil rights” and defined themselves as part of the “Fair Housing Movement” that differed from *the* Civil Rights Movement. This distinction had regional, race and class valences differentiating their cause and movement from African-American activists on streets of the South and Roxbury. The emphasis on “housing practices” simultaneously implied that, unlike the more systemic problems of Southern white supremacy, residential segregation represented the last and only barrier to racial integration and equality. The individualist ideas of Myrdalian theory, therefore, also dovetailed with the consumer-oriented politics of New Deal liberalism and its emphasis on homeownership, encouraging adherents to work within, rather than, to remake the system of capitalism especially the housing market.

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<sup>28</sup> Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 213; Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America’s Conscience*.

<sup>29</sup> “200 Join Move.”

The two main planks of the local committees' agenda bring into sharpest relief the influence of the individualist ideology of postwar social science and liberalism on the fair housing movement. First, the groups aimed to use educational outreach to change the "hearts and minds" of skeptical suburbanites and promote tolerance and understanding within their communities. Recognizing the role that property values played in shaping the political subjectivity of suburban residents, these groups focused most urgently on convincing their fellow residents that a black neighbor did not create real estate value declines. The Brookline Fair Housing Practice Committee (FHPC) published a series of articles in the local newspaper that incorporated information from a variety of academic studies to emphasize that panic selling, not racial integration, caused a decline in property values.<sup>30</sup> These groups also sponsored many talks by a variety of government officials, politicians, community activists and academics including of the leading experts on intergroup relations who were affiliated with area institutions.<sup>31</sup> Several of the groups even tried to suggest that integrated housing would enhance property values in an effort to fuse the priorities of middle-class homeowners with the basic theoretical findings of intergroup relations scholarship.<sup>32</sup> The Newton FHPC did not just present general information, but produced its own. The group conducted a study to prove that black families moving into all-white neighborhoods in Newton did not affect property values. Marshalling the professional resources of the committee, a local sociologist supplied the demographic information, a lawyer offered the real estate analysis and a group of housewives conducted the field research and clerical tasks. Members deemed this

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<sup>30</sup> "Group Works to Dispel Prejudice Fantasy and Fear," *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, March 17, 1960; "Property Values Don't Fall When Negroes Move In," *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, April 7, 1960.

<sup>31</sup> Fair Housing Federation, *Fair Housing News*, January 1962, LCRC.

<sup>32</sup> "200 Join Move for Fair Housing in the State."

collaboration so successful that Morton Rubin, the sociologist, even published a scholarly article in the *Journal of Intergroup Relations* that touted both the importance of research for suburban fair housing committees, and the benefits of enlisting housewives as volunteer research assistants for social scientific study.<sup>33</sup> Research methods aside, this attempt to assuage anxieties of skeptical residents reveals the ways in which the fair housing movement did not challenge, but, rather, worked within the framework of and complimented white residents' investment in the material and ideological privileges of suburban homeownership.

The second component of the local committee's shared agenda, focused on assisting individual African-American families who wanted to move into their various communities. This effort exposed the market-based and individualist ideology shaping many suburbanites' acceptance of racial integration. This line of activity also relied heavily on suburban-centered tactics and contacts. In order to secure "open occupancy" listings, the suburban activists used their personal contacts to gain promises from homeowners and real estate brokers that they would sell homes on a nondiscriminatory basis. The groups also used their informal social networks to encourage homeowners to do the same and even convinced some residents to list their houses directly with their local committee. In addition, the members worked closely with potential African-American buyers or lessees (usually referred by the AFSC), accompanying them to look at available housing options, and serving as advocates, negotiators, and mediators in the purchase or rental process. Some residents devoted long hours and full weekends to helping just one African-American family find housing in their community.

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<sup>33</sup> Morton Rubin, "The Function of Social Research for a Fair Housing Practice Committee," *The Journal of Intergroup Relations*, Vol II, No. 4 (Autumn 1961), 330-331.

The placement activities of the suburban committees produces a disturbing cartography of segregation in metropolitan Boston in the postwar period and reveals just how embedded residential discrimination had become in the physical and social geography of the region. Many of the prospects that enlisted the help of the suburban groups had had protracted struggles finding housing in the suburban Boston, having experienced overt racial prejudice from landlords and tenants. For instance, Samuel Turner, a native of Newton and teacher in its public schools, who had earned the title “Outstanding Young Man in Newton,” found a home in that community only through the assistance of the local committee after a 12-month search.<sup>34</sup> In Belmont, the committee went into action after an African-American Harvard dean’s attempt to move into a particularly exclusive neighborhood in the upper middle-class town created a surge of protest. Committee members worked to change the attitudes of the dean’s new neighbors and reassure them that the presence of the black Ivy Leaguer would not tarnish the prestige of the area or the valuation of its property. They also stressed that dean only wanted to raise his family in a neighborhood “suited to his intellectual and financial position.”<sup>35</sup>

These forms of assistance bring into sharp focus the explicitly classed and suburban-centered dimensions of grassroots fair housing activism.<sup>36</sup> It was no coincidence that the beneficiaries of the committee’s strategies were almost exclusively white-collar professionals and academics who had recently relocated to the Boston area for professional purposes, but reflected middle-class and suburban-centered dimensions

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<sup>34</sup> “200 Join Move.” In another town, a committee invested 400 volunteer hours to find suitable housing for a prospective buyer. George Forsythe, “Housing Laws—Do They Work?”

<sup>35</sup> O’Donnell, “How Negroes Fare in Bay State.”

<sup>36</sup> For more on middle-class blacks motivations for moving into the suburbs see Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 218-219.

of the movement itself. The mission statements of the early groups asserted that their shared purpose was to ensure that “all persons” could “secure homes for their families without restriction based on color, creed or national background.”<sup>37</sup> Many of the groups, nevertheless, qualified “all persons” with designations such as “good character” or even “financially qualified.”<sup>38</sup> These mission statements illustrate the narrow parameters by which many of the activists defined the seemingly broad idea of “fair housing.” The groups frequently adopted the terms and ideas, “equal opportunity” and “freedom of choice,” which constituted common planks of the racial liberal ideology interpreting racial discrimination in terms of individual prejudice not structural inequality.<sup>39</sup>

This therapeutic and individualist viewpoint of racial liberalism exacerbated notions of class discrimination at the heart of the fair housing agenda. This discourse of choice and opportunity also reflected a distinctly white middle-class understanding of racial integration that promoted individual meritocracy and consumer rights and normalized class exclusion as a natural feature of the suburban landscape.<sup>40</sup> In line with the racialized and classed vision of suburban life, the Belmont FHPC exposed a cognitive map of the metropolitan region by affirming its “maintaining and improving the high standards of attractive well-kept homes, fine schools and local enterprises” in Belmont and not creating new “slums and ghettos.”<sup>41</sup> While the group clearly aimed this point at skeptics fearful about their declining property values, their choice of imagery exposed the ways in which this strategy of promoting racial integration rested upon an explicit

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<sup>37</sup> The Natick Committee on Homes for Minority Groups, Flyer, 1957, Box 58, Folder 2519, FH.

<sup>38</sup> “Citizens Groups Look for Fair Housing Practices,” *Newton Villager*, June 26, 1958; Bryant Rollins, “Fair Housing Federation Builds Mounting Enthusiasm in the Area,” *Boston Globe*, February 11, 1962.

<sup>39</sup> Belmont Fair Practices Committee, “An Invitation to Act for Democracy!” 1961, LCRC.

<sup>40</sup> Rollins, “Fair Housing Federation Builds Mounting Enthusiasm in the Area.”

<sup>41</sup> Belmont Fair Practices Committee, “A Invitation to Act on Democracy.”

language and ideology of class exclusivity. Code words like “slums” and “ghettos” also highlighted the movement’s appropriation of social scientific ideas about the pathological consequences of African-American urban life in order to bolster a class-based vision.<sup>42</sup> Jeanne Theoharis has suggested that using the discourse of cultural pathology allowed “northern liberals” to “claim attention to race, while maintaining that the structures of schooling, housing, and jobs in these cities were open and that success was determined “through hard work and abiding by middle-class social norms.”<sup>43</sup> This language, therefore, enabled white suburban supporters of the fair housing movement to inhabit a middle ground from which to express their commitment to a very limited and very class-based view of racial equality.

The movement’s “Good Neighbors for Fair Housing” campaign further underscores the ways in which the movement embodied and promoted notions of suburban racial liberalism and class discrimination. The Brookline committee first launched the door-to-door campaign in the winter of 1962, asking residents to sign a pledge which it defined as “a simple concrete way...to show broad community support for the principle of Fair Housing.”<sup>44</sup> The idea quickly spread to the towns of Arlington, Belmont, Lexington and Wellesley. The three-point contract began with a sweeping articulation of the racial liberal principle “that all people regardless of race, religion, or national origin should have equal opportunity for housing.”<sup>45</sup> Moving to the more concrete, the pledge made the signer promise to rent or sell the property he or she owns

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<sup>42</sup> For more on the postwar social scientific discourse of black pathology see Daryl Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940-1980); Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 214-215.

<sup>43</sup> Theoharis, “Hidden in Plain Sight,” 54.

<sup>44</sup> Brookline Fair Housing Practices Committee, Press Release, No Date, Box 1, Folder 52, PMR.

<sup>45</sup> Brookline Fair Housing Practices Committee, Press Release, No Date.

or manages without regard to race, religion or national origin and to encourage neighbors to join with them to achieve an integrated neighborhood.<sup>46</sup>

Although a promoting seemingly simple promise, the campaign's "Good Neighbor for Fair Housing" poster best illustrates the initiative's complex web of meanings. Drawn by a member of the Brookline committee in stick-figure form, the poster featured two identical single-family homes. In the forefront of the picture two stick-figured men talked while leaning on push mowers, behind them two women spoke to each other from within inside the respective houses and off in the distance (or conceivably the back yard) two small girls held hands. The pair of smiling families exactly mirrored each other except that the artist had colored in the faces of the family on the right to mark their race.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the message of a Lexington Civil Rights Committees flyer to "make possible for every one of Lexington's neighbors to view a prospective neighbor not as a Negro, but as a doctor, engineer, or businessman" could have provided the poster's accompanying text.<sup>48</sup> This image and text shows the ways in which the fair housing groups ascribed to a color-blind ideology of equality anchored in notions of class difference. The poster also illuminates the ways in which both the campaign and suburban-centered movement as a whole rested upon a postwar ideology of the nuclear family and traditional gender roles. The mission statement of many of the groups articulated the common goal of making their communities open to "families" of all races, nationalities and religions and the groups usually referred to the prospective homeowners they aimed to help in terms of familial units. This designation both built upon and reified the family-centered ideology and traditional gender norms of postwar

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<sup>46</sup> Brookline Fair Housing Practices Committee, Press Release, No Date.

<sup>47</sup> "Good Neighbor for Fair Housing," Flier, Box 4, Folder 3, PMR.

<sup>48</sup> Lexington Civil Rights Committee, LCRC Flyer, No Date, LCRC.

suburbia.<sup>49</sup> Yet the visual and rhetorical emphasis on domesticity also implicitly contained the racialized and class-coded message that the fair housing committees did not aim to recruit dangerous and deviant single black “bachelors” into the suburbs, but, rather, safe and stable middle-class families.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the movement and its iconography implicitly suggested that the concept of a “good neighbor” ran in two directions.

The campaign gathered 4000 signatures across five communities in the span of two months and in doing so helped to promote the reputations of these communities as strongholds of liberalism. In Brookline, committee members convinced fourth-fifths of residents canvassed to sign the petition thus boasting what one members characterized as “a better than 80 % batting average.”<sup>51</sup> The 12-week drive of the Lexington Civil Rights Committee (LCRC) had the most favorable response garnering the signatures of 1540 residents.<sup>52</sup> Never losing an opportunity to make an allusion to the town’s historic importance, a local reporter observed that this enthusiastic response proved that the “birthplace of American liberty” continued to be “its most ardent champion.”<sup>53</sup> Once the drive concluded, LCRC members Irene Blum and Dee Zobel conducted an analysis of the basic demographics of the signers broken down by location, gender and profession.<sup>54</sup> The detailed study demonstrated community-wide support for the pledge, but did show a disproportionately high response on certain streets where particularly active committee

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<sup>49</sup> See May *Homeward Bound*. May convincingly shows how in the postwar period governmental pressures, invigorated cultural ideals and Cold War anxieties reinscribed traditional gender roles and normalized marriage and the nuclear family for most white middle-class Americans.

<sup>50</sup> This point is indebted Nayan Shah’s discussion of “respectable domesticity” in *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>51</sup> Fair Housing Federation of Greater Boston, Fair Housing News, January 1962, Box 2, Folder 1, PMR.

<sup>52</sup> The civil rights committee placed advertisement in the Lexington *Minute-Man* with names of the all the residents who signed the Pledge. “The Good Neighbor Pledge,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, May 10, 1962.

<sup>53</sup> “Civil Rights Pledge Here Signed by 1500 Persons,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, May 10, 1962. One resident believed that the pledge actually surpassed the battle on the Lexington Green dubbing the campaign as “the best thing that ever happened to the town.” Irene Blum and Dee Zobel, “Pledge Sidelights,” No Date, LCRC Collection.

<sup>54</sup> Irene Blum and Dee Zobel, “Pledge Sidelights.” They accessed this information using the town directory.

members lived. Using information from the town directory, Blum and Zobel reported that 802 men and 738 women had signed the document representing a spectrum of white-collar vocations. While “housewives” represented more than one-third of the total signers, engineers constituted “the most predominant profession by far,” with teachers, doctors, physicists, chemists, business executives and lab workers following behind.<sup>55</sup> The favorable response from members of the scientific industry directly corroborates the key role of the rise of Route 128 in bolstering the causes fair housing and suburban liberalism.

The “Good Neighbor” initiative received the strong endorsements of the area press. The *Boston Globe* and the *Boston Herald* each featured editorials on the campaign and cited the canvassing as an important effort “to implement basic American principles” and attack the “citadel of prejudice in the North.”<sup>56</sup> The *Globe* observed that the drive proved the “enormous reservoir of good will” in Boston suburbs and showed the ways in which individuals had the power to affect and change public opinion.<sup>57</sup> It also gained strong endorsements from both local and national politicians. U.S. Congressman Lawrence Curtis patriotically proclaimed the Brookline group as acting “in our country’s best interest in seeking to eliminate discrimination in housing” and a few months later Congressman Benjamin Smith read copy of the Lexington committee’s pledge on the House floor.<sup>58</sup> Moving up the levels of the government, the Brookline committee informed President John Kennedy, a native of the town, of their campaign as means to

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<sup>55</sup> Blum and Zobel counted 520 housewives, 120 engineers, 80 teachers, 35 physicians, 30 physicists, 25 chemists, 25 business executives and 12 labor workers (Blum and Zobel, Pledge Sidelights).

<sup>56</sup> “Fair Housing in Greater Boston,” *Boston Globe*, February 19, 1962; “Mortar for Bricks,” *Boston Herald*, March 9, 1962.

<sup>57</sup> “Fair Housing in Greater Boston.”

<sup>58</sup> Letter from Phyllis Ryan to Mr. Manion, No Date, Box 1, Folder 52, PMR; Kennedy eventually signed Executive Order 11063 in November 1962, but it was actually less comprehensive than Massachusetts Fair Housing Practices Act. See Meyer, *As Long As They Don’t Live Next Door*, 166-171.

indirectly pressure him to sign an executive order banning housing discrimination by the federal government. The campaign did not translate into immediate presidential action. Kennedy's Special Assistant on Civil Rights Harris Wofford did, however, praise the committee for "advancing the cause of all Americans" as dubbed the pledge "kind of constructive response that the nation needs."<sup>59</sup>

The "Good Neighbor" campaign ultimately represented one of the high-water marks of the fair housing committee's grassroots activities.<sup>60</sup> The drive highlights the ways in which fair housing represented a grassroots movement at its most literal definition and its wide-ranging support shows that that indifference to issues of race and civil rights among suburbanites was by no means a given. The campaign also embodied the basic tenets of postwar racial liberalism in both its implicit focus on creating equality of opportunity and its confidence that changing the "hearts and minds" of individuals offered the surest route to ending racial discrimination. The effort proved extremely popular largely because it provided a way for residents in these largely affluent communities, even those not formally affiliated with their local fair housing group, to demonstrate their commitment to the cause and to liberalism more broadly.

The limits of this commitment and approach became patently clear, nevertheless, with a story out of Lexington just a few months after the campaign's conclusion. A distressed woman wrote to the LCRC to complain about how her efforts to sell her house to a black family failed after her neighbor, who had signed the pledge, blocked the

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<sup>59</sup> Brookline Fair Housing Practices Committee, Press Release: White House Say Brookline Fair Housing Practices Committee is Advancing the Cause of All Americans," 1962, Box 1 Folder 52, PMR.

<sup>60</sup> Phyllis Ryan, "Report of the Fair Housing Federation Publicity Committee," March 14, 1962. Box 1, Folder 53, PMR.

transaction.<sup>61</sup> This story confirms Sugrue’s observation that in “wealthy suburban circles” in the 1960s “collecting signatures on pro-housing integration petitions proved to be easy,” but “creating integrated housing markets in the suburbs proved to be much harder.”<sup>62</sup> Fair housing activists increasingly came to recognize in order to create meaningful integration it would have to use other means and thereby turned to the formal channels of the law.

### **Fair Housing Law**

The suburban fair housing movement’s advancement of legal and political solutions underscores suburban liberals’ faith in the formal mechanism of the law to eradicate the problems of racial segregation. This effort not only highlights the effectiveness of suburban residents at working within the formal channels of government, but also the ways in which the movement successfully harnessed and applied the professional expertise of its members, especially attorneys, to create laws and policies that upheld their vision of equality. Yet, this effort ultimately reproduced several of the same strengths and weaknesses of the “Good Neighbor” campaign and the fair housing movement’s other projects and therefore provides another lens through which to examine more broadly the ideology and tactics of grassroots liberalism.

The Massachusetts response to the crisis of racial discrimination in housing first emerged in the immediate aftermath of World War II as state officials responded to fears that racism violated the American creed and marked a potential weakness in the arena of

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<sup>61</sup> Mrs. Paul F. Duggan to the L.C.R.C, June 15, 1962, LCRC.

<sup>62</sup> Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 247.

foreign affairs.<sup>63</sup> In 1946, Massachusetts became the third state to create a Fair Employment Practices Commission. The three-member volunteer board had the mandate to recommend legal action, but its “gradualist” process of “conference, conciliation and persuasion” actually served to keep cases of employment discrimination out of the courts.<sup>64</sup> Four years later the state legislature expanded the scope and jurisdiction of the commission to include oversight of discrimination in public housing and public accommodations and changed the agency’s name to Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD).<sup>65</sup> The amplified powers of MCAD solidified Massachusetts’s position at the forefront of the national civil rights battle. But as the decade unfolded, both the agency and local civil rights activists increasingly understood the need to extend the reach of state power beyond only public housing and into the private housing market.

Throughout the 1950s, the local chapters of black-led groups like the NAACP and the Urban League had made the issue of housing, both public and private, central to their effort to create legal remedies to correct spatial and racial segregation.<sup>66</sup> In 1957, the League, the NAACP and the American Jewish Congress sponsored legislation to include publicly financed private housing within the anti-discriminatory laws and the enforcement powers of MCAD. The Fair Housing Practices Law, signed into state law on

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<sup>63</sup> Many scholars have addressed this shift in Federal and State government’s civil rights agenda in the aftermath of World War II. See for example Biondi, *To Stand and to Fight*; Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>64</sup> In *To Stand and Fight*, Martha Biondi shows that in New York, SCAD had a very similar mandate with exactly the same language. She argues that the inclusion of the “conference, conciliation and persuasion” clause was part of compromise to gain Republican support for the bill by included this “gradualist” concept, see Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 100.

<sup>65</sup> Anthony S. Chen, “‘The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas’: Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945,” *Journal of American History* Vol. 92 (March 2006), 1238-64.

<sup>66</sup> For an excellent discussion of the effort of black activism on housing in the 1940s and 1950s, see Max A. Felker-Kantor, “‘Freedom Means a House to Live In’: The Black Struggle for Equal Housing Opportunities in Greater Boston, 1948-1968,” (Honors Thesis, Tufts University, 2006).

June 7, 1957, enlarged MCAD's jurisdiction to include private housing for any person buying or renting a house under Federal Housing Administration (FHA) or Veteran Administration (VA) programs, urban renewal or redevelopments projects.<sup>67</sup> Since almost 80 percent of housing purchased in the state had some assistance from the FHA, the law had bold intentions and constituted a clear effort by the Commonwealth to create accountability for the discriminatory actions of the federal government. However, the legislature did not apply the statute retroactively and MCAD received almost no complaints in its first years of existence because almost no housing in the entire state fell within its jurisdiction. By the late 1950s the Commonwealth had the largest number of anti-discrimination statutes in the nation, but this abundance did not immediately translate into effectiveness. The MCAD commissioners, therefore, looked to form an alliance with suburban fair housing groups to ensure that the effect of the commission and corresponding laws was more substantive than symbolic.

In 1959, members of the burgeoning fair housing committees joined other civil rights groups and MCAD commissioners to form a broad and successful coalition that fought to give the state more aggressive oversight of private housing. These efforts led to a revised statute, signed in the summer of 1959, that significantly expanded MCAD's jurisdiction and enabled the state to once again proudly hold the claim to the title as national leader "in the quality and quantity of its civil rights legislation on housing."<sup>68</sup> Since MCAD lacked the resources to launch a publicity campaign to alert the public of its expanded capacities, the fair housing groups took up the task. Committee members

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<sup>67</sup> Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Thirteenth Annual Report of Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, December 1, 1957 to November 30, 1958. New York, New Jersey, Oregon and Washington also had laws banning discrimination in the sale, lease or rental of private housing accommodations which were publicly assisted.

<sup>68</sup> MCAD, Thirteenth Annual Report.

marshaled existing public relations contacts and communication networks to disseminate information about the law. These activists wrote articles for the local newspapers, placed cards on cars in various suburban town centers and distributed colorfully illustrated pamphlets throughout their communities.<sup>69</sup> They also contacted local real estate agencies and landlords to ensure that they understood the revised statute and promised to act in compliance with it.<sup>70</sup>

The local fair housing committees also played a crucial role in the MCAD hearing process, supplying many of the discrimination cases that came before the Commission after 1959. Suburban activists in contact with many victims of racial discrimination through the movement's placement activities and committee members often encouraged prospective buyers or renters to file charges and then helped them navigate the multi-step hearing process. The effectiveness of the local committees to both encourage compliance and supply cases, nevertheless, became circumscribed by the fact that the expanded laws did not cover the majority of housing stock in places like Newton and Wellesley that had the most active fair housing groups. The expanded law only covered about 15 percent of housing in the state and in 180 of Massachusetts' 351 cities or towns all homeowners could lawfully discriminate if they owned conventionally financed homes.<sup>71</sup> The committees in these areas instead sought to work with local realtors to obtain "compliance with the spirit of the law."<sup>72</sup> This promise sounded symbolically significant,

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<sup>69</sup> Minutes of Meeting May 13, 1960, Box 3, Folder 28, Papers of Mildred H. Mahoney, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University (hereafter: "MHM"); Fair Housing Federation, "Knock on Any Door," No Date, LCRC.

<sup>70</sup> Minutes of Meeting May 13, 1960,

<sup>71</sup> Governor Endicott Peabody, "Statement to Group at the Signing of Senate Bill 350," No Date, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Records of Edward Lampiere, Box 3, State Archives of Massachusetts.

<sup>72</sup> Minutes of Meeting, October 30, 1959, Box 3, Folder 28, MHM.

but it underscored the limitations of the purportedly landmark legislation in actually eliminating housing discrimination in the Bay State and particularly in its suburbs.

By 1960, MCAD muted its initial enthusiasm for the private housing law.<sup>73</sup> In addition to the fact that it only covered apartments and new single-family developments, MCAD quickly recognized the housing market usually moved faster than the processes of administrative agencies. In many cases by the time the Commission made a finding of the existence of discrimination, the property in question had already been rented or sold. The Federation, therefore, joined with members of other organizations, including CORE, the NAACP, and Americans for Democratic Action and the American Civil Liberties Union, to sponsor revised legislation that would allow MCAD to apply for an injunction restraining the landlord or agent from action on the property in cases where a preliminary investigation showed probable cause of discrimination.<sup>74</sup> The various suburban housing committees launched a letter-writing campaign and staged organized visits to the State House to pressure representatives.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, twenty-two members of the local fair housing committees testified at the Judiciary Committee hearings, using personal anecdotes to demand the broadening of MCAD's jurisdiction.<sup>76</sup> These contributions exposed specific ways that suburban residents could help influence legal and change and the Federation would increasingly rely on and refine these strategies in the following years. When the law had passed in the spring of 1961, State Representative Sumner Kaplan of Brookline publicly credited the fair housing committees "for educating our

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<sup>73</sup> Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Sixteenth Annual Report of Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, December 1, 1959 to November 30, 1960.

<sup>74</sup> Greater Boston Federation of Fair Housing Practices Committees, Press Release, March 19, 1961, Box 1, Folder 53, PMR.

<sup>75</sup> Greater Boston Federation of Fair Housing Practices Committees, Press Release, June 15, 1961, Box 1, Folder 53, PMR.

<sup>76</sup> Greater Boston Federation of Fair Housing Practices Committees, Press Release, March 19, 1961; Brookline Fair Housing Practices Committee, Press Release, March 13, 1961, Box 1, Folder 53, PMR.

otherwise indifferent legislators to the importance of this vital piece of legislation.”<sup>77</sup>

William Ryan observed the committees had contributed to the “climate of opinion” among Massachusetts politicians in which they were “required to damn discrimination with as much fervor as a Minnesota politician is required to damn margarine.”<sup>78</sup> The lobbying activities also brought the Federation into closer physical and ideological collaboration and conflict with other civil rights organizations like CORE trying to eliminate residential discrimination in metropolitan Boston.

## **CORE**

In the fall of 1958, at the same moment that the fair housing committees in Boston held their first coffee klatches, quintessential postwar liberal Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. responded to an inquiry from James Robinson of the national chapter of CORE about the possibility of opening a chapter of the organization in the Bay State. The Harvard historian and future Kennedy staffer, citing the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and the suburban housing committees, answered, “While conditions are far from perfect here, I would suppose that CORE activities might be more urgently needed in other parts of the country.”<sup>79</sup> While Schlesinger’s reply represents one strand of postwar Northern white liberal thinking about race, the individuals who opted to ignore his counsel represent another. The group’s mission to draw attention to issues of spatial inequality and enforce the implementation of fair housing laws put it at the center of most cases of residential discrimination in the Boston area. The experiences and

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<sup>77</sup> “200 Join Move.”

<sup>78</sup> Letter from Bill and Phyllis Ryan to Mr. Davis, February 7, 1962, Box 2, Folder 4, PMR.

<sup>79</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. to James R. Robinson, October 7, 1958. Reel 21, Folder 55, The papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, Microform, Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1980 (hereafter: “CORE”).

activities of CORE's Boston chapter, therefore, provide an important piece of the narrative of the civil rights struggle around housing as well as the development of grassroots liberal activism in Massachusetts in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

A group of Cambridge residents had initially contacted the national office of CORE in the spring of 1958 about the possibility of reviving the area's long dormant chapter. Perplexed by reports of discrimination against blacks home seekers in their community, these residents believed that CORE's biracial and nonviolent philosophy would provide the best means to confront these problems. CORE Field Secretary Gordon Carey shared their view that the housing problem in Boston appeared "particularly suitable to the member-participation, direct-action approach of CORE" and tried to assist with the formation of the chapter.<sup>80</sup> The first meeting, held in December 1958, attracted 17 participants, who largely mirrored racial, class and political affiliations of the members of the suburban fair housing committees. The founding members of Boston CORE also shared with their suburban counterparts both a commitment to the broad ideals of equality and the vision of an integrated society. The group had hoped achieve these expansive goals by focusing their energy on housing discrimination within Cambridge, particularly in the area encircling the Harvard campus by running tests with "bona fide" tenants.<sup>81</sup> They had difficulty, however, finding people who sought their services and began to look for alternative arenas to apply their energy and activism.

During their early planning, the founding members considered that Boston CORE might be effective "assisting suburban committees which are working against discrimination in housing" and sought to create contact with the grassroots fair housing

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<sup>80</sup> Gordon R. Carey to Lloyd Hugh Magbie, November 3, 1958, Reel 21, Folder 55, CORE,

<sup>81</sup> "Report on Housing-Greater Boston CORE," June 1959, Reel 21, Folder 55, CORE.

committees.<sup>82</sup> Yet CORE found these relationships difficult to forge. Reporting to the national office in June of 1959, the local leadership of CORE acknowledged that “avoiding misunderstood duplication of effort with some of the mushrooming community-wide fair housing committees in the Boston suburbs” had created an area of “major concern” for the local chapter.<sup>83</sup> Boston CORE reported that the groups seemed “somewhat distrustful of them” and sought advice from the national office on how to navigate “successful relationships.” Even though the fair housing committees might have felt a sense of encroachment on their turf, CORE recognized key differences in their viewpoint and philosophy. Most of the suburban groups understood the issue of housing as the movement’s first and foremost function, even if they had different opinions about exactly what it meant. CORE on the other hand nevertheless self-consciously avoided “think[ing] of itself as a ‘housing committee’” and inverted the fair housing group’s model to see itself as committed to the civil rights-inflected goal of racial equality which they sought to achieve through means of challenging residential segregation.<sup>84</sup> CORE also rarely invoked the concept of “fair housing” and instead committed to the slightly more specified issue of “housing discrimination.” While these differences initially appeared slight, as the effort to combat residential discrimination intensified they took on increasing significance. Despite these ideological divergences, CORE’s early activities did closely correspond and overlap with those of the suburban movement. In 1959, CORE joined the local committees in the fight for the passage of the Fair Housing Law.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Henry R. Mack to James R. Robinson, September 12, 1958,” Reel 21, Folder 55, CORE.

<sup>83</sup> “Report on Housing-Greater Boston CORE,” June 1959.

<sup>84</sup> CORE, Projects, No Date, Reel 21, Folder 55, CORE.

<sup>85</sup> Their campaign borrowed many of the techniques of New York’s CORE chapter, which had headed a similar effort for the passage of that state’s fair housing laws in 1957. Jim Peck “Cracking the Color Line,” 1959, Reel 49, CORE. In order to work for the passage of the fair housing law, the groups sponsored a series of coffees where non-whites told stories of discrimination and CORE members incorporated these

After the law's enactment, CORE joined the fair housing committees in the task of disseminating information about the under-publicized act. While fair housing committees performed this service throughout the suburbs, CORE focused on the urban areas, distributing 5,000 leaflets in predominately black neighborhoods. The pamphlet outlined both the meaning of the law against discrimination as well as the free services that CORE offered to apartment and house hunters.

Supplementing its effort to influence legal change, CORE also began to develop strategies that would challenge individual discriminatory practices while at same time drawing attention to the larger cause. These activities resembled some of the work of the suburban housing committees, but assumed more of a direct-action approach and style. Boston's chapter pioneered a formula of testing realtors by sending in white teams to apply for the same unit denied to an African-American family. Once they established the existence of clear discriminatory practices, members sought to negotiate with the developer or owner to seek fair treatment, and if these efforts failed, they then filed formal charges with MCAD.<sup>86</sup> This technique provided a relatively simple way of determining whether black and white families received equal treatment. It also proved a form of activism where white middle-class volunteers could be particularly effective. In the summer of 1959, CORE launched its inaugural test on the VA after the federal organization's local housing office turned down the request of an African-American had tried to buy one of its ranch houses for his family. Boston's CORE sent one black and one white family to inquire separately about single-family houses in the VA's suburban

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case histories into testimony at the legislative hearings. Greater Boston CORE, "CORE Techniques in Housing," October 25, 1959, Reel 21, Folder 55, CORE; "CORE Helps Pass Fair Housing Law," *CORE-Lator*, No. 76 (Spring 1959).

<sup>86</sup> "CORE Techniques in Housing, Greater Boston CORE," No Date, Reel 21, Folder 55, CORE.

developments. The VA staff told of the many option available to the white family while offered none to the black family, which, helped CORE establish a “clear pattern of discrimination.”<sup>87</sup>

During the next year CORE continued to develop these tactics, coordinating more than 50 cases of racial testing in apartment buildings and new housing developments throughout the metropolitan area. In the summer of 1960, the organization staged its boldest project. Ulysses Marshall, a black electrical contractor, asserted the Woodvale development in Danvers repeatedly discriminated against him over a two-year period and eventually decided to file a complaint with MCAD. Marshall’s lawyer Edward Barshak contacted the Greater Boston CORE to provide further evidence for the case using its testing and direct action techniques. During two tests real estate agents at the large suburban housing development literally ran away from the black testers trying to obtain applications. In response, CORE members staged a series of sit-ins in one of the model homes, which successfully shut down the developer’s business activities for multiple days.<sup>88</sup> Returning to the site, ten CORE members picketed the Woodvale office with provocative messages like “Democracy Begins at Home” and slyly inverting the development’s sylvan name: “Woodvale Tries to be Whitevale.”<sup>89</sup> These theatrical tactics gained national press attention, which along with evidence from the tests, motivated MCAD to take action. The Commission issued a cease-and-desist order in which it found Woodvale’s builders and owners guilty of discrimination.<sup>90</sup> The activities, therefore,

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<sup>87</sup> “CORE action on V.A. Housing, Boston,” Summer, 1959, Reel 21, Folder 55 CORE. CORE opted not to make a formal complaint to the MCAD and instead met with officials who promised to look into it.

<sup>88</sup> Jean Mann to Marvin Rich, July 17, 1960, Reel 21, Folder 55, CORE.

<sup>89</sup> To National Council Meeting, February 1961, Lexington Kentucky from Greater Boston C.O.R.E., Reel 21, Folder 55, CORE.

<sup>90</sup> MCAD Annual Report, 1960.

proved the effectiveness of direct-action not only to shape public opinion, but also to ensure compliance with the legal process.

The successful strategies of testing and pickets further distinguished CORE from other local civil rights organizations, especially the suburban fair housing activists. While both groups sought to challenge discriminatory practices and create integrated housing in the suburbs, they did not just develop diverging tactics, but also covered different geographies. Many of CORE's projects occurred in middle-class communities like Danvers and Waltham that lacked active fair housing communities. The reason that CORE's activity centered around these particular places was less to fill in the gaps in FHPC's activities, but, rather, because these communities contained the type of housing that fell under the jurisdiction of the 1959 law. As discussed in the previous chapter, more affluent communities like Lexington and Newton by contrast had used zoning ordinance to construct the kind of multi-family and mass-produced housing covered by the law.

The chapter not only became a leader in combating housing discrimination in the Boston area, but also among other CORE affiliates. By 1961, Boston surpassed New York as the most active and effective chapter in the arena of housing and earned the notice and praise of the parent office. Executive Secretary James Robinson lauded the Woodvale situation as the "first really different thing which CORE has done in the field of housing."<sup>91</sup> And James Farmer, the eminent national chairman, suggested the housing tactics of the Boston chapter provided a valuable blueprint for how to get roots in local communities and establish "viable" groups in the North.<sup>92</sup> The chapter's strategies for

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<sup>91</sup> James R. Robinson to Richard D. Mann, August 5, 1960, Reel 21, Folder 50, CORE.

<sup>92</sup> Housing Workshop Minutes, April 23, 1961, Reel 46, Folder 499, CORE.

combating discrimination became a model for other affiliates to emulate and the national leadership sponsored a week-long Summer Institute in Boston 1961 which attracted 19 participants from 12 groups across the country to learn techniques for challenging racial discrimination in the North based on the twin ideals of open access and direct action.

Despite this attention, the Boston CORE chapter suffered from what Anne Harkless diagnosed as “the great handicap of isolation,” especially from the city’s black community.<sup>93</sup> The leaders of the primarily white group complained about “not being well rooted in our own Boston area.”<sup>94</sup> Many of the African-Americans whom CORE had helped combat individual housing discrimination had joined the organization, just as many of the individuals whom the FHPCs assisted had become members of those committees. Yet these additions amounted to “token integration, ” and the CORE chapter searched for ways to cultivate connections across racial, class, and spatial divides.<sup>95</sup> Capturing the sentiment of much of the membership, Anne Harkless asserted that CORE should be a “living example of racial equality, and this means being thoroughly integrated.”<sup>96</sup> The group, therefore, decided in 1961 to shift the location of its weekly meetings from the American Friends Meeting House on historic Brattle Street in Cambridge to Freedom House, a social service agency in Roxbury. The change of

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<sup>93</sup> Anne Harkless, “Some Personal Reflection on Boston CORE in Housing, 1961,” Reel 46, Folder 499, CORE. The Boston chapter also felt isolated from the national organization. The combination of Greensboro sit-ins and the Freedom Rides in the early 1960s had placed CORE’s southern activism at the center of the national media spotlight. The Boston chapter endorsed these activities, staging several sympathy marches outside local bus stations and dime and department stores, but the group sought to avoid serving as merely an appendage to the southern movement. CORE’s local leadership, however, struggled to define its relationship with the larger movement, feeling that their emphasis on housing and techniques departed from the work of the national organization and as the racial composition of the national leadership changed, Boston members felt increasingly out of step with their parent group.

<sup>94</sup> Harkless, “Some Personal Reflection on Boston CORE in Housing, 1961.”

<sup>95</sup> Harkless, “Some Personal Reflection on Boston CORE in Housing, 1961.”

<sup>96</sup> Harkless, “Some Personal Reflection on Boston CORE in Housing, 1961,” Reel 46, Folder 499, CORE.

location offered the group a new presence in and proximity to Boston's urban black population.

### **Coalition Building**

In its effort to further alleviate its sense of isolation, CORE also began to work more closely with other organizations in the Boston area concerned about the problems of residential discrimination. CORE members joined with representatives from a wide spectrum of social justice groups, such as Americans for Democratic Action, the Jewish Labor Committee and the Fair Housing Federation, to create in 1962 the Massachusetts Committee Against Discrimination in Housing.<sup>97</sup> Adopting a broad definition of "fair housing" and "housing discrimination," the group promoted the two-fold goal of open non-segregated communities and increasing the supply of low and middle-income housing throughout the state.<sup>98</sup> They used the New York Committee on Discrimination in Housing and the National Committee on Discrimination as models and sought not to usurp the authority or autonomy of any of 14 organizations involved. Rather, by "coordinating, and supplementing, the legislative, research and educational activities of affiliated groups," it provided them with a means to share information and to take

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<sup>97</sup> Letter from the Organizing Committee of the Massachusetts Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, June 1, 1962. Box 1 Folder "Committee on Discrimination in Housing" Records of Massachusetts Chapter of Americans for Democratic Action, Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter: "ADA"). The 14 founding groups of MCDH were Action for Interracial Understanding, Americans for Democratic Action, American Friends Service Committee, American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, American Veterans' Committee, Anti-Defamation League, Boston Ethical Society, Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, Congress on Racial Equality, Fair Housing Federation of Greater Boston, Grass Roots Housing Council of Cambridge, Jewish Labor Committee, Mass. AFL-CIO, Civil Rights Committee, NAACP, National Assoc. of Social Workers, St. Mark's Social Center. Mass. Bay District Unitarian Universalist Churches, United Auto Workers, AFL-CIO, United Packinghouse Workers of America, AFL-CIO," Members of the MASSACHUSETTS COMMITTEE ON DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING," Box 4, Folder 9, PMR.

<sup>98</sup> MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL ON DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING (in formation), April 24, 1962, Box 1 Folder: Committee on Discrimination in Housing, ADA.

cooperative and collective action.<sup>99</sup> The Housing Advisory Research Committee represented the most concrete and effective way that the MCDH achieved these goals. Helen Kistin, a member of the Newton Fair Housing Practices Committee and the Fair Housing Federation, chaired the subcommittee that consisted of local university faculty and professionals in urban planning. These academics and professionals generated to research, data, and reports the problems of housing for the affiliated groups. The establishment of the MCDH and its broad-based membership reveals not only the ways in which housing discrimination operated at the forefront of the local civil rights struggle in the 1960s but also the collectivity and reach of the movement around it.

The 1962 legal case *Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination v. Colangelo*, which successfully upheld the constitutionality of the Massachusetts fair housing statutes, clearly demonstrates the unity of this coalition, its effectiveness at creating change through legal means, and its commitment to adopting individualist solutions to structural problems.<sup>100</sup> In 1960, a Maurice Fowler, a single African-American member of the Air Force, sought a “garden-type” apartment at the Glenmeadow development in Waltham, but real estate developer A.J. Colangelo turned him down on the basis of his “bachelor status.”<sup>101</sup> Fowler’s lawyer Edward Barshak, a member of the Brookline Fair Housing Practices Committee, contacted CORE, which discovered that many white “bachelors” lived at Glenmeadow and the owner also offered apartments to two white CORE testers. This fact pattern almost duplicated that of the Woodvale case

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<sup>99</sup> “Housing Discrimination in Massachusetts” prepared by Housing Advisory Research Committee of the MCDH as a statement to the public meeting of the Housing Subcommittee, Massachusetts Advisory Committee of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, March 5, 1963 by Helen Kistin Box 4, Folder 13, PMR.

<sup>100</sup> *Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination v. Colangelo*, 344 Mass. 387 (1962).

<sup>101</sup> To National Council Meeting, February 1961, Lexington Kentucky from Greater Boston C.O.R.E., Reel 21, Folder 55, CORE.

demonstrating the similarities, in the types of residential discrimination that occurred in Greater Boston and the cases that CORE pursued. As with Ulysses Marshall, Barshak on behalf of Fowler filed a complaint with MCAD and at the final hearing CORE presented overwhelming testimony and evidence which convinced the Commission not just to rule in Fowler's favor, but to require that the real estate developer pay damages. After a series of appeals, Colangelo and the rental agent appealed the state Supreme Judicial Court to challenge MCAD's order and the constitutionality of the 1959 law on the grounds that they had been denied due process, protection of private property, and the freedom of association.

The case attracted the attention and participation of many members of the fair housing movement who saw it as the ideal opportunity both to apply their professional knowledge to their social activism and to test the constitutionality of the state's housing. Harvard Law School professor Albert Sacks, whose wife Sadelle Sacks was a leader in the Federation and the Belmont FHPC, along with assistant Attorney General Gerald Berlin, represented MCAD and together wrote the Brief for the Petitioner.<sup>102</sup> The Fair Housing Federation also officially joined with the American Jewish Congress, the NAACP and four other civil liberties and religious group to submit a joint *Amici Curae* brief written chiefly by Laurence S. Locke and Norman Landstrom, two of the central figures in the Federation. Covering a wide range of issues, the petitioners and amici briefs combined structural evidence and broad appeals into a convincing and nuanced argument about the need for legal action in the area of housing.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Fair Housing Federation, Fair Housing News, January 1962, Box 2, Folder 1, PMR.

<sup>103</sup> The arguments of the briefs complemented each other and made such persuasive arguments about both the problems and roots of housing discrimination that the Jewish Community Council would later make

The briefs transcended arcane legal technicalities and case law and instead offered a sweeping argument that drew on a wide range historical, political, foreign policy and social science research to prove that housing served as the basis for all other forms of institutionalized racism. The petitioners and amici relied most heavily upon a report officially entitled “Statistical Study of Housing Discrimination Against Negroes in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts” by Helen Kistin presented in the appendix to the state’s brief. The addition of the study to the brief illustrates the ways in which the housing movement both produced and depended upon expert interpretation of data. In this remarkable study that included 34 pages of text and 19 tables, Helen Kistin of the MCDH drew upon twenty years of census data to illustrate the problem of residential segregation in stark statistical terms. Her report showed that spatial segregation had increased between 1950 and 1960 and that the majority of black families in Boston lived in substandard housing for which they paid disproportionately high rents. The study and briefs together create a stark portrait of economic, spatial, demographic upheaval of the 1950s, which, as Landstrom and Locke stressed had made the Boston area a “dramatic” example of “the national trend towards development of a central city with its ‘black core’ in a ring of ‘lily-white suburbs.’”<sup>104</sup>

Despite this careful attention to the dynamics of structural racism, these lawyers still couched their respective and collective arguments in the racially liberal language of individual rights and moral wrongs. Reflecting their commitment to the basic tenets of racial liberal ideology, the petitioners emphasized the psychological damage of racial

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them both available for sale to the various Fair Housing Practices Committees Robert E. Segal to Chairman, Fair Housing Practices Committees, January 24, 1962, LCRC.

<sup>104</sup> *Commission Against Discrimination v. A.J. Colangelo et al.* the Brief Amici Curiae, Box 4, Folder 60, PMR.

discrimination on its victims. In an emotional appeal that borrowed directly from both Gunnar Myrdal and the *Brown* decision, Sacks and Berlin contended that housing discrimination had “ramifications beyond bricks and mortar and beyond not just the hearts and minds of men of all races and nationalities, and to their modes of living together in one society.”<sup>105</sup> Moving from the most inward effects to the most outward, both briefs fused a language of Massachusetts distinctiveness with that of Cold War anxieties. They noted that Boston served as the “the seat of world-renowned universities and hospitals” attracting “visitors from all over the world” many of whom “were colored.” They warned that failing to “protect the dignity of our foreign guests” when they sought housing would not only tarnish the state’s reputation as the cradle of liberty, but also impede “our country’s position in the global struggle for men’s minds” especially within the newly formed Asian and African countries “whose friendship and support we need.”<sup>106</sup>

On May 16, 1962, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in a 6-1 decision upheld both the Commission Against Discrimination’s initial decision and the 1959 Fair Housing Law.<sup>107</sup> For the activists committed to the cause of fair housing the successful outcome of the case validated their efforts and reinforced the ways in which grassroots actors and activity could use the law to create meaningful change.<sup>108</sup> The *Colangelo* decision made Massachusetts the only state with a constitutionally upheld statute prohibiting discrimination in private housing and provided an important local and national precedent. *Colangelo* also created the legal basis and political climate for

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<sup>105</sup> Petitioners brief.

<sup>106</sup> *Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination v. A.J. Colangelo et al.* the Brief Amici Curiae.

<sup>107</sup> *Mass. Comm'n Against Discrimination v. Colangelo*, 344 Mass. 387(1962).

<sup>108</sup> “Precedent-Setting Decision,” *CORE-lator*, No. 62 (June 1962).

MCAD to propose a bill to expand the parameters of the existing Fair Housing Law to cover all private property. In the spring of 1963, with little opposition the Massachusetts legislature passed a new act that outlawed discrimination in the sale or rental of all private housing, with the sole-exception of a two-apartment house if the owner occupies one of the apartments as his or her home. The new statute corrected the major weakness of the earlier laws increasing the amount of coverage from 15 to over 90 percent of all housing in Massachusetts. The revised law restored the state's claim to have the strongest anti-discrimination laws in the nation. Many observers quickly inserted the new statute into the narrative of Massachusetts exceptionalism. Governor Endicott Peabody appropriated the legislation into a progressive image of his own administration and the state as whole.<sup>109</sup> Using a language of degree which constituted a central element of this discourse, the governor stated, "We realize full well that every indignity practiced openly in the South is practiced to a lesser degree here in Massachusetts," but he urged Bay State residents to continue to serve as a model and beacon for "our brothers of both colors in the South."<sup>110</sup>

### **"Lexington Live Up to Your Name"**

With a new law and coalition to match, the fair housing cause appeared by all accounts to be at a high point in the summer of 1963. However, James Parker's case against the Lexington real estate agent was one of the first cases filed with MCAD under the new law and revealed the limitations of this seemingly new strength and exposed the deep-rooted fissures within the individual groups and the movement as whole. On August

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<sup>109</sup> Governor Endicott Peabody, "Statement to Group at the Signing of Senate Bill 350," No Date Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Records of Edward Lampiere, Box 3, Massachusetts State Archives.

<sup>110</sup> Peabody, "Statement to Group at the Signing of Senate Bill 350."

27 1963, Parker and his wife Odessa had gone to Lexington in response to an advertisement for a cottage for rent.<sup>111</sup> When they arrived for the showing, the owner Mark Moore, Jr., a prominent local real estate developer, whose advertisements in the local newspaper promised homes “for the discriminating buyer” without a hint of irony, expressed visible surprise. Using the excuse that another couple had already put an offer on the cottage, Moore told Parkers that the house was not available. Frustrated, the Parkers boarded a plane back to Washington.

The previous spring members of the LCRC had learned the strategies of racial testing pioneered by CORE and when Barbara Petschek, who along with her astronomer husband was very active in the suburban civil rights group, learned of the Moore and Parker interaction, she recognized that it offered an ideal chance to experiment with these new skills.<sup>112</sup> Along with fellow member Julian Soshnick, a state assistant attorney general, she contacted the developer posing as interested buyers. After Moore informed them that they could move in on September first, Soshnick revealed his true identity and interrogated Moore on his discriminatory rejection of the Parkers.<sup>113</sup> The next day Soshnick filed an official complaint on behalf of Parker with the MCAD and simultaneously the Foreign Service officer contacted the Boston Chapter of CORE and alerted it of his case. CORE immediately announced that it would stage a demonstration on the Lexington Battle Green that Saturday morning as means to draw attention to Parker’s case and promote compliance with the Fair Housing Law.

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<sup>111</sup> Parker, who had previously served in Liberia, Algeria, and Spain, was about to begin a year at the African Studies Program at Boston University (Murphey, “In Lexington”).

<sup>112</sup> “LCRC Affidavit,” *Lexington Minute-man*, September 12, 1963. Moore apparently explained that he had “nothing against them,” but couching his defense in the purportedly colorblind logic of the market, he confided that he had \$400,000 invested in a prospective subdivision on the same property and feared that if he rented “to a Negro,” he would lose his money.

<sup>113</sup> “LCRC Affidavit.”

CORE's picketing in Lexington duplicated the strategies of non-violent direct action that the group had skillfully deployed in its previous housing protests around Boston's metropolitan region. Since the older anti-discrimination statutes had not covered the majority of housing in these towns, the Lexington situation, nevertheless, signified the first time the group had brought its tactics into one of Boston's more affluent suburbs. In another key departure, instead of staging the rally outside the offending developer's office as they had done in other instances, they chose the location of the Battle Green, appropriating the site's symbolic and historic associations with freedom, equality and democracy. The placards that CORE members carried made explicit references to the town's revolutionary tradition with such as read "Birthplace of American Liberty??" And "Lexington Live up to your Name," thereby simultaneously invoking and questioning the community's reputation. Recognizing that the victim coincidentally shared his last name with the Minuteman cast in iron under which they marched, one sign asked: "If John Parker could live here, why can't Jim Parker?"<sup>114</sup> This question brought into clear focus the convergence of traditions that the protest appropriated and contested.

The widespread media attention that the demonstration received captured some of the multifaceted meanings of the protest. The *Boston Globe* made the picketing front page news and a picture of the in the prominent above-the-fold location. Above the caption "Peaceful Protest Beside Minuteman Statue" the photograph depicted two white women in the foreground walking side by side holding a sign that read "Jim Crow Must Go" with the Minuteman statue hovering in the immediate background.<sup>115</sup> The image brought both the spatial and gendered meanings of the protest into sharp focus. As with

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<sup>114</sup> Lukas, *Common Ground*, 98.

<sup>115</sup> Murphey, "In Lexington."

most of CORE's activities, white middle-class women comprised the majority of the protestors on the Green. As they marched along the Lexington Green's edge on that late summer morning, most of the women wore modest dresses or skirts, dress shoes and coiffed hair. This projection of middle-class respectability and femininity did not occur accidentally, but rather, served as part of a purposely-coded presentation that assured onlookers that these white middle class women were non-threatening and innocent. CORE had crafted a detailed list of picketing rules that required "neat dress" preventing women from wearing "slacks or shorts" and outlawed disrespectful activities like smoking as means to assure the "effectiveness of the project."<sup>116</sup> Some of the female protestors pushed baby carriages and others had small children in tow, which marked their roles and responsibilities as mothers and drew on the strong political and social associations of motherhood.<sup>117</sup> This careful performance illuminates the ways in which many of the female picketers did not seek to transgress but rather refashion and strategically deploy their traditional gender roles and racial and class standing in order to gain sympathy and support for their cause.<sup>118</sup>

The press couched coverage of the Parker family in the discourses of middle-class respectability and domestic ideals as well. The *Globe* depicted James Parker as a World War II veteran, civil servant and devoted father. By noting that his wife had served as president of the American Women's Club in Barcelona and the stellar academic record of their children, the paper emphasized the ways in which the Parker family upheld the

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<sup>116</sup> "C.O.R.E. Picketing Rules" No Date, Reel 47, Folder 516, CORE.

<sup>117</sup> Annelise Orleck, "Introduction" in *The Politics of Motherhood: Activist Voices from Left to Right*, Alexis Jetter, Annelise Orleck and Diana Taylor, eds. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 6.

<sup>118</sup> Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 137.

normative ideals of the postwar nuclear family.<sup>119</sup> Through this portrait, the Parker family served as the ideal poster children for the fair housing movement's colorblind and class-specific appeals.<sup>120</sup> In newspaper interviews, James Parker's comments upheld and even reified the fair housing movement's implicit image of what a "good neighbor" looked like. Parker presented himself as an apolitical concerned parent who desired to move into because of the "town's reputation for having an outstanding school system."<sup>121</sup> Revealing his own class biases, he stated that he would not move to Massachusetts at all if he had to live in Roxbury and send his children to the Boston Public Schools. Parker also relied on his out-of-state, expatriate status as a means to profess innocence to the realities of American racial and class structures. He explained, "We've been away for so long that I was not psychologically prepared for it. If I had been assigned to the Deep South and this had happened, it wouldn't have been such a shock."<sup>122</sup> Parker's statements both challenged the sense that the racial discrimination and segregation merely constituted Southern problems and complicated the racial and moral geography of the Northern middle-class imaginary. Like the CORE protester's use of the Jim Crow analogy, these comments reflected both a critique and invocation of Massachusetts exceptionalism. Noting that he was "surprised that the incident had happened in New England," Parker amplified that regional difference by an appeal to a sense of Northern morality and social consciousness.<sup>123</sup> His perspective both upheld and challenged the notions that the Bay State was more tolerant and enlightened than the Deep South.

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<sup>119</sup> Murphey, "In Lexington."

<sup>120</sup> For the open housing movement's effort of finding "ideal pioneers" especially in the famous attempt to integrate Levittown see Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 223-228.

<sup>121</sup> Murphey, "In Lexington."

<sup>122</sup> Murphey, "In Lexington."

<sup>123</sup> Murphey, "In Lexington."

The press and other observers also focused extensively on Parker's Foreign Service career to amplify a sense of moral outrage. In the postwar period, the federal government had gone to great lengths to promote worldwide the U.S. reputation for racial progress and the case was a potential embarrassment to this agenda. Like the briefs in the *Colangelo* case, the repeated allusions to Parker's career suggested that Lexington had not just tarnished its own reputation, but had hindered the larger global war against Communism. CORE also did not fail to recognize the importance of Parker's military and foreign service experience. In a follow-up protest at the Battle Green a few days later, a picketer carried the provocative sign that read, "Mr. Parker as a Negro has defended us but he can't live here."<sup>124</sup>

The very public nature of the Parker controversy, coupled with political pressure at both the state and local level, led MCAD to schedule an expedited conciliation session.<sup>125</sup> The Commission found "probable cause of discrimination" by Moore and the Parkers quickly settled into their new home.<sup>126</sup> Despite this unusually rapid resolution, the Parker case had wide-reaching repercussions within the Boston fair housing community, calling into question the very meanings and functions of the cause. The first round of tensions emerged when a delegation of LCRC members returned from a trip to the March on Washington and urged CORE not to protest. When the civil rights activists ignored these pleas, some members of the LCRC issued sharp barbs in town and Boston area newspapers. Father Thomas MacLeod, serving as the organization's official spokesman, provided the most biting critique of CORE's actions. MacLeod's statement

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<sup>124</sup> "Pickets Again."

<sup>125</sup> High ranking State Department officials had was preparing a letter of protest about the case to Governor Peabody. Lukas, *Common Ground*, 98-99.

<sup>126</sup> "Probable Bias Found in Lexington Case."

sought to dismiss the demonstration by charging that it violated the principles of non-violent direct action. “I am in complete sympathy with the sit-ins in the South where they demonstrate against laws which are both immoral and unconstitutional,” he explained, “but I deplore the actions of CORE...in this instance and disassociate myself with their methodology.”<sup>127</sup> By offering his support for the sit-ins while critiquing CORE, the priest upheld a spatial and racial geography and logic that privileged racism and protest in the Deep South and marginalized and negated instances of discrimination and activism in the suburban North. The LCRC board eventually released a public statement declaring that it was “in agreement with the objectives of CORE...and recognizes that a variety of approaches should work in harmony toward a common goal” and later expressed “the desirability of close and friendly communication with civil rights organizations in this region.”<sup>128</sup> Yet the initial responses heightened longstanding tensions between CORE and the suburban committees.

CORE intentionally avoided making any public statements against the LCRC. In two confidential memos to the Lexington group written a few months after the situation’s resolution, however, CORE chairman Alan Gartner dubbed the behavior of these members “objectionable and irresponsible.”<sup>129</sup> He contended that the public’s lasting impression of the incident would focus not on Mark Moore’s discriminatory actions, but on the conflict between the groups, which he called “a loss for us all.”<sup>130</sup> In an effort to move beyond the schism, Gartner “unequivocally” declared that CORE and the LCRC should take away from the incident the lesson that “internicene (sic) warfare among the

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<sup>127</sup> “More Picketing.”

<sup>128</sup> Greater Boston Fair Housing Federation, Fair Housing Key, September 1963, LCRC.

<sup>129</sup> Alan Gartner to Elizabeth Pitman, No Date, LCRC.

<sup>130</sup> Alan Gartner to Mrs. Donald Smith, November 27, 1963, LCRC.

civil rights groups leads to no gains for civil rights and indeed only to satisfaction to it's opponents. ” He voiced a desire to continue to cooperate with the LCRC, but bitingly declared, “We cannot accept a “States rights”” concept of local sovereignty.”<sup>131</sup> In spite of its obligatory homage to conciliation, Gartner’s memo further reflected the conflicting definitions of the causes of fair housing and civil rights, which would come to take the activists of CORE and the leadership of the suburban group in increasingly divergent directions.

### **Divergent Directions**

The Parker protest had occurred at a moment of organizational and ideological transition for Boston CORE. Soon after the Parker incident the chapter moved its office permanently to Roxbury. The new location in a storefront on Blue Hill Avenue significantly expanded its black membership base and lent it more legitimacy as a civil rights organization.<sup>132</sup> Simultaneously, CORE also widened its areas of concern into employment and education.<sup>133</sup> While housing discrimination remained the group’s central focus, the members began to revise their definition and activities in that arena, moving away from a commitment to the principles of open occupancy and compliance of fair housing legislation. CORE members gradually recognized that the organization’s efforts to alleviate residential discrimination by encouraging compliance with the law

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<sup>131</sup> Alan Gartner to Mrs. Donald Smith, November 27, 1963, LCRC.

<sup>132</sup> While the number of black members in Boston’s CORE did rise considerably in 1963 and 1964, the group did maintain a slightly white majority. Boston was also last local affiliate to have a white chairman, August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 305, 290.

<sup>133</sup> The chapter initiated a successful campaign to urge area banks and department stores to hire more minorities for white-collar positions, see National Shawmut Bank of Boston, News Release, October 1, 1963, Reel 41, Folder 358, CORE; “CORE Fights Job Discrimination” CORE-spondent, September 30, 1963, Box 2, Folder 16, PMR, Boston Committee on Racial Equality, Press Release, June 11, 1963, CORE, Reel 21, Folder 55; See also Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 237-238, 248-249.

mainly helped a small handful middle-class blacks, like James Parker, Maurice Fowler and Ulysses Marshall, to gain access to white suburban communities. The parameters of Massachusetts fair housing statutes had partially circumscribed the reach of CORE's activism. Despite their expansive language of freedom of choice and equal opportunity, these laws themselves only really addressed the concerns of a small cohort and the vast majority of the state's African-American population and their housing problems fell outside the laws' jurisdiction. By late 1963, CORE, therefore, realized the patent limitations of the legal and ideological concept of fair housing to creating residential and racial equality. While the group did participate in a few more cases to promote compliance, most notably a nine-week picket of a Dorchester realtor's office, these activities became a secondary piece of its housing strategy.

Instead, CORE redirected its energy and activism towards actions to improve housing conditions within Boston. The move to Roxbury altered the group's angle of vision and brought members in close contact with the severity of the city's housing crisis. Almost immediately upon setting up its new office the group launched a campaign "to remedy housing blight."<sup>134</sup> Between 1964 and 1965, CORE sent inspection teams into buildings to canvass for health and safety violations, staged a successful month-long rent strike to force landlords to make necessary repairs, organized pickets of tenants to protest the suburban homes of landlords, led the press and local and state politicians on walking tours of Roxbury's housing stock and pressured city officials to intensify enforcement of building codes.<sup>135</sup> Many of their tactics mirrored the group's earlier suburban strategies applied to a new setting and issue. These activities reveal, nevertheless, how CORE had

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<sup>134</sup> "CORE, NAACP Join Forces to Combat Housing Blight," *CORE-spondent*. December 3, 1963 Vol. 1 No. 5.

<sup>135</sup> Congress of Racial Equality, "One Year of Promise," No Date Box 2, Folder 27. PMR.

transitioned away from a vision of fair housing and spatial equality that privileged racial integration and move towards an approach that emphasized community empowerment and control. This shift in attention placed the group in closer concert with the needs of Boston's black population, but it made the possibility of meaningful collaboration with the suburban fair housing groups increasingly remote.

The controversy in Lexington also had important implications about the placement activities of the Federation and its individualist and middle-class approach to reducing racial and spatial segregation. In the first years of operation, the majority of the suburban groups received placement referrals from the regional office of the American Friends Service Committee. The Friends maintained a clearinghouse at their Cambridge office that contained the lists of available housing and contact information of the various FHPC's for prospective minority buyers to peruse. In the spring of 1961, the AFSC decide to discontinue the service and officially transferred the program lists to the Federation. Upon assuming these new responsibilities, the suburban activists became shocked to learn that most of the urban black population of Boston had never heard of the fair housing committees and those who did know of their existence remained skeptical that these groups could actually help them.<sup>136</sup> As a means of creating a stronger overall presence within the black community, the Federation board decided to open a separate organization called Fair Housing, Inc. (FHI) in a 10-by-10 foot office in a corner of the lobby at Freedom House.<sup>137</sup> Saddle Sacks of Belmont assumed the post of executive director and oversaw as group of largely female volunteers from the various local

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<sup>136</sup> Robert W. Morgan, Jr. "Some Thoughts about the usefulness of a Federation office in Boston, based on my first two weeks of work at the Temporary Federation, June 19, 1961," Box 2, Folder 2, PMR.

<sup>137</sup> Forsythe, "Housing Laws—Do They Work?"

committees who spoke with prospective families, putting them in contact with the various suburban committees with available housing listings.

FHI focused primarily on working with the suburban committees to assist prospective nonwhite buyers and sellers. Like the committees who relied upon its services, FHI devoted a great deal of energy and resources to helping individual African-American middle-class families. Between 1961 and 1963, the organization had only secured housing placements for slightly more than one hundred people spread out among various suburbs. A map of Boston in FHI's annual report, which used little Monopoly-style houses to mark locations where the organization had made successful placements, punctuates the breadth, but lack of depth of its efforts.<sup>138</sup> In fact, its reports frequently cited Lexington as a success story because the very active committee there had boosted the number of nonwhite families in the town to just over 40.<sup>139</sup> The FHI board and staff acknowledged the symbolic importance of its placements in reducing racial animosity within Boston's white suburban ring, but they grew increasingly disillusioned and discouraged with the ability of these methods to reduce racial and residential inequality across metropolitan boundaries.

FHI's leaders, therefore, decided to expand the definition of "Fair Housing" in their name to mean more than simply equal rights in the suburbs. The organization's mission, like the concept of "fair housing" more generally, rested upon the problematic assumption that all blacks wanted to live in the suburbs. The organization never succeeded in creating a massive exodus out of Boston because the number of African-Americans, who wanted to move into suburban areas and could afford it actually

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<sup>138</sup> Fair Housing, Inc. "Annual Housing Report April 1962-March 1963," LCRC.

<sup>139</sup> Fair Housing, Inc. "Annual Housing Report Sept. 1963-Aug. 1964," Box 3, Folder 12, PMR.

represented a very small minority of the city's black population. FHI, therefore, suffered from a spatial mismatch between its urban-based potential clients and its suburban-centered services. The majority of people who sought out assistance from FHI fell into the low-income bracket and for these prospective clients not just suburban homeownership, but homeownership in general, remained elusive. In an effort to convince African-Americans to move beyond Roxbury, the group touted the "success stories" of black families that had moved to the suburbs and staged meetings where they could describe their own experiences.<sup>140</sup> Yet it had little effect. While FHI had long lists of single-family houses in the Boston area available to nonwhite buyers, these homes usually fell within the relatively unaffordable \$18,000 to 20,000 price range. And, the areas like Lexington or Wellesley most "open" to residential integration also had rigid zoning ordinances, which meant that they had no apartments available for rent or lease. These communities also had a surplus of volunteers willing to help black buyers by accompanying them on home tours and serving as key negotiators with the owners and neighbors. The organization, nevertheless, encountered far more difficulty replicating these services in urban areas. As Sacks conceded "The grass roots movement has never secured a foothold in city."<sup>141</sup> Despite the Federation's repeated acknowledgement of needing to create chapters within Boston's city limits, only the affluent predominately white neighborhoods of Back-Bay and Beacon-Hill ever established committees. The inability of the Federation to set up a fair housing committee in Roxbury further confirms

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<sup>140</sup> Saddle Sacks, "An Open Door to Integrated Housing in Metropolitan Boston" 1966, Box 55 Folder 2230, FH.

<sup>141</sup> Fair Housing, Inc. "Annual Housing Report Sept. 1963-Aug. 1964," Box 3, Folder 12, PMR.

the racialized and classed dimensions of the movement and its definition of fair housing.<sup>142</sup>

Acknowledging this set of problems, Sacks announced in the fall of 1963 that “our major area of concentration must be in the low-income housing field.”<sup>143</sup> Coinciding with the Lexington controversy, the staff of FHI began to try to replicate the services of the local committees for these potential clients within Boston and even used the same guide that they had developed for suburban housing aides. These efforts proved extremely difficult, in part because the largely white middle-class female volunteers lacked similar personal connections and contacts they had cultivated in the suburbs. More significantly, however, the organization shared CORE’s discovery of the extreme shortage of adequate low-cost rental housing within the city of Boston, particularly for families with more than 2 or 3 children, who represented the majority of the agency’s clientele. This search narrowed even further since, unlike CORE, FHI remained committed to the goal of integrated housing and thereby consciously avoided segregated or racially transitional neighborhoods. FHI had earlier fulfilled this commitment to “integration” by placing prospective occupants in predominantly white suburbs. But, this solution proved unworkable because most African-Americans refused to move to white neighborhoods such as South Boston or Charlestown that fell within their price range because of their reputations for racial hostility.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Rep. Royal L. Bolling statement, Fair Housing Key, July 1963, LCRC; Sadelle Sacks, Memorandum Subject: Boston-an Open City (the organization of a Boston Fair Housing Committee)” July 29, 1964, Box 6, Folder 217, Muriel and Otto Snowden Papers, Archives and Special Collections Department, Northeastern University.

<sup>143</sup> Fair Housing, Inc. “Semi-Annual Report on Housing,” October 1963, Box 3, Folder 6, PMR.

<sup>144</sup> In the 1963 Annual Report, Sacks noted that FHI had tried to organize white people who do support integrate housing in Boston and encourage the group to initiate a good neighbor pledge program in these neighborhoods to show to African-Americans that they could count on some “friendly support in a new and

Exacerbating the dilemma, the majority of families, who sought housing in the few units that fell within the parameters of FHI's criteria, experienced overt discrimination from landlords. In keeping with the well-established practices of the suburban committees, FHI sought to counter these discriminatory practices by urging compliance with the law. Between September 1963 and August 1964, the staff assisted 49 families draw up and file formal complaints with the MCAD. Yet few of these cases yielded positive outcomes and in many instances the complainants came to feel that "they, rather than the respondents, were being investigated for wrongful acts."<sup>145</sup> These experiences convinced the FHI staff of MCAD's ineptitude and they decided that they could no longer rely solely on state law to ensure adequate and non-prejudiced housing options for their clients.<sup>146</sup> In the fall of 1963, the organization received a federal grant from the Housing and Home Finance Agency to help families who experienced "the effects of discrimination at its worst."<sup>147</sup> The FHI determined that decent housing even in a segregated neighborhood constituted the first step in the overall campaign to end racial discrimination in housing. By 1966 FHI had organized a separate program for poverty-level families with emergency needs. This new project exemplified the ways in which the FHI had come to interpret the meaning of "fair housing" and racial discrimination in economic rather than legal terms and in doing so further distanced and estranged its agenda from that of its suburban colleagues.

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strange neighborhoods." Fair Housing, Inc. "Annual Housing Report Sept. 1963-Aug. 1964." Box 3, Folder 12, PMR.

<sup>145</sup> Fair Housing, Inc. "Annual Housing Report Sept. 1963-Aug. 1964."

<sup>146</sup> Massachusetts Freedom Movement et al. "Permission to Discriminate: An Evaluation of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination," October 1964. Box 4, PMR.

<sup>147</sup> Sadelle Sacks, "An Open Door to Integrated Housing in Metropolitan Boston" 1966. Box 55 Folder 2230, FH.

## **From Fair Housing to Civil Rights**

If the effects of the Parker incident created a symbolic turning point for CORE and FHI, it had a far more tangible impact on the LCRC. The organization, like many of its counterparts throughout the Boston suburbs, continued to grow rapidly. The Lexington group had nearly a thousand members by 1966, and even included as one member facetiously noted “a liberal (pun intended) sprinkling of Negroes.”<sup>148</sup> The committee’s effective membership recruitment strategies coupled with the increased national attention to the civil rights movement, fueled this steady expansion. The majority of these members, nevertheless, maintained a nominal commitment limited to paying the \$5 annual dues and receiving a copy of the monthly newsletter.

Within the group’s small active leadership, however, “a series of internal squabbles” ensued. These tensions revealed that just as there existed a range of definitions of fair housing among the larger Boston social activist community, a spectrum of conflicting interpretations operated at even the most local level. LCRC member B.W. White summarized the viewpoints of the two main factions in an internally circulated paper. He dubbed the first group the “lets increase the pressure” camp, consisting primarily of people like MIT physicist David Riener and Astrid Haussler, an activist in the Fair Housing Federation, who believed “the primary function of the Committee should be to identify with the Negro minority and give it every assistance and assurance in maintaining and increasing its pressure for equal status.” Their opponents, whom White called the “lets lower the resistance” group, interpreted the role of movement as

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<sup>148</sup> Astrid Haussler to David Riener, July 9, 1964, LCRC.

“reducing the resistance of the White community.”<sup>149</sup> This camp included Frances and Charles Weiser and Father MacLoed, who had fiercely criticized CORE’s demonstration. These members favored non-threatening activities like sponsoring speeches, neighborhood coffees and good neighbor pledges. Yet instances such as the Parker-Moore controversy had exposed the limits of this style of outreach in actually combating residential discrimination. Critics like Haussler believed that these benign strategies smacked of moderation and “go-slowism.”<sup>150</sup> The “pressure reducers” also believed the LCRC should focus its energies exclusively on Lexington rather than extending its reach to include the metropolitan region as whole. White, himself, adhered to this line of thought and suggested that the LCRC’s physical and ideological position in the suburbs made it “uniquely qualified” to address the specific issue of white resistance to civil rights than more urban-centered organizations like CORE and the NAACP. Advocating a division of labor across spatial and racial lines, White and others made a case that the LCRC’s “suburban middle class” position could “be much more effective in the “role of resistance relaxer than of pressure increaser.”<sup>151</sup> In his “thought piece” White suggested that Lexington residents whose outlook and aims aligned with CORE or the NAACP should definitely go help them, but discouraged the entire suburban committee from doing so. A few of the more active members of the Lexington group took up White’s counsel. In the subsequent months, some either completely renounced their membership in the LCRC, or instead increasingly focused organizational attention on CORE and the Fair Housing Federation rather than on the suburban committee.

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<sup>149</sup> B.W. White, “Thoughts on the Role of a Civil Rights Organization in a Middle Class Suburb,” No Date, LCRC.

<sup>150</sup> Haussler to Riener.

<sup>151</sup> White, “Thoughts on the Role of a Civil Rights Organization in a Middle Class Suburb.”

While these tensions magnified the clear divisions in their outlooks, both sides still operated under the political and social rubric of postwar liberalism. The participants on both sides of the debate defined themselves as “white liberals” and even Astrid Haussler conceded that her adversaries were not “arch-conservatives,” telling a fellow member that she “didn’t think they were political conservatives—just moral ones.”<sup>152</sup> The debate reveals that fundamental differences underpinned the liberal coalition even at the most seemingly homogenous and localized level. The discord, moreover, reached beyond different understandings of civil rights activism to the realm of power struggles and personality conflicts between the LCRC’s leadership. In a particularly colorful and candid 1964 letter to Dave Reiner, Haussler described one member as a “petulant Pekinese,” another as not “the smartest person in the world” and compared Charles Weiser to the punchline of a joke involving the immobility and idiocracy of the leadership of the Republican party.<sup>153</sup> Calling a recent meeting “a travesty of common sense,” Haussler complained, “It’s hard on the nerves and the digestion to be eternally embroiled in quarreling with such grim and humorless people. It takes all the fun and challenge out of working for civil rights.”<sup>154</sup> It seemed that the personal had come to impede the effectiveness of the political.

The tensions set off by the controversy became most pronounced in Lexington but represented “the growing pains” of many of the other local committees between 1963 and 1965.<sup>155</sup> Indeed, the Federation experienced a similar set of tensions as its local chapters.

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<sup>152</sup>B.W. White, “Thoughts”; Haussler to Riener.

<sup>153</sup> Haussler said that Wieser reminded her of a scene from a recent Art Buchwald column where he had developed a scenario where “Nixon, Lodge, Ike Scranton & Rockefeller are all out on a lake in small boat; as they talk, Dick surreptitiously drops an anchor overboard—and then stands up and exhorts the others to ‘Row! Row! Row!’” See Haussler to Riener.

<sup>154</sup> Haussler to Riener; LCRC Housing Subcommittee—Dec. Meeting,” 1964, LCRC.

<sup>155</sup> Lexington Civil Rights Committee, Report of the General Meeting, October 21, 1963, LCRC.

In October 1963, just after the CORE-LCRC controversy, the group hosted a conference to discuss its future. The dialogue centered around whether the group should continue its focus exclusively on the issues of serving the housing needs of minorities in the suburbs, or given the “era of terrifically increased civil rights agitation by Negroes,” should it take a much more expansive interpretation of its mission.<sup>156</sup> The “polarized” viewpoints of the participants represented a macrocosm of the ongoing debate in Lexington. At the conference, Father MacLeod recapitulated his comments from the LCRC executive meetings and called for a continued division of labor within metropolitan Boston’s civil rights community. He stated that just as “Negro leadership” sought to represent its base, so too did the Federation have a “similar obligation” to serve “according to the conscience and desire of its own membership” and to keep open occupancy as its primary focus.<sup>157</sup> Members like Franklin Jackson of Burlington, however, suggested that the movement not only expand its purview beyond the suburbs into the entire metropolitan region, but also that it acknowledge that housing operated as but one node in a matrix of inextricably intertwined issues including those of employment and education. The African-American engineer warned that if the Federation did not accept responsibility for all these inter-connected areas it would “fall behind the movement for rights.”<sup>158</sup> Although Jackson and MacLeod shared the ultimate goal of racial integration, their comments reveal patently different interpretations of what they envisioned as means to that end. The conference participants, ultimately, decided to strike a happy medium between these two viewpoints and resolved that housing should remain the foremost

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<sup>156</sup> Greater Boston Fair Housing Federation, Fair Housing Key, September 1963, LCRC.

<sup>157</sup> Fair Housing Key, November 1963, Governor Peabody Subject Files, Administrative Records, Civil rights Folder, Massachusetts State Archives.

<sup>158</sup> Fair Housing Key, November 1963.

concern of the Federation, but elected to increase both its attention to other forms of discrimination and its collaboration with other rights groups in the metropolitan region. In order to reflect this revised agenda and strategy, the delegates also voted to officially change the name of the organization to the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights. The decision to add the “Equal Rights” marked an effort to keep with “the trend among fair housing groups to bring their committee names into line with their growing recognition of the inseparability of housing problems from those of education and employment.”<sup>159</sup>

Between 1963 and 1965, most of the local chapters also widened their interests and activities to other civil rights issues and many of them became actively involved in the growing controversy over integrating the Boston Public Schools. The majority of committees took on new names to reflect this expanded range of interest: with the Brookline Fair Housing Practices committee now the Brookline Civil Rights Committee, the Newton group the Newton Committee for Fair Housing and Equal Rights.<sup>160</sup> These name changes, although a seemingly minor variation, symbolized the ways which the members of the local committees and Federation shifted from seeing themselves as part of a specific fair housing movement to participant in the broader local and national fight for civil rights. Despite their new names, however, the Federation and the local committees still struggled to define their suburban-centered purpose. In the spring of 1964, incoming Federation president Roy Brown delivered a speech entitled “What We Are and Where We Are” which encouraged the group to embrace not shun its unique geographic and ideological position. He insisted that, “the Federation’s strength lies in

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<sup>159</sup> Fair Housing Key, November 1963.

<sup>160</sup> “Fair Housing Committee Changes Name to Committee for Civil Rights,” *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, October 12, 1963.

the unique grass roots character of its constituent committees” and made a convincing case, stating “No other civil rights group is so favorably situated to speak for and to the essentially white suburban white areas of greater Boston.”<sup>161</sup>

Recognizing one area where this grassroots structure and suburban base could be particularly beneficial, the Federation began to broaden its legislative agenda and lobbying role. At the 1963 conference the participants had finally decided to address the organizational tensions between the Federation and the suburban chapters. The delegates voted to change both the direction of authority and decision-making away from a consensus among the local committees in favor of the Federation’s executive board, bestowing it with broader mandate to pursue more substantive issues of public policy. After this restructuring, the Federation’s board began to focus much more of its attention on working within political channels. Its legislative subcommittee, chaired by Ellen Feingold, emerged as the most active wing of the organization. She was also an active member of the Americans for Democratic Action and brought the committee into frequent contact and collaboration with the ADA and other lobbying groups like the League of Women Voters. Even as the Federation came to assume similar form and function to these other statewide liberal organizations, its focus on issues of civil rights especially housing provided an important source of differentiation.

The grassroots and suburban infrastructure of the Federation, moreover, provided a unique advantage in its legislative pursuits. Most of the 3500 largely white middle-class suburban members spread throughout about 37 communities maintained only a nominal affiliation to the organizations. However, invoking the numerical strength of this powerful constituency provided the legislative committee a powerful lobbying device and

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<sup>161</sup> Roy Brown, “What We Are and Where,” May 14, 1964, LCRC.

gave them leverage particularly in building coalitions of suburban politicians to pass certain pieces of legislation. The leaders also marshaled the organizational structures of the local chapters frequently to pressure their state and national representatives through letter-writing campaigns and visits to the State House. By the middle of the 1960s, therefore, the Federation had become one of the states most powerful and effective advocates for laws related to housing and other civil rights issues.

## **Conclusion**

By the time Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968 outlawing discrimination in housing, the fair housing movement in Massachusetts had largely dissipated, yet its imprint on the legislation is clear. The story of the grassroots fair housing movement demonstrates the potential of suburban activists to work within the law to create political and policy change. The activists helped transform the notion that African-Americans should have the right and opportunity to live anywhere from a fringe into a mainstream belief over the course of the 1960s. Yet, suburban liberals' faith in meritocratic individualism also enshrined class segregation as an accepted and guiding principle of both state and federal housing policy. The movement, as Thomas Sugrue suggests, led to a shift in "attitudes" that "was not accompanied by a shift in behavior."<sup>162</sup>

That metropolitan Boston remained roughly as racially and economically segregated in 1970 as had been in 1955 also reveals how the ideology of suburban liberalism and its individualist solutions to structural problems constricted efforts to create racial and spatial equality. Likewise, the middle-class black professionals and their families sprinkled throughout the Boston suburbs reinforced the sense that individualized

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<sup>162</sup> Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 248-249.

and morally-based actions had helped to break down the barriers of segregation.<sup>163</sup> This movement provided suburban whites with a new language of colorblindness that provided them with a way to articulate their liberalism and innocence from producing or solving the root causes of racial inequality. In addition, the movement did not just fail to challenge notions of the market-based privileges and entitlements of suburban residency; it unintentionally reified and emboldened this ideology. Looking at the issues of educational integration and affordable housing construction discussed in subsequent chapters provides a means to further explore the progressive and problematic implications of suburban liberal notions of racial and spatial equality and the ways it both enabled and thwarted the quest to challenge the structures of segregation.

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<sup>163</sup> Richard A. Powers, "Negro Move Into Suburbia Still Only A Trickle," *Boston Globe*, June 5, 1964.

## **Chapter 3: Suburban Civil Rights**

### **Introduction**

Just after dawn on the snowy morning of February 26, 1964, 100 white teenagers from Newton gathered in the back of the suburb's stately brick city hall to board eight yellow school buses headed for Boston. As the excited and talkative adolescents carried permission slips in one hand and their lunches in the other, the scene resembled the typical school-sponsored excursion.<sup>1</sup> Yet, this was no ordinary field trip. The Newton students joined a group of 1,000 white middle-class youth from over 20 suburbs that came into the city to participate in Stayout for Freedom, a one-day boycott of over 20,000 pupils that protested discrimination and segregation in the Boston Public Schools. Instead of attending formal classes, these white and African-American children spent the day in Freedom Schools in church basements and community centers around Roxbury and the city's other predominately black neighborhoods learning the music, history and strategies of the Civil Rights Movement. The day of interracial education and conversation had a dramatic impact on the attitudes of the students involved. Boarding the bus home, one suburban ninth grader, she observed, "I wish more adults had been there to share this with us."<sup>2</sup> The events did not just transform the outlooks of the individual participants but also directly shaped the future of civil rights activity in Massachusetts. A day after

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<sup>1</sup> Lucia Mouat, "A School Day to Remember," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 26, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> Anne Wyman, "Arlington: Talk in Every Pew," *Boston Globe*, February 27, 1964.

the protest, Governor Malcolm Peabody established a blue-ribbon commission whose findings eventually led to the passage of the Racial Imbalance Act, the landmark and controversial legislation that made the Commonwealth the first state to outlaw school segregation. The day's activities inspired a group of suburban activists to establish the Metropolitan Council of Educational Opportunity (METCO) a program that transported black students from Boston into predominately white suburban school systems and would become one of the first and largest voluntary integration programs in the nation.

The image of throngs of white suburban students boarding buses to join in a civil rights protest directly defies the conventional associations of busing in Boston in the postwar period. Most accounts of the conflict over school segregation barely mention the 1964 Stayout and focus instead on the violent white working-class opposition to court-ordered busing that erupted ten years later. Yet by dismissing this event and the movement that spawned it, these standard narratives not only obscure a much richer story of civil rights activism in postwar Boston, but also the role of white suburban liberals in that struggle.<sup>3</sup> An inquiry into the Stayout, the passage of the Racial Imbalance Act, the development of METCO and the crucial contributions of white middle-class activists to those events upsets conventional depictions of civil rights and suburban political culture. In doing so, it shows how the ideology of suburban liberalism that favored individualist solutions to structural problems came to shape the policies of racial integration and diversity in education both locally and nationally.

The web of suburban fair housing groups and their umbrella organization, the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights played a distinct and

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<sup>3</sup> See Lukas, *Common Ground*. Ronald Formisano mentions the Stayout in passing and dubs it “relatively tame.” See *Boston Against Busing*, 33.

important but largely unexplored role in the struggle for educational equality. Beginning in 1964, many white suburban members of the Federation joined in the black-led movement to combat the discriminatory patterns in education. These activists expanded the grassroots strategies they had developed to fight against residential discrimination and applied them to the effort to desegregate Boston's public schools. The group spearheaded the lobbying campaign that led to passage of the Racial Imbalance Act in 1965.

Following that success, the Federation coordinated the establishment of the METCO program helping to secure both federal funding and suburban support for the project.

Understanding the crucial role of the Federation in these activities illuminates not only the inextricable ties between the fight against residential and educational discrimination but also the relationship between civil rights and suburban liberalism.

The METCO program, like the busing crisis, has long loomed large in the racial, spatial and political imaginaries of many Massachusetts residents. Yet few accounts have accurately identified or explored the roots of the program. Observers have alternately cast METCO as a top-down form of social engineering hatched by government bureaucrats or a program created solely by black parents in the inner city.<sup>4</sup> These conflicting depictions have obscured both the unique coalition of black and white activists and school officials that created it, and the fact that its formation relied on a partnership between a grassroots movement and the federal government. These interpretations also overlook the roots of the program in both the physical structure of the fair housing movement and its suburban-centered philosophy. Suburban liberal ideology and activism both enabled and

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<sup>4</sup> For a works that depict METCO as a state-initiated program see Sarah Susannah Willie, *Acting Black: College, Identity, and the Performance of Race* (New York: Routledge Press, 2003), 196. For depictions of the program that emphasizes exclusively the role of black parents see Susan Eaton, *The Other Boston Busing Story: What's Won and Lost Across the Boundary Line* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

constrained METCO's development and in turn shaped future efforts to create racial and spatial equality at both the local and national level.

The role of white middle-class activists in METCO's founding provides a compelling example of a grassroots movement that sought to direct federal spending to underwrite its programs and policies. The development of the initiative illuminates that the dialectic relationship between government policies and grassroots social movements animated the suburban liberal vision of racial equality.<sup>5</sup> The widespread support for the program among suburbanites in large part relied on its small size as well as its government funding. METCO embodied and contributed to the development of the bifurcated political outlook of many white middle-class liberals. Many of these suburban residents actively supported federal spending to promote racial equality, but remained far less enthusiastic to see their own local property taxes fulfill similar functions.

The development of METCO also reveals how the ideology of grassroots liberalism shaped the policies of the federal government. The busing program's suburban advocates formulated a persuasive argument for the program that a decade later, both influenced, and anticipated a key rationale for Affirmative Action policies. This case did not focus on the ways such a one-way busing program would create a remedy to past injustice, but rather emphasized its particular educational benefits for white middle-class children by preparing them to operate in a multiracial world. Scholars are beginning to examine the ways in which Affirmative Action emerged "from below," but few have grappled with the constitutive role white middle-class liberals played at the grassroots

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<sup>5</sup> Many political historians have adopted a new analytic model that identifies the ways in which politics and political movements play a key role in state building, but also how federal politics serve as a constitutive force in the processes of group and individual identity formation. For the best overview of this trend in political history see Meg Jacobs and Julian E. Zelizer, "The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History" in *The Democratic Experiment*, 1-15.

level.<sup>6</sup> Exposing the individualist ideology of suburban liberalism underpinning the government's response to racial equality in education, therefore, provides an important way of understanding how and why these policies have failed to solve the enduring dilemmas of structural inequality at the local and national level. By the late 1960s, the METCO confronted increasing difficulties balancing its original two-pronged mission of providing quality educational opportunities for African-American students and creating limited integration in the suburbs. Exploring these tensions provides a crucial way of understanding the possibility and limitations of racial liberal ideology and how its focus on individualism and integration both assisted and constricted the broader effort to achieve meaningful educational equality in Massachusetts and the nation.

### **“Two Small Latin Words”**

The Boston School Committee's long upholding of “the neighborhood school” as a romantic ideal and policy matter clearly favored some city areas over others. In 1960, roughly half of the black population of Boston lived in Roxbury, North Dorchester and the South End, where the schools were overwhelmingly nonwhite and overcrowded. Officials had not built new school buildings in these neighborhoods in over thirty years and most of the existing ones violated health and safety codes. The city also spent an average of \$100 more per pupil on its white students and provided them with a more

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<sup>6</sup> Most of the first historical studies of Affirmative Action focused primarily on the role of government bureaucrats in shaping the policy. See for example, Hugh Davis Graham, *The Civil Rights Era: Origins and Development of National Policy, 1960–1972* (New York, 1990) and John D. Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002). Recent works have complicated this interpretation arguing that affirmative action policies emerged primarily from the efforts of African-American, Latino and feminist grassroots activists. See MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough* and Thomas J. Sugrue, "Affirmative Action from Below: Civil Rights, the Building Trades, and the Politics of Racial Equality in the Urban North, 1945-1969," *Journal of American History*, vol. 91 issue 1 (June 2004), 145-173.

advanced curriculum and more experienced teachers.<sup>7</sup> In the early 1950s, a group of African-American parents came together to challenge these deliberately discriminatory practices. Roxbury mother Ruth Batson, who would become one of main leaders for Boston's African-American community and later the director of METCO, led the effort. The child of Garveyite parents and lifelong resident of Roxbury, Batson was an early supporter of John Kennedy, the first black delegate from Massachusetts to the Democratic Convention, and would later hold a variety of political appointments including a stint on the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination.<sup>8</sup> Batson's outlook and activism resisted convenient categorization. She combined a Black Nationalist background, a faith in the formal channels of political institutions and a personal concern about the education of her own children.<sup>9</sup>

In the early 1950s, after losing a bid for a seat on Boston School Committee, Batson turned to the Boston chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for help in demanding educational equity. In the first decades after World War II, the chapter had become a point of convergence and training ground for many of the figures who would soon play leading roles the local black freedom

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<sup>7</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Report on Massachusetts: Housing in Boston* (December, 1963), 7; Ruth Batson. "Statement to the School Committee," June 11, 1963, Box 3, Folder 15, PMR; "Teacher Overlooks One Fact," *Boston Globe*, February 27, 1964.

<sup>8</sup> Jeanne Theoharis, "I'd Rather Go to School in the South: How Boston's School Desegregation Complicates the Civil Rights Paradigm," in *Freedom North*, 129; Interview with Ruth Batson, conducted by Mel King, No Date, Carton 4, Ruth M. Batson Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University (hereafter: "RB").

<sup>9</sup> Batson's position at the forefront of the movement demonstrates that female activism at the grassroots level was a constitutive feature of leadership of Boston's freedom struggle, particularly the effort to achieve the equal allocation of educational resources. Batson also collaborated other prominent African-American female activists like Melnea Cass, the head of the Boston NAACP, Muriel Snowden the co-founder of Freedom House and Ellen Jackson, the organizer of Operation Exodus. Theoharis, "I'd Rather Go to School in the South," 131. For more gendered analysis of the civil rights movement see for example Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White*; Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace*; Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles against Urban Inequality*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

struggle.<sup>10</sup> Batson helped move the issue of “de facto segregation” in the public schools to the center of the local chapter’s interest.<sup>11</sup> The Branch’s increased attention to educational inequity also flowed from the agenda of the national NAACP. After its success in the *Brown* case, the NAACP legal team had turned to challenging school segregation in the North and West.<sup>12</sup> This case depended on a regionally determined dichotomy that distinguished the racial discrimination of the Jim Crow South, which they termed “de jure,” from the “de facto” segregation above the Mason-Dixon line, which allegedly derived largely from residential patterns. With an eye to these national goals and strategy, the Boston chapter began to gather evidence for a test case that they hoped would persuade the Supreme Court to rule the de facto segregation of the city’s public schools unconstitutional.<sup>13</sup> When that project failed, the committee members shifted their attention away from the federal courts and instead sought to devise strategies to force local and state authorities to intervene. The notoriously intransigent and all-white Boston School Committee represented the first target in this multi-step campaign.

In the late spring of 1963 Batson, Paul Parks and the other members of the NAACP education subcommittee introduced a case to the Boston School Committee that fused the specific concerns of black parents about resource distribution with the NAACP’s broader legal and legislative aims.<sup>14</sup> After a series of tense exchanges, the

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<sup>10</sup> Leading members of the Boston NAACP in the 1960s included Paul Parks, an engineer by training, who would later become head of Boston’s Model Cities program, Melvin King, a prominent community activist and later State Representative and Thomas Atkins, who would become the first African-American elected to Boston’s city council.

<sup>11</sup> Theoharis, “I’d Rather Go to School in the South,” 129.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew D. Lassiter, “De Jure/De Facto Segregation: The Long Shadow of a National Myth” in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, 31-36.

<sup>13</sup> Harvard Center for Law and Education, “A Study of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act,” Publication No. 6019, Harvard Center for Law and Education for the Massachusetts State Department of Education, February, 1972, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Harvard Center for Law and Education, “A Study of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act,” 14.

School Committee, chaired by the long-time integration opponent Louise Day Hicks, held a public hearing on June 11, 1963 that lasted over eight hours in a room filled to its capacity. Upholding the very idea of “de facto” segregation, the NAACP and other representatives at the meeting consistently acknowledged that they did not blame the School Committee for the existence of racial discrimination in the school system but believed that that body must rectify the situation.<sup>15</sup> As Batson told the room, “It is the responsibility of school officials to take an affirmative and positive stand on the side of the best possible education for all children,” suggesting this was impossible where segregation existed.<sup>16</sup> The Committee gave no official response.

Four days after the hearing, four civil rights leaders endured a seven-hour closed-door session with the school committee. At this meeting, the representatives from the black community boiled their argument down to 14 specific demands. The majority of their requests addressed problems of educational resources such as reduction in class size, improvements in the school buildings, human relations training for teachers and the hiring of more black teachers and principals. Point 1, nevertheless, called for “an immediate public acknowledgement of the existence of de facto segregation in the Boston school system.”<sup>17</sup> While the School Committee cautiously agreed to study most of the requests, the majority of the members staunchly refused to publicly recognize the existence of “de facto” segregation and thus the school board and civil rights community

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<sup>15</sup> In his testimony at the hearing CORE chairman Alan Gartner cited a study his organization had produced to assert that “the school department has not arranged district lines to produce segregated schools but they have done nothing to end segregated schools.” CORE, Press Release, Spring 1963, Box 1, Folder 33, PMR.

<sup>16</sup>Ruth Batson. “Statement to the School Committee,” June 11, 1963, Box 3, Folder 19, PMR.

<sup>17</sup> Boston Branch NAACP, “Statement to the Press of the Boston Branch, NAACP,” June 18, 1963, Box 3, Folder 18, PMR.

of Boston moved closer to what J. Anthony Lukas called “an impasse over two small Latin words.”<sup>18</sup>

As the NAACP leadership engaged in another round of closed-door negotiations with the Boston School Committee, other black activists planned a school boycott. Reverend James Breeden a minister at St. James Episcopal Church in Roxbury and Noel Day, Executive Director of St. Mark Social Center also in Roxbury, the leaders of the newly formed Massachusetts Freedom Movement and former college roommates served as the central organizers. By encouraging black students to “Stay Out for Freedom,” the project aimed to dramatize “the intolerable conditions” of “de facto segregation” and literally expose the 13 Boston public schools with “predominately Negro pupil enrollment.”<sup>19</sup> On June 18, 1963, 8,260 junior and senior high school pupils, about 30 percent of the total secondary population, stayed away from school.<sup>20</sup> The absentee list included 5,200 whites. While Louise Day Hicks claimed that many white parents kept their children at home to avoid violence, more likely, given the day’s “magnificent weather,” many used the boycott as an excuse to “play hooky.”<sup>21</sup>

One-third of the 3,000 African-American students who opted out of class and a handful of white children did not “play hooky” but instead attended “freedom schools.”<sup>22</sup> Noel Day, who had previously served as a junior high teacher in Harlem, crafted the curriculum planning classes in “Negro history,” the rights and responsibilities of

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<sup>18</sup> Lukas, *Common Ground*, 127.

<sup>19</sup>Robert L. Hassett, “Hub Negroes say 14,000 will stay out of School.” *Boston Herald*, June 13, 1963 Boston Branch NAACP, Statement to the Press of the Boston Branch, NAACP,” June 18, 1963, Box 3 Folder 18, PMR.

<sup>20</sup> Harvard Center for Law and Education, “A Study of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act,” 23. The daily average absentee rate among secondary school students was about 10 percent.

<sup>21</sup> Ian Forman, “And Whites Play Hooky,” *Boston Globe*, June 18, 1963.

<sup>22</sup> “Statement to the Press of the Boston Branch, NAACP,” June 18, 1963; “What About the Freedom Stay Out?” No Date, Box 3, Folder 15, PMR; Statement of James Breeden, June 17, 1963, Box 1, Folder 33, PMR.

American citizenship, the meanings of non-violence and civil rights as a means to “supplement public education and to protest existing inadequacies in the system.”<sup>23</sup> At the Saint Mark Social Center, the site of the largest Freedom School, a group of 250 “cheerful” and “well behaved” children learned freedom songs and listened to speeches from this prominent bill of speakers. An impressive roster of activists and academics such as Anson Phelps Stokes, Harvard Professor Thomas Pettigrew, CORE chairman Alan Gartner and Boston Celtics star Bill Russell all took the day off from work to be part of the “Freedom Faculty.”<sup>24</sup> The basketball MVP toured all nine schools telling the “spellbound” students “to be proud of their badge of color” and urging them to stay *in* school from then on.<sup>25</sup>

The first of their kind in the country, the Freedom Schools and the larger Stayout proved a successful way to draw attention to the problem of school segregation. The tactics established an important precedent for civil rights groups throughout the country. Similar protests rippled throughout the North and West during the next year, using the Boston Stayout as an inspiration and model. In Chicago over 200,000 children stayed home or attended Freedom Schools in the fall of 1963. In February 1964, in New York, the largest civil rights demonstration in American history occurred when more than 300,000 African-American and Puerto Rican students took part in a one-day boycott to demand integration.<sup>26</sup> The Freedom Schools concept elicited such a favorable response within the African-American community in Boston that the organizers decided to extend

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<sup>23</sup> BACKGROUND MATERIAL: FREEDOM SCHOOLS GOALS AND PURPOSES OF FREEDOM SCHOOLS AS DEVELOPED FOR JUNE 18, 1963, Box 2, Folder 19, PMR.

<sup>24</sup> Abraham Oseroff “Freedom School Offers Whys,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 18, 1963.

<sup>25</sup> John H. Fenton, “Negroes Boycott Schools in Boston,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1963.

<sup>26</sup> “Public Schools: The Spreading Boycott,” *Time* (Feb. 14, 1964); Leonard Buder, “Boycott Cripples City Schools,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1964.

the project through the summer and fall of 1963. Day and Breedon established Freedom School classes three nights a week at three churches in Roxbury, Dorchester and the South End open to both adults and children “to encourage dignity, self-respect and feeling of effectiveness” and to provide a vehicle for “organized creative action.”<sup>27</sup>

The Stayout might have brought the issue of the educational inequality into the local and national spotlight, but it did not persuade Boston school officials to officially concede their position. Over the course of the summer, the NAACP and other civil rights activists staged routine picketing of Boston School Committee buildings, but they remained at a stalemate with Hicks and her allies. The assassination of Medgar Evers, George Wallace’s stand at the University of Alabama and the violence in Birmingham also occurred during the summer of 1963. These activities in the Deep South coupled with the looming School Committee election in November created a backdrop to the battle that neither side could ignore. With new school year quickly approaching, the Boston NAACP held a press conference on August 16, 1963 and made an important concession. Branch president Kenneth Guscott announced that the chapter had decided to consciously substitute the term “racial imbalance” for the “de facto segregation,” which he asserted had become “too charged with past emotions and events.”<sup>28</sup> This decision fell in line with a national shift in the language surrounding school segregation. By the summer of 1963, school officials in California, New Jersey and New York had all announced formal policies about “racial imbalance,” which the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights defined as “the existence, however innocently caused, of that degree of racial homogeneity in a given school which interferes with the achievement of equal

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<sup>27</sup> “Freedom Schools Open Fall Term,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 21, 1963.

<sup>28</sup> WGBH-TV, “To Secure These Rights’: A Documented History of the Negro ‘Freedom Movement,’” February 24, 1964, Box 39, Folder 1357, FH

educational opportunity for Negro pupils.”<sup>29</sup> The national NAACP as well as many of its local northern chapters had also adopted this language substitution as part of the broader shift in their strategy away from the federal courts and toward trying to end racial discrimination through the passage of state laws.<sup>30</sup> Members of the Boston School Committee dubbed “racial imbalance” as a “superior descriptive term” and an improvement over de facto segregation. Governor Endicott Peabody also praised the substitution as a more meaningful label since it did not “suggest that there’s been any active policy by an public officials to bring it about.”<sup>31</sup> The NAACP did not wave the white flag quite yet, however, for soon after Guscott publicly qualified the organization’s stance announcing: “We used the term ‘de facto segregation’ because that’s what the rest of the country used. But the NAACP will accept any other term that anybody else wants to use ... as long as there is recognition that a problem does exist.”<sup>32</sup>

If the NAACP ceded some rhetorical ground, it did not relent in its campaign or direct action strategies. After school officials continued to willfully ignore their demands, the organization sponsored an all-night sit-in inside the Boston School Committee building on September 6, 1963, days after the March on Washington.<sup>33</sup> These activities undoubtedly more closely connected the Boston struggle with southern events such as the lunch-counter sit-ins in Greensboro, but Massachusetts activists did not simply mimic their southern counterparts. Rather, the sit-in constituted a calculated decision on the part of the northern activists to build upon the growing national concern for the civil rights

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<sup>29</sup> Lassiter, “De Jure/De Facto,” 33; United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights '63: 1963 Report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights* (Washington: Government Publishing Office 1963), 65-72.

<sup>30</sup> Lassiter, “De Jure/De Facto,” 33.

<sup>31</sup> WGBH-TV, “To Secure These Rights.”

<sup>32</sup> WGBH-TV, “To Secure These Rights.”

<sup>33</sup> Seymour R. Linscott, “School Sit-Ins Sit All Night,” *Boston Globe*, September 6, 1963.

activities in the Deep South in order to draw sympathy for their very localized case against the School Committee. In the November School Committee election Hicks won 68.8 percent of the vote and the NAACP-backed candidate lost. It seemed that the comparisons to George Wallace and other southern segregationists helped rather than hurt the chairwomen. Thus, as School Committee members began to fully understand the potential political benefits of racial antagonism, it only strengthened their unwillingness to negotiate and indicated to both the Boston's civil rights community that the fight remained very much on.

### **Stayout for Freedom**

Many white middle-class suburbanites, particularly those involved in local fair housing groups, had watched these events unfold in Boston from a removed, yet concerned position. By the summer of 1963, many leaders of the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights had begun to acknowledge that the housing operated as one node in a matrix of causes of racial segregation that included the arenas of employment and education.<sup>34</sup> The showdown between the School Committee and activists in Boston only strengthened this conviction of the need to expand the movement's singular focus. Yet these fair housing activists remained unsure about how exactly their suburban-centered outlook and membership could intervene.

The suburbanites found the ideal opportunity in the winter of 1964. Noel Day and James Breeden decided to plan a second Stayout on February 26 to challenge the School

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<sup>34</sup> Chapter 2 discusses this shift in the agenda of the Federation at length and particularly the tensions it created between members who wanted to extend the reach of the groups into other issues and the whole metropolitan area and those members who thought the groups should continue to focus solely on housing and the suburbs.

Committee again and to correspond with a chain of school boycotts around the country.<sup>35</sup> The second boycott adopted the same basic template as the June initiative, but revised it in a few key ways. Since organizers had more time to plan, they both expanded the project to include all grade levels not just older students and also constructed a more elaborate and detailed curriculum and schedule of events than the more improvised program in June. The organizers also made key shifts in the language of their pleas and plans. The issue of “de facto” segregation had been integral to the agenda and purpose of the boycott in June and while this term still appeared throughout the literature, its status became downgraded. Instead, the Stayout planners asserted that the purpose of the project was to call for “a reasonable plan for integration” of the Boston Public Schools.<sup>36</sup>

The call for integration did not mean that leading black activists had abandoned their focus on issues of equalized educational opportunities. By the winter of 1964, nevertheless, many of the movement leaders had realized that integrated schools provided a more reliable means of guaranteeing adequate resources for black students. Activists like Breeden and Day began to couch their demands in more racially liberal terms that emphasized the psychological harm of segregated conditions wrought on individual children by “distorting their minds” and “dull[ing] their spirits.”<sup>37</sup> The decision to revise their demands reveals that while the School Committee remained their symbolic adversary, the state legislature represented the real target of the activity. For liberal politicians and their suburban constituents, the individualist call of integration had more

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<sup>35</sup> The event was initially for February 11, 1964 in line with the boycotts in other cities, but it would have coincided with final exams in the Boston Public Schools so organizers decided to reschedule the demonstration for February 26, 1964. Statement of James Breeden, No Date, Box 1, Folder 33, PMR; Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, Statement on the Proposed Boston School Stayout, January 24, 1964, Box 2, Folder 16, PMR.

<sup>36</sup> James Breeden to Citizens for Human Rights, January 21, 1964, Box 2, Folder 16, PMR.

<sup>37</sup> Statement of James Breeden, No Date.

traction than structural demands for resource distribution. This shift in language also aligned with both the local and national NAACP's effort to encourage state action on the problem of "racial imbalance." The Stayout's organizers sought to apply this commitment to racial integration not just in rhetoric. If the June Stayout had dramatized de facto segregation through empty classrooms, the winter version sought to make its case by creating integrated ones. Breeden announced the plan for "integrated Freedom Schools where the presence of thousands of white and black children learning together demonstrate the promise of what our public schools could be."<sup>38</sup> Expecting that it would be difficult to find willing participants in Boston, the Massachusetts Freedom Movement looked beyond the city limits and into the suburbs. The civil rights group recruited Hubie Jones, one of the only African-American members of the Newton Fair Housing Practices Committee to chair its Suburban Support Committee. As his first official task Jones organized a meeting at the Stone Church in Lincoln on January 31. The event brought together representatives from 21 towns, all of whom agreed to not only endorse the endeavor but also to send students to participate in the Freedom Schools.<sup>39</sup> Warmed by the tide of support, Thomas Atkins, executive secretary of the NAACP told the audience "I only wish some of you still lived in town!"<sup>40</sup>

Following the meeting, thirty communities set up formal local suburban support committees, generally offshoots of the local fair housing chapters, to contribute on many different levels. The coordinators in each town drew upon the previously established social networks and publicity strategies of the fair housing movement to circulate

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<sup>38</sup> Statement of James Breeden, No Date.

<sup>39</sup> Massachusetts Freedom Movement, "STATEMENT ON SUBURBAN SUPPORT OF FREEDOM STAY-OUT," February 1, 1964, Box 2, Folder 19, PMR.

<sup>40</sup> "Wayland Schools In Recess, Weston in Session for New Freedom Stayout Day," *Wayland and Weston Town Crier*, February 6, 1964.

information about the Stayout. During the first weeks of February, volunteers passed out enrollment applications and permission slips at local junior and senior high schools, took out paid ads in town newspapers, distributed fact sheets to their friends and neighbors, and made countless phone calls to recruit student participants, adult chaperones, and teachers.<sup>41</sup> Praising the ways that suburban residents contributed to the planning of the Stayout, Hubie Jones announced, “Frankly I have been overwhelmed by the support from suburbia. So much so that is shaken my pessimism about the negative role that most suburbanites play and have played in the whole struggle.”<sup>42</sup> This metropolitan cooperation had important benefits for the organizers on both sides of the spatial divide. The Stayout provided the ideal vehicle for concerned suburbanites to contribute to the fight against school discrimination. It also bolstered the case of the members of the fair housing committees who sought to enlarge the physical and ideological scope of the movement. For the Boston activists, the suburban participation both amplified their case about the value of integrated education and provided additional manpower.

Over a thousand students from more than 20 suburban communities boarded buses to Boston on February 26, with 100 representatives from Newton, 100 from Brookline, and 90 from Lexington. While many of the students who volunteered were the children of members of the local fair housing groups, others heard about it at school and recruited their parents. One Wellesley chaperone explained, “With three children

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<sup>41</sup> Olivia Abelson to Brookline Committee for Civil Rights, “Report on Meeting of Suburban Groups in Re Freedom (sic) Stayout...Jan 31,” February 1, 1964, Box 3, Folder 16, PMR; Freedom Stay-Out Committee, STATEMENT ON FURTHER SUPPORT OF ‘FREEDOM STAYOUT,’” February 12, 1964, Box 2, Folder 19, PMR. Many of the suburban committees made financial contributions to the Massachusetts Freedom Movement to help pay for the project and also wrote letters to the editors of town and Boston newspapers to state their support of the Stayout and its goals, see Lexington Civil Rights Committee, Newsletter, March 15, 1964, LCRC; “STATEMENT ON FURTHER SUPPORT OF ‘FREEDOM STAYOUT.’”

<sup>42</sup> “‘To Secure These Rights’: A Documented History of the Negro ‘Freedom Movement,’” 51.

participating how can you help but get involved?”<sup>43</sup> Many detractors cited the fact that the Stayout coincided with winter vacation in many suburban school districts as the explanation for this flood of participation, and some even suggested that the organizers had picked the date on purpose.<sup>44</sup> It was in some ways more impressive the number of students who willingly gave up a day of school vacation to show, as one Wellesley eighth grader stated, “people we care, and that we feel there is a problem being ignored.”<sup>45</sup> Katherine Ashbrook, a high school senior from Tony Weston explained that she wanted “to learn more about the conditions and the problems in Roxbury from Roxbury students.”<sup>46</sup> Breeden observed that the involvement of these suburban volunteers gave “substance to our theory that young people themselves desire integration.”<sup>47</sup>

Arriving on banner-strewn buses, these suburbanites joined with the 20,571 Boston students who opted to stay out. Roughly 10,000 of the black absentees attended Freedom schools at 34 churches, social centers and neighborhood houses in Roxbury, the South End and Dorchester.<sup>48</sup> These figures far surpassed the estimations of the leadership and caused some last minute reshuffling. More than 200 black and white volunteers taught on the Freedom School faculty including many local civil rights activists like Ruth Batson, Paul Parks, Mel King, Alan Gartner and a coterie of “housewives, parents, teachers,” many of them members of the suburban fair housing movement.<sup>49</sup> Serving as

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<sup>43</sup> Lucia Mouat, “Suburbs Prepare Boycott Support,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 26, 1964.

<sup>44</sup> Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 33.

<sup>45</sup> Mouat, “Suburbs Prepare Boycott Support.”

<sup>46</sup> “Youngsters Explain Why They ‘Stayed Out’ for Freedom,” No Date, Box 8, Folder 10, PMR.

<sup>47</sup> Mouat, “Suburbs Prepare Boycott Support”; Robert Levey, “Boycott Put Off, Suburbanites Join,” *Boston Globe*, February 2, 1964.

<sup>48</sup> NAACP, “Press Release: Boston Boycott 100 Per Cent Successful,” February 28, 1964, Box 2, Folder 19, PMR. The NAACP reported that 22 percent of the city’s 93,000 public schools students did not attend classes, which was about twice the normal absentee rate.

<sup>49</sup> Massachusetts Freedom Movement, Press Release, February 12, 1964, Box 2, Folder 19, PMR; Massachusetts Freedom Movement, Press Release, February 19, 1964, Box 2, Folder 19, PMR.

both principals and teachers, these “trained leaders” led courses and discussion groups where students could express their views on racial segregation in housing, employment, and education as well as other community issues. A guide for discussion leaders explained their role as helping “the students see themselves in a new and different way, and to encourage them that there are indeed many things which they can do.”<sup>50</sup> A cohort of prominent psychologists and academics such as Gordon Allport, Charles Pinderhughes, Herbert LeVine, and Sumner Rosen both spoke to the students and provided materials for the lessons plans, highlighting the racial liberal emphasis on the psychological damages of racial segregation running throughout the Stayout.

The “educationally and culturally enriching” curriculum contained materials on the “psychological effects of segregated education,” “the Negro’s contribution to American history,” the issue of teenage unemployment, and “college scholarship opportunities.”<sup>51</sup> The program also included chances for singing “freedom songs” and socializing, which hit a literal and figurative high note when a Harvard freshman picked up his banjo and led a thousand students gathered at the Saint Mark Center in an impromptu sing-a-long of “We Shall Overcome.”<sup>52</sup> For many of the white and black children, the event marked both their initial exposure to much of this information and their first time learning in an integrated setting. One onlooker later described watching as the children listened intently “as if they were trying to gulp and chew a lifetime of learning in one day.”<sup>53</sup> When the students filed back on the buses, they received “Freedom Diplomas” signed by Breeden and Day, proclaiming that the student had

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<sup>50</sup> Roderick Nordell, “I Sure Do Thank the Freedom Schools,” *Boston Herald*, No Date, Box 8, Folder 13, PMR.

<sup>51</sup> FREEDOM SCHOOL CURRICULUM, No Date, Box 2, Folder 19, PMR.

<sup>52</sup> Ian Forman, “Who Staged the Boycott?” *Boston Globe*, February 27, 1964.

<sup>53</sup> William Ryan, *Blaming the Victim* (New York: Pantheon Books 1971), 40.

completed the requirements “of an experiment in democratic education” and joined “other citizens of Boston in the pursuit of freedom and equality.”<sup>54</sup>

The day’s program and curriculum proved so successful that it became one of the major inspirations for the Mississippi Summer Project’s own network of 41 Freedom Schools which similarly sought to enrich the education of young black southerners. In fact, not long after the Stayout, Noel Day traveled to New York to participate in the planning of the Council of Federated Organization’s effort. Drawing many of his experiences and ideas from the event a few weeks earlier, he served as primary author of the Mississippi Freedom School curriculum, designing lesson plans intended for volunteers with neither teaching experience nor knowledge of African-American history.

<sup>55</sup> Thus, the Boston Stayout showed that the circulation of ideas in the civil rights movement flowed not just south to north, but in the reverse direction as well.

The activities of the February Stayout continued after the Freedom Schools let out when 1800 people gathered just below the governor’s office at the Robert Gould Shaw tableau at the entrance of Boston Common. Wielding placards and singing freedom songs, the integrated crowd marched in procession from the State House to City Hall Plaza. Participants milled around the newly-designed piazza while a delegation of civil rights activists met with Mayor John Collins in an hour-long closed-door session. Although he had opted to send his four children to school that day, Collins dubbed the conversation “useful” and the meeting at his city hall office provided a fitting

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<sup>54</sup> Boston Freedom Schools, Freedom Diploma: The Ryan Family, February 26, 1964, Box 3, Folder 16, PMR.

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Perlstein, “Teaching Freedom: SNCC and the Creation of the Mississippi Freedom Schools,” *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 30 No.3 (Fall 1990).

culmination to the day's events.<sup>56</sup> The overall outcome of the Stayout significantly pleased Boston civil rights activists. The NAACP's Thomas Atkins hailed the boycott as "100 per cent successful," Noel Day called it "a great day," and James Breeden dubbed it a "resounding success."<sup>57</sup>

This sense of accomplishment owed much to careful orchestration of the Stayout planners. *Boston Globe* reporter Ian Forman dubbed the principal leaders as the "ivy league team," a depiction with a particular set of class-based connotations that sought to accentuate the distinctiveness of the event and its leaders. Day and Breeden, the "solidest one-two punch in the civil rights movement," had graduated from Dartmouth two years apart and served as the public face of Stayout.<sup>58</sup> While this duo oversaw the operation of the Freedom Schools classrooms, William and Phyllis Ryan, a white Brookline couple active in the civil rights cause, manned a command center in a bare room on the fourth floor of the Saint Mark Center. The Harvard professor oversaw the transportation of students to and from the Freedom Schools in what he would later describe as "a plague of yellow buses... crisscrossing the streets of Roxbury."<sup>59</sup> Respected in "horn-rimmed glasses" and with his shirtsleeves rolled up and tie pulled loose, Ryan resembled "a harried MTA starter on his telephone directing rush hour."<sup>60</sup> Phyllis Ryan ran the public relations wing of the operation; a duty she had performed in countless other civil rights campaigns in and out of the suburbs. Ryan also willingly supplied the coffee. As she made a cup for a reporter, Ryan announced "in a wry tone" that "this is probably the first

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<sup>56</sup> "March on City Hall Caps Boycott," *Boston Record American*, February 27, 1964.

<sup>57</sup> "Press Release: Boston Boycott 100 Per Cent Successful"; Forman, "Who Staged the Boycott?"; John H. Fenton, "20,571 Pupils Out in Boston Boycott" *New York Times*, February 27, 1964.

<sup>58</sup> Forman, "Who Staged the Boycott?"

<sup>59</sup> Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*, 40.

<sup>60</sup> Forman, "Who Staged the Boycott?" The experience would come to shape both Ryan's personal experience and academic work, he cited it as an anecdote in his groundbreaking work *Blaming the Victim*.

revolution where coffee is served.”<sup>61</sup> Her purposefully ironic comment reveals an acknowledgement that neither the Stayout nor its leadership could hardly be deemed radical. Even as they upset certain racial and spatial boundaries, they upheld and even reified both a distinctively a middle-class and gendered image and ideology.

The classed dimensions of the Stayout extended into the press coverage of the project as well. Phyllis Ryan’s media savvy was extremely useful to the project. Major newspapers in Boston made the event front-page news with images of rows of attentive white and black children sitting side by side, putting in visual and printed form the civil rights activists’ case about the value and necessity of integration.<sup>62</sup> The press treatment of the February events far surpassed that of the first Stayout in part because its larger size and because of the inclusion of white students. The suburban students represented only one-tenth of the participants in Freedom Schools and one-twentieth of the Stayout, but they received a disproportionate amount of the press consideration, particularly in the *Boston Globe*, which had a wide circulation throughout the metropolitan area. Reporters relied on such racialized and classed adjectives as “well-dressed,” “soft spoken,” and “pretty” to describe the white adolescents and never failed to note that most of these children came from “well-to-do families.”<sup>63</sup> The presence of white middle-class children apparently assured a quick way to elicit media attention and suburban sympathy. These descriptions and the overall media attention, therefore, illuminate the effectiveness of the

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<sup>61</sup> Forman, “Who Staged the Boycott?”

<sup>62</sup> Ryan herself meticulously preserved this coverage in clippings files and they more than 7 folders, See Box 8, PMR.

<sup>63</sup> Forman, “Who Staged the Boycott”; Timothy Leland, “From Suburbs They Came to Back the Fight,” *Boston Globe*, February 27, 1964.

Stayout in using suburban students to solidify support for the cause of school segregation among Massachusetts residents and politicians.<sup>64</sup>

These appeals, however, did little to move the obdurate Boston school officials' sympathies. Superintendent William Ohrenberger publicly denounced the event as a "Pyrrhic victory" and Louise Day Hicks as usual went even further calling it "a tremendous failure."<sup>65</sup> Although the Stayout had failed to persuade the School Committee to change its position, the project did have an important impact on the effort to challenge racial and spatial segregation in education in both the short and long term. By galvanizing state officials, civil rights activists in Roxbury and concerned suburbanites in the cul-de-sacs of Boston's outer ring, the events served to both strengthen the channels of interracial and metropolitan cooperation and quicken the pace of the legislative activity.

### **The Racial Imbalance Act**

Fulfilling the goals of organizers, the most immediate response to the protests emerged from the State House. The day after the Stayout, Governor Peabody announced plans to establish a blue-ribbon advisory committee to study the problem of "racial imbalance." The distinguished appointees included four university presidents, prominent Boston businessmen, and religious leaders like Cardinal Richard Cushing and President of the Massachusetts League of Women Voters Lucy Benson. State Commissioner of Education Owen Kiernan served as the chair. The *Globe* praised the group for the "civic standing of its members." The *Herald* gushed that the project represented a "heartening development" proving that "Massachusetts, if not its capital city, is in the forefront of the

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<sup>64</sup> Uncle Dudley, "The Boycott Aftermath," *Boston Globe*, February 27, 1964.

<sup>65</sup> Harvard Center for Law and Education, "A Study of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act," 27.

great national drive for the equalization of public education.”<sup>66</sup> The much-touted task force announced its first findings in the summer of 1964, uncovering racial imbalance in 55 schools across the state and 45 in Boston alone.<sup>67</sup> On April 8, 1965, the Kiernan Commission released its final report entitled “Because It is Right—Educationally” and condemned “racial imbalance” as harmful to both white and black children and as “a serious conflict with the American creed of equal opportunity.” The Commission recommended a law officially outlawing the practice.<sup>68</sup>

The Boston School Committee voted to reject the claims of the Kiernan Report within hours of its release. Louise Day Hicks dismissed it as “pompous proclamations of the uninformed” and dubbed the Kiernan Committee “a band of racial agitators, non-native to Boston, and a few college radicals who have joined the conspiracy to tell the people of Boston how to run, their schools, and their lives.”<sup>69</sup> The Report’s release, nevertheless, came just a month after the violence in Selma, Alabama where Reverend James Reeb, a white Unitarian minister from Lexington was clubbed to death at the hands of a white mob. For nearly a week, media coverage of Reeb’s death ran next to news of Selma which brought the confrontation on Pettus Bridge home for many Bay Staters and made Hick’s inflammatory remarks appear that much more bewildering. Over 20,000 people attended a memorial service for the slain minister on Boston Common. Speakers at the event drew comparisons between the situation in Alabama to those “less bloody,

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<sup>66</sup> “Off to a Good Start,” *Boston Globe*, March 7, 1964; “Massachusetts Moves on De Facto,” *Boston Herald*, c. March 1964, Box 8, Folder 14, PMR.

<sup>67</sup> Advisory Committee on Racial Imbalance, Massachusetts State Board of Education Interim Report July 1, 1964, Box 1, Folder 16, PMR.

<sup>68</sup> Massachusetts State Board of Education, “Because It is Right—Educationally: Report of the Advisory Committee on Racial Imbalance and Education” (Boston, MA: Massachusetts State Board of Education, April 1965).

<sup>69</sup> Harvard Center for Law and Education, “A Study of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act,” 36.

but in the long run, no less destructive processes of injustice” occurring in the Boston public schools.<sup>70</sup>

When Martin Luther King, Jr. came to Boston on April 22, 1965 it further amplified the pressure on the School Committee. At a rally at Boston Common as the 25,000 people crowd waited for the minister to speak they chanted, “Will you follow Louise Day Hicks or Martin Luther King?”<sup>71</sup> King couched his speech in the rhetoric and imagery of Massachusetts exceptionalism. The famed civil rights leader declared, “It would be dishonest for me to say Boston is Birmingham or that Massachusetts is Mississippi.” However, acknowledging the poverty and segregation in the city’s predominately black neighborhoods, he announced, “Boston must become a testing ground for the ideals of freedom.”<sup>72</sup> As the arguments and agendas of local and national civil rights movements intertwined, it created a powerful sense of urgency for solving the problem of racial segregation in Boston’s public schools. Soon after, newly-elected Governor John Volpe announced the need for “appropriate legislation” as “an important step in this particular issue and in putting the force of our state government behind the fight for equal rights.”<sup>73</sup>

In June 1965, the State Board of Education submitted a pathbreaking bill to the Massachusetts legislature prohibiting racial imbalance in the state’s public schools. Synthesizing the recommendations of the Kiernan Commission, the proposed act sought to empower the Board of Education to withhold state funds from any town that had not adopted a reasonable plan for eliminating racial imbalance. Beryl Cohen, a liberal state

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<sup>70</sup> Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 34.

<sup>71</sup> Lukas, *Common Ground*, 129-130.

<sup>72</sup> Lukas, *Common Ground*, 18.

<sup>73</sup> “Excerpts Taken from Governor’s Message,” *Boston Globe*, June 1, 1965.

representative from Brookline, volunteered to sponsor the bill. In what one observer dubbed “a case study in coalition politics,” he enlisted a group of citizens to help to work to get the landmark legislation passed.<sup>74</sup> He first gathered a team of lawyers and civil rights activists, many from his own constituency, to essentially re-draft the Board of Education’s initial proposal.<sup>75</sup> Cohen then recruited Helene LeVine, the chair of the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Right’s legislative committee, to help build support for the legislation both in suburban communities and at the State House. LeVine and other members of the Federation readily embraced the challenge. With opposition to the legislation increasing among representatives of city districts, the response of the Federation confirmed that its structure and strategy provided an effective way to provoke legislative change.

To build support for the law, Federation leaders fine-tuned the lobbying formula they had crafted in earlier campaigns for fair housing laws. During the summer of 1965, Federation members collaborated with representatives of CORE, the NAACP, and the Massachusetts Freedom Movement. In “interracial teams,” volunteers from the city and suburbs canvassed the State House, demanding face-to-face meetings with state politicians. This integrated coalition sought presented a particular image of themselves and their cause that capitalized on the growing concern about civil rights both nationally and locally. The black organizers gave volunteers explicit instructions to avoid engaging in a technical discussion of the bill. They urged them instead to place their appeal in

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<sup>74</sup> Harvard Center for Law and Education, “A Study of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act,” 38.

<sup>75</sup> In addition to Richard L. Banks, Herbert Hershfang, Paul Parks and Ruth Batson, the group also included Edward Barshak who had been one of the driving forces in the fair housing campaign and Rev. Robert Drinan who was then the Dean of the Boston College Law School. Harvard Center for Law and Education, “A Study of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act,” 38-42.

moral and emotional terms as parents concerned about their children.<sup>76</sup> The Federation and local chapters supplemented these meetings with other grassroots tactics such as petitions and letter writing-campaigns. This support from concerned suburbanites in the 38 communities with Federation affiliates demonstrated the geographic scope and political reach of the organization. These lobbying efforts forged a bipartisan coalition of representatives from suburban and rural areas and successfully overpowered the Boston-based opposition. In August 1965, the bill eventually passed in the House and Senate.<sup>77</sup> In the aftermath of this hard-fought victory many politicians, civil rights leaders, and media observers identified the suburban groups as the driving force behind the legislation.<sup>78</sup> Federation members basked in this credit.

As he signed his name to the Racial Imbalance Act, Governor Volpe invoked the Massachusetts' exceptionalist mythology especially its precedent-setting record as the site of the nation's first public school, college, and school board.<sup>79</sup> The Racial Imbalance Act made Massachusetts the first state to outlaw racial imbalance in its public schools. Yet, the actual statute had more rhetorical than enforcement power. The law classified a racially imbalanced school as one that had 50 percent nonwhite students, and by "nonwhite" it meant explicitly African-American. By defining imbalance in these terms, the law naturalized a white norm while conveniently ignoring the city's Asian and Latino

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<sup>76</sup> Gordon Brum, Political Action Chairman, Boston CORE "An Urgent Message from Boston CORE Concerning H. 4048," Box 1, Folder 28, PMR; Massachusetts Freedom Movement, Lobbying Report (Racial Imbalance Bill 4048), Box 1, Folder 28, PMR.

<sup>77</sup> The Harvard Center for Law and Education study of the Racial Imbalance Act, provides a good discussion of the maneuverings within the state house, see Harvard Center for Law and Education, "A Study of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act," 38-5.

<sup>78</sup> Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights, *FHER Key*, September 1965, LCRC.

<sup>79</sup> "Another First for Massachusetts," *Time* (Aug. 27, 1965); By early 1966, California, Illinois and Indiana had passed similar laws, Fred Powledge, "North Offers Tokens," *New York Times*, January 12, 1966. The law also became a model for a failed bill in the U.S. Congress that sought to apply a similar set of standards on a national scale.

populations.<sup>80</sup> It also exempted areas without a large nonwhite population, including every suburb of Boston, all of which technically had racially imbalanced schools. Like the purportedly landmark Massachusetts Fair Housing Law passed six years earlier, therefore, the communities like Brookline, Newton, and Lexington that had been most enthusiastic in their lobbying efforts all fell outside the boundaries of the new statute's jurisdiction. In addition, the law contained significant mechanisms to delay implementation since it gave school systems found in violation both the leeway to devise their own plans for remedy and the chance for judicial review. These stipulations enabled Boston to avoid actually having to rectify the racial imbalance in its schools for over nine years. Thus as the praise for law dwindled and the Boston School Committee sought to devise ways to evade it, both black activists and their white suburban supporters searched for alternative solutions to the increasingly untenable situation in the city's public schools.

### **A Suburban Education for Urban Children**

Many white participants in the February 1964 Stayout had returned home to their respective communities with a desire to extend the experiment of interracial education and their coalition beyond that single day. These residents envisioned reversing the paradigm and rather than an "urban education" for suburban children, they would offer "suburban education" for urban children. This idea evolved by the winter of 1966 into the Metropolitan Council of Educational Opportunity (METCO), a voluntary one-way integration initiative to transport black students from Boston into predominately white

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<sup>80</sup> The Boston School Committee would later officially classify 671 Asian students at two schools in Chinatown as "white" to alleviate charges that the schools were racially imbalanced, see "Chinese 'Whites' Boston Declares," *New York Times*, October 20, 1966.

suburban school systems. While the Stayout had served as the primary inspiration, three other factors also played an important role. These diverse forces ultimately fused to shape METCO's unique parameters and its unusual combination of suburban liberalism, African-American activism, and government policy.

First, the initiative drew on a series of smaller programs that brought African-American students into predominantly white suburbs. The Boston-Prince Edward County Exchange served as the earliest predecessor for METCO. In 1962, the American Friends Services Committee had organized a program arranging for a few students from the Virginia County that closed its public schools to avoid compliance with court-ordered desegregation to spend a year in Boston. The Virginia students lived with host families and attending school in the districts involved tuition-free.<sup>81</sup> Even after the year-long experiment ended, Leslie "Skip" Griffins, one of three students placed in Newton, had decided to complete his education at the suburb's high school, where he had a standout academic and athletic career and eventually earned admission to Harvard.<sup>82</sup> This success story further convinced some Newton residents that if they could offer tuition waivers to students from the South, then they could provide for African-American children with a far shorter commute. In early March 1964, a few Newton residents submitted a proposal to the city's School Committee that it admit 50 African-American students free of tuition beginning that September.<sup>83</sup> The Newton School Committee rejected the proposal, claiming that it had no legal responsibility to educate non-residents.

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<sup>81</sup> "Planning to Aid Negro Children from Virginia," *The Newton Villager*, August 22, 1961.

<sup>82</sup> Griffin was the son of a minister prominent in the Southern civil rights movement. At Harvard, Griffin became one of the leaders of the black student movement at Harvard would go on to be the Director of Public Affairs for the *Boston Globe*.

<sup>83</sup> "School Board Against Bringing Pupils Here," *Newton Graphic*, March 12, 1964.

Although the proposal to admit black students from Boston into their districts failed, many of the individuals committed to civil rights in the suburb found alternative ways to create integrated educational opportunities. Rev. Charles Harper of the Eliot Church in Newton and fellow residents organized a monthly after-school program based on the Freedom School model for 80 students from the city and the suburbs beginning in the spring of 1964. The project, like the Stayout, sought to provide “a realistic inter-racial, inter-cultural and inter-economic setting” through a curriculum that included African-American history, slave songs, and lectures from local and southern civil rights activists.<sup>84</sup> Residents in over a dozen towns on or near Route 128 established similar programs during the summer of 1964. The Federation proudly noted that the pictures of white and black children swimming and playing appeared in town newspapers throughout Boston outer ring that summer, provided “dramatic evidence” that the “civil rights drive has spread from urban centers to the surrounding suburbs.”<sup>85</sup>

Second, METCO drew on a program initiated by a group of Roxbury parents in 1965 called Operation Exodus.<sup>86</sup> The program sought to take advantage of Boston’s open enrollment policy that allowed students to attend any school in the city as long as it had open seats, but forbade the use of city funds to bus children. Ellen Jackson and the other members of North Dorchester-Roxbury Parent Association decided that if the city refused to provide transportation to the open seats, they decided they would do it themselves arrange the busing of 250 children from the city’s predominately black and low-income

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<sup>84</sup>“Freedom School to Be Held at Eliot Church,” *Newton Graphic*, April 2, 1964; “Roxbury-Newton Freedom School to Open Nov. 10,” *Newton Graphic*, November 5, 1964.

<sup>85</sup> “Summer of Discovery,” Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights, FHER Key, September, 1965,” LCRC.

<sup>86</sup> James Teele, Ellen Jackson, Clara Mayo, “Family Experiences in Operation Exodus,” 1966, Box 28, Folder 3, Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Inc. Records, Archives and Special Collections Department, Northeastern University, Boston MA (hereafter: “METCO”).

areas to open seats in schools throughout the city.<sup>87</sup> The Federation supported the initiative by raising money for its operation and hosting speaking engagements for Ellen Jackson in their communities.<sup>88</sup> “As parents, we are concerned not only with our own children’s education, but the education of all children, ” one Newton women declared of her and her fellow residents commitment to Operation Exodus.<sup>89</sup> This logic influenced many of the same suburbanites to support METCO as well.

A controversial proposal of Boston Redevelopment Agency head Edward Logue served as the final inspiration for the METCO program. The nationally renowned urban planner had publicly denounced the recommendations of the Kiernan Report upon its release in April 1965. Logue especially took issue with a suggestion hidden in the appendix that a “mutual exchange of students” might provide a short-term solution to racial imbalance in Boston. He decided to create an alternative remedy to the problem of school segregation that looked beyond the city’s corporate limits and included the entire metropolitan region.<sup>90</sup> Logue had no background in educational policy and he drew upon instead his urban redevelopment expertise to craft a proposal for a one-way busing of 4,000 “imbalanced” fifth through eighth grade black students from Roxbury into the surrounding suburbs. He sought to “transport the children, but not the problem of racial imbalance” and therefore compiled a list of 21 towns to receive the “disadvantaged” youth that lacked a significant black population, were within a half-hour of the city, and

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<sup>87</sup> Teele, Jackson, Mayo, “Family Experiences in Operation Exodus,” 1966, METCO, Box 28, Folder 3.

<sup>88</sup> “Appeal Made for Funds to Defray Costs,” LCRC Newsletter, February 1966, LCRC; ““Operation Exodus’ Plans Outlined at Meeting Here,” *Newton Graphic*, November 18, 1965; “Operation Exodus Gets An Assist at Reception Here,” *Newton Graphic*, February 10, 1966.

<sup>89</sup> ““Operation Exodus’ Plans Outlined at Meeting Here.”

<sup>90</sup> Edward J. Logue, “Proposal for Achieving Racial Balance in the Boston Area Public Schools,” Speech at the Meeting of Massachusetts Association of Women Lawyers, Boston, No Date, Box 1, Folder 45, PMR

had a per pupil expenditure that exceeded that of Boston.<sup>91</sup> He stipulated that this formula of “scatteration” would prevent overcrowding and keep the black student population in the towns well below the tipping point.<sup>92</sup>

Logue’s metropolitan busing plan demonstrated his deep commitment to the basic tenets of postwar liberalism, especially its abiding faith in state power to solve problems of social inequality. Logue, who had pioneered strategies of acquiring federal funding for urban redevelopment, suggested that money from the Federal Aid to Education Act or the Federal Poverty Program could cover the estimate \$5 million per year cost of his plan.<sup>93</sup> These funding suggestions derived directly from his conviction that “essential to any enduring solution to the problem of racial imbalance” would be that it not affect the property tax base of either Boston or the participating towns.<sup>94</sup> Logue conjectured that many people who had encouraged their children to participate in the Stayout and had joined the march during Martin Luther King’s visit, but might be less “willing to practice at home the Civil Rights they bespeak elsewhere” they might be less enthused to underwrite these convictions with their property taxes.<sup>95</sup>

In spite of these creative funding suggestions, Logue’s “scatteration” plan sparked immediate controversy and denunciations. Many suburban school administrators responded that their districts already confronted overcrowding and in addition they did not have the authority to accept pupils from outside their community.<sup>96</sup> Several observers viewed the proposal not only as a form of “forced busing” but also an example

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<sup>91</sup> Logue, “Proposal for Achieving Racial Balance in the Boston Area Public Schools.”

<sup>92</sup> Logue, “Proposal for Achieving Racial Balance in the Boston Area Public Schools.”

<sup>93</sup> Cohen, “Buying into Downtown Revival,” 84.

<sup>94</sup> Logue, “Proposal for Achieving Racial Balance in the Boston Area Public Schools.”

<sup>95</sup> Logue, “Proposal for Achieving Racial Balance in the Boston Area Public Schools.”

<sup>96</sup> Irene Michelek and Bill Duncliffe, “Suburban School Heads Cool to Busing Proposal,” *Record American*, April 28, 1965.

of downtown bureaucracy and social engineering at its worst. The *Boston Globe* editorial page suggested that Logue “scatter his ‘scatteration’ ideas far enough that they get lost.”<sup>97</sup> Louise Day Hicks promised to “vigorously oppose” the scheme, arguing that busing would not alleviate the problems “for the Negro child” and might even make them worse.<sup>98</sup> Owen Kiernan expressed “grave doubts” that such an endeavor would cost only \$5 million. State officials shied away from the plan and instead pursued the central recommendations of the Kiernan Report. Logue was not incorrect, however, when he identified that the sizable number of suburban residents were dedicated to racial equality. Many of the local chapters of the Fair Housing Federation took Logue’s plan seriously and established study groups to explore and debate his recommendations.

The combination of the suburban exchange programs, Operation Exodus, and Logue’s plan inspired Brookline School Committee member Leon Trilling committee to make an appeal to Brookline to admit a group of African-American students into the district. An astrophysics and aeronautics professor at MIT, Trilling embodied many of the characteristics of the activists who served as the backbone of the grassroots liberal movement. The son of Jewish immigrants who had fled Poland in the 1930s, Trilling had moved to the United States when he was 16 and received both his B.A. and Ph.D. from Cal Tech. He came to the Boston area to work at MIT in the early 1950s and opted to settle in Brookline. After learning about the severe discrimination in the Boston Public Schools, Trilling began to recognize that even though he was in immigrant he had confronted no barriers in his own professional advancement. Yet, this “equality of opportunity” was not available to most African-Americans. This concern impelled him to

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<sup>97</sup> As We See It: Logue’s Scatteration,” *Boston Globe*, April 28, 1965.

<sup>98</sup> “Kiernan ‘Doubts Workability of Logue Busing Plan,” *Boston Traveler*, April 29, 1965.

first join his local fair housing group and then to run for the Brookline School Committee, where he became a strong advocate for integrated education.<sup>99</sup>

Trilling submitted a proposal to encourage Brookline to accept a group of African-American students, placing particular stress on the benefits of such a program the white children by preparing them for life in a “multi-racial state.”<sup>100</sup> In order to persuasively argue this point, the MIT Professor relied on the findings of the Kiernan Report, which had emphasized that “racial imbalance is also harmful to white children,” and that segregated schools “presented an inaccurate picture of life to both white and Negro children and prepares them inadequately for a multi-racial community, nation and world.”<sup>101</sup> The final wording of the Racial Imbalance Act had downplayed this point and mostly focused on the injurious effects of separation on black students. Trilling emphasized the harm segregation created for white children and made it the central thesis in his case to enroll black students into Brookline’s schools. This argument piqued the attention of both school committee members and local residents. The positive reaction convinced Trilling to widen the scope of his plan to include not just Roxbury and Brookline but metropolitan Boston as a whole. He arranged a meeting with the board of the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights in early November to discuss his vision for busing across the urban-suburban divide.

Logue’s metropolitan-based program would provide the template for the proposal, but Leon Trilling did make a few important revisions.<sup>102</sup> While Logue had pitched his

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<sup>99</sup> Clarence G. Williams, *Technology and the Dream: Reflections on the Black Experience at MIT, 1941-1999* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 2003), 231-232.

<sup>100</sup> Brookline Civil Rights Committee, B.C.C.R. Newsletter, Spring 1966, Box 1, Folder 51, PMR.

<sup>101</sup> Massachusetts State Board of Education, “Because It is Right—Educationally.”

<sup>102</sup> Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights, Minutes of Executive Board meeting, November 16, 1965, LCRC.

program as the sole remedy to the issue of racial imbalance, Trilling presented his version as a “temporary” and “partial solution.” The MIT professor expanded the reach to include all grades, not just middle school, but his suggestion of “1 or 2 Negro children per class in any suburban school district” fell even further below the tipping point of each suburban classroom than Logue’s blueprint.<sup>103</sup> Unlike the BRA head’s plan, Trilling did not suggest a list of towns to receive the nonwhite students based on a complicated formula, but rather he sought to involve only those communities that wanted to participate. Crafting the program as a “voluntary” means to create “equal opportunity,” Trilling’s suggestion that the plan be optional rather than compulsory constituted his most important alternation to Logue proposal. In doing so, Trilling repackaged a program rooted in the technocratic ideology of growth liberalism and placed it in distinctly racial liberal terms.

Through these revisions, the concept of metropolitan busing no longer appeared a top-down program of government bureaucrats, but a spontaneous and grassroots reaction of concerned suburbanites. The plan’s emphasis on free choice also provided a way to make the program palatable to black parents in Roxbury. Many members of the black community joined the clamors of opposition to Logue’s scatteration idea, resentful of the way it had depicted urban parents and their children as passive victims.<sup>104</sup> This revised version of the plan appealed to many parents and civil rights leaders since it enabled them, like the suburban districts, to participate by choice rather than force. Trilling’s alterations, therefore, revealed an astute understanding of how to transform a potentially

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<sup>103</sup> Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights, Minutes of Executive Board meeting, October 25, 1965, LCRC.

<sup>104</sup> Ruth Batson, interview by Katherine M. Shannon, Boston, Massachusetts, December 27, 1967, The Civil Rights Documentation Project Box 1, RB.

controversial vision of racial and spatial equality into ideas acceptable to both skeptical white suburbanites and African-Americans in the inner city. Although metropolitan busing plan now appeared as a bottom-up, grassroots, and optional solution, Trilling shared Logue's skepticism that most suburban areas would volunteer to financially underwrite the endeavor. Trilling's proposal, therefore, incorporated many of Logue's ideas about ways to secure federal, state, and philanthropic funding.

Trilling's proposal intrigued the executive board of the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights, which felt the program represented a logical extension of the growing suburban concern with the Boston schools. In a report to local chapters, Federation Civil Rights Coordinator Astrid Haussler summarized the chain of events that set the stage for the proposal of urban-suburban cooperation. She recounted that suburban interest in the Boston Public schools had been "initially awakened" by the Freedom Schools and Stayout, "further aroused" by the efforts to pass the Racial Imbalance Bill and "stimulated" by summer programs.<sup>105</sup> Haussler, therefore, arranged for representatives from twenty local chapters to attend a panel on November 4, 1965 at which Paul Parks moderated a discussion of the plan between Deputy Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Education Dr. Thomas Curtin, Trilling, and three suburban school officials. Six days later, the Sudbury Human Rights Council and League of Women Voters co-sponsored a meeting at which Parks, Edward Logue, and Boston School Committee member Thomas Eisenstadt debated the problems of the city's schools in front of an audience of 500 people. During the conversation, the concept of a

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<sup>105</sup> Ruth M. Batson, *The Black Educational Movement in Boston: A Sequence of Historical Events; A Chronology* (Boston: Northeastern University, 2001), 232.

metropolitan program once again circulated and elicited a favorable response from the audience.<sup>106</sup>

The positive reaction at these two forums propelled the Federation board into action. The day after the Sudbury meeting, Haussler and Elizabeth Keil worked through the organization's contact list verifying the support and interest of the local committees. Then, on November 15, Haussler, Keil, Aina Cutler of the Wellesley Fair Housing Practices Committee, and Layla Weisner, the League of Women Voters's State Chairman for Human Resources, met with Trilling at his MIT office to map a plan of attack. Around the same time, Paul Parks convened with State Department of Education officials Curtin and Joseph Killory, who interpreted the program as means to pursue the goals of "open enrollment" and "quality integrated education" and requested more information.<sup>107</sup> Parks also recruited his longtime NAACP comrade Ruth Batson, who was then serving as a MCAD commissioner, and Elizabeth Johnson, one of founders of Operation Exodus, to the nascent project's first official meeting. These various constituencies converged at Brookline High School on December 14, 1965, where Trilling laid out his plan.<sup>108</sup> Following the presentation, the audience pondered the possibilities of a two-way exchange and a comprehensive metropolitan school system. While many of the 65 participants shared a sense this could be the ultimate goal of the project, they recognized that such a project was currently "impractical politically" and instead decided to pursue a "short-range" plan of one-way busing.<sup>109</sup> The contributors also reached a consensus on

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<sup>106</sup> The Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity "Suburban Education For Urban Children [Internal Report]," c. 1967, Box 2, Folder 62, METCO.

<sup>107</sup> METCO, "Suburban Education For Urban Children [Internal Report]."

<sup>108</sup> METCO, "Suburban Education For Urban Children [Internal Report]."

<sup>109</sup> "INCREASING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES," December 14, 1965, Box 6, Folder 50, METCO; "Suburbs Push Plans for Busing," *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, December 16, 1965; Leon Trilling Letter, January 5, 1966, Box 28, Folder 1, METCO.

three basic conditions for the program: it must include funding from sources other than town budgets, the number of Boston student could not make the suburban classrooms reach a point that was “educationally unsound,” and that any student invited to join had to be allowed to complete his or her entire education in the suburban district. As the members of the audience set up subcommittees to address specific questions of funding, program planning, and community coordination, Haussler optimistically reported to the Federation after the meeting “a pilot program of this type could well be put into effect by the fall of 1966.”<sup>110</sup>

By the end of December, the organizers had decided to formally name the project the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO). The title succinctly captured both the urban-suburban dimensions of the endeavor as well as its emphasis on the racial liberal ideal of “equal opportunity.” Along with a new name, the founders refined METCO’s mission statement. The new plan called for bringing 200 non-white children with a range of academic abilities and economic backgrounds to a handful of districts in order to “provide a meaningful educational experience for city and suburban children in relation to integrated learning” and create a “partial solution to the issue of de facto segregation.”<sup>111</sup> The grant proposals the founders submitted to the federal government and private organizations further illustrate the suburban-centered ideology of racial and market-based individualism. Describing the problem that the project sought to counter, the authors of METCO’s application quoted at length from a background paper prepared for Kiernan Commission Report by psychologist Charles Pinderhughes.

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<sup>110</sup> Batson, *The Black Educational Movement in Boston*, 229.

<sup>111</sup> THE METROPOLITAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY (METCO), “Proposed Plan for Cooperative Program of Education Between Urban and Suburban Schools, Draft,” February 2, 1966, Box 47, Folder 16, METCO.

Providing a classic case of racial liberalism, Pinderhughes had argued that racial segregation had a “compartmentalizing” effect on both white and black children that interfered “with abilities to relate, form ideas and to process feelings.”<sup>112</sup> This emphasis on the emotional damage demonstrated one facet of suburban-centered vision of racial integration.

The insistent refusal to place any financial burden on the participating communities represented another. The decision of METCO to seek public and private funding upheld Logue’s logic about the unwillingness of suburban residents to outlay local tax funds. It also reflected the professional expertise and experiences of many of the organization’s charter members. The subcommittee charged with writing the funding applications consisted of many academics like Trilling who relied on federal and private grants to pursue their professional research and were thereby particularly adept at navigating these types of bureaucratic channels. The committee also included suburban school superintendents like Charles Brown and Robert Sperber of Newton and Brookline, respectively, both of whom represented districts with national reputations for academic excellence and endorsing experimental programs. After some discussion, the financing subcommittee decided Title III of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which underwrote “innovative or exemplary ways of attacking persistent problems” would be their best chance for funding.<sup>113</sup> Haussler captured the confidence of many of METCO’s early boosters when she declared that “the creative innovative nature of the project should make it relatively easy to secure initial funding.”<sup>114</sup> The application,

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<sup>112</sup> METCO, “Proposed Plan for Cooperative Program of Education Between Urban and Suburban Schools, Draft.”

<sup>113</sup> Leon Trilling to Benjamin Benderson, September 21, 1967, Box 8, Folder 58, METCO.

<sup>114</sup> Batson, *The Black Educational Movement in Boston*, 229.

nevertheless, stipulated that a school system must sponsor the plan and Brown volunteered himself and the town of Newton to do so. The central role of the school officials like Brown demonstrated the ways in which the organization's board and purpose combined a set of figures and issues rare for a nonprofit organization. The involvement of these administrators also distinguished METCO from Operation Exodus. Despite the fact that the two programs offered similar services, Exodus was often unable or ineligible for many of federal or private grants since it lacked both a resourceful executive board of trained professionals and sympathetic city school officials willing to sponsor its applications. This difference points to one of the reasons why Operation Exodus financially floundered while METCO flourished.

In the late spring the U.S. Department of Education approved a two-year grant of \$265,000 to cover the tuition and transportation costs of METCO. The project also received a \$100,000 check from the Carnegie Corporation to pay for the staff salaries and leasing office space. The Massachusetts Department of Education granted its Assistant Director of the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Joseph Killory a sabbatical so that he could assume the position of Executive Director. The uncontested decision to appoint Killory as the inaugural director lent METCO legitimacy as an educational program as well as implicit sanction from state. Ruth Batson decided to leave her position as MCAD Commissioner to become Associate Director, and Elizabeth Johnson of Operation Exodus accepted the role as Staff Assistant. The organization also established a Board of Directors, which Trilling chaired, and included school officials, civil rights activists, and other leaders of the suburban fair housing movement.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> The signatories on METCO's official articles of organization included many individuals who had long been active in the suburban fair housing movement such as Astrid Haussler, Helene LeVine, Edward

Throughout the winter and spring this newly formed staff and board comprised of school officials, civil rights veterans, and grassroots suburban activists met in the evenings in empty MIT lecture halls and the Brookline High School auditorium in order to continue to formulate their plans.

### **Getting the Buses Rolling**

Suburban participation marked METCO's first order of business. Throughout the winter and spring of 1966, the Board of Directors attempted to persuade school committees in their respective communities to join. These activities and the vocal membership of the local fair housing groups clearly helped establish a favorable climate for the program and reinforced the ways in which METCO program built directly upon the organizational and ideological scaffolding of the Federation. In order to appeal to a white middle-class suburban sensibility, many of these advocates pitched the program in a language of low taxes, quality education, and equal opportunity. Proponents in places like Wellesley, Newton, and Lexington asserted the federal government would assume the financial responsibility and the program would not burden local tax rates. Assuaging concerns about overcrowding, the supporters reassured the suburban school committees and administrators that they would retain wide discretion over the number of students accepted into their districts and their classroom placements.

The argument that METCO had specific educational and social value for white middle-class students by preparing them to operate in a diverse and multi-racial society constituted the most effective component of the promotional campaign. This point fused

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Barshak, and Elizabeth Keil, see Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Articles of Organization, March 24, 1966, Box 1, Folder 59, METCO.

many suburbanites' abstract concerns over the problems of racial and spatial inequality with their more immediate worries that their tax dollars provided the best possible education for their children. Reiterating Trilling's initial case, these METCO advocates drew on the Kiernan Commission's findings to suggest that school segregation harmed children on both sides of the metropolitan divide. One pamphlet circulated among interested suburban districts declared, "Suburban white youngsters have been cut off from contact with young children of races, to the detriment of the education and total development of members of both groups." Further outlining the "benefits for suburban children," the pamphlet then presented an argument that would later become a key rationale for the survival of Affirmative Action programs suggesting the inclusion of a few African-Americans in each suburban classroom would help prepare white pupils to succeed in a diverse society. "Suburban children expect to work and learn with Negro youngsters," it contended, "And expect to be provided with educational experiences which will better prepare them for life in a multi-racial world."<sup>116</sup> Superintendent Brown agreed, telling the Newton School Committee that the admission of black pupils would aid in the education of local white children who were "deprived" in the sense that "they have no realistic contact with other parts of our society."<sup>117</sup> The discursive shift of disadvantage and deprivation away from black inner-city youth and to white middle-class suburban students proved incredibly effective at goading municipalities to join.

The plan received a largely positive response in the initial communities approached. The school committees of Newton, Brookline, Lexington, and Wellesley all quickly signed on followed by Arlington, Braintree, Lincoln, and Concord. Many

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<sup>116</sup> METROPOLITAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY, "What You'll Want to Know About the METCO program," November 1966, Box 2, Folder 5, METCO.

<sup>117</sup> "Discuss Plans for Hub Students Here," *Newton Graphic*, January 27, 1966.

residents praised the decision as a sign of their community's enlightened progressivism. Others recognized the program as a chance for students "to break down the barriers of misunderstanding between blacks and whites" and "see democracy in action."<sup>118</sup> These endorsements were not entirely universal. Some citizens feared the inclusion of the "disadvantaged" students would weaken the academic standing of their currently "top-notch" and nationally ranked school systems. Yet none of these dissenters caused any town to forgo participation in the program.<sup>119</sup> The lack of sustained opposition to METCO was in some ways remarkable given the protracted and violent battle that occurred over busing in Boston a few years later.

This support underscores how the features of METCO, particularly its limited size and lack of local financial commitment, tapped into and reified an agenda of suburban homeownership. METCO's emphasis on individual interracial contact as opposed to structural intervention in the market economy represented the type of government response to racial inequality that many white suburban residents favored. One Lexington resident articulated his willingness to support this kind of "person-to-person" initiative rather than "impersonal programs like welfare, urban renewal and antipoverty programs."<sup>120</sup> Despite their commitment to the ideals of equality, many residents even in traditionally liberal communities clung to a political outlook of middle-class entitlements and market-based individualism. As a result they supported one-way, voluntary programs like METCO, which did not have the hassles or financial sacrifices of a more systemic

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<sup>118</sup> "Communications," *Wellesley Townsman*, March 10, 1966.

<sup>119</sup> In Wellesley a small group of residents did form "Operation Challenge METCO" and raised objection to the fact that school committee had approved the project without consulting the wider community through a referendum or town meeting vote. The school board and most local residents, nevertheless, ignored the arguments of this so-called insurgency and the plans for the program went ahead, see "Operation Challenge METCO," No Date, Box 8, Folder 99, METCO.

<sup>120</sup> Arthur E. Bryson, Jr. "An Open Letter to the Lexington School Committee," *Lexington Minute-Man*, January 13, 1966.

fully metropolitan solution. This program success, like the fair housing movement, depended on appealing to many middle-class white suburban residents interpretation of racial discrimination in terms of personal prejudice rather than structural inequality.

METCO's host family program bore the clear influence of the fair housing movement. The idea did not appear in Edward Logue's initial proposal. However, it represented a crucial way in which the suburban activists remade the technocrat's vision of metropolitan busing into their own. METCO organizers stipulated that the suburban communities match each child from Boston with the family of a student from his or her school, grade, and preferably class to serve as a suburban "host." The planners envisioned that host families would provide offer "a second home" in the suburbs as "a place to go for lunch, or if he is ill, or he desire to become in a social way in the community."<sup>121</sup> This idea did have certain practical purposes, particularly in towns where students ate lunch at home. Yet it also directly echoed and extended the individualist and racial liberal ideology at the heart of the suburban fair housing movement by emphasizing one-on-one interaction as the best way to erase and transcend the boundaries of racial and spatial inequality. It also revealed the literal and figurative domestic ideology underpinning the suburban commitment to civil rights as it rested on the assumption that women would be at home feed and supervise the children after school.

The Federation supplied METCO not only with its board members and grassroots infrastructure and ideology but also its adroit lobbying skills. Almost immediately after Leon Trilling presented his idea to the Federation board, members realized that the ambitious program needed legislative sanction. Helene LeVine and the legislative committee drafted a bill to legally allow children to attend schools in cities or towns other

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<sup>121</sup> "Proposed Plan for Cooperative Program of Education Between Urban and Suburban Schools."

than that which they resided. Senate Majority leader Kevin Harrington submitted the bill to the Massachusetts legislature in December 1965 even before the organization had formally agreed on a name. The purpose of the legislation was not just to provide METCO with a sound legal basis, but also a source of future financial subsidy. The organizers of the legislative drive recognized that federal and philanthropic funding were both short-term and unreliable and anticipated that the program would need state money for the future. The “METCO bill,” an extension of the Racial Imbalance Act, enabled the State Board of Education to financially support any program where one town adopted a plan to assist in elimination the racial imbalance of another town. The Federation lobbyists ensure the successful passage of the METCO bill.<sup>122</sup>

In addition to developing this legislative authorization, the METCO founders also sought the endorsement of the Boston School Committee. Since the program had alternative sources of funding and functioned as a non-profit, it did not actually require any official approval of the Committee. Yet the board and staff of METCO believed that such an affirmation would help further solidify its legitimacy.<sup>123</sup> On March 28, 1966, the Boston School Committee voted 3-2 in favor of the program, but its approval included the contingent clause “that this program shall no require the expenditure of funds of the City of Boston.”<sup>124</sup> Like the suburban enthusiasm for the project, the School Committee’s support, therefore, derived from the fact that it both cost the city no money

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<sup>122</sup> Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights, “Report on Executive Board Meetings of 2/6/66 and 2/15/66,” February 1966, LCRC.

<sup>123</sup> Ruth Batson, Katherine M. Shannon Interview.

<sup>124</sup> Boston School Committee, “In School Committee,” March 28, 1966 Box 8, Folder 4, METCO.

and provided the body with a means to appear committed to alleviating racial imbalance.<sup>125</sup>

While many members of the METCO board sought to secure these state and local level endorsements, Ruth Batson assumed responsibility for raising awareness and support within Boston's black community. At first glance, Batson appeared an unlikely convert to the suburban-centered initiative since her commitment to alleviating the inadequacies in the Boston Public Schools had been so vocal and longstanding that it had earned her the reputation as the "de facto lady."<sup>126</sup> However, Batson never believed that METCO provided the sole answer to the problem of racial imbalance, and she always acknowledged that transporting 220 children to the suburbs would do nothing for the vast majority of African-American students that remained in Boston.<sup>127</sup> Yet, she recognized that METCO offered both improved educational opportunities for the small number of children involved as well as a means to potentially publicly shame the Boston School Committee into addressing the racial inequality of the city's schools. Her support for and involvement in METCO, therefore, emerged less from a deep-rooted commitment to an abstract ideal of integration and more because she understood its material and symbolic potential to gain quality education for black students in Boston.

Batson became an extremely effective spokesperson for METCO. Her previous activism had earned her a great deal of respect and trust among Boston's black

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<sup>125</sup> In fact a profound perversion of program's goal Boston would later count the participating students as part its racial imbalance compliance plan. See Mel King, *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development* (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 87.

<sup>126</sup> Ruth Batson, Mel King Interview.

<sup>127</sup> Batson told Massachusetts Advisory Commission to the United States Commission on Civil Rights 1966 that she did not think METCO solved the problem of racial imbalance, declaring "I think racial imbalance is so deeply rooted that the taking of 220 will certainly not do anything for the large number left behind in the Roxbury area and I for one, am very concerned about what is happening with the children who are still in the community." Quoted in King, *Chain of Change*, 86-87.

community. She also understood what aspects of the program to accentuate in order to make METCO appealing to potentially skeptical members of the city's African-American population. In presentations at Roxbury churches and civic centers, she presented METCO as a temporary rather than permanent program with only a few years of funding, and assured parents that the students would return to the city's public schools "as soon as Boston 'straightens out.'"<sup>128</sup> She also stressed that since the program paid their tuition the black children would not be suburban "charity cases."<sup>129</sup> This feature combined a faith in both government intervention and self-determination undergirding the black freedom struggle locally and nationally.<sup>130</sup>

Batson proved equally skillful at assuaging the anxieties of white suburbanites. At meetings sponsored by either local fair housing groups or METCO coordinating committees, she often couched her discussion of the program in the racial liberal language of equal opportunity and quality education. Batson often adopted the apolitical language and imagery of a concerned parent rather than the potentially polarizing discourse of the black freedom struggle. She explained, "We want to better our entire area and we believe the best way to do it is educate all our population on an equal basis."<sup>131</sup> In fact, she would repeatedly publicly state that METCO served educational rather than civil rights goals. While this distinction might have been meaningless for

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<sup>128</sup> Ruth Batson and Robert Hayden, "A History of METCO: A Suburban Education for Boston's Urban Students," 1987, Box 2, Folder 6.

<sup>129</sup> Ruth Batson, "The METCO Story," *The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History*, October 11, 1985, Box 1, RB.

<sup>130</sup> In the 1967 interview with a staff member of the Civil Rights Documentation Project, Batson strongly asserted her belief in federal intervention and solutions to the school situation." Ruth Batson, Katherine M. Shannon Interview.

<sup>131</sup> Claude Lewis, "Boston Takes Step Toward School Integration by Busing," *The Sunday Bulletin*, Philadelphia, June 11, 1967.

many members of the black community, it helped make METCO appear less threatening to suburban residents.<sup>132</sup>

In addition to speaking at these meetings, during the summer of 1966 Batson and her assistant Elizabeth Johnson worked to recruit prospective students. They notified civil rights and church groups about the application process and placed advertisements on the local R&B station. Batson and Johnson interviewed every one of the 600 applicants and their parents and then attempted the arduous process of selecting the 220 students to comprise METCO's inaugural class. Using a complex set of criteria, the METCO staff members sought to create a "representative" cohort that had a balance of boys and girls, a range of economic backgrounds, family sizes, and a cross-section of city's predominately black neighborhoods.<sup>133</sup> In keeping with the definition of race in both the Racial Imbalance Act and the METCO grant applications, the planners selected only African-American children with the exception of the sole white applicant whom they opted to accept.<sup>134</sup> Finally, they tried to admit students from a range of different academic achievement levels, although they decided to exclude any student with a serious learning disability or other significant educational or disciplinary problems.<sup>135</sup> This final goal sought to assuage the concerns of many skeptical white and blacks that the program enabled the suburbs to "steal" the best black students from the Boston.

The participating suburban districts provided the METCO staff with a range of available spaces. Brookline and Newton, for example, offered 75 and 50 respectively in a variety of grades. Lincoln provided just 10 seats in kindergarten. Batson and Johnson

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<sup>132</sup> Ruth Batson, King interview.

<sup>133</sup> Batson and Hayden, "A History of METCO."

<sup>134</sup> As far as I know, she was the only white student who has participated in the program.

<sup>135</sup> This rule would later change when the state passed new legislation to fund special education.

then worked to match the open seats with the location preferences that parents had selected on their children's application. The list of preferences reveals that the prospective parents sought inclusion in the program more for its quality educational opportunities than a commitment to integration.<sup>136</sup> The hierarchy of choices imposed a specific racial and economic grid on metropolitan Boston. Just as the name Roxbury evoked a particularly racial and economic taxonomy of association for white suburban residents, the names of the various suburbs had their own specific meanings in the minds of much of Boston's black community.<sup>137</sup> Brookline, Newton, and Wellesley sat at the top of most parents' lists because of their proximity to the city and national reputations of their respective schools systems. Many parents associated Lexington and Concord with their historical reputation of tolerance and enlightenment and thereby they followed close behind. The applicants expressed more reticence about Lincoln since it was one of the wealthiest towns in Massachusetts, a 45-60 minute bus ride from Boston's predominately black neighborhoods, and the only town involved that had not even a single black resident. Yet if Lincoln appeared too well heeled, many parents eschewed Arlington and Braintree for not being 'elite' enough, and they represented the least popular choices.<sup>138</sup> The cognitive cartography embedded in these preferences, therefore, illustrates the racial, class, and spatial assumptions which both white and black participants brought to METCO.

The METCO staff firmed up their plans in the late summer, sending out acceptance letters and placement notifications, holding orientation sessions for entering

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<sup>136</sup> Batson and Hayden, "A History of METCO."

<sup>137</sup> For on the ways race and class came to assume spatial meanings in the postwar period see Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 120-121, Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 9-10.

<sup>138</sup> Batson and Hayden, "A History of METCO."

students and suburban school principals and teachers, and mapping bus routes from city and into the various communities. The first day of classes in early September 1966 went smoothly and with the exception of one minor incident in Wellesley the students experienced none of the racial tension for which the participants and staff braced themselves.<sup>139</sup> In fact, the program first confronted logistical rather than racial problems. The staffs backgrounds in education administration and grassroots organizing made them more adept at preparing a federal grant application and recruiting participants than for coordinating of bus pick ups and drop offs. The operation of the buses created constant difficulty for the program in its first years. Despite these kinks, METCO both yielded great deal of praise from school principals, suburban and city parents, and state politicians, and attracted a swell of interest from urban students and suburban towns wanting to get involved.<sup>140</sup> Many boosters sought to increase involvement by highlighting the mutual opportunities of the program for white and black children. “The black urban child has gone to a vastly better educational setting in the suburbs,” David Sargent of Wellesley encouraged, “while the suburban white child has had a multi-racial experience that will prepare him for the multi-racial world.”<sup>141</sup> By its third year in operation, the state of Massachusetts had assumed financial responsibility and Batson had become executive director.

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<sup>139</sup> Batson and Hayden, “A History of METCO.”

<sup>140</sup> The organization’s 1967 report to the Carnegie Corporation includes many samples of this positive feedback, METCO, “Suburban Education For Urban Children [Internal Report].”

<sup>141</sup> David R. Sargent to Francis W. Sargent, March 26, 1969, Box 2, Folder 73, METCO.

## “Shaping Up”

During its first three years METCO remained a small program, transporting just 386 students to 14 communities.<sup>142</sup> However, the combination of the release of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder’s controversial Kerner Report and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the spring of 1968, in the words of Batson, “sharply changed the picture.”<sup>143</sup> Many residents viewed the program as a tangible way to help ease the nation’s urban problems, and in the span of two months 36 towns voted to submit plans for involvement and those already participating decided to increase their level of commitment. By June 1968, these suburban communities had officially offered a total of 1200 seats for children from Boston. Many towns also opted to reduce their tuition fees in order to spread out the state funding to more communities and children.<sup>144</sup> METCO staff member Katherine Jones successfully convinced the Newton school committee that reducing tuition constituted one way that the community could accept “local responsibility” for “the imperatives placed before it by the President’s Commission Report on Civil Disorders.”<sup>145</sup> These efforts established an important future precedent and earned the praise of the Governor and other state officials as a sign that the suburbs were willing to accept financial responsibility for the larger problems of the city.<sup>146</sup> “All of us in Massachusetts should take pride in this program,” the Governor later publicly declared, “which has quietly and effectively demonstrated that integrated education is

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<sup>142</sup> METCO, 1969 Annual Report, Box 1, Folder 7, METCO.

<sup>143</sup> Leon Trilling, Ruth M. Batson to Thomas J. Curtin, December 11, 1968, Box 8, Folder 19, METCO.

<sup>144</sup> METCO, MEMORANDUM NO. II: REPORT OF SCHOOL SYSTEMS WAIVING TUITION AND/OR REDUCING TUITION, c. May 1968, Box 8, Folder 69, METCO.

<sup>145</sup> Catherine Jones, NEWTON METCO COMMITTEE, April 1968, Box 9, Folder 68, METCO.

<sup>146</sup> Governor Francis Sargent Statement to the Committee on Education. April 1, 1970, Box 34, Press Releases Folder. Records of the Administration of Governor Francis W. Sargent, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, MA (hereafter: “FWS”).

possible, that city-suburban cooperation is possible, and cooperation between the state government and the local communities is both possible and productive.”<sup>147</sup>

Despite this heightened attention to the program, by the late 1960s the METCO leadership found it increasingly difficult to balance its dual goals. Brookline Superintendent Robert Sperber observed that METCO had succeeded in its first goal of gaining a better education for black children, but had confronted more difficulty in creating positive racial understanding between white suburban children and black students from Boston. He surmised, “It is not as simple as we once thought, just putting black and white kids together.”<sup>148</sup> In the late 1960s, racial tensions had increased among the students especially at the high school level with a few reported physical fights and many other tense verbal exchanges.<sup>149</sup> Mrs. Clarence Good, a Lexington host parent, observed: “it’s unquestionably easier for younger children to get along.” Ruth Batson elaborated on this statement, noting that “With little kids you have simple problems; with bigger kids, more complicated problems.”<sup>150</sup> Many older black students began to more honestly voice their frustrations and sense of alienation at being one of only faces of color in suburban schools. “The white kids here do not know the black kids,” one Lexington student asserted, “because there aren’t enough black kids to integrate the

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<sup>147</sup> Governor Francis Sargent Statement to the Committee on Education, April 1, 1970, Box 34, Press Releases Folder, FWS.

<sup>148</sup> Phyllis Myers, “Boston’s METCO: What To Do Until the Solution Arrives,” *City*, National Urban Coalition, January/February, 1971, Box 13, Folder 33, METCO.

<sup>149</sup> For example at Lexington High School a fist-fight erupted along racial lines in March 1969 and the METCO students felt that the white students “were out to get ‘em.” METCO, METCO EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES, March 12, 1969, Box 5, Folder 23, METCO.

<sup>150</sup> Lisa Hammel, “Buses That Bring Together Two Separate and Unequal Worlds,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1969.

school.”<sup>151</sup> The variety of complaints underscored just how limited a remedy the program provided to the problems of racial and spatial separation.

Several participants began to challenge the implications of the host family program that made them feel like guests and “thankful” to their white peer. “They should be thankful to us,” one METCO student attending Lexington High maintained, “We’re really educating them because a lot of the kids never saw a black kid before. They only saw people like Aunt Jemima.”<sup>152</sup> These comments countered many white suburban parents and journalists who signaled the host family program as the most positive component of the initiative. For instance, a 1969 *New York Times* article highlighted this part as a rare example of racial understanding in the United States. The article described in detail a get-together between Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Williams of Roxbury and Mrs. and Mrs. Alexander Neiley of Lincoln. The couples chatted over sherry in the host family’s living room overlooking two acres of woods, a tennis court and a horse-filled barn as their daughters Rhonda Williams and Susan Neiley played a game of monopoly in the playroom. The scene itself highlighted the types of racial and class disjunctions at the heart of the program.<sup>153</sup>

The celebration of these moments of interracial discussion also obscured that though the program placed a strong emphasis on equality, the African-American students involved bore much of the burden for participation. Most of the participants from the city had to attend school away from their neighborhood, in a largely white and affluent community, commuting by bus at least a half-hour away. This experience led many METCO students to feel like outsiders both in the suburbs and Boston’s black

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<sup>151</sup> “Black-White Student Dialogue Probes Value of METCO Busing,” *Boston Globe*, May 25, 1969.

<sup>152</sup> “Black-White Student Dialogue Probes Value of METCO Busing,” *Boston Globe*, May 25, 1969.

<sup>153</sup> Hammel, “Buses That Bring Together Two Separate and Unequal Worlds.”

community.<sup>154</sup> “It’s a lonesome thing to be a Metco student,” Bernice Bullock, who had attended Marblehead High, observed. “Now that I’m at Boston University. I’m much happier.”<sup>155</sup> Many METCO participants experienced a sense of guilt that they had betrayed their neighborhoods and felt they should have stayed to help the fight to achieve educational equality there. Likewise, some students protested the inequity in resources between the city and suburbs. “I don’t see why they (the suburban community) should have everything,” one student stated, “I’m going to get a good education so that when I grew up, I can see that Roxbury has just as much as they do.”<sup>156</sup>

Batson recognized that this rise in discontent and sense of separatism had a variety of sources. She attributed some of this friction to the fact that the suburban schools taught critical thinking skills rather than rote learning. This new educational style encouraged METCO students to be more assertive than when they had first enrolled. She stressed long hours on the bus to and from the suburbs helped students furthered the unity among the children involved and heightened their sense of difference from their white suburban classmates. Batson recognized that the most important factor motivating this sense of separatism, nevertheless, came from increased concentration of the wider black freedom struggle on developing a sense of racial pride. In response to the reports of racial friction and student dissatisfaction, Batson contended that “the black community, 1969, is a far different community and METCO has felt the effect.”<sup>157</sup> Ruth Batson later observed more succinctly and directly, “The children pulled apart as the black movement grew.”<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Susan Eaton’s *The Other Boston Busing Story* discusses this sentiment at length.

<sup>155</sup> “Graduates Assess Program,” *Boston Globe*, March 26, 1972.

<sup>156</sup> Ruth M. Batson, “A VIEW FROM THE TOP 1968-1969,” c. 1969, Box 13, Folder 32, METCO.

<sup>157</sup> Batson, “A VIEW FROM THE TOP.”

<sup>158</sup> Myers, “Boston’s METCO: What To Do Until the Solution Arrives.”

The response to these racial tensions exposes white and black leaders different definitions of the program's goals and purpose. Many of the white suburban leaders understood these changes within a racial liberal framework of individualized interaction. Leon Trilling contended that the racial frictions "might be a blessing in disguise." He declared that through these encounters "blacks and whites gain a more realistic understanding of the problems, aspirations, and life-styles of each other."<sup>159</sup> Other suburban liberals shared this view, stressing that the "Roxbury students" gave "suburban residents a healthy glimpse of the turmoil in the ghetto."<sup>160</sup> In contrast, many of the program's primarily African-American staff had never articulated a commitment to the ideal of integration and had always understood the voluntary program as a means to provide quality educational opportunities for a small number of black children. They saw the high number of METCO graduates who went on to higher education as the clearest indication of the program's success.<sup>161</sup>

When students issued these new demands and critiques, the African-American staff pushed for the organization to place more programmatic emphasis on fostering a sense of positive black identity for the children involved in the late 1960s. METCO established tutoring and psychological services at its central offices in Roxbury intended to address the unique educational and emotional demands of its students.<sup>162</sup> The program also pressured suburban schools to implement more African-American history and

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<sup>159</sup> Tonnie Katz, "Three Years Later—METCO is Working," *Patriot Ledger*, May 28, 1969.

<sup>160</sup> Katz, "Three Years Later—METCO is Working."

<sup>161</sup> METCO, 1970 Annual Report. For instance, in 1970 48 of 54 METCO seniors continued their education and 40 attended four-year nationally recognized colleges or universities.

<sup>162</sup> The organization used also additional funds it had secured from the state to establish a new position of the METCO coordinator. The job description called for a person of color employed in participating school districts to serve both as a link between the program and the suburbs and to provide a sympathetic face and ear for METCO students. By 1971, the program employed 13 full-time and 15 part-time coordinators spread throughout the suburbs, see "Black-White Student Dialogue Probes Value of METCO Busing."

literature in the curricula, and recruit more black teachers.<sup>163</sup> Robert C. Hayden, the executive director who replaced Ruth Batson upon her resignation at the end of 1969, made fostering positive black identity among METCO students his primary objective. “We do not want black youngsters to lose their identity while in the METCO experience,” he stressed. Hayden, therefore, sought to shift the program’s definition of racial integration away from an individualist focus on the similarities between white and blacks and towards an appreciation of racial, economic and spatial differences.<sup>164</sup> Hayden encouraged suburban school districts to solicit the advice of METCO participants in revising their curricula noting that “black students can bring to the classroom new perceptions of urban life and the social problems we all must face both in Massachusetts and the rest of the country.”<sup>165</sup>

Most suburban parents and school administrators readily embraced the multicultural materials, tutoring services and teacher training as another way of broadening the education of white middle-class children. Katherine Jones, Newton’s METCO director observed, “Newton kid’s are in a vacuum...they are getting an unreal picture of the world.”<sup>166</sup> Jones emphasized the program’s heightened attention to racial differences gave these white students increased exposure to the realities of the inner city. Discussing the new requirement, a white mother from the town of Needham succinctly asserted, “the schools would be worse without METCO.”<sup>167</sup> With this attitude in mind, the organization appropriated its new racial consciousness into a sellable attribute to

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<sup>163</sup> In 1968 the organization began to hold an annual Conference on Curriculum Materials for the Study of Black History that offered a range of sources for teaching about the African-American experience, METCO, 1969 Annual Report.

<sup>164</sup> Evelyn Keene, “Director Rates Metco,” *Boston Globe*, March 26, 1972.

<sup>165</sup> Keene, “Director Rates Metco.”

<sup>166</sup> Carole Fischberg, “Kathy Jones on METCO: ‘a drop in the bucket,’” *Newton Times*, February 2, 1972.

<sup>167</sup> Myers, “Boston’s METCO: What To Do Until the Solution Arrives.”

suburban communities. In the early 1970s, the organization circulated a pamphlet within the suburbs entitled “We Wish You could meet a METCO Boy and Girl.”<sup>168</sup> The pamphlet alerted prospective communities that METCO provided suburban children with a “new appreciation, a new awareness, a new and realistic understanding of our multi-racial world.” It also contended that METCO provided unique advantages to suburban teachers as “a challenge to their professional skills” stressing “the backgrounds that inner-city children and youth bring to the classroom have provided important new resources.” The pamphlet quoted one teacher who somewhat paternalistically observed, “Having a METCO student in the class peeps things up. They’re not afraid to be square. They haven’t learned not to raise their hands and say something.”<sup>169</sup> The pamphlet did not mention the widespread sense of alienation among METCO students. Instead, the literature still presented its benefits largely within a racial liberal framework, citing one METCO child’s color-blind observation: “With your friends you can talk about everything it doesn’t matter whether you live in Wellesley or Boston.”

The program sent a very different message of its purpose to urban black students and parents than it did to whites living in the suburbs. METCO distributed a student handbook in the early 1970s that declared: “Opportunity is the key word in the name.” Recounting METCO’s history, the booklet explained that the program’s founders envisioned it as a chance for black children to gain a better education, not mentioning the dual goal of fostering integration anywhere in the instruction manual. The handbook focused primarily on the special responsibility and burden the students had assumed by participating in the program and punctuated the themes of community control and self-

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<sup>168</sup> METCO, “Questions & Answers About METCO” c. 1970, Box 2, Folder 35, METCO.

<sup>169</sup> METCO, “Questions & Answers About METCO”

determination. In the handbook and in other forums, Hayden and the staff stressed that though the students were not “civil rights leaders,” their participation did have political consequences.<sup>170</sup> “You are in a unique position to offer your ideas, energy and talent to your suburban school community and most important to your own Black community,” the handbook instructed. “It is expected that you will take full advantage this opportunity as YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK YOUTH and become successful METCO students.”<sup>171</sup> The handbook provided specific instructions about how to handle racial incidents telling students they were not expected “to turn the other cheek!” Yet it cautiously warned them to “think critically” and acknowledge that these types of incidents often created negative stereotypes about black people. In line with these instructions, METCO adopted as its motto for students “Whatever You Are—METCO is!!” This slogan had a double meaning rooted in the traditions of both community control and the politics of respectability and constituted a definitive departure from the messages and expression the organization offered to white suburbanites. The program, nevertheless, continued to try and keep its messages to white and black participants in a tense and often contradictory, but, workable balance.

### **Armor Report**

METCO’s struggle to maintain this dual agenda confronted new difficulties following the release of a controversial social scientific report called the “Evidence on Busing” or “Armor Report.” In the spring of 1972, Harvard sociologist David Armor announced the findings of a study to be published in the summer edition of the national

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<sup>170</sup> Keene, “Director Rates Metco.”

<sup>171</sup> METCO, METCO Handbook, c. 1970, Box 1 Folder 51, METCO.

periodical *The Public Interest*, which raised serious doubts about the benefits of integration.<sup>172</sup> Although he discussed integration programs in a number of northern cities including Hartford, New Haven, White Plains and Ann Arbor, he relied most heavily on an earlier study he conducted about METCO called “Attitudes and Attitudinal Changes of Secondary School METCO Students.” Between 1968 and 1970 Armor, with the program’s approval, had circulated a series of questionnaires to METCO participants and compared them with the answers of a control group comprised of their siblings. The questionnaire had asked the students questions such as “Do you sympathize with the Black Panthers, or not” and used affirmative answers to conclude that METCO participants had become “increasingly skeptical of the idea of school integration” and had begun “to embrace ideological movements which stress black separatism and control.”<sup>173</sup> The responses led Armor to deduce that “integration heightens racial identity and consciousness, enhances ideologies that promote racial segregation, and reduces opportunities for actual contact between the races.”<sup>174</sup>

These findings directly contradicted the main ideological underpinnings of postwar racial liberalism. Armor’s report challenged the basic ideas of leading liberal sociologists such as Gunnar Myrdal, Kenneth Clark, Gordon Allport and James Coleman, a direct influence on METCO, who long promoted that “social contact” between groups would reduce racial prejudice and bring equality. The Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision had essentially codified this theory as the goal of school

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<sup>172</sup> By the time, the *Public Interest* published the piece, it had to include a headnote observing that that “rarely can an unpublished academic article have attracted as much attention and publicity as has this analysis of busing.” David J. Armor, “The Evidence on Busing,” *The Public Interest*, (Summer 1972), 90.

<sup>173</sup> David J. Armor, “METCO STUDENT ATTITUDES AND ASPIRATIONS: A THREE-YEAR EVALUATION,” October 1970, Box 32, Folder 12, METCO.

<sup>174</sup> Armor, “The Evidence on Busing,” 102.

integration. In direct repudiation, Armor suggested a “contact-conflict” theory in which black students who attended predominately white schools became more aware of the cultural and economic differences that separated them from their classmates. He declared that while the black community might believe that the gain in educational opportunity outweighed the benefits of integration. He insisted, “if blacks and whites are ever to live in an integrated culture, they must begin learning and accepting their differences; and this cannot happen without contact.”<sup>175</sup> Armor concluded, however, that this evidence demonstrated that “mandatory busing for the purposes of improvement and interracial harmony is not effective and should not be adopted at this time.”<sup>176</sup>

When the *Boston Globe* announced Armor’s evidence in a front-page article with the headline “Busing Found to Have Backfired,” it produced a litany of immediate and angry responses at the local and national level. Many activists and academics and concerned citizens feared the report would undermine the ongoing struggle to desegregate the Boston Public Schools. Leading African-American activist Mel King criticized Armor for addressing integration in sociological and psychological terms, unlike most blacks who “are talking of integration in political and economic problems.”<sup>177</sup> King and his allies also denounced the report as another example “of so-called liberals who come into the ghetto conducting academic citizens of the misery of black citizens.” Armor defended himself by saying “personally I am not prepared to abandon integration as a goal” and described himself as a “liberal.”<sup>178</sup> Several other academics disagreed with this self-assessment. Thomas Pettigrew, a former student of

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<sup>175</sup> David J. Armor, “The Evidence on Busing,” 115.

<sup>176</sup> David J. Armor, “The Evidence on Busing,” 115.

<sup>177</sup> Wood and Fields, “Black Leaders Angered by Busing Report.”

<sup>178</sup> John B. Wood, “Avowed Integrationist probes busing, finds it has backfired,” *Boston Globe*, May 22, 1972.

Allport, a leading authority on race relations, and Armor's colleague in the Harvard sociology department, led these charges.<sup>179</sup> In a subsequent issue of the *Public Interest* Pettigrew and a group of other social scientists prepared published a point-by-point critique of Armor's "evidence on busing."<sup>180</sup> The rebuttal maintained Armor had relied on faulty evidence about METCO to present "a distorted and incomplete review of this politically charged topic."<sup>181</sup> They claimed that the research had little to do with busing beyond its title and took issue with Armor using a voluntary one-way program to draw broad conclusions about mandatory two-way integration. The authors also found many weaknesses in Armor's actual research, which helped further diffuse the impact of these findings.

The representatives of METCO provided Armor with his most strongly worded criticism. These responses, nevertheless, revealed the differing interpretations of integration among the program's participants.<sup>182</sup> Like Pettigrew, the representatives of METCO challenged the basic parameters of the study, particularly that it focused on a small sample of secondary students and that the unique program should not be used as a proxy to draw conclusions about mandatory desegregation. Board President and Wellesley business executive David Sargent declared that METCO represented "an island of cooperation and trust and mutual support in a time when polarization and dissention seem to be the rule" and "unique institution" that deserved "the support it has always had from black and white, urban and suburban, grassroots and political leadership."<sup>183</sup> Robert

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<sup>179</sup> Robert Reinhold, "Study Critical of Busing Scored," *New York Times*, June 8, 1972.

<sup>180</sup> Thomas F. Pettigrew, et al, "Busing: A Review of the Evidence," *Public Interest* (Fall, 1972).

<sup>181</sup> Pettigrew, et al, "Busing: A Review of the Evidence," 88.

<sup>182</sup> METCO had willingly participated in Armor's study and even used some of its findings in a press release on the program, METCO, Press Release, March 8, 1970, Box 10, Folder 44, METCO.

<sup>183</sup> David R. Sargent, METCO Responds to the Globe, 1972, Box 1, Folder 57, METCO.

Hayden denounced the study on slightly different grounds. Recapitulating many of his earlier comments, he emphasized that improved education not improved race relations was the primary purpose of METCO.<sup>184</sup> The executive director also raised concerns that the report jeopardized these educational opportunities. Urging the state not to decrease its financial support in the face of the Armor Report, he sympathetically implored, “the kids have been social pioneers” and they “have assumed responsibility for their own education and have brought about changes in suburban schools.”<sup>185</sup> Although the controversy eventually subsided, and the state continued to underwrite the program, METCO continued to struggle with maintaining the dual agenda outlined by these representatives.

## **Conclusion**

By the time of the Boston busing crisis, METCO garnered local and national attention and praise as the largest voluntary integration program in the country. The project served as a model to other cities across the nation that sought to implement similar solutions to the problems of school segregation. Yet the unique set of contingent factors that coincided to create METCO in Boston made it equally difficult to replicate in other metropolitan areas, especially the cooperation between black and white, urban and suburban, government and grassroots. The white and black sides of this partnership explicitly emphasized the importance of each other in the realization of the project. When a colleague at NYU expressed interest in starting a similar program in the Westchester suburbs, Leon Trilling told his fellow physicist that bringing Ruth Batson on board was an “essential” ingredient to the program particularly because she had the “the full

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<sup>184</sup> Wood and Fields, “Black Leaders Angered by Busing Report.”

<sup>185</sup> “Unhappy report on METCO,” *Boston Globe*, May 23, 1972.

confidence of the community.”<sup>186</sup> Likewise, when asked to name individuals at the forefront of the black freedom struggle in Boston, Batson supplied Trilling’s name citing him as the person “whose idea it was to conceive Metco and worked in a very quiet...very low profile, low key way to get this off the ground.”<sup>187</sup> Batson would credit the Federation as the “dedicated partner” in the development of the program.” She announced, “I can honestly state that METCO would not have become a reality without their membership’s resolve and determination.”<sup>188</sup>

Despite praise and the dedication of its participants, METCO never ushered in “national acceptance of public school integration” as one of its early fliers had touted.<sup>189</sup> It did not create a comprehensive two-way busing system in metropolitan Boston, as a few of its founders had initially hoped. The inability to graduate beyond its short-range goals of busing a small number of inner-city children into the suburbs reveals some of the basic limitations in the individualist ideology of the grassroots suburban civil rights movement as a whole. While the dispersal of activists in a variety of communities made the movement effective in building support for legislation like the Racial Imbalance Act, this physical fragmentation hampered its ability to challenge racial and spatial discrimination. Like the fair housing movement that had preceded it, METCO was able to bring a small number of African-Americans into the suburbs but failed to significantly reshape the patterns of racial, economic, or spatial inequality, creating a largely individualist solution to a set of primarily structural problems. These possibilities and

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<sup>186</sup> Leon Trilling to Benjamin Benderson.

<sup>187</sup> Ruth Batson Interview, Mel King, 19.

<sup>188</sup> Batson, *The Black Educational Movement in Boston*, 229.

<sup>189</sup> METCO “What You’ll Want to Know About the METCO program.”

limits would become even clearer during the busing crisis, which had important reverberating effects on METCO.

## **Chapter 4: Political Action for Peace**

### **Introduction**

On October 15, 1969, 100,000 Massachusetts residents stood on Boston Common to protest the Vietnam War. Keynote speaker Senator George McGovern applauded those present and their chants of “Peace Now” as practicing “the highest patriotism.”<sup>1</sup> The event, known as the Vietnam Moratorium, was the biggest demonstration in Boston history and though reporters deemed it “political Woodstock,” a large portion of the crowd defied the image of the music festival or typical Vietnam protest.<sup>2</sup> Alongside longhaired and bell-bottom attired college students stood rows of well-dressed white middle-class suburbanites. For many of these people it was the first time they had publicly protested the Vietnam War. Frank Rizzo, a graduate student long active in the antiwar movement, declared of these participants and the event as a whole, “To even think five years ago about this kind of a crowd—and I don’t mean just numbers because most these people are middle class types—would have been impossible.”<sup>3</sup> The Boston Common rally represented only the biggest event in the national and local Moratorium. During the day more than 50,000 suburban residents in 130 communities around metropolitan Boston took part in smaller demonstrations on their town greens and other

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<sup>1</sup> Crocker Snow, Jr. “McGovern, Kennedy Ask Groundtroop Pullout Within a Year,” *Boston Globe*, October 16, 1969; Andrew F. Blake and David B. Wilson, “A Political Woodstock on Boston Common,” *Boston Globe*, October 16, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> “A New Peace,” *Boston Globe*, October 16, 1969.

<sup>3</sup> Diane White, “She Has 2 Young Sons and Wants Them Alive,” *Boston Globe*, October 16, 1969.

public spaces.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the country, citizens participated in similar activities to express their opposition to the Vietnam War.<sup>5</sup> In total, two million people in more than 200 cities participated in what became the largest civil demonstration in the history of the United States.

The idea for the large-scale antiwar demonstration was not the product of New Left activists but it was in fact the brainchild of a suburban liberal business executive from Newton, Massachusetts named Jerome Grossman. The chairman of the largely suburban-based group called Massachusetts Political Action for Peace (PAX), Grossman along with his fellow members had conceived of the Moratorium as a means to involve more moderate suburban residents in their broader mission to end the war. Collaborating with student organizers to make a local idea national, the group consciously aimed to incorporate a wide spectrum of people and attitudes about the war. Despite the clear importance of the October 15 event, seminal works on the sixties tend to focus on student organizers of the large-scale protests in Boston, Washington and New York and either ignore or deemphasize the crucial role of Grossman and the smaller vigils in the town centers of Lexington, Concord, Winchester, and Weston. In general, the standard narratives of the antiwar movement pay virtually no attention to suburban liberal groups like PAX, Citizens for Participation Politics (CPP) and Voice of Women (VOW), and

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<sup>4</sup> Crocker Snow, Jr. "McGovern, Kennedy Ask Groundtroop Pullout Within a Year," *Boston Globe*, October 16, 1969.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the moratorium-related events on more than a hundred college campuses, the day's activities ranged from 50,000 person protests in Washington, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco to the 30 residents of Hudson, Ohio. "Strike Against the War," *Time Magazine* (October 17, 1969); Chalmers M. Roberts, "All Across the Nation-Vast Numbers Turn Out," *Boston Globe*, October 16, 1969. For more on the national events see Paul Hoffman, *Moratorium: An American Protest*, (New York: Tower Books, 1970); Ken Hurwitz, *Marching Nowhere* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1970); Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 254-258.

ignore the suburbs as the site for legitimate activism.<sup>6</sup> Student activists in both the Boston area and across the nation played an essential and central role in the antiwar movement. Yet as events like the Moratorium illustrate that they did not act alone and often operated in partnership with middle-class liberals.<sup>7</sup>

By downplaying this scope of this event and the suburban liberal movement that incubated it, these standard narratives not only obscure a more textured story of the antiwar and electoral politics of the period, but also the crucial role of white suburbanites in it. Tracing the activities of these forms of peace activism from the early 1960s to the Moratorium challenges the conventional arguments about the antiwar movement, postwar liberalism and suburban politics in a few key ways. First, it reveals a more ideologically, demographically and chronologically expansive vision of the antiwar movement. Second, it provides new insight into the tension postwar liberal coalition, by showing that the challenges to Cold War liberalism came from not just from the radical fringes, but from

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<sup>6</sup> Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987) offers the dominant model and most easily challengeable of this extensive literature. See also Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); James Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Melvin Small and William D. Hoover, *Give Peace a Chance: Exploring the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Barbara Tischler, ed *Sights on the Sixties* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992). For a cogent critique of some of the problems in the literature on the sixties from another vantage point see Adam Rome "Give Earth a Chance": The Environmental Movement and the Sixties," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 90 No. 2 (September 2003), 525-554. A group of scholars have revealed that looking beyond national leaders of the New Left to grassroots organizations and actors provides a more temporally, demographically and ideologically expansive understanding of the peace antiwar movement. Michael S. Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance in the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Doug Rossinow *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, See also Christian Appy's call for more attention to the local level in "Give Peace Activism A Chance," *Reviews in American History*, 23 (March 1995), 137-143.

<sup>7</sup> Amy Swerdlow's *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), Swerdlow's study of the pacifist organization Women's Strike For Peace has exposed the role of suburban housewives in shaping both and the debate around the nuclear weapons, the military draft and the Vietnam War. In doing so, she has helped to shatter traditional assumptions about the peace movement and postwar female activism. This case study has been seminal for connecting the literatures and stories of the peace and women's movements. Swerdlow's narrow organizational, focus, nevertheless, fails to address both the suburban or liberal political culture and ideology underpinning these activities.

closer to the center. Third, it reinforces the vibrancy and limits of suburban liberal politics.

The Moratorium marked almost a decade of activity for PAX and grassroots suburban-based peace activism in Massachusetts. Since the early 1960s, these groups had sought to use their suburban-centered identity and ideology to work within the system, especially the formal channels of electoral politics, to stop the construction and use of nuclear arms and United States military intervention. Through the Moratorium and other activities, these suburban liberal activists would come to directly influence the antiwar sentiment and electoral politics in the Bay State and the nation. Exploring their activities helps expand the temporal scope of antiwar period beyond dramatic campus confrontations of the late 1960s. It reveals both a lengthier chronology predating the Vietnam War itself and an early and ongoing emphasis among suburban activists of working within rather than outside the formal channels of power to prevent nuclear proliferation and war.

Suburban grassroots peace activism also provides a way of reperiodizing the standard chronologies and narratives postwar liberalism. Scholars have long cited the Vietnam War and Eugene's McCarthy's presidential bid as the central challenges to Cold War liberalism in the late 1960s.<sup>8</sup> The activities of the suburban-centered peace movement provide an important site for complicating this explanatory framework and re-considering the tensions in the liberal consensus. By transforming opposition to the Cold War and Vietnam from a fringe to dominant belief within both the Democratic Party and the suburbs, this constituency played a central but often underappreciated role in shaping politics at the local and national levels. Massachusetts suburban peace activists offered a

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<sup>8</sup> For the best elaboration of this basic chronology. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*.

critique of Cold War liberalism and U.S. foreign policy even before the escalation of the Vietnam War. Activists like Grossman, nevertheless, remained committed to reforming rather departing from the Democratic Party and its liberal principles before, during, and after the 1968 election.

Like other forms of liberal grassroots activism, peace advocates applied their suburban identities and social networks toward peace politics. Women became particularly central in the peace movement, and an analysis of their activities thereby highlight the ways in which liberal causes provided many female residents with the means to reshape traditional roles of wife and mother. At the same time it exposes how these women helped to advance the peace cause by couching it in normative values of gender and family. The male and female members of suburban-based movement's frequent invocation of their parental identities, nevertheless, exposes a class-based tension at the heart of this form of grassroots activism since the white suburban liberals who were often the most vocal parents against the war were statistically the people whose children were least likely to actually serve in Vietnam.<sup>9</sup>

The peace movement embodied and perpetuated the tendency of suburban liberals to become most committed to causes that were spatially distant and required the least personal or financial sacrifice. These grassroots peace groups emerged during the same historical moment and geographical space as the suburban fair housing and civil rights movement and overlapped both ideologically and tactically. In the early 1960s, members of these peace and civil rights groups together sought to build a coalition opposing the

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<sup>9</sup> For more about the working-class people overwhelmingly compromised the troops in Vietnam and the implications of that class-based imbalance see Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1993). For a discussion of this phenomenon in the Boston area see 12-13, 54.

ways that military spending not only created dangers abroad, but racial, spatial, economic inequality in the nation's urban centers. Yet as the Vietnam War escalated, the peace activists moved away from attention to forming such a coalition and addressing the structural issues that defined it and towards trying to involve more white suburban residents in their movement. The suburban-centered tactics of these activists attracted both more attention and white middle-class members to the antiwar cause and in doing so forged a new political base for liberal political candidates. Yet by focusing its attention and resources on activities like the Moratorium and the campaign of Eugene McCarthy, the suburban grassroots activists increasingly excluded lower-income and racial minorities and the issues that concerned them from its frame of focus. The Massachusetts antiwar movement's suburban-centered strategies, therefore, channeled the peace movement in particular ways.

### **Hughes Campaign**

H. Stuart Hughes's campaign for the Senate in 1962 first motivated suburban liberal peace activism in Massachusetts and served, in the words of E.J. Dionne, as a "trial run for the antiwar movement."<sup>10</sup> The campaign brought together suburban residents and students committed to peace, nuclear disarmament, and other liberal causes. It demonstrated to them the possibilities of using the formal channels of politics to mobilize residents and to raise attention to their cause. In the immediate decades after World War II, the combination of the Red Scare and the broader postwar culture of consensus had muffled existing pacifist activity in metropolitan Boston, as elsewhere. By the mid-1950s, however, a small minority of residents began to articulate a new set of

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<sup>10</sup> E.J. Dionne, Jr, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 48.

fears about the threat of Cold War and the potential harm of nuclear weapons and started to call for disarmament and an end to nuclear testing. Jerome Grossman, the organizer of the Moratorium who would later earn the titles of “dean of the Massachusetts Peace movement” and “Number One Suburban Do-Gooder,” was one such suburbanite and his background provides a valuable lens into the membership of this movement.<sup>11</sup>

Grossman lived with his wife and three young children in the Waban neighborhood of Newton and served as president of Mass Envelope, his family’s stationary manufacturing company. Although he supported both Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party in the late 1940s, he spent much of his spare time during the 1950s with his own children and as a League Little coach and a member of the Parent-Teacher Association.<sup>12</sup> It was his “very-child oriented” suburban-centered worldview coupled with his predilection toward progressive politics that sparked his initial concern about the dangers of nuclear weapons.<sup>13</sup> In the mid-1950s, a friend brought Grossman to an American Friends Service Committee meeting in Cambridge where he learned more about the power and danger of nuclear weapons. The information hardened Grossman’s opposition to the Cold War and nuclear armament. Grossman soon after joined the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), which was working for a nuclear test ban. He grew quickly disillusioned, however, by the groups approach which he saw as consisting primarily of writing letters to newspapers, organizing “quiet” dinners, and protesting small military installations. “We were talking to ourselves, a very thin slice of the citizenry, an upper middle-class phenomenon,” he later declared, and “we weren’t

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<sup>11</sup> Marjorie Arons, “Jerry Grossman reflects on local political scene and beyond through two decades,” *Newton Times*, November 24, 1976.

<sup>12</sup> Grossman, *Relentless Liberal*, 16-38.

<sup>13</sup> Jerome Grossman Interview, interview conducted by Nancy Earsy, December 3, 1996, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed April 3, 2009).

reaching the public.” By 1960, he had decided to leave the group in search of a more effective means to build widespread public outrage over the Cold War.<sup>14</sup>

Grossman shared the conclusion of members of the small local campus peace movement that peace activists should use “the political system to bring issues and ideas” to the public “because we can’t reach them any other way.”<sup>15</sup> A group of students and faculty from Boston area universities had participated in the national rallies demanding a nuclear test ban in New York and in Washington that drew crowds of 6,000 people in the early 1960s. The activists, nevertheless, realized that these demonstrations did little to alter federal policy and decided that a political campaign might provide a more effective way to draw attention and power to their ideas.<sup>16</sup> In the spring of 1962, delegates from the group met with Harvard history professor H. Stuart Hughes, urging him to run for the U.S. Congress on a peace platform.<sup>17</sup> The grandson of former Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, he had served with the Office of Strategic Services in World War II, worked at the State Department, and was a leading member of SANE. He had also authored six books including *An Approach to Peace*, which presented his views on the need for unilateral disarmament.

The always erudite Hughes agreed to run but told them that the Senate was a more appropriate forum for their experiment since the Constitution gave it more of a role in foreign policy. The Senate also proved preferable since Republican George Lodge, the

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<sup>14</sup> Edward H. Myrderding, Associate Director SANE to Jerome Grossman, December 5, 1960, Papers of Jerome Grossman, Special Collections, unprocessed collection, Boston Public Library, Boston, Massachusetts (hereafter: “Grossman Papers”).

<sup>15</sup> Grossman Interview.

<sup>16</sup> Philip D. Shrag, “Two Visits to the Executive Office Building” in the CPPAX Education Fund’s “The Hughes Campaign: 25 Years Later, 1962-1987,” 1987, Box 29, Records of Citizens for Participation in Political Action, Special Collections, Healey Library, University of Massachusetts-Boston (hereafter: “CPPAX”).

<sup>17</sup> Sumner Rosen, “The Transformation of Politics in Massachusetts” in “The Hughes Campaign: 25 Years Later, 1962-1987.”

son of Henry Cabot Lodge, and Democrat Edward Kennedy, in his first run for public office, were already engaged in a highly publicized fight for the seat left open by John F. Kennedy. The peace activists knew from the start that victory in the race of political pedigrees was a longshot. Yet, they saw the opportunity as a means to obtain a wide forum for peace issues, show the failures of the federal government's action on the subject, and get the attention of the President who had a personal investment in the race.<sup>18</sup> Though a registered Democrat, Hughes ran as an Independent in order to stay in the race beyond the primary and to draw attention to the fact that there was "a lack of new thought in both major parties on foreign relations."<sup>19</sup> Hughes's campaign platform focused on issues of peace including limiting the buildup of nuclear weapons by the United States, ending all nuclear testing, admitting China to the United Nations, and alleviating the dependency of Massachusetts on military contracts through conversion to a peacetime economy. No candidate, either locally or nationally, since Harry Wallace in 1948 had provided this serious a critique of Cold War liberalism. Hughes' stance quickly gained the support of both peace-minded students and a number of suburban residents, including Jerome Grossman.

The effort also drew the attention of the suburban-centered peace organization Voice of Women-New England (VOW). Four married mothers--Mrs. Mark Howe of Cambridge, Mrs. Roger Fisher of Cambridge, Mrs. Donell Boardman of Acton, and Mrs. Eugene Beslisle--founded the organization in the fall of 1961 to take local action against atmospheric testing and towards the goal of "a world without war." The all-female group, which had an affiliation with the Women's Strike for Peace and shared the

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<sup>18</sup> Jerome Grossman, "From Stuart Hughes to Robert Drinan" in "The Hughes Campaign: 25 Years Later, 1962-1987."

<sup>19</sup> John H. Fenton, "Candidates Push Bay State Drives," *New York Times*, June 23, 1962.

maternalist ideology of the national organization. VOW based its mission upon a sense of faith and duty that “women acting together, can raise a plea for human survival that can be heard round the world” and those “whose business is to bring up and protect the world’s children” must as they “do at home---plead for patience.”<sup>20</sup>

While the group technically encompassed all of New England, the founders attracted the greatest following in the affluent suburbs along Route 128 outside Boston. The early members, like Jerome Grossman, shared concern for the future of their children and families and a desire to avert the threat of nuclear war.<sup>21</sup> Rhona Shoul of Newton had been politically active in college and then as a social worker, but after getting married had devoted her full energy to her family. She recognized the dangers her young children confronted in a world of political tension and unnecessary militarization and decided to take action.<sup>22</sup> Shoul helped to form a local chapter in her own town along with close friends Kay Stein and Louise Lown in January 1962, which quickly became the nucleus of the organization. Upholding their commitment to maternalist ideals, during its first six months the hundred members of the regional group staged a vigil at the State House, collected two thousands signatures for a petition opposing nuclear war which they delivered to Rose Kennedy in Hyannisport, and passed out leaflets at local supermarkets

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<sup>20</sup> Mrs. Mark Howe et al Letter, October 27, 1961, Box 1, Folder 29, VOW.

<sup>21</sup> To commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> Reunion of Voice of Women-New England, a group of members sent out questionnaires entitled “30 years later: Voice of Women Reunion” to members of the organization asking a variety of questions including why the respondent originally got involved several of the members cited a desire to protect their children and family from the harm of nuclear war. See for example the responses of Alice Aronow, Harriet Avery, Sue Berkeley, Marilyn Lyn Gotler, Louise Lown, Jane Knowles Webb, Box 1, Folder 51, VOW.

<sup>22</sup> Suzanne Kelley McCormack, “Good Politics is Doing Something: Independent Diplomats and Anti-War Activists in the Vietnam Era Peace Movement, A Collective Biography” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston College, 2002). Rhona Shoul is one of the main figures and McCormack conducted several interviews with Shoul where she discusses the reasons she got involved in VOW.

entitled “Radioactivity, Food and You.”<sup>23</sup> When Stuart Hughes spoke at a VOW meeting in the spring of 1962 it galvanized the women into action, and they made his candidacy a top priority. Several members took leadership roles on his staff.<sup>24</sup> The campaign provided the group with a means to prove itself as a legitimate peace organization and exposed these individual members to the possibilities of working through the formal channels of elected politics for nuclear disarmament.

Massachusetts’s election law required an independent candidate running for state office to collect 72,500 signatures before July. Hughes would later attest to the importance of the deadline in creating widespread support for his bid. He surmised that without the necessary signatures “my candidacy might never have been more than drawing-room conversation in the neighborhood of Harvard Square.”<sup>25</sup> Chester Hartman, a young urban planner also active in the fair housing movement, whom others deemed an “organizational genius,” served as the mastermind of the ten-week petition drive recruiting hundreds of volunteers.<sup>26</sup> Hartman picked local coordinators, assigned each town a signature quota, and prepared detailed instructions on how to canvass. The project became most effective, according to Hughes, “along the arc of educated, prosperous suburbia running through the near-urban Brookline and Cambridge through Newton, Lexington and Lincoln to exurban Weston and Wayland.” Hughes recalled that in these Route 128 communities “liberal-minded middle-class housewives did most of the

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<sup>23</sup> Voice of Women-New England, Press Release: Voice of Women Raised in New England—For Peace Regional Council Formed in Support of Nationwide Movement, November 28, 1961, Box 1, Folder 46, VOW; Voice of Women-New England, Newsletter January 1962, No. 1, Box 1, Folder 19, VOW.

<sup>24</sup> Voice of Women-New England, Newsletter May 1962, No.5, Box 1, Folder 19, VOW.

<sup>25</sup> H. Stuart Hughes, *Gentleman Rebel: The Memoirs of H. Stuart Hughes* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1990), 252.

<sup>26</sup> Grossman, “From Stuart Hughes to Robert Drinan.”

work.”<sup>27</sup> Many of these women belonged to VOW and relied on their existing suburban social networks in order to get signatures. Ruth Siedel the Brookline coordinator led a group primarily of young mothers “deeply concerned about the kind of world their children are going to grow up in.”<sup>28</sup> The group quickly collected 5,200 signatures, which constituted 16 percent of Brookline’s voting population.

The signature drive faced more difficulty outside of the affluent suburbs. Hartman, therefore, recruited college students from Boston-area colleges to supplement the local efforts. During the week, the undergraduates would canvass Boston neighborhoods and housing developments and on the weekend Hartman chartered buses to caravans to industrial cities like Worcester and Springfield and smaller towns across the state. The campaign eventually gathered 149,000 signatures from residents in 262 Bay State municipalities. The Town of Clerk of Watertown dubbed the Hughes signature campaign the “best organized effort of this kind I’ve seen in 25 years in office.”<sup>29</sup> The *Boston Herald Traveler* published a cartoon of a bespectacled Hughes holding up a long sheet of names at the front of a large parade of people holding up signs of support with the caption “Anyone Else?”<sup>30</sup> Like the Good Neighbors for Fair Housing Pledge campaign that also occurred in 1962 in the same communities, the effort brought into sharp focus the effectiveness of grassroots suburban liberals to build support for their causes.

The Hughes campaign sought to maintain the momentum of the signature drive through the November election. Jerome Grossman decided to take a leave from his job to

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<sup>27</sup> Hughes, *Gentleman Rebel*, 252.

<sup>28</sup> “Hughes Has Support from All Walks of Life,” *Brookline Chronicle*, November 1, 1962.

<sup>29</sup> Voice of Women-New England, Newsletter, August-September 1962, Box 1, Folder 19, VOW.

<sup>30</sup> “Anyone Else?” *Boston Herald Traveler*, c. 1962, reprinted in “The Hughes Campaign: 25 Years Later, 1962-1987.”

serve as campaign manager and oversee the fundraising and canvassing activity. The campaign continued to draw together a diverse coalition of supporters. College student Philip Shrag later recalled the excitement of working with “housewives, doctors, union organizers, retired people, lawyers and others” for “the same goals of nuclear arms control and better distributive justice.”<sup>31</sup> Building on the infrastructure established by signature drive, the campaign experienced its greatest success in its fundraising efforts. Throughout the fall, suburban supporters hosted a series of fundraising parties in the suburbs as well as cultural events such as an art auction, a chamber music concert, and a performance by folk singer Pete Seeger called “Sing Out for Hughes.” The campaign eventually raised \$150,000 through direct solicitation.<sup>32</sup> During the last six weeks of the campaign, local Hughes outlets adopted a program of “intensive peace education” by door-to-door outreach to “every voting household,” distribution of buttons and stickers, and periodic driving of a sound truck through residential neighborhoods.<sup>33</sup> Stuart Hughes encouraged campaigners to summon their final reserves “because literally every vote for us will have world-wide importance.”<sup>34</sup>

Hughes, Grossman and many of the staff members recognized by the fall that Kennedy would be impossible to beat, but believed that their model of grassroots action could “be of great value as a guide to future campaigns” and a strong showing would lead to “dozens of similar political efforts in New England and throughout the nation” in the 1964 election.<sup>35</sup> Volunteers in Brookline, Lexington, Newton and Cambridge, therefore,

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<sup>31</sup> Shrag “Two Visits to the Executive Office Building.”

<sup>32</sup> Hughes *Gentleman Rebel*, 256.

<sup>33</sup> Hughes for Senate, “A Plan for Intensive Campaigning in Selected Areas By Each Local Hughes Organization,” 1962, Box 1, Folder 56, VOW.

<sup>34</sup> Stuart Hughes to Fellow Campaigner, October 25, 1962, Box 1, Folder 56, VOW.

<sup>35</sup> Hughes for Senate, “A Plan for Intensive Campaigning.”

continued to canvass their communities distributing leaflets with slogans such as “The Nuclear Age is No Time for Politics as Usual!” and “Make Your Vote Count!”<sup>36</sup> The members of the Brookline for Hughes committee took out an advertisement in the local newspaper endorsing him as the only candidate who “really recognizes that thermonuclear war is the greatest threat of our time.”<sup>37</sup> “We are not just supporting a candidate,” Brookline volunteer Ethel Alper explained about her reasons for continuing to campaign, “We are supporting an ideal.”<sup>38</sup> In late October Hughes himself declared, “the response to this candidacy has been spectacular. We have made a great dent in Massachusetts politics. We have created a new political style which will serve as an example for the future.”<sup>39</sup>

The outbreak of the Cuban Missile Crisis just weeks before the election presented a major setback for the campaign. In line with his platform Hughes widely distributed a plan for peaceful resolution that suggested Kennedy abandon unilateral action and “act calmly” through the United Nations.<sup>40</sup> This unpopular position made Hughes’ chances of victory even more remote. In the general election, Kennedy became one of youngest people ever to win a Senate seat. Hughes became notable in another sense as one of the few candidates in American political history to receive significantly more signatures to get on the ballot than actual votes in the election. Hughes won 52,000 votes or 2.3 percent, of the vote doing best in upper middle-class suburban precincts such as Lexington, Brookline and Newton and parts of Boston and Cambridge where he had the

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<sup>36</sup> Flyers reprinted in “The Hughes Campaign: 25 Years Later, 1962-1987”; Hughes for Senate, “Equality Now!,” c. 1962, Box 3, Folder 94, PMR.

<sup>37</sup> Hughes Advertisement, *Brookline Chronicle*, October 1962.

<sup>38</sup> “Citizens Support Hughes,” *Brookline Chronicle*, September 20, 1962.

<sup>39</sup> Stuart Hughes to Fellow Campaigner.

<sup>40</sup> John H. Fenton, “Campuses Voice Some Opposition,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1962.

most active local organizations. Hughes blamed his lack of support outside the suburbs on the media's overemphasis of his position on the Cuban Missile Crisis. Campaign workers privately noted as another major setback the fact that the academic and well-pedigreed Hughes had difficulty connecting to blue-collar citizens and only seemed comfortable with voters at suburban cocktail parties where the guests had a similar economic and educational level.<sup>41</sup>

Many participants, nevertheless, interpreted the success of the campaign less in the votes tallied than in the number of volunteers it had attracted. More than three thousand people worked for Hughes over the course of the campaign, and the candidate later deemed it "the largest amateur organization" in "recent American political history" and one of "most devoted and "most united." Hughes believed that the significance of his candidacy lay in the fact that for "the first time since the 1930s the whole liberal dissenting constituency found itself under one tent."<sup>42</sup> The campaign also demonstrated that a large contingent of these dissenters lived in Boston's most affluent suburbs. Hughes declared that during the 1950s his followers "had quietly gone about their business, behaving as their neighbors did, swallowing their anger and their fears for their children," and the campaign provided them a chance to channel those views politically. He later called it "a precursor of larger things to come."<sup>43</sup> While the low turnout prevented organizers from achieving the overarching goal of proving the political viability of the peace issue in this particular campaign, it did convince the campaign

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<sup>41</sup> Selections from "Joel Cohen's Hughes for Senate: A Campaign History," 1964 in "The Hughes Campaign: 25 Years Later, 1962-1987."

<sup>42</sup> Hughes, *Gentleman Rebel*, 259.

<sup>43</sup> Hughes, *Gentleman Rebel*, 259-260.

leaders both the possibility of working within the political system and the importance of the liberal suburbanites in order to do so.

### **Political Action for Peace**

In the aftermath of the election, the members of the Hughes campaign sought to direct the momentum from the effort into a more permanent organization committed to the political viability of peace issues.<sup>44</sup> Throughout November and December 1962, the primary Hughes activists including Jerome Grossman, Chester Hartman, Elizabeth Boardman, Marty Peretz, Philip Shrag and the candidate himself staged meetings in living rooms throughout the Route 128 suburbs to discuss the best way to translate their efforts around a single candidate into an organization committed to working for peace through politics.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the group agreed on establishing an organization with the purpose to “develop and apply political power in order to bring the issues connected with ending the arms race to the center of the political arena.” They decided to call Massachusetts Political Action for Peace or PAX (the Latin word for peace).<sup>46</sup> At the first official PAX meeting on January 5, 1963, at Weston’s town hall, 90 people present agreed to establish “a new political voice in Massachusetts” dedicated to ensuring that the “sentiment for peace is clearly heard at election time and strengthened in the period in between campaign.” In order to fulfill this goal, they adopted the Hughes Peace Platform as their guiding ideological mission and “common basis for activity.”<sup>47</sup> They decided to

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<sup>44</sup> Report of Dec. 1 Meeting at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Donham in Wayland, 1962, Box 5, Folder V.5, CPPAX.

<sup>45</sup> Mineuts(sic) if Temporary Steering Committee, November 28, 1962, Box 5, Folder V.5, CPPAX.

<sup>46</sup> Mass PAX leaflet, c. 1971, Box 6, Folder V.42, CPPAX; Mass PAX, Press Release, February 7, 1963, Box 5, Folder 5, CPPAX.

<sup>47</sup> Massachusetts Political Action For Peace letter, January 30, 1963, Box 5, Folder V.5, CPPAX.

advance its principles by encouraging and supporting candidates committed to peace and disarmament to run for national office both within and outside the two-party system.

While they hoped for electoral victory, when that would be difficult, like with the Hughes campaign, they would run “educational campaigns.” During off-election periods, the PAX agreed to educate local communities on peace issues and sponsor legislation. The founding members elected Jerome Grossman as chairman, Sumner Rosen as vice-chairman, Chester Hartman as secretary and H.A. Crosby Forbes as the treasurer.<sup>48</sup>

Wayland housewife Flora Dunham, who joined the Hughes Campaign at the encouragement of her teenage son, took the paid position as executive secretary. PAX opened a headquarters at 18 Brattle Street in Cambridge and recruited 1500 initial members largely from the lists compiled during the Hughes campaign.

During its inaugural year, the Federal government established a Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that President Kennedy signed with the Soviet Union over the summer. PAX celebrated the signing of the treaty and took indirect credit. The leaders believed that the Hughes campaign had helped alert the public, politicians, and the president about the issue. When the Senate ratified the treaty, Stuart Hughes proclaimed, “Far-out ideas that were first voiced in Massachusetts during the senatorial campaign...have since been take [n] up by responsible spokesmen.” He went on to state, “it would be wrong, of course, to try to claim credit for these heartening new developments. What would be more correct would be to show how a non-conformist and electorally hopeless campaign could inject a more imaginative type of thinking into American public discourse.”<sup>49</sup> After the announcement, Grossman declared it was gratifying to have the president adopt the

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<sup>48</sup>Mass PAX, Press Release, February 7 1963.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Anders, “Introduction” in “The Hughes Campaign: 25 Years Later, 1962-1987.”

language and ideas of the peace movement but warned that if PAX became “merely blind supporters of the Kennedy administration and cease to pressure it, we will be doing a disservice to that Administration, our country and the world.”<sup>50</sup>

PAX struggled, however, to fight for peace and nuclear disarmament in a moment when the government appeared more responsive to their goals. After some deliberation, the PAX members decided to focus their attention on “planning for peace,” especially conversion of the state and national economy. In the spring of 1964, PAX along with local chapters of the United Auto Workers and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), sponsored a conference entitled “After the Arms Race” about how to address the unmet economic needs of many poor Massachusetts residents.<sup>51</sup> PAX members interpreted the issue as a way for peace groups to build connections with other constituencies affected by the focus on arms, especially African-Americans in the inner city.<sup>52</sup> This stance proved both ideologically progressive and politically convenient since the Civil Rights Movement was experiencing its greatest mainstream success in 1964 and provided a means to draw both more members and more attention from politicians to the peace cause. At its second annual state convention held in Cambridge in May 1964, PAX revised its platform to include more attention to issues of economic inequality. “Both American and Russian societies are confronted with major internal social and economic problems,” the Preamble asserted. “Neither society can solve these problems or those of

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<sup>50</sup> Mass PAX, Peace Politics Newsletter, No. 1, October 1963, Box 5, Folder V.1, CPPAX.

<sup>51</sup> Mass PAX et al. “After the Arms Race,” April 1964, Box 5, Folder 5. Folder V.9, CPPAX.

<sup>52</sup> Sumner M. Rosen, Politics of Conversion, *Labor Today*, Vol 3 #1, February-March 1964, Box 5, Folder V.8, CPPAX.

world poverty as long as they spend a major part of their budgets for instruments of war.”<sup>53</sup>

PAX took other steps to assist the national and local civil rights movements. PAX publicly supported the February 1964 Stayout and urged parents and children to participate in what it dubbed “a nationwide act of conscience.” Grossman also provided the mimeograph paper for the School Stayout. In a letter of gratitude, James Breeden, the co-organizer of the event, expressed a hope that the Stayout helped develop closer ties between PAX and the Massachusetts Freedom Movement (MFM) and “lay the ground for increased cooperation and common awareness between our groups.”<sup>54</sup> Breeden and his fellow Stayout organizer and MFM leader Noel Day later became members of the PAX Advisory Committee, which marked the first step in fusing the issues of peace and civil rights.

The 1964 election provided a means for the two socially conscious groups and their overlapping suburban members to align in a formal coalition. PAX worked with MFM on the presidential and a congressional campaign in order to prove its credibility as a political action committee and further illuminate the links between peace and civil rights. In the presidential contest, these groups shared more of an opposition to Republican Barry Goldwater than an abiding support of Democrat Lyndon Johnson. Goldwater’s campaign struck against the core principles of these movements, and they interpreted his platform as “destructive to an open society at home and a peaceful world.”<sup>55</sup> Members of PAX and other peace groups feared that the “extremist” and “unpredictable” Goldwater was more apt to use nuclear weapons than Johnson, while the

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<sup>53</sup> Mass PAX, Preamble to Platform, 1964, Box 5, Folder V.10, CPPAX.

<sup>54</sup> Rev. James P. Breeden to Jerome Grossman, c. 1964, Grossman Papers.

<sup>55</sup> The Committee Against Political Extremism, Flyer, 1964, LCRC.

Arizona Senator's consistent opposition to civil rights deeply troubled and concerned activists in that arena. In response Grossman and Breeden decided to form a coalition named the Committee Against Political Extremism (CAPE). Though the name provided the group with the appearance of an anticommunist organization, the target was in fact Goldwater's ideology and political style. The members of the alliance included PAX, the Massachusetts Freedom Movement (MFM) the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights, and the local chapters of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The steering committee of the ad hoc group revealed the overlapping interests of the grassroots peace and civil rights movements in the cause. James Breeden served of chairman of the committee that included Grossman, Julius Bernstein Alan Gartner of CORE, Paul Parks, and Phyllis and William Ryan.<sup>56</sup>

CAPE had two simple goals: first, to turn out a large vote against Goldwater, and second, to convince leading officials in the state Republican Party to repudiate him. While the group recognized Goldwater's slim chances for victory, they saw his nomination "as a major threat to society" and his control of the Republican Party "a continuing danger."<sup>57</sup> Breeden publicly declared that by nominating Goldwater the Republican Party had "contemptuously slapped the face of all citizens who have recently turned America toward the goal of equality of all." He warned that CAPE would "oppose with all the energy of our combined strength, this man who would turn America away from that goal."<sup>58</sup> Throughout the fall, in order to fulfill that mandate, CAPE issued

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<sup>56</sup> Ryan also held the position as the public relations coordinator; a role she had perfected for several earlier civil rights and fair housing campaigns.

<sup>57</sup> The Committee Against Political Extremism, Flyer, 1964, LCRC; CAPE, Press Release, 1964, LCRC.

<sup>58</sup> CAPE, Press Release, August 3, 1964, , Box 2, Folder 14, PMR.

sharply-worded press releases denouncing Goldwater's stance on civil rights, and PAX distributed copies of "Goldwater on Foreign Policy."<sup>59</sup> CAPE also sponsored a series of rallies, including a huge protest when Goldwater spoke at Fenway Park that September. The silent vigil drew thousands of people to nearby Lansdowne Street and sent a clear message of opposition.<sup>60</sup>

The additional steps CAPE took to ensure Goldwater's sound defeat demonstrate the specifically suburban liberal dimensions of its strategy. Breeden and Grossman co-authored an instructional leaflet entitled "What You Can Do to Defeat Goldwater and Goldwaterism" to mobilize the members of CAPE's affiliated groups, particularly the ones with a well-organized and geographically-wide base.<sup>61</sup> The suburban-centered Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights enthusiastically took up the instructions of the flyer providing "hands, brains and funds."<sup>62</sup> The Lexington Committee for Civil Rights became particularly active, encouraging members to send letters to Republican candidates, donate funds, and purchase bumper stickers produced by PAX that read, "Stop Barry—the Life You Save might be your own."<sup>63</sup> Once again demonstrating the effectiveness of suburban liberals at working within formal channels of power, supporters sent hundreds of postcards to several leading state republicans including Edward Brooke, Eliot Richardson, and John Volpe voicing their opposition to Goldwater and support for

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<sup>59</sup> CAPE, "CAPE Issues Goldwater Civil Rights Record," October 28, 1964, Box 2, Folder 14, PMR.

<sup>60</sup> CAPE, Press Release, September 1964, Box 2, Folder 14, PMR; Grossman Interview.

<sup>61</sup> James P. Breeden, Jerome Grossman, "What You Can Do to Defeat Goldwater and Goldwaterism," Box 2, Folder 14, PMR.

<sup>62</sup> Lexington Civil Rights Committee, "CAPE Forms—Seeks Support, Volunteers and Funds," October 9, 1964, LCRC; Robert D. Hall to Fair Housing Federation of Greater Boston, October 19, 1964; Box 2, Folder 31, PMR.

<sup>63</sup> Lexington Civil Rights Committee, "CAPE Forms."

CAPE.<sup>64</sup> The various activities of this full-frontal campaign influenced Brooke to completely disassociate himself with Goldwater, while Richardson and Volpe publicly voiced their strong reservations.<sup>65</sup> After Johnson's landslide victory in both the state and national elections, CAPE felt its job was done and disbanded.

This liberal peace and civil rights coalition confronted more difficulty in its simultaneous effort at the congressional level. In line with its goals, PAX decided in 1964 to mobilize an electoral campaign as a means to fulfill its founding mission. Recognizing that civil rights more than peace was the "great liberal issue of the movement," they selected as a potential candidate Noel Day. PAX believed Day represented one of "the few civil rights figures who understood and could articulate the essential interconnection of civil rights with the issues of poverty, unemployment and peace."<sup>66</sup> The 31-year-old African-American activist and social worker ran the St. Mark Social Center and, along with his former Dartmouth roommate Breeden, had co-organized the School Stayouts and served on the PAX Advisory Committee. When representatives approached Day about running for Congress, the political novice was initially reluctant, but PAX persuaded him by promising to provide financial and personal support. Day and his advisors decided registering as an Independent had symbolic and practical value as it showed his desire to remain outside the two party system and it would allow him to voice his position seven weeks beyond the primary.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> CAPE, Press Release, September 9, 1964; Rabbi Roland Gittlesohn to John Volpe, September 18, 1964, Box 2, Folder 14, PMR.

<sup>65</sup> CAPE, Statement of Canon James Breeden, Chairman of CAPE, September 17, 1964, Box 2, Folder 14, PMR; CAPE, Press Release, November 2, 1964, Box 2, Folder 14, PMR.

<sup>66</sup> Chester Hartman, "The Noel Day Campaign and the Future of Radical Politics," *The Correspondent*, Winter 1965, Box 2, Folder 28, PMR.

<sup>67</sup> Hartman, "The Noel Day Campaign."

The campaign architects selected the Ninth Congressional District as the site for the effort, which for two reasons proved “symbolically ideal.”<sup>68</sup> First, the district included 97 percent of Boston’s black population and the only significant concentration of racial minorities in the Bay State. The District, which comprised 16 of the city’s 22 wards including the precincts of the notoriously all-white blue-collar and racial discriminatory South Boston, had never elected an African-American to any political office. In fact, Day was the first African-American ever to run for Congress in Massachusetts. Second, Speaker of the U.S. Representatives John McCormack had represented the Ninth District for 36 years and run opposed in most of the past elections. Many observers attuned to the intricacies of Boston politics interpreted Day’s announcement of candidacy on June 4, 1964 as an act of “audacity.”<sup>69</sup> Yet for PAX, which hoped less for Day’s victory than for an educational forum to discuss peace and civil rights, McCormack represented the “perfect symbol of entrenched political power.” Day himself believed by challenging “a figure of such great national and local stature” he could “highlight the failure of the existing political system to meet basic social needs” and “the consequences of political impotence on the part of the disadvantaged.”<sup>70</sup> Day ran on a platform of “poverty, peace and civil rights” and promised to surpass McCormack’s record in each of those areas. He also sought to draw state and national attention to the problems of poverty and discrimination within the speaker’s home district.

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<sup>68</sup> Hartman, “The Noel Day Campaign.”

<sup>69</sup> Richard Neff, “Rights Leader in Race,” *Christian Science Monitor*, No Date, LCRC.

<sup>70</sup> Hartman, “The Noel Day Campaign.”

Day and his strategists hoped to use the campaign to bring together the fragmented issues and constituencies of “poverty, peace and civil rights.”<sup>71</sup> His speeches and campaign literature also emphasized this goal. For instance, a leaflet entitled “Time for a better life” declared that Day’s candidacy “unites the vital issues of our time: for real disarmament, civil rights, better cities, [an] end to poverty...an economy and society that invests in human lives.” Another flyer with the heading “Time for Investment in Human Lives” in support of “planned disarmament” asserted that “United States spent “56 billion dollars a year on bombs and missiles” and “a part of this billion could be used for job retraining, building schools and decent housing, training doctors and teachers and creating better cities.”<sup>72</sup> These claims reveal the ways in which Day aimed to translate his focus on issues specific to the black community into concerns of society as a whole.

The campaign organizers came to boldly envision the campaign “as the prototype of a movement” to bring together “the economically insecure and disadvantaged,” “the civil rights movement, the peace movement,” and “the radical intellectuals “in order to reveal “the relatedness of their interests and to create a new base of political power.”<sup>73</sup> The campaign fell short of these lofty goals, however, as the coalition disproportionately consisted of white suburban liberals. Many grassroots liberal suburban activists saw Day’s candidacy as a means both to combine their interest in peace and civil rights and to test the possibilities of electoral politics for creating social equality. PAX provided over half the funds for the campaign and much of the organizing energy. Many of the people

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<sup>71</sup> Cambridge PAX, Noel Day to Announce for Congress, Cambridge PAX Bulletin, June 3, 1964, Box 5, CPPAX; Voice of Women-New England Newsletter June 1964, Box 1, Folder 20, VOW.

<sup>72</sup> Cambridge PAX, Noel Day to Announce for Congress, Cambridge PAX Bulletin, June 3, 1964, Box 5, CPPAX; Voice of Women-New England Newsletter June 1964, Box 1, Folder 20, VOW; Day for Congress, “Vote Noel Day” flyer, 1964, LCRC.

<sup>73</sup> Chester Hartman, “The Noel Day Campaign.”

who had been active in the Hughes campaign sought to recreate their tactics in that effort as well. PAX members canvassed the district in order to place Day on the ballot and to increase his support. The group encouraged “car-loads of suburban men and women,” providing them “with maps, voter lists and moral support.”<sup>74</sup> The members of VOW also became involved in this effort soliciting signatures and participating in telephone drives.<sup>75</sup> Members of these groups performed other traditional campaign duties such as leafleting, running a sound truck, and going door-to-door. The Fair Housing Federation provided the Day campaign with the mailing list of its more than 3000 members throughout metropolitan Boston to send out information about the campaign.<sup>76</sup> Federation president Roy Brown sent a follow up letter to members stating that it “always recognized the inseparability of politics and from real social advances” and emphasized that the campaign was a “logical extension of [Day’s] civil rights activities.”<sup>77</sup> The letter provided members with further information about Day and how to get involved in the campaign. Taking up this call, the Lexington Civil Rights Committee invited Day to speak in the suburbs about the campaign.

Despite this outpouring of support from suburbanites outside of the district, Day’s candidacy floundered. The architects had hoped that Day would translate the support he had received within the African-American community for the Stayout into votes on Election Day. He was unable, however, to match the energy and excitement of the February event. Contributing to the problem, Day himself did not appear as committed as supporters would have liked. Throughout the campaign, he remained primarily focused

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<sup>74</sup> Cambridge PAX, Bulletin, June 3, 1964.

<sup>75</sup> Voice of Women-New England Newsletter, October 1964, , Box 1, Folder 20, VOW.

<sup>76</sup> Roy H. Brown to Robert D. Hall, Jr., October 1964, Box 2 Folder 31, PMR.

<sup>77</sup> Roy Brown Letter October 1964, LCRC.

on his ongoing civil rights and community organizing obligations. When he did campaign he primarily went to events in places like Lexington and Newton, where those in attendance could not vote in the race. Furthermore, the members of Boston's African-American leadership failed to take Day's candidacy seriously. These leaders interpreted the campaign as one run and financed by "white outsiders" and believed that the emphasis on peace issues gave it too much of a "middle-class flavor."<sup>78</sup> Day eventually received 7,440 votes amounting to five percent of overall total cast. He did best in the precinct with the highest concentration of African-Americans and worst in the five most predominately Irish-Catholic areas where he received only 341 votes combined. PAX had not anticipated a win, but this poor showing brought into sharp focus its failure at both fielding a credible campaign and in using the political system to build a diverse coalition around the issues of peace and civil rights. The loss sent PAX into a period of internal reflection that extended beyond simply the Day campaign to PAX's overall goals and purpose.<sup>79</sup> Hartman observed, that PAX had "started out largely as a peace group," but "gradually and without specific acknowledgment" had been "pulled (and pushed) into a role as the omniliberal political organization" and needed to redefine its mission.<sup>80</sup>

### **"A Moral Blunder"**

As PAX sought to reassess its mission, the United States military's presence in Vietnam came to define the group's purpose and future. Following the 1964 election,

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<sup>78</sup> Day also received little support from rank and file members of the Boston's black community, most of who had never heard of him. In fact, a poll conducted by a Boston University political scientist found that only 27 percent of African-Americans in Boston interviewed had heard of Day and even fewer recognized the name James Breeden. The statistics shocked white liberals who believed that Breeden and Day represented the new leaders of Boston's African-American community (Hartman, "The Noel Day Campaign.")

<sup>79</sup> Hartman, "The Noel Day Campaign."

<sup>80</sup> Chester W. Hartman, Comments on the Brumm Memorandum, 1964, Box 5, Folder V.11, CPPAX.

PAX realized its unique focus on mobilizing popular support through political channels could provide “a much-needed voice” against increased Vietnam involvement.<sup>81</sup> After the election, it decided to devote the majority of its energy and money to seeking alternatives to the Johnson administration’s current policy and action. In line with its ideological opposition to armament, Jerome Grossman and other members of PAX feared the situation in Vietnam would lead to a nuclear war between the United States and either the Soviet Union or China and would further exacerbate racial and economic inequality.<sup>82</sup> In December 1964, the group circulated a petition to President Lyndon Johnson signed by 400 people urging against the expansion of the war in Vietnam and plans to bomb supply routes in the country.<sup>83</sup> In a corresponding press release PAX member H.A. Crosby Forbes dubbed escalation “a military, a strategic and above all, a moral blunder” and warned it “would have demoralizing effects on our own society.”<sup>84</sup> When the telegram failed to deter Johnson from escalating military action, the group developed a series of tactics to raise public and political attention to the dangers of the situation. Using the free paper supplied by the Grossman’s envelope company, throughout the winter and spring of 1965 PAX issued many position papers, printed 200,000 pamphlets calling out the “inhumanity” and “illegality” of American action. In addition, it distributed bumper stickers saying “END VIETNAM WAR NOW” with the aim to get them on cars from “coast to coast.”<sup>85</sup> These Vietnam-related activities provided the group a new focus and

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<sup>81</sup> Mass PAX, PAX Profile, c. 1965, Box 5, Folder V.14, CPPAX.

<sup>82</sup>Grossman interview.

<sup>83</sup> Mrs. Philip Donham to PAX Supporter, December 2, 1964, Box 5, Folder V. 10, CPPAX.

<sup>84</sup> Mass PAX, Press Release, December 21, 1964, Box 5, Folder 10, CPPAX.

<sup>85</sup> Mass PAX, Statement on the Crisis in Vietnam, Feb 9, 1965, , Box 5, Folder 12, CPPAX; Mass PAX, SECOND STATEMENT ON VIETNAM CRISIS CONCERNING CONSTITUTIONALITY OF US MILITARY ACTIONS AND THE NEED FOR CLARIFICATIONS OF AMERICAN MOTIVES, February 9, 1965, Box 5, Folder 12 CPPAX; Flora B. Donham Letter , July 6, 1965, Box 5, Folder V.12, CPPAX.

by 1966 the PAX ranks included 6,000 people predominately concentrated in the Route 128 suburbs.

The military escalation in Vietnam also reenergized VOW, and the group played a crucial role in awakening opposition to the war within the suburbs, especially among women. Following the Hughes campaign and the test ban, VOW, like PAX, struggled with where to channel its energy. The group became involved in many of the national and international women's pacifist activities, and some members even traveled to Moscow as guests of the Soviet women's committee. The group also took an increased interest in civil rights. Rita Paine of Weston led a delegation of members into Boston to participate in the School Stayout and members had canvassed for Noel Day. The war provided VOW the ideal issue to fulfill its goals of promoting peace and disarmament through political activism and civic education. In 1965, group became involved in a variety of activities including letter writing campaigns, telephone chains, and on July 4<sup>th</sup> sponsored an airplane banner that flew over public beaches and Fenway Park declaring "End the War in Vietnam, Use UN for Peace. Write LBJ."<sup>86</sup>

VOW members experimented with a variety of tactics to deploy their unique position as the suburban middle-class housewives and mothers toward the war opposition. Similar to the women who had participated in the fair housing movement, these women strategically deployed gender norms and the strong political and social associations of motherhood to advance the antiwar cause. VOW members recruited new members through their suburban social networks urging neighbors, PTA members and fellow congregants to join the organization. The group gained many of its new members from the ranks of the suburban fair housing movement, like Anita Greenbaum and Kay

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<sup>86</sup> Voice of Women-New England Newsletter, October 1965, Box 1, Folder 20, VOW.

Stein of Newton who had grown increasingly worried about Vietnam. VOW also attracted other new members like Dorit Glass who had recently moved to the Boston area. She knew few people and the organization provided an opportunity “to meet others nearby and make friends with women who had political ideas similar” to her own.<sup>87</sup>

VOW sponsored traditional suburban social and fundraising activities to draw financial and numerical support for the war opposition. The group organized an annual “Flea Market for Peace” asking members to donate “unbroken” antiques, “unwanted” wedding gifts, old jewelry, and other small items.<sup>88</sup> These activities raised the necessary funds for VOW to charter buses, cars, and even planes so that its members could attend the national protests in Washington against the war. VOW members also took part in protests closer to home. In 1966, the group, along with the local chapter of the Women International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), began holding a weekly silent hour-long vigil on Wednesdays at noon in the front of the Old State House in Downtown Boston with an average of 25 people attending each session. The participants found the effort rewarding and many suburban communities developed baby-sitting pools so that mothers could attend.<sup>89</sup> A few months later, the VOW and WILPF decided to hold a simultaneous weekly vigil on the Battle Green in Lexington.<sup>90</sup>

The growing suburban involvement in the opposition to the war encouraged VOW to become more experimental and aggressive in its tactics and position.<sup>91</sup> By 1967,

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<sup>87</sup> McKormack, “Good Politics is Doing Something.”

<sup>88</sup> Voice of Women-New England, Newsletter, March 1966, Box 1, Folder 20, VOW.

<sup>89</sup> Voice of Women-New England, Newsletter, November 1966, Box 1, Folder 20, VOW; Voice of Women-New England, Newsletter December 1967, Box 1, Folder 21, VOW; Voice of Women-New England, Flyer, No Date, Box 1, Folder 28, VOW.

<sup>90</sup> Jane Colbourne to the Editor, *Lexington Minute-Man*, May 4, 1967; M.W. to the Editor, *Lexington Minuteman*, May 18, 1967.

<sup>91</sup> VOW members led the local activities related to Vietnam Summer, a nationwide initiative launched in 1967, which further helped to expand and solidify the antiwar sentiment within the suburbs. Voice of

the group realized that the combination of their suburban image and social connections could provide respectability and financial support to more radical causes. “We were comfortable middle-class women,” Rhona Shoul later recalled, “if you’ve got these kinds of resources that a lot of people don’t have, then you’ve got a responsibility to do something.”<sup>92</sup> The group began to believe that imploding the military conscription system provided a main way to stop the war and thus encouraging draft resistance offered them “the most obvious way to channel time and money.” In October 1967 Michael Ferber, a leader of New England Resistance, spoke to VOW about the nonviolent tactics of his group to help men avoid the draft. Soon after, the police arrested Ferber at a rally on Boston Common for burning his draft card, which became a cause celebre for radicals across the country.<sup>93</sup> Several VOW members had joined the 4,000-person crowd and came to believe that the organization must support young men whose conscience prevented them from cooperating with the draft.<sup>94</sup> VOW hosted activities such as a “festive supper party” in Newton for 150 people where members New England Resistance and Boston Resistance Group engaged in informal dialogue with their suburban supporters. At the beginning of the evening Reverend Harold Fray, minister of the Eliot Church, stated that the presence of so many “middle-class types”—doctors,

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Women-New England, Newsletter, May 1967, Box 1, Folder 21, VOW; “Antiwar Protest is Held in Lexington,” *New York Times*, July 5, 1967.

<sup>92</sup> McKormack, “Good Politics is Doing Something.”

<sup>93</sup> For more on this event and the draft resistance movement in Boston, see Foley, *Confronting the War Machine*.

<sup>94</sup> Voice of Women-New England, Newsletter, November 1967, Box 1, Folder 21, VOW clearly deployed their middle-class, middle-aged identities as polite and respectable suburban mothers and housewives to earn parental respect and admiration of the resisters. VOW. Many young women had confronted difficulty joining Boston’s draft resistance movement. Leslie Cagan who would become a prominent feminist and peace activist, later described a meeting where the leaders told the females present that they could not speak because they did not face conscription. Amy Swerdlow suggests older women like the member of VOW met more success in large part because they did not seek to enter as peers or equals but came from the vantage of mothers and housewives. Amy Swerdlow, “Not My Son, Not Your Son, Not Their Son’: Mothers Against the Vietnam Draft” in *Give Peace A Chance*, 159-170.

lawyers, technicians---at a meeting of this sort clearly indicated that the conscience of America is awakening."<sup>95</sup> The event raised over \$1,000 to benefit the Resistance Movement.

Opposing the draft appealed to the maternalist instincts of VOW members on a general level, but specifically many with teenage and college-aged sons who potentially faced conscription. They persuaded school officials in Newton and Lexington to allow high school students to discuss their options and alternatives with draft counselors.<sup>96</sup> The involvement in the Resistance cause inspired many of VOW members such as Shoul, Elizabeth Boardman, Alice Aronow and Helen Damon to encourage their own sons to become conscientious objectors.<sup>97</sup> In addition, the group worked with a group of mothers from Roxbury to extend some of these form of draft counseling toward the black community as well. These activities reveal the behind-the-scenes ways that upper-middle-class suburban residents sought to participate and support the growing antiwar effort. VOW and its allies, however, rarely discussed the limited number of residents from places like Newton, Brookline and Lexington who actually served in combat in direct contrast to the statistics from places like South Boston, Chelsea and Roxbury. In doing so, they contributed to naturalizing the forms of class inequities at the very heart of the conscription issue.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Voice of Women-New England, Newsletter, January 1968, Box 1, Folder 21, VOW.

<sup>96</sup> Voice of Women-New England, Newsletter, December 1967, Box 1, Folder 21, VOW.

<sup>97</sup> See Voice of Women-New England, 30 Years Later: Voice of Women Questionnaires, Box 1, Folder 51, VOW.

<sup>98</sup> For more about the class-inequities imbedded in inscription of Soldier see Appy, *Working-Class War*. See also James Fallows, "What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?" *Washington Monthly* (October 1975).

## **“Suburban Chic”**

For the more politically minded members of the Massachusetts peace movement, this increased activism had potential pitfalls. Jerome Grossman believed that the Vietnam War had accelerated a “drift” toward educational and protest activities among peace activists. He continually sought to remind PAX of its commitment to the “premise that the most effective and efficient way of bringing about desirable changes in foreign and military policy is through the application of political pressure based upon political power” and their “largest contribution can be made within a specifically political framework.”<sup>99</sup> Between 1965 and 1968, PAX sought to create “action programs” with “political effects” that would “be relevant in the American political scene” and play “a catalytic role” by forging an alliance with “civil rightists, the suburban liberals, the academics and the students.”<sup>100</sup>

PAX also took steps to more directly challenge Johnson and his administration. Grossman recalled learning about the Gulf of Tonkin invasion while standing in the picket line outside the Goldwater rally in Fenway Park and saying to those around him, “maybe we’re picketing the wrong candidate.”<sup>101</sup> By 1966, he and his collaborators had shifted their anger to the president, helping to organize a large demonstration when Johnson came to speak in Boston. But they hoped to do more than simply protest. PAX took to heart the lessons from the failed Hughes and Day independent candidacies and realized that the group could be more effective by working within the framework of a political party. As the 1968 election approached, Grossman saw a challenge to Johnson’s

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<sup>99</sup> Jerome Grossman to Mrs. Gardner Cox, August 27, 1965, Box 5, Folder 3, CPPAX.

<sup>100</sup> Grossman to Mrs. Gardner Cox.

<sup>101</sup> Grossman Interview.

hold on the presidency as a means for the grassroots group to direct popular opposition to the war into political action.

Grossman, therefore, joined Allard Lowenstein and Curtis Gans of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) in their ongoing campaign to “Dump Johnson.”<sup>102</sup> He traveled with them to meetings with Senators George McGovern, William Fulbright and Robert Kennedy, but each of them refused the offer. In August 1967, Grossman and his wife attended a dinner party at the Wellesley home of Dr. Lester Grinspoon. Fellow guest Dr. William Davidson, a close friend of Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota, asked Grossman what he thought about his chances for the presidency. Grossman responded enthusiastically, stating he and PAX would be able to rally support and money for the effort as they had done in many previous campaigns. The next day, McCarthy himself phoned asking Grossman to come to Washington.<sup>103</sup> Soon after, Grossman went back to the Capital bringing with him fellow PAX members Chester Hartman and Marty and Ann Peretz who spent five hours talking to McCarthy. Upon returning to Boston, they called a special PAX meeting where Grossman reported about McCarthy. “He has gray hair, wears a gray suit, has a gray personality,” Grossman disclosed, “but he’s all ours and he’s willing to challenge Lyndon Johnson on the Vietnam War.”<sup>104</sup> The members erupted in cheer convinced that they had found a candidate to challenge Johnson.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> For more on the Lowenstein effort see William Chafe, *Never Stop Running: Allard Lowenstein and the Struggle to Save American Liberalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), especially 262-275.

<sup>103</sup> Grossman, *Relentless Liberal*, 41-42.

<sup>104</sup> Grossman, *Relentless Liberal*, 42.

<sup>105</sup> Mass PAX, Executive Committee Meeting, December 4, 1967, , Box 5, Folder 20. CPPAX. This sense of confidence was reinforced when McCarthy took a three-day trip the Northeast to test the waters in the fall of 1967 and met with 65 prominent Boston figures and business executives at a PAX-organized lunch. At a rally in Cambridge supporters held up signs declaring “The war is obscene. We want Eugene” (Chafe, *Never Stop Running*, 272).

PAX played a central role in getting the McCarthy campaign off the ground in Massachusetts and nationally in the early winter of 1968. Though many members wished he would take a firmer and more radical stand on peace, they declared themselves as “going all out for Senator McCarthy.”<sup>106</sup> PAX established the foundations for McCarthy’s challenge to Johnson in the state’s April 1968 presidential primary. The group began a weekly newsletter to inform potential volunteers about ways to assist the effort and to give them general information about the candidate. PAX also composed a list of 11 reasons that people, especially “main line Democrats,” should support McCarthy. They distributed and published the bullet points in the PAX newsletter, which by 1968 went out to 14,000 people. The “Why Work for McCarthy” list stressed that such action would create “a change in the power structure of the Democratic Party,” influence the Democratic National Convention, get the peace issue discussed within a political context and demonstrate the political strength of the “anti-Vietnam forces at their broadest point.”<sup>107</sup>

By January 1968, Grossman was commuting to Washington a few days a week to work for McCarthy as National Director of Administration. These efforts gave PAX early influence with the candidate and a great deal of oversight over the structure of the campaign.<sup>108</sup> The national campaign had planned to bypass the state, but Grossman and PAX persuaded the strategists that Massachusetts constituted “a hotbed of antiwar sentiment, with well-organized peace groups chomping at the bit to go work for a peace

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<sup>106</sup> Mass PAX, Statement of PAX, “Positions on a Peace and Freedom Presidential Ticket on the Massachusetts, Ballot of November 5,” 1968, Box 5, Folder 21, CPPAX.

<sup>107</sup> Mass PAX, Executive Committee Meeting, January 8, 1968, Box 5, Folder 21, CPPAX.

<sup>108</sup> For instance the deep-pocketed Martin Peretz sent McCarthy a sharply-worded letter urging him not to worry about professional politicians and “deadhand ADA liberals’ because they could not get out the vote and to please them he would have mute his campaign and thereby alienate others. McCarthy responded in an early morning phone call telling Peretz to trust him (Mass PAX, Executive Committee Meeting, January 8, 1968).

candidate.” The national staffers assented.<sup>109</sup> PAX and its network of supporters also provided early funds and volunteers for McCarthy’s bid in the primary in nearby New Hampshire. In addition, PAX encouraged the campaign to focus its energy on suburban communities and college campuses across the country. PAX recognized the “vast majority” of students were not part of SDS or Draft Resistance but still opposed the war, and so McCarthy would be wise to mobilize this constituency.<sup>110</sup>

Even after the official establishment of Massachusetts for McCarthy Campaign, PAX continued to play an intrinsic role particularly in solidifying support among suburban liberals. The group provided the campaign with the model of grassroots mobilization that it had employed during the Stuart Hughes and Noel Day campaigns. Led by Concord lawyer Paul Counihan, the McCarthy campaign built directly upon infrastructure established by PAX and VOW by targeting areas already politically active against the war such as Lexington, Concord and Newton.<sup>111</sup> Like earlier efforts, these suburban volunteers deployed both their social networks and social conventions in order to draw support and funds for the candidate. The members of PAX and VOW hosted countless “Wine and Cheese for McCarthy ” parties with speakers outlining the virtues of the candidate and the need to end the war.<sup>112</sup> Most journalists both at the time and subsequently focused on McCarthy’s student supporters in Massachusetts and overlooked

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<sup>109</sup> Grossman, *Relentless Liberal*, 43.

<sup>110</sup> Mass PAX, Executive Committee Meeting, January 8, 1968.

<sup>111</sup> “LBJ, McCarthy Invited to Speak in Lexington,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, January 28, 1968; Voice of Women-New England, Newsletter March 1968.

<sup>112</sup> Mass PAX, Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting, January, 19, 1968, Box 5, Folder V.21, CPPAX; Voice of Women-New England, “Wine & Cheese for McCarthy,” April 15, 1968, Box 1, Folder 11 VOW. Lexington residents organized a coffeehouse with entertainment, coffee and pastries (“McCarthy Rally,” *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, April 4, 1968); Martin Small to Editor, *Lexington Minute-Man*, April 11, 1969. Suburban high school students in Newton and Lexington launched “Clean for Gene” to raise money by cleaning houses, washing cars, mowing lawns and performing to raise money for the campaign. In addition, the teenagers offered transportation and babysitting on the day of the primary (“Lexington Teens to ‘Clean for Gene’,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, April 4, 1968).

the importance of the suburban liberals in the success of his campaign in the Bay State.<sup>113</sup> During the primary, however, Abigail McCarthy described her husband's constituency as "academia united with the mobile society of scientists, educators, technologists and the new post-World War II class."<sup>114</sup> This description aptly characterized both the base of McCarthy's support and the membership of the area's peace groups. Most of these supporters did not need to get "Clean for Gene" because they already exhibited the image of suburban respectability.<sup>115</sup>

The McCarthy campaign, in turn, provided suburban liberals in these communities the ideal means to channel their growing opposition to the war. VOW encouraged members to get involved who "crave an activity more effectively than demonstrations."<sup>116</sup> Lexington's Bonnie Jones, active in both peace and civil rights causes, observed that most local liberals believed in her town "in being part of the process, the so-called mainstream, and participating in it and trying to change it from within" and the McCarthy candidacy represented an effective means to do so.<sup>117</sup> The campaign marked the first time that so many suburban liberals at the grassroots converged around a single issue. Jones explained that before the campaign in Lexington "there were networks of people. The people I knew in town were active similar political organizations---Civil Rights Fair Housing---and they were sort of interlocked while other people in town got involved in the Democratic Town Committee, the League of Women Voters. The anti-war movement really bridged all of those in the suburbs."<sup>118</sup> The

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<sup>113</sup> See for example "McCarthy Rides on 'Student Power,'" *New York Times*, March 10, 1968.

<sup>114</sup> Matusow, *Unraveling of America*, 407.

<sup>115</sup> "Lexington Teens to 'Clean for Gene,'" *Lexington Minute-Man*, April 4, 1968.

<sup>116</sup> Voice of Women- New England, Newsletter, January 1968, Box 1, Folder 21, VOW.

<sup>117</sup> Jones Interview.

<sup>118</sup> Jones Interview.

excitement of the initiative also attracted many suburban residents who had never before been politically active. The campaign offered a safe way to channel their frustration at the war and get involved in local social life. One Lexington liberal activist later recalled “people who I never think of as being active in politics got drawn [in].”<sup>119</sup>

Suburban support for McCarthy increased considerably after his success in the New Hampshire primary and remained strong even with Robert Kennedy’s decision to enter in the race.<sup>120</sup> McCarthy ran officially unopposed in Massachusetts because the election fell after Johnson withdrew and before Hubert Humphrey or Kennedy had a chance to put their names on the ballot. The campaign, nevertheless, tried to bring out a big vote in order to send a message to the rest of the nation about McCarthy’s viability.<sup>121</sup> Suburban volunteers went into action making phone calls, leafleting shopping centers, and going door-to-door in order to fulfill that goal. PAX’s supplemented these efforts by placing 200 McCarthy ads in Boston subway cars.<sup>122</sup> On April 30 McCarthy won the biggest number of votes in the history of the Massachusetts Democratic Presidential Primary, a higher tally than even John F. Kennedy in 1960.<sup>123</sup> The state headquarters glowed that “the Massachusetts effort has been exactly what Eugene McCarthy believes to be the political salvation of this country: involve by and direction from the

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<sup>119</sup> Emily Frankovich, interview conducted by Bonnie Jones, February 28, 1992, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed April 3, 2009).

<sup>120</sup> Bruce Miroff notes that in the competition between the two peace-minded candidates. Robert Kennedy became the favorite among minorities, some blue-collar Catholics and Kennedy loyalists, while most students and the antiwar segment of the white middle-class maintained their support for McCarthy. See Miroff, *Liberals’ Moment*, 16-17.

<sup>121</sup> S.J. Micciche, “Mass. Primary Eyed by Nation,” *Boston Evening Globe*, April 29, 1968.

<sup>122</sup> The advertisement showed a picture of a wounded American GI and a quotation from General Shoup declaring, “I don’t think the whole of Southeast Asia as related to the present and future safety and freedom of the people of this country is worth the life or limb of a single American.” Mass PAX, Executive Committee Meeting, March 11, 1968, Box 5, Folder 21, CPPAX.

<sup>123</sup> “Rocky Upsets Volpe, Nixon, McCarthy Tops JFK Record,” *Boston Globe*, May 1, 1968.

grassroots.<sup>124</sup> Encouraged by these words, many residents remained committed to keeping the candidate “viable, visible, and valuable.”<sup>125</sup> During the late spring, in order to provide funds for the candidate in the Oregon and California primaries, many residents continued to hold fundraisers with a uniquely suburban-bent sponsoring picnics, concerts, “cocktailathons,” raffles, and selling McCarthy fabric and buttons.<sup>126</sup> Yet by the summer, when McCarthy’s chances for victory appeared increasingly slim, his support lessened considerably.

Despite the fact that McCarthy had not secured the Democratic nomination, Grossman, PAX and other suburban liberal activists saw the campaign as a major success. For those activists who had gotten their start working for Stuart Hughes six years earlier, the campaign finally confirmed the viability of working through the political system to achieve their goals.<sup>127</sup> McCarthy’s effort had not only issued a career-ending blow to Johnson, but also placed antiwar issues into the center of the election and the Democratic Party’s agenda. Likewise, the campaign had both helped increase support and infrastructure for the opposition to Vietnam in the suburbs and had demonstrated that “massive grassroots sentiment can be transformed into effective political action.”<sup>128</sup> Although historian Allen Matusow later deemed “being for McCarthy was the latest variety of suburban chic” many of these residents remained committed to peace and political activism even after the campaign fell out of vogue.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Massachusetts McCarthy for President, May Newsletter, May 14, 1968, Box 32, CPPAX.

<sup>125</sup> Massachusetts McCarthy for President, May Newsletter.

<sup>126</sup> Massachusetts McCarthy for President, May Newsletter.

<sup>127</sup> When Hughes met McCarthy in 1968 he introduced himself as “John the Baptist.” Hughes intended the religious comparison to suggest that the enthusiasm and grassroots volunteers of McCarthy’s campaign drew upon the model he had established six years earlier (Hughes, *Gentleman Rebel*, 260).

<sup>128</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics, “Proposed Goals for the Citizens for Participation Politics” c. September, 1968, Box 6, Folder VI.19, CPPAX.

<sup>129</sup> Matusow, *Unraveling of America*, 407.

In spite of the election of Richard Nixon, the McCarthy campaign gave liberals a means to create a more formal and more long-term influence on state and national politics. Throughout the summer and fall of 1968, Massachusetts campaign leaders including Paul Counihan, John Elder, Jerome Grossman, and Alvin Levin staged a series of meetings to discuss how to create an effective and broad-based political organization in the “spirit and format of the McCarthy Movement.”<sup>130</sup> During the primaries, the press had dubbed the McCarthy style of campaigning with its emphasis on grassroots tactics and issues of social justice as the “New Politics” in contrast to the “old politics” the Democratic Party “Establishment.”<sup>131</sup> The group of activists decided to take the “new politics” idea in both its name and practice. Although it retained its old headquarters, by September “Massachusetts McCarthy for President” had officially evolved into “Citizens for Participation Politics.”<sup>132</sup> The organization sought to work for both legislation that would reform the political, social and electoral structure of the state and candidates who supported and embodied its “new politics” ideals. CPP’s commitment to operating within the formal channels of political power to realize its vision of democracy highlight the ways in which the organization embodied the direct influence not of just the McCarthy campaign, but other suburban liberal groups like PAX and the Fair Housing Federation as well.

Two weeks after Nixon defeated Humphrey, 400 people, largely from Boston’s suburbs, convened in Worcester for the official formation of the CPP.<sup>133</sup> The convention

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<sup>130</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics, “Proposed Goals for the Citizens for Participation Politics.”

<sup>131</sup> For more on “New Politics” see Lanny J. Davis, *The Emerging Democratic Majority: Lessons and Legacies from the New Politics* (New York: Stein and Day, 1974).

<sup>132</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics “Facts About CPP,” c. 1970, Box 36, Folder CPP, FWS.

<sup>133</sup> John Elder to All McCarthy Supporters, Fall 1968, Box 6, Folder VI.2, CPPAX. Prior to the convention the planning committee encouraged that local and district-wide McCarthy groups to meet and discuss the proposed charter.

adopted a charter that reflected its commitment to reforming the political process and an emphasis on voter participation. “It is the goal of CPP,” the statement of purpose declared, “to make the governmental and political process more responsive to the will and need all the people through their broader participation in that process and in the formulation of programs which affect them.”<sup>134</sup> Expressing this commitment to “broad-based participation,” the group sought to place the majority of its “decision making power at the grass-roots local level.”<sup>135</sup> It also decided not to create formal ties with either party in part because in Massachusetts Republicans had filed more liberal legislation than Democrats and in part because it would enable them to put issues ahead of party labels.<sup>136</sup>

The CPP concept attracted suburban residents like Emily Frankovich of Lexington who would become a major grassroots organizer for political causes during the late 1960s and early 1970s. A reporter turned housewife, Frankovich had become active in the local League of Women Voters and strongly committed to working within the established system. Though against the war, Frankovich scoffed at activities like the silent vigils on the Battle Green, which she believed did nothing to affect candidates and politics. She had not considered McCarthy a credible candidate, but during the 1968 Democratic National Convention her son was sick and she had “nothing to do except watch the convention on TV.”<sup>137</sup> Watching the protests, she realized that 20 years earlier she would have been part of the action and then began thinking about the possibility of

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<sup>134</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics, “CPP Organizes at Worcester Convention, November 1968,” Box 6, Folder VI.2, CPPAX.

<sup>135</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics, Statement of Purpose, November 17, 1968, Box 6, Folder VI.2, CPPAX.

<sup>136</sup> Richard Cauchi Letter, Fall 1968, Box 6, Folder VI.2, CPPAX; “Facts About CPP.”

<sup>137</sup> Frankovich Interview.

her own son going to fight in “a silly war.”<sup>138</sup> She sought to do something to change the political structure to end the war and decided to get involved in CPP as a means to work within the political process. She soon became the chair of what became one the group’s most active chapters.

CPP shared both an overlapping membership with PAX and a commitment to harness grassroots sentiments in the political action. CPP, nevertheless, sought to expand beyond PAX’s exclusive focus on peace get involved in a wide range of state and local issues. Following the convention CPP immediately began supporting legislation on electoral reform, civil service reform, air pollution, and became actively involved in the highway protest movement discussed in the following chapter. As CPP organized, PAX went through a period of self-redefinition. Despite, the success of the McCarthy campaign, the group had lost key members including Chester Hartman who came to believe that PAX was not radical enough.<sup>139</sup> After lengthy discussions, the group decided to get more involved in community organizing as a means to galvanize political action for peace. PAX had 14,000 people on its mailing list and decided, “now that public sentiment has become more liberal, it’s time that these 14,000 people move.”<sup>140</sup> The leaders recognized “peace groups traditionally talk to themselves” and in order to avoid that tendency they had to focus more on activities that reached and mobilized people at the grassroots. This new emphasis brought PAX into even closer ideological and physical collaboration with CPP.

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<sup>138</sup> Frankovich Interview.

<sup>139</sup> Mass PAX, Minutes of the PAX Steering Committee, March 11, 1968, Box 5, Folder V.21, CPPAX.

<sup>140</sup> Mass PAX, Revised Notes on PAX Community Organizing, June 13, 1968, Box 5, Folder V.22, CPPAX.

## Hydrogen Bombs in Our Backyard

The members of CPP and PAX discovered their first opportunity to work together and prove themselves as effective practitioners of “new politics” in a campaign to stop the construction of an Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) system in the suburbs of Boston. These groups mobilized a suburban-centered effort that ultimately redirected national defense policy, enhanced their shared cause, and provided an important blueprint for subsequent action. The ABM issue dated back to the 1950s when the Joint Chiefs of Staff first proposed a nuclear weapon shield. In 1967 Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara announced that the United States would proceed with plans for a thin ABM system called “the Sentinel” that would detect enemy missiles by means of radar and destroy them with thermonuclear warheads. Each of these warheads cost at least \$1 million and would be a hundred times more powerful than the bomb dropped in Hiroshima. The plans called for 14 ABM bases spread throughout the United States with two in Massachusetts in the North Shore suburbs of Reading and North Andover. Congress allocated the first appropriation for the project in the summer of 1968. The military soon after broke ground in Reading and on a three hundred acre site in North Andover, a 13,000-person community 20 miles north of Boston. The army planned on placing radar tracking facilities, a power plant, military housing and long-range Spartan missiles at the location, 160 acres of which sat on state forest.<sup>141</sup> Many well-known scientists, including Jerome Wiesner, the provost of MIT and National Science Advisor to President Kennedy, had publicly spoken out against construction, warning that such a

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<sup>141</sup> Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources, The Sentinel-Perimeter Acquisition Radar Site, Boxford State Forest, North Andover, Massachusetts, August, 1970, Box 54, Folder: ABM Site in North Andover, FWS.

shield could not stop a nuclear weapon. The issue proved more complicated, nevertheless, because Raytheon, the largest defense company on Route 128 had a \$60 million contract to build the missile site radars and this money would greatly enhance the Massachusetts economy.<sup>142</sup>

The members of PAX, long fearful about the threat of nuclear weapons and staunch advocates of disarmament, strongly opposed the ABM idea and by December 1968 turned their full attention to stopping it. In line with its commitment to grassroots methods, PAX decided that arousing widespread community concern provided the most effective way of preventing construction.<sup>143</sup> PAX recognized, nevertheless, that the residents of the communities surrounding the proposed sites, including Andover, Lynnfield, Reading and Wakefield had voiced little opposition to either the Vietnam War or the ABM system and voted consistently Republican. The group, therefore, began formulating an outreach campaign to invoke action among more politically moderate local residents by working through established local structures such as newspapers, churches and town government.<sup>144</sup> PAX learned that other peace groups like CPP had expressed interest in organizing work on ABM and in early January PAX invited them all to a meeting at its main offices to coordinate their efforts in sparking local outrage about the missiles.<sup>145</sup> Members of CPP, VOW, WILPF and the Boston Branch of the Federation of American Scientists all attended and agreed to create the ad hoc New England Citizens Committee on ABM. CPP offered the endeavor office space at its new headquarters.

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<sup>142</sup> Victor K. McElheny, "Reading Scene for Verbal War," *Boston Globe*, January 29, 1969.

<sup>143</sup> Mass PAX, "December 10 Meeting First Congregational Church, Reading," December 10, 1968, Box 5, Folder V. 23, CPPAX.

<sup>144</sup> Raymond Dougan Letter, December 16, 1968, Box 5, Folder V. 23, CPPAX.

<sup>145</sup> Mass PAX, Steering Committee Minutes, January 13, 1969, Box 5, Folder V.25, CPPAX; Mass PAX Steering Committee Minutes, January 28, 1969, Box 5, Folder V.25, CPPAX.

The leaders of this project recognized that the Army's slated meeting to outline the plans for the ABM program in Reading offered the ideal space to showcase the widespread opposition to the plan. In January, the ad hoc committee worked to expand opposition on the North Shore and throughout the state before the meeting. VOW mailed 4,000 letters to people throughout Greater Boston alerting them about the hearing. PAX leafleted the Reading-Lynnfield area with over 20,000 flyers warning about the dangers of the site. These pamphlets simultaneously addressed the global threats of the ABM and more localized issues in order to appeal to suburban homeowners. Residents of Lynnfield, Wakefield and North Reading received warnings that the site would affect property values, water supply, flood control, public services and television reception. Opponents also pointed out that that the project would employ 500 people and suggested this new influx of population would place a burden on the community, its services, and its schools. For many citizens these threats about property values and tax rates aroused more concern than potential nuclear radiation. For instance, Edward Kendrick of Wakefield and Beverly Bjorkman of Reading got involved in the anti-ABM effort because they feared the installation would force local officials to change their zoning laws to allow apartments for Army employees.<sup>146</sup> Activists also sought to appeal to the growing environmental consciousness of suburban citizens by emphasizing that the site in North Andover sat on Massachusetts conservation land and had already destroyed 90 acres of timber, which also helped stimulate opposition.

The 1,300 people who crammed into the Reading High School Auditorium for the January 29 meeting overwhelmed the Army representatives. Many noted scientists and engineers, including MIT professors George Rathjens and Leo Sartori, testified against

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<sup>146</sup> Rachele Patterson, "TV Blur From Radar; Crowded Schools Cited," *Boston Globe*, January 29, 1969.

the Army's plans. They challenged the military's lack of concern for the local area, pointing out that an accidental explosion would obliterate everything in a five-mile radius. The outrage from local citizens, however, proved most influential. Before the meeting, PAX produced a set of issues for residents to ask the Army representatives ranging from narrow questions such as "will the ABM here disturb our television?" to broader concerns about U.S. civil defense and foreign policy.<sup>147</sup> The residents, most likely relying on this PAX-produced material, posed highly critical and specific questions and concerns about the construction of the multi-megaton system. Local residents pointed out that the project threatened more than protected their lives and homes. Many "housewives and homeowners" argued that this federal money would be better spent on domestic programs than on the missile race.<sup>148</sup> General Robert Young of the Army Ballistic Agency, the administrator in charge of the project, was clearly unprepared for these questions and focused his responses on issues such as drainage and landscaping.<sup>149</sup> The citizens found this lack of interest in their concerns infuriating. By early February, 80 percent of Reading residents polled opposed construction of the system, an exponential leap from just a few months before.

The meeting further stirred suburban grassroots opposition to the system. In addition to citizens in Reading and Lynnfield, residents from many other Boston suburbs, with the assistance and guidance of PAX and CPP, formed local anti-ABM committees. The movement became particularly active in the northwestern suburbs along Route 128 such as Concord, Lexington and Winchester, both because of their relative proximity to

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<sup>147</sup> "Questions for the Army at Reading High School-Wed, Jan. 1969," Box 5, Folder V.25, CPPAX.

<sup>148</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics, "The Reading ABM Meeting: Citizen Action to Stop Nuclear Missiles in Massachusetts," February 1969, Box 6, Folder V.1, CPPAX.

<sup>149</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics, "The Reading ABM Meeting."

the site and the number of scientists and engineers who lived there. These residents supplemented the existing anti-missile arguments with their professional expertise. While many of these engineers might have benefited financially from the ABM contracts, their concerns about the security of their towns, homes, and most of all family superceded such economic interests. The fusion of scientific knowledge with suburban-centered ideology of taxes, property and children helped to further stirred grassroots opposition to the ABM. The success of PAX's educational drive and the role of experts as leaders allowed the local groups to display a heightened scientific knowledge in their public statements and forums. Ordinary suburban residents used scientific facts to declare that the system was not foolproof especially since the Soviet Union had the technology to penetrate the shield. They alleged that it would not protect from an attack launched from a submarine or from the South Pole, and would be a great threat to anyone living near the sites since an accidental explosion would destroy everything within a five mile radius and bring grave harm to areas up to a hundred miles away.<sup>150</sup> The committees circulated flyers with dire warnings such as "Missile Sites Near Concord" and "Hydrogen Bombs in Winchester's Backyard? The Pentagon wants to put them there."<sup>151</sup> The local ABM-committees, like the larger Ad Hoc group, encouraged local residents to channel frustrations into letters to their local, state and state officials. The Concord committee led by Paul Counihan who had served as the chairman of Massachusetts for McCarthy emphasized, "let your voices be heard in Washington" and "remember it is your tax dollar at work."

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<sup>150</sup> Concord Citizens Committee on ABM, "Missile Sites Near Concord, Write Now!!" c. February 1969, Box 5, Folder V.25, CPPAX.

<sup>151</sup> Concord Citizens Committee on ABM, "Missile Sites Near Concord, Write Now!!"; Winchester Citizens Committee on A.B.M., "Hydrogen Bombs in Winchester's Backyard? The Pentagon wants to put them there," March 1969, Box 5, Folder V.25, CPPAX.

The Ad Hoc Committee and the local groups continued work within the formal channels of government in order to prevent the ABM construction.<sup>152</sup> Their letter-writing campaigns, for example, proved an extremely powerful means of changing defense policy. Senators Kennedy and Brooke both responded to the demands by local citizen and publicly expressed doubts about the efficacy of the Sentinel system. Kennedy deemed the proposal a “serious mistake” and “a waste of money.”<sup>153</sup> On February 4, 1969, the entire Massachusetts Senate passed a resolution voicing grave concern and calling for suspension of construction until reevaluation.<sup>154</sup> All of these officials expressly stated they were responding to the “rising tide of public opinion.”<sup>155</sup> By the time the U.S. Congress put the issue to a vote, many previously uncommitted politicians in Massachusetts and other parts of the nation opposed further development of the ABM system.

Local interest in the ABM issue waned as a protracted debate over the system in Congress ensued. The United States eventually established the ABM Treaty with the Soviet Union in 1972, in which both countries agreed to surrender the rights to protect populations and weapons through such systems.<sup>156</sup> Though it took years for representatives to terminate officially the project, by late 1969 the Pentagon did permanently abandon plans for the sites in Reading and North Andover. A year later Republican Governor Francis Sargent reached an agreement with the White House and

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<sup>152</sup> Residents convinced the selectman in many North Shore communities put their opposition to the ABM on record and the Boston and Cambridge city councils introduced resolutions opposing the construction. When the Massachusetts Public Safety Committee held a hearing on a bill opposing ABM, PAX distributed leaflets urging citizen attendance at subway stops in Boston and through local groups in communities throughout the region (PAX, Steering Committee Minutes, February 23, 1969, Box 5, Folder V.25, CPPAX,).

<sup>153</sup> Theresa McMasters, “Ted Urges Halt on All ABM Work,” *Boston Herald Traveler*, February 5, 1969; Remarks of Senator Edward Brooke Regarding Proposed ABM System. February 4, 1969, Box 5, Folder V.25, CPPAX.

<sup>154</sup> “State Senate Asks Halt on ABM Site,” *Boston Record American*, Tuesday February 4, 1969.

<sup>155</sup> Coordinating Committee Meeting on ABM, February 2, 1969, Box 5, Folder V.25, CPPAX.

<sup>156</sup> The Treaty did allow for one “token installations” for each country, one in Washington and the other in Moscow.

the Department of Defense to develop a state park on the former North Andover ABM site.<sup>157</sup> The Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources decided to transform the area already excavated to hold the missiles into a swimming pool. Upon announcing the plans, which the federal government agreed to subsidize partially, Sargent declared, “the Commonwealth will be able to develop what has become an albatross around the neck of the Defense Department to a valuable addition to the State’s park system.”<sup>158</sup> The short and long-term outcome ultimately provided a potent example of the possibilities of ordinary citizens to work for peace causes and change state and national policy.

### **Household Word**

The ABM campaign demonstrated to groups such as PAX and CPP the political potential of galvanizing moderate suburban citizens and led directly to the idea of the moratorium. Even in the throes of grassroots organizing against the ABM, these groups already began searching for a way to reproduce the action on a national scale in order to convince President Nixon to withdraw United States troops from Vietnam.<sup>159</sup> PAX feared that Americans had become complacent they decided that they needed to take “strong fresh action” to “renew activity against the war” and demand a timetable for withdrawal.<sup>160</sup> In the spring of 1969, the group met to discuss how to build on the grassroots model it had established in the McCarthy and ABM campaigns in order to, in

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<sup>157</sup> Arthur W. Brownell to Charles W. Colson, August 14, 1970, Box 54, ABM site North Andover Folder, FWS.

<sup>158</sup> Francis W. Sargent, Press Release, October 30, 1970, Box 54, ABM site North Andover Folder, FWS.

<sup>159</sup> Mass PAX, PAX Steering Committee, February 11, 1969, Box 5, Folder V.25, CPPAX. After Nixon’s campaign promise of a supposed secret plan to end the war, promise many peace groups had decided to wait and see what he would propose. By the spring, despite the fact that Nixon had made no announcements a Gallup Poll reported that three out of every five citizens supported the President’s Vietnam policy, see Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* (New York: Horizon Books, 1989), 245-256.

<sup>160</sup> Mass PAX, PAX Steering Committee, April 15, 1969, Box 5, Folder V. 26, CPPAX.

the words of Jane Webb, “do something to turn people on--- to take a symbolic act to dramatize the people’s opposition to the war.”<sup>161</sup> Fall River business executive Betram Yaffee suggested that PAX prepare a mass demonstration six months in the future where Nixon would be handed an “ultimatum of some kind” to deliver on his campaign promise to end the war.<sup>162</sup> Jerome Grossman expanded on this idea, proposing a “deadline demonstration.” He suggested that PAX and other groups pick a day when to expect Nixon withdraw troops and if the administration did not do so, then people around the country would launch a one-day general strike to halt the wheels of commerce in protest of the war.<sup>163</sup>

In early May, PAX sent a “market survey” to over two hundred peace, labor, religious and liberal organizations across the country explaining their desire to “develop a national mechanism to which the rank and file of Americans can attach themselves as easily and traditionally as possible” and the possibility of a strike.<sup>164</sup> PAX received a mostly negative response from these organizations. Labor groups immediately opposed the idea because it would mean most working-class people would suffer from a day without pay. Likewise many peace activists decried “my employer is not in league with the bad forces, so I don’t want to do it that way.”<sup>165</sup> Sam Brown, a Harvard Divinity School student and former youth coordinator for McCarthy Campaign, was one of the few people to respond favorably to the idea of nationwide action. Brown believed,

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<sup>161</sup> William J. Lewis, “Oct. 15 Was Born Here,” *Boston Globe*, October 10, 1969.

<sup>162</sup> Mass PAX, PAX Executive Assembly Meeting, April 20, 1969, Box 5, Folder 26, CPPAX.

<sup>163</sup> Grossman Interview. The fact Grossman, a factory manager would advocate for a work stoppage surprised many members of the group, but he believed that withdrawing labor power was actually a way to treat the issue of the war as a business problem. In line with the non-violent tradition, the group also discussed organizing a corresponding hunger strike but decided it would undermine their goal of maximizing public support.

<sup>164</sup> Mass PAX Executive Assembly Meeting, June 1, 1969, Box 5, Folder V.26, CPPAX; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 246.

<sup>165</sup> Grossman Interview.

however, like the McCarthy Campaign the “real seedbeds of anti-war sentiment were the college campuses and the white-collar suburbs” and knew from experience these constituencies would find a strike “too militant.”<sup>166</sup> Brown suggested PAX organize a day of discussion and debate and call it a “Vietnam Moratorium.” The less forceful term displeased the members of PAX who according to Ray Dougan, thought that it was too long, that people “not would relate to it,” and that it connoted “death.”<sup>167</sup> They reluctantly agreed, but demonstrating continued reservations interchangeably referred to the event as the Moratorium and “Vietnam Peace Action Day.”<sup>168</sup> The planners opted to hold the protest in October and while they abandoned the strike idea, the organizers decided to stage it on a Wednesday rather than on the weekend to dramatize it as a “refrain from business as usual.”<sup>169</sup>

The PAX members decided to focus primarily on planning the activities in Massachusetts and placed Brown in charge of coordinating the national effort. This division of labor created a divergence in the local and national planning that shaped the development of the project. Brown soon moved to Washington where he formed the Vietnam Moratorium Committee and recruited David Mixner, also from the McGovern campaign, and David Hawk and Marge Sklencar of the National Student Association to help him. The young leaders decided to focus on college campuses. Similar to the McCarthy campaign, Brown believed that the Moratorium would give them a way to reach students who opposed the war but felt alienated by the New Left. During the summer, the committee sent out a call for action to campuses across the country. Brown

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<sup>166</sup> Hoffman, *Moratorium*, 32-33.

<sup>167</sup> Mass PAX, PAX Executive Assembly Meeting, July 1, 1969, Box 5, Folder V.27, CPPAX.

<sup>168</sup> Betram G. Waters, “Peace Action Day—October 15,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, October 12, 1969.

<sup>169</sup> Robert L. Levey, “Grossman Is Pleased By Response to Idea,” *Boston Globe*, October 7, 1969.

and his collaborators explicitly emphasized the event was not a strike and they “did not want to cripple universities or shut them down, but simply to use them as a base for working against the war.”<sup>170</sup> The committee received a very positive response from the student groups they contacted.

As Brown and the National Moratorium Committee surveyed the national landscape, Grossman and PAX concentrated on plans for Massachusetts. PAX tried to make the event different from other antiwar events by “engag[ing] more moderate elements of the community who have recently adopted pro-withdrawal positions.”<sup>171</sup> They primarily targeted the suburbs just as they had done during the McCarthy and ABM campaigns because they recognized the power of these residents to gain the attention of politicians. *Time* later recognized the ways in which the Moratorium idea embodied “the New Politics” vision and paralleled the McCarthy and ABM campaign tactics “to speak with a moderate yet deeply committed voice, to work through zealous grass-roots volunteers” and “to force the issue of the war to the forefront of American consciousness.”<sup>172</sup> Like the McCarthy campaign, PAX especially wanted to reach those who disliked the war but who had “not yet expressed themselves through political action.”<sup>173</sup>

Demonstrating the middle-class and suburban dimensions of its vision, PAX called on the contacts it had created during the McCarthy and ABM campaigns to find specific ways to involve “businessmen, officers works, professionals, clerks, union men, etc.” They encouraged local organizers to design events that would provide a means for

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<sup>170</sup> Crocker Snow, Jr, “Youths at 100 Colleges Plan New Viet Protest,” *Boston Globe*, July 1, 1969.

<sup>171</sup> Vietnam Peace Action, Press Release, September 4, 1969, Box 5, Folder 27, CPPAX.

<sup>172</sup> “Strike Against the War.”

<sup>173</sup> Raymond Dougan to High School Students, September 20, 1969, Box 5, Folder 27, CPPAX.

this constituency to comfortably channel its opposition to the war. PAX's early pamphlets explicitly placed the event and its purpose in non-threatening and moderate terms that would appeal to middle-class suburban professionals, dubbing it a "work for peace" day and a moratorium "on business as usual."<sup>174</sup> Grossman hoped that by getting local residents to go door to door in their home towns where "people trusted them" and knew them "as the person who coached the Little League" or the "person who helps them burn the leaves" it would help destigmatize the antiwar issue and get many more suburban residents involved."<sup>175</sup> PAX initially received a "lukewarm" response among their local contacts. Yet by mid-September the idea took off beyond their "wildest imagination" and by October "the response and enthusiasm" became "almost unbelievable."<sup>176</sup> The small PAX headquarters quickly transformed into a hub of activity overflowing with suburban housewives, many with small children in tow, professionals who came at lunch and after work, and college students from area schools. These volunteers helped coordinate the local activities and arranged a large rally on Boston Common with speakers George McGovern, John Kenneth Galbraith, Howard Zinn, James Breeden and Peter Camajo of the Student Mobilization Committee.

Involvement grew very rapidly in the Boston suburbs. By early October, over a hundred towns organized vigils, petition drives, and community clean-ups grew. "This is a real grass roots affair now," longtime PAX member Helen Rees of Newton declared. "The people have taken over."<sup>177</sup> The sudden response from previously politically inactive communities and residents had a variety of roots. Many people had grown

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<sup>174</sup> Vietnam Peace Action, Press Release, September 22, 1969, Box 15, Folder 17, CPPAX.

<sup>175</sup> Grossman Interview.

<sup>176</sup> Lewis, "Oct. 15 Was Born Here.."

<sup>177</sup> Diane White, "This is Real Grass Roots," *Boston Globe*, October 15, 1969; Diane White, "War Rallies: All Over Towns," *Boston Globe*, October 10, 1969.

frustrated by the continuing war and Nixon's handling of it even in the few months since PAX had first announced the project. "Last year I tried to get a McCarthy write-in campaign started in this town and I couldn't (sic) even get it off the ground," Joan Stander of Weston observed, "With the moratorium its been completely different. We've had a wonderful response. I think people are just fed up to the teeth with the war."<sup>178</sup> One Washington coordinator sarcastically dubbed the President "one of our best organizers."<sup>179</sup> After Nixon had dismissed the Moratorium at a September 26 press conference and declared it would not persuade him, it further catalyzed public interest. Ellie Gelhar of Concord got involved in order to send a message to Richard Nixon. "He's been trying to pass off this whole thing as a student movement," she explained "I think when he sees the kind of people who are involved in this protest he may begin to realize that there is broadly based opposition to the war."<sup>180</sup> Natick housewife Pam Kaufman agreed that in her community the participants in the activities would be "the people who voted for him. How long can he ignore that?"<sup>181</sup> This response proved, in the words of one Cohasset woman, that "All kinds of people are in favor of stopping the war. It's become a much broader cause."<sup>182</sup> The breadth and moderate bent of the event itself helped to stimulate this turnout. Harvard Junior and organizer Jeff Rosen aptly observed, "Our image and tone are constructive and this gives people who can't accept radical tactics a way of joining."<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Diane White, "More Adults Joining Vietnam War Protest," *Boston Globe*, October 12, 1969.

<sup>179</sup> Waters, "Peace Action Day—October 15."

<sup>180</sup> White, "War Rallies: All Over Towns."

<sup>181</sup> White, "More Adults Joining Vietnam War Protest."

<sup>182</sup> White, "This is Real Grass Roots."

<sup>183</sup> Van Dyne, "Moratorium Reaches to NE Grass Roots," *Boston Globe*, October 12, 1969.

Grossman played a pivotal role in distancing the event from any radical associations. In interviews, the balding 52 year-old presented himself as a concerned middle-aged businessman and suburban dad and wore a suit and tie in every public appearance. He never failed to mention his credentials as a Little League coach nor the fact that his political awakening had occurred as a member of the PTA. “ I feel that as a businessman I have a vested interest in stability, and I think that one of the most insane things about the Vietnam war is the way it has insinuated instability in our society and our economy,” he told a Boston Chamber of Commerce publication.<sup>184</sup> Often glossing over his previous ten years of leftist activism and commitment to peace causes, he stated that if Nixon agreed to withdraw troops within six months, “I would be very happy to go back to the envelope business.” In a direct appeal to middle-class individualist ideology and patriotic individualism, he announced, “The climate that encourages people to start business is the same climate that encourages people to try to change Vietnam War policy, ABM policy and to express their feelings.” Grossman announced his own plans to forgo sitting on the podium on Boston Common to spend the day handing flyers outside his local supermarket in Newton because he believed that was the overarching purpose of the event.<sup>185</sup> These statements and image construction provided an extremely effective way to convince moderate middle-class suburbanites to embrace the Moratorium-related activities. The participants nevertheless represented a wide spectrum of positions about the war, ranging from those who opposed the war in an abstract way to more outspoken suburban liberals and students who sought to pressure Nixon to take decisive action toward withdrawal. Grossman believed that the range and lack of partisan or ideological

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<sup>184</sup> “On Moratorium Day” *Boston*, Volume 61, No. 11 (November 1969), Box 5, Folder V. 29. CPPAX.

<sup>185</sup> Grossman Interview.

affiliation constituted the very strength of the idea. “You could be against the war for whatever reason you liked,” he later remarked of the participants.<sup>186</sup>

The positive response from formal institutions, professional groups, and politicians clearly underscored the moderate tone and breadth of opinions that the Moratorium came to encompass. Several Boston area universities including Northeastern University and Boston University suspended classes, and Harvard and MIT treated classroom attendance as a matter of individual conscience. Groups of Boston physicians and lawyers organized Moratorium committees, and members of the Harvard Medical School faculty planned to hand out postcards outside downtown hospitals calling for the war to end in six months.<sup>187</sup> The largest and most surprising outpouring of support came from national, state and local politicians. While George McGovern and Eugene McCarthy had been early champions, in early October more centrist politicians like Edward Brooke and Ted Kennedy voiced support. A delegation of 23 US representatives requested “special orders” to speak on the House floor on the eve of the Moratorium in order to keep Congress in an all-night session. At the state level, the Massachusetts Senate and its president Maurice Donahue officially decreed the day a chance “to give moral witness” against the war’s continuation. Governor Sargent endorsed the event and agreed to participate. In a statement of support, Sargent made no direct reference to Nixon’s Vietnam policies and instead promoted it as “a day of contemplation on the war” and a means to honor those who died.<sup>188</sup> The selectman in even the area’s most conservative suburbs, such as Duxbury and Hingham, released proclamations of support,

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<sup>186</sup> Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 271.

<sup>187</sup> Richard A. Knox, “Doctor Protest Grows,” *Boston Globe*, October 7, 1969; Alan Lupo, “Hub Lawyer Group Plans to Participate,” *Boston Globe*, October 7, 1969.

<sup>188</sup> Crocker Snow, Jr, “Sargent Endorses Rally,” *Boston Globe*, October 7, 1969.

and the traditionally conservative Boston City Council passed a resolution asking Nixon to end the war.<sup>189</sup> Boston Mayor Kevin White announced he would let city employees participate in any way deemed appropriate, and that he himself planned to spend the day first at a church service and then at the rally on the Common.<sup>190</sup>

This outpouring of support from powerful institutions provided the event an increased legitimacy and respectability, yet it also further galvanized opposition from members farther to the left. Along with the American Legion, SDS was one of the few organizations to publicly oppose the Moratorium and their response revealed deeper fissures within the factions of the antiwar movement.<sup>191</sup> The Boston chapter of SDS released a pamphlet entitled “The Moratorium is a Cover Not a Solution” which dismissed the event as “just old wine in new bottles.”<sup>192</sup> The authors accused the organizers of trying to “draw people away from real anti-imperialist fights” and “get them engaged in meaningless symbolic actions.” SDS member and Harvard Senior Myron Mather publicly dubbed the protest “irrelevant” and predicted, “all those McCarthy jackasses will just be indulging in their patriotic, onanistic impulses.”<sup>193</sup> Even members of PAX grew concerned that perhaps the pendulum had swung too far and that endorsements deeming it a day of contemplation obscured the original focus of applying pressure to the Nixon administration. Several members began to joke that the event had become so “establishment-oriented” that before long Richard Nixon himself would announce his support.<sup>194</sup> “When we first organized this we were afraid of getting co-

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<sup>189</sup> Snow, “Sargent Endorses Rally.”

<sup>190</sup> Robert J. Anglin, “Peace Day to Him Just That,” *Boston Globe*, October 14, 1969.

<sup>191</sup> Jeremiah V. Murphy, “Protests Make Strange Bedfellows,” *Boston Globe*, October 14, 1969.

<sup>192</sup> Boston Chapter of Students for A Democratic Society, “The Moratorium is a Cover Not a Solution.” Boston, MA, 1969.

<sup>193</sup> “Strike Against the War,” *Time*.

<sup>194</sup> Crocker Snow, “Everybody’s Getting into the Act,” *Boston Globe*, October 10, 1969.

opted from the left,” Ken Hurwitz explained, “Now it’s happening from the other side. The danger is from the right.” At a meeting the week before the event, Bay State organizers decided, therefore, to shift their energy from building support to stressing the original intent on encouraging US policy closer to withdrawal from Vietnam.

The day of activities far surpassed the expectations of organizers and thereby quelled these concerns and anxieties. Almost every town around Boston held some event ranging from small church services, rallies and candlelight vigils on village greens to readings of the 89,000 names of the war dead. High school students became particularly active in orchestrating local events. In many of the more conservative communities, students spent hours preparing posters and trying to induce adult interest.<sup>195</sup> The Commissioner of Education had required schools stay open, but suggested that the “war be considered within the framework of classroom discussion.”<sup>196</sup> Dozens of suburban high schools scheduled special seminars or let students out early to attend local activities. A reporter noted that one of the more remarkable images was the number of teenagers partaking in the candlelight vigils that occurred on town greens throughout Boston’s suburban ring and then staying afterward to help cleanup.

The *Boston Globe* reported that the communities along Route 128, especially in the more “liberal towns,” became particularly energized by the Moratorium.<sup>197</sup> In Newton, Alfred Halper turned his home into the unofficial headquarters for grassroots activity before October 15. Halper recruited housewives to canvas residents to sign a petition to Nixon calling for withdrawal and place a hand-painted yellow sign on their

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<sup>195</sup> John C. Burke, “Students Form The Vanguard in Suburbs,” *Boston Globe*, October 16, 1969.

<sup>196</sup> “High Schools Make Peace Day Plans,” *Boston Globe*, October 8, 1969.

<sup>197</sup> Burke, “Students Form The Vanguard in Suburbs.”

lawns on October 15 declaring, “End the War Now.”<sup>198</sup> The campaign received “marvelous” response. Lincoln residents transformed local Pierce Park into “Peace Park” where housewives and students constructed semi-circular huts to house tables for peace petitions, batches of homemade bread, and information about the draft. A group of students and adults also staged a “guerilla theatre” mock press conference with participants wearing huge papier-mâché masks of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. Lexington, with its existing well-organized network of antiwar residents, became particularly active in the Moratorium activities. Local CPP head Emily Frankovich along with Unitarian minister John Wells had led the organizing committee recruiting participants by directly appealing to a fiscally-moderate suburban sensibility. The organizers dubbed the war “a tax drain, ” taking 25 percent of all tax dollars from Lexington citizens and asked rhetorically “should responsible citizens be involved in the quest for peace, or shall students be left alone in this desire?”<sup>199</sup> On the day of the Moratorium, the group enlisted 200 volunteers to go door-to-door soliciting signatures for a peace petition.<sup>200</sup> The group also planned to have a large event on the Lexington Battle Green with a high profile speaker for suburban residents who did not want to make the journey into Boston. They first sought out McGovern, who had already committed to appearing on Boston Common, and then turned to Governor Sargent who agreed.<sup>201</sup>

Sargent’s speech on the Lexington Battle Green served as one of the highlights of the activities across the state. In an internal memorandum leading up to the event, several liberal members of Sargent’s administration recognized the potential implications of the

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<sup>198</sup> Robert J. Anglin, “Peace Day to Him Just That,” *Boston Globe*, October 14, 1969.

<sup>199</sup> “Citizens Groups Plan War Protest Meeting,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, September 23, 1969.

<sup>200</sup> White, “War Rallies: All Over Towns.”

<sup>201</sup> Frankovich interview.

governor taking an official stance against the war. Staff member George Washington stressed to Sargent advisor Al Kramer “millions of students marching and George McGovern speaking will not persuade Nixon to end the war. Dissent by Republican Governors and Senators will. ” He went on to predict that “dissatisfaction is now rampant in liberal Republican circles, it would start a chain reaction which would force the President to stop the killing.”<sup>202</sup> Sargent took Washington’s advice. With an airplane-made peace sign in the sky overhead, he eloquently pronounced, “I am here to say the war in Vietnam must end. Not alone because it is killing Vietnam. But because it is killing America...This war is costing America its soul.” In the middle of the speech, Sargent confronted a small group of teenage hecklers. The governor, a World War II veteran, broke from his prepared remarks and declared, “I know war. I was in it and you never were, so you listen to me...I suggest you listen first and then yell. That’s how we do it in America.”<sup>203</sup> The setting of the birthplace of the American Revolution made the comments even more dramatic and helped define Sargent as one of the nation’s leading antiwar Republicans.

Across the country, citizens participated activities similar to those organized in Boston and its suburbs, which showed the scope of opposition to the war. Small towns like North Newton, Kansas, Duluth, Iowa, Golden Colorado, and Cheyenne Wyoming staged events. In New York, Eugene McCarthy and Sam Brown spoke to large crowds in Times Square, twenty thousand business people attended an event on Wall Street. In the nation’s capital forty thousand people participated in a candlelight procession from the

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<sup>202</sup> Memorandum George Washington to Al Kramer Re: The Governor’s October 15 Speech on the Vietnam War, October 9, 1969, Box 36, Memos from Pool to Al Kramer Folder, FWS.

<sup>203</sup> Stephen Kurkjian, “Moratorium Foes Heckle Sargent on Lexington Green,” *Boston Globe*, October 16, 1969.

Washington Monument to the White House.<sup>204</sup> The peacefulness of the events provided a sharp contrast to violence of the Weatherman's Days of Rage held in Chicago the week before and provided the entire project with a sense of respectability. The Moratorium received a great deal of media attention before, on and after October 15<sup>th</sup>, which further contributed to its mainstream legitimacy. The event appeared on the front page of most newspapers across the country and the major television network newscasts devoted their programming to it. *Time Magazine* placed it on the cover of its October 17, 1969, edition with an article declaring that by making "moratorium" a "household word, the events meant that "Nixon cannot escape the effects of the antiwar movement."<sup>205</sup>

The events of October 15 marked an important turning point in public sentiment about the Vietnam War, and shifted the conversation away from not *if* but *when* the United States would withdraw troops. Historian Melvin Small later dubbed the Moratorium "the most successful anti-war demonstration of the entire Vietnam War era, and the most successful protest in American History."<sup>206</sup> The Moratorium made opposition to the war acceptable and even the dominant sentiment across the country, but especially in the suburbs. The event also proved the effectiveness of combining local activities with large national rallies as a means to influence public opinion. The Moratorium, therefore, served as a direct inspiration and model for both the inaugural Earth Day events six months later and the Nuclear Freeze movement in the 1980s.

The rally on Boston Common served as the climax of the Moratorium events and helped to solidify the Massachusetts reputation as the "most liberal place in the United

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<sup>204</sup> "Strike Against the War."

<sup>205</sup> "Strike Against the War."

<sup>206</sup> Melvin Small, *At the Water's Edge: American Politics and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005), 141.

States.” The composition of the large crowd on the Common, nevertheless, also exposed the limits of the organizer’s suburban-centric vision. The participants in Moratorium events in Boston and the nation predominantly consisted of college students and middle-class white suburbanites. PAX and the National Moratorium Committee had consciously sought to target these groups. Yet, by doing so, had also excluded other parts of the population from getting involved. Even with the removal of the strike concept, the events did not appeal to the majority of working-class people, especially in rural areas, who did not want to take the day off from work. The absence of the state’s African-American residents proved a particularly telling factor. Although James Breeden did appear on the podium on the Common and other civil rights leaders took part in events throughout the country, they clearly did not represent the attitude of many members of the African-American community toward the event. Though PAX had made half-hearted attempts to arrange for events in Roxbury, a spokesman for Boston’s black community stated that they would rather focus on domestic injustice than the war.<sup>207</sup> The response provides important insight into the changing image and platform of Bay State peace groups.

Just five years before the Moratorium, PAX and other peace organizations had established efforts like CAPE and the Noel Day Campaign to expose the links between military spending and racial and economic equality. By 1969 these activists increasingly deemphasized the structural component of its opposition to the war. PAX also shifted its attention away from trying to reach low-income and racial minority voters and focused almost exclusively on galvanizing the suburban white middle-class. While working on the McCarthy campaign, some members of PAX had suggested the group try to engage

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<sup>207</sup> Snow, “McGovern, Kennedy Ask Groundtroop Pullout within a year.”

the black community.<sup>208</sup> The campaign organizers basically ignored these ideas, deciding to concentrate instead on liberal suburbs like Lexington, Concord and Newton. By trying to make peace politics more acceptable to moderate citizens, however, the suburban-centered effort had led PAX to focus less on the war's misallocation of government funds and resources. This shift, therefore, pushed the grassroots liberal groups further away from the structural critique of the war and from creating coalitions that transcended race or class lines.

The middle-class emphasis of the Moratorium and movement as a whole, moreover, obscured the racial and class inequalities at the heart of the war itself. The suburban activists of PAX, CPP and VOW rarely pondered the criticisms of a wounded veteran from Dorchester who pointed out the disproportionate number of war casualties from his neighborhood as compared to “fancy suburbs” such as Lexington, Milton and Wellesley. “You’d be lucky to find three Vietnam veterans in each of those rich neighborhoods,” the Boston soldier cracked, “never mind three that got wounded.”<sup>209</sup> Historian Christian Appy calculated that while the towns of Lexington, Milton, and Wellesley combined had the same 100,000-person population as Dorchester, those suburbs lost 11 residents in the war while the city neighborhood had 42 casualties and many more injuries. Appy found the same disparity throughout the affluent Route 128 suburbs such as Dover, Lincoln, Sudbury and Weston, deducing that “boys who grew up in Dorchester were four times more likely to die than those raised in fancy suburbs.”<sup>210</sup> At the same time an exceptionally higher number of citizens in these affluent communities got involved in the Moratorium activities as compared with residents of

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<sup>208</sup> Mass PAX, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, December 4, 1967, Box 5, Folder V.20, CPPAX.

<sup>209</sup> Appy, *Working-Class War*, 12.

<sup>210</sup> Appy, *Working-Class War*, 12.

working-class Boston neighborhoods like Dorchester who remained virtually absent. The tactics of PAX and its allies, therefore, erased the fact that for the most part it was not upper middle-class suburbanites, but low-income communities for whom the war took an immediate burden and everyday toll. A working-class mother who lost her son in Vietnam pointedly captured this sentiment dismissing the protestors as primarily “rich women” from “the rich suburbs” whose kids were in college rather than the military. “I’m against the war too—the way a mother is. The way a mother is, whose son is in the army, who has lost a son fighting in it,” the women declared, “the world hears those demonstrators making their noise. The world doesn’t hear me, and it doesn’t hear a single person I know.”<sup>211</sup> Her comment illuminates the ways in which the Moratorium and other suburban liberal activities downplayed the class inequalities and resentments underpinning the entire issue of the Vietnam War.

## **Conclusion**

For PAX and its members, the Moratorium confirmed the importance of grassroots activity within the suburbs to help to stop the war and provided them with a clear plan for the future. The events, however, did not lead Nixon to declare an immediate and full troop withdrawal as the organizers had initially hoped. Brown and other student organizers hoped to plan for an even bigger demonstration in Washington as part of the promise to hold an event every month. While PAX members still considered the Moratorium a great success, it was not the neighborhood-focused initiative that they had hoped to organize. In subsequent meetings, the PAX leader stressed the

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<sup>211</sup> Robert Coles, *The Middle Americans: Proud and Uncertain* (Boston: Little Brown & Co, 1971), 131-134.

singularity of the event and wanted to concentrate their efforts locally. “It’s obvious that 100,000 people won’t turn out on the Common for the same thing,” Ray Dougan declared.<sup>212</sup> “What happened in the communities is the real story of Oct. 15,” Grossman stated of their decision not to get involved in the November event.

The Moratorium had further convinced PAX they needed to reach middle Americans in order to change the Nixon Administration’s policy and that the potential for violence at such a large rally would alienate moderate opponents. The November event brought 250,000 people to Washington and became the biggest demonstration in American history. The crowd, nevertheless, was far younger and more militant than the month before, and by April 1970 the National Vietnam Moratorium Committee agreed with Grossman that the large antiwar demonstration had run its course and decided to disband.<sup>213</sup> By this time, PAX and its collaborators had already returned working more directly within the political system and electoral politics as a means to change the course of the war.<sup>214</sup> As chapter 6 shows, by building on the foundations of the Moratorium, it was in electoral politics that these suburban liberal groups discovered even greater success.

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<sup>212</sup> “Andrew F. Blake and Stephen J. Kurkjian, “2<sup>nd</sup> Rally: 500,000 to March on Washington,” *Boston Globe*, October 17, 1969; Parker Donham, “Leaders of Moratorium Shy From March on D.C.,” *Boston Globe*, October 18, 1969.

<sup>213</sup> This militancy was largely due to the role that the New Mobilization assumed in organizing it. Robert Healy, “Peace Groups Need New Thing,” *Boston Globe*, April 22, 1970; David E. Rosenbaum, “Vietnam Moratorium Committee is Disbanding,” *New York Times*, April 20, 1970.

<sup>214</sup> Mass Pax, Moratorium Executive Assembly, December 28, 1969, Box 5, Folder 29, CPPAX.

## **Chapter 5: Grappling With Growth**

### **Introduction**

On October 19, 1972, local resident Claire Ellis penned an impassioned plea to the *Concord Journal*. The letter was prompted by her sense that, “Concord is unique and special.” Ellis declared: “the towns surrounding Concord have for most part, already lost their country town atmosphere and their beauty and have joined the mass of commercially oriented communities.” Residents of the affluent suburb of Concord took aggressive measures throughout the postwar period to preserve the image of their community as the home of Walden Pond and the incubator of American environmentalism. Ellis asserted, “Us ‘newcomers’ were drawn to this town because of these many things. Had we wanted super highways or a main street emblazoned with lights until the wee hours we would have lived elsewhere.” Ellis was no bystander in Concord’s confrontation with growth, but, rather, the leader of a citizens group formed in the early 1970s to stop the expansion of the Route 2 highway from encroaching on hundreds of acres of conservation and park land in the town. “It’s time some little town in the U.S.A. had the guts and determination to stand up and refuse this kind of ‘progress and efficiency,’” Ellis urged, “rather than bow down to coercion of being one more of this speed-crazed, polluted world.”<sup>1</sup> Concord residents fulfilled Ellis’s populist rallying call by successfully thwarting plans for the Route 2 expansion, preserving the suburb’s natural beauty, historical significance, and economic exclusivity. In reference to this

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<sup>1</sup> Claire Ellis to the Editor, *Concord Journal*, October 19, 1972.

mobilization, one longtime resident declared he “had never known the people of Concord to be so aroused and outspoken on an issue.”<sup>2</sup>

The Concord campaign represented a broader suburban environmental movement, which during the decades after World War II redirected the ideology of postwar liberalism away from a growth oriented-vision and toward an emphasis on quality of life issues including a new appreciation of nature. The new focus shaped state and national policy and galvanized both grassroots activism and structures of racial and economic exclusion. White middle-class homeowners in Concord and several affluent suburbs near the interchange of Route 128 and Route 2 actively resisted overdevelopment and sprawl through such tactics as minimum acre zoning, private land trusts, and conservation commissions.<sup>3</sup> This movement placed Massachusetts at the forefront of the emerging national effort to confront the consequences of sprawl and directly influenced the passage of new environmental protection legislation and the development of a new environmental consciousness at both the state and national level. These locally based efforts to protect open space and stop growth simultaneously solidified both land conservation and race and class-based exclusivity at the center of the political agenda of many of the most affluent and most liberal suburbs in the Boston area.

In the late 1960s, suburban open space activists joined a revolt against the most quintessential symbol of postwar growth: the highway system.<sup>4</sup> The participation of

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<sup>2</sup> Cyrus F. Gibson to Al Kramer and Guy Rosmarin, October 30, 1972, Box 20, Route 2 Folder, FWS.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the national open space movement see Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> This chapter gives only a brief discussion to the highway revolt in metropolitan Boston. For a terrific overview of the movement in Boston see Alan Lupo, Frank Colcord, Edmund P. Fowler, *Rites of Way: The Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971); For more about the national highway revolt see Raymond A. Mohl, “Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities” *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 30. No.5 (July 2004), 674-706; Tom Lewis, *Divided*

these white suburban activists transformed the local anti-highway campaign in Boston from an urban-based fight about housing displacement into a metropolitan-wide movement about environmental protection. The contributions of the suburban conservationists confirmed the overall effectiveness of liberal activists at working within the established channels of government to achieve change. Indeed, the efforts of this coalition successfully convinced Governor Francis Sargent to declare the first ever moratorium on highway construction and to redirect the state's transportation policy toward mass transit. In addition, the coalition made the idea of citizen participation an integral component of the environmental and transportation planning process. The campaign inspired similar shifts in the federal government policy, permanently changing the parameters of transportation and environmental politics and policy in the Bay State and the nation. This alliance between neighborhood activists and environmentalists also successfully transformed highways from representing a symbol of postwar growth liberalism's success to a sign of its destructiveness.

The highway revolt offers a clear counterexample to the metropolitan and racial polarization that characterized the Boston busing crisis and many other key issues of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>5</sup> As the momentum of the revolt shifted away from opposing highway construction in the city and the battle over expanding Route 2 and towards building a more comprehensive metropolitan rapid transit system in the suburbs, nevertheless, the limits to the multi-faceted transportation alliance and the individualist tendencies of suburban residents became more evident. These later battles underscore that the anti-highway movement did not surmount, but, in fact, reinforced the individualist and

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*Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Viking Books, 1997), 179-210.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 165, 234.

isolationist tendencies of suburban political culture, which would have far-reaching repercussions for the physical, social and political landscape of the Bay State in the decades to come.<sup>6</sup>

Scholars have traditionally dismissed the anti-sprawl philosophy of Claire Ellis and her fellow residents as a convenient medium through which to practice the exclusionary politics of suburban privilege. Mike Davis, for example, pessimistically reduces the “slow growth” movement to the “latest incarnation of a middle-class subjectivity that fitfully constitutes and reconstitutes itself around the defense of household equity and residential privilege,” strengthening the structures of racial and economic segregation. Several historians have revised this argument to suggest that the selective embrace of locally-based environmentalism, in fact, advanced pollution and degradation in low-income communities.<sup>7</sup> On the other side, Adam Rome has demonstrated the central role of suburbanites in shaping the modern environmental movement while downplaying the exclusionary dimensions of their political worldview.<sup>8</sup> This chapter offers a more nuanced understanding of both the strengths and limitations of the movement by examining suburban environmentalism from the context of grassroots

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<sup>6</sup> This point mirrors Louise Dyble’s argument that the freeway revolt in Marin County outside of San Francisco “signaled the rise of the growth-control movement, a new and powerful expression of localism and self-interest that shaped the future of suburban and rural areas.” See Louise Nelson Dyble, “Revolt Against Sprawl: Transportation and the Origins of the Marin County Growth-Control Regime,” *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (November 2007), 39.

<sup>7</sup> Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); 159; Andrew Hurley *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Matthew Klinge, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) especially pp. 201-280.

<sup>8</sup> See Rome, *Bulldozer in the Countryside*, especially pp. 1-14.

liberalism and the open space movement rather than the racially segregated homeowner associations of suburban Los Angeles or the lakeside retreats of U.S. Steel Executives.<sup>9</sup>

Many suburban residents who became proponents of stopping highway construction voiced a genuine concern about environmental degradation advanced by postwar growth. In spite of such concern, however, these activists pursued policies and strategies that by in large sought to preserve their accustomed standard of living than advanced structural and environmental equality. Like other components of postwar liberalism, these land preservation campaigns aimed not to radically restructure the market economy, but, rather, to improve the quality of life of individual suburban residents.<sup>10</sup> The movement's new dedication to quality of life issues saved conservation land from destruction and preserved several low-income neighborhoods in Boston, reoriented transportation policy at the state and national level, and secured environmentalism as an increasingly important component of suburban liberalism. Yet, it also emboldened a sense of individualism and distinctiveness among many of the residents in the affluent towns along Route 128, which made them increasingly unwilling to take responsibility for their role in producing the problems of environmental and social inequity. Thus, like many of other components of postwar liberal vision these attempts to grapple with growth fortified the structures of spatial, economic and racial inequality.

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<sup>9</sup> The work of Peter Siskind proves one notable exception. See Peter Siskind, "Suburban Growth and Its Discontents: The Logic and Limits of Reform on the Postwar Northeast Corridor" in Kevin Kruse and Thomas Sugrue, eds, *The New Suburban History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Peter Siskind, "Growth and Its Discontents: Localism, Protest and the Politics of Development on the Northeast Corridor" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> For more about the links between the growth of environmental concern in the 1960s and the ideology of postwar liberalism, see Rome, "Give Earth a Chance," 527-534.

## Open Space

In the decades after World War II, the rapid growth of industry and suburban development along Route 128 stoked anxieties about the threat of overdevelopment.<sup>11</sup> Many of the communities on or near Route 128 first aimed to solve the problem through rigid zoning policies that called for single-family homes on at least one acre of land.<sup>12</sup> These practices ensured that many people who opted to settle in communities like Concord, Lexington, Lincoln and Wayland were, in the words of one local official, “largely those who cared about open space” and could afford the price of homes in these exclusive enclaves.<sup>13</sup> Many of these environmentally-conscious residents and their officials came to believe that zoning alone was not enough to prevent urban sprawl. Zoning, in this view, constituted a “negative power” that could circumscribe, not create, open space.<sup>14</sup> As one Lexington resident Roland Greeley explained, “Most people come to Lexington because they like among other things its rural atmosphere,” and “30,000-sq-foot zoning” is simply not enough to “preserve the open-ness which we cherish.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, suburban residents like Greeley searched for a way to establish a “positive power”—one that would protect the pastoral charm and the undeveloped land of their respective towns.

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<sup>11</sup> Officials in several of these towns contacted the Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources complaining having to confront “extraordinary housing and industrial development” and asking for recommendations for how to “preserve the ancient charm” and avoid “the destruction of the physical assets on which community.” See, Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Natural Resources, Fiscal Year 1955, State Library Massachusetts, Boston, MA (hereafter: “SLM”).

<sup>12</sup> For more about the zoning policies of the Route 128 suburbs see chapter 1.

<sup>13</sup> Lincoln Planning Board, Comprehensive Development Plan for the Town of Lincoln, Massachusetts, August 1965, Box 3, Folder 46, LER.

<sup>14</sup> Michael N. Danielson, *The Politics of Exclusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 36.

<sup>15</sup> Roland B. Greeley, “A Proposal for Town Action to Preserve Local Space, No Date, Box 1, Natural Areas Council Folder, Charles H.W. Foster Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA (hereafter “CHWF”).

Once such resident was Wayland native Allen H. Morgan. Wayland sits twenty miles west of Boston on a reedy floodplain along Sudbury River. Wayland's swampy ecology had prevented significant development prior to World War II and thus, for many years, it remained largely a farm and steeple dotted town.<sup>16</sup> Morgan spent his childhood exploring the town's marshes and woodlands, which instilled his lifelong fascination and love of nature. He left Wayland for college and the Army. When he returned to the town in the 1950s, he found Wayland fundamentally transformed. Sitting on the edge of the Massachusetts Turnpike and less than five miles from the newly constructed Route 128, the town became an ideal location for engineers and executives employed in the office parks beginning to spring up along the highway Like many of its neighbors, Wayland experienced a building and population boom. Atop the beloved landscape where he used to bird watch, Morgan was appalled to find "subdivisions and shopping centers."<sup>17</sup> But he was not merely lamenting the aesthetic change in his hometown, Morgan also grew worried that the new development would cause flooding, pollution and property damage. One summer evening in 1953, Morgan sat on his patio with his neighbor George Lewis. The two men surveyed his yard, looking out toward the adjacent creek and began to discuss the problem of open space and floodplain destruction in Wayland for the "hundredth time." Morgan suddenly suggested they form a private trust to purchase and preserve the town's natural habitats.<sup>18</sup> Soon after his discussion with Lewis, Morgan gathered a duck-hunter, sportsman, amateur farmer, and one man who joined "not

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<sup>16</sup> For more on how technologies made building on spaces like hills, marshes and floodplains possible see Adam Rome, *Bulldozer in the Countryside*.

<sup>17</sup> Allen H. Morgan, *A History of the Massachusetts Audubon Society* (Draft), 1980, Box 3, Folder 14, Allen H. Morgan Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA (hereafter: "AHM").

<sup>18</sup> Barbara P. Paine, "Preservation of Open Spaces Offers a Challenge to Suburbia," *Nature Magazine* Vol. 51 (October 1958).

because of any love of Nature but because he believed in keeping a few suburban amenities intact” to establish Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT).<sup>19</sup> These inaugural SVT members recognized that they had little conservation expertise and “no more political influence than the usual homeowner.”<sup>20</sup> Instead, the participants sought to use their homeowner sensibility and professional knowledge of law, business, education and engineering, which explains why they pursued the localist course of creating a private trust within their own community. They envisioned that the trust would buy parts of the floodplain and protect it both from encroaching development, and state and federal taxes.<sup>21</sup> By 1958, five years after its founding, SVT had four hundred members and had placed more than four hundred acres of local marshland in the tax-exempt trust.

The SVT represented a departure from earlier conservationists who had focused primarily on saving exceptional tracts of forest, beach or wilderness removed from urban life. In contrast, the SVT adopted as its guiding philosophy that “any natural land is worth saving” and focused on saving the less sublime areas within the metropolitan ring.<sup>22</sup> Explaining the group’s mission, Morgan stated, “suburban open space does not have to be glamorous or unique to be worth saving. Any unspoiled natural area in any area is threatened today and will be spoiled tomorrow unless someone starts fighting for it right now.”<sup>23</sup> A deviation from many of the mainstream treatises of the 1950s that extolled suburbanization, these conservation activists believed that vigorous open space protection not unbridled growth offered white middle-class homeowners a high quality of

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<sup>19</sup>Paine, “Preservation of Open Spaces Offers a Challenge to Suburbia.”

<sup>20</sup>Paine, “Preservation of Open Spaces Offers a Challenge to Suburbia.”

<sup>21</sup> Allen H. Morgan to C. Russell Mason, January 7, 1955, Box 1, Folder 15, AHM.

<sup>22</sup> Paine, “Preservation of Open Spaces Offers a Challenge to Suburbia.”

<sup>23</sup>Paine, “Preservation of Open Spaces Offers a Challenge to Suburbia.”

life.<sup>24</sup> Yet while the SVT leaders opposed urban sprawl, they never fully rejected the basic tenets or structures of suburbanization. Indeed, members repeatedly stressed that they did not oppose all development but, rather, advocated for building decisions that took into account ecology and aesthetics. Morgan explained, “We are not against houses or people. But neither are we against nature or natural beauty.”<sup>25</sup> Like open space advocates at the national level, Morgan and collaborators understood the private trust as a tactic to preserve land without challenging the fundamental dynamics of the suburban real estate market.<sup>26</sup> The SVT contended the land in the trust would actually enhance local property values by reducing the damage caused by annual flooding and adding to the pastoral aesthetic of the area. Similar to large-lot zoning, they argued, the trust would also limit population, lessen the demand for municipal services, and reduce the overall local tax rate.<sup>27</sup> Grassroots liberals who promoted fair housing and voluntary busing used similar claims to suggest that involvement in their respective movements would augment the reputation of the overall community and the value of individual properties. In both cases, arguments successfully marshaled the support of residents in the affluent suburbs along Route 128.

The success of the SVT inspired similar organizations throughout Massachusetts and the nation. Many of the affluent communities along Route 128 established their own private trusts using SVT as their model. For instance, in nearby Lincoln a group of

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<sup>24</sup> Amy L. Scott shows Boulder activists adopted a similar argument to promote open space protection Amy L. Scott, "Remaking Urban in the American West: Urban Environmentalism, Lifestyle Politics, and Hip Capitalism in Boulder, Colorado," in *Political Culture of the New West*, Jeff Roche, ed. (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2008), 251-80.

<sup>25</sup> “Conservation—A Do It Yourself Miracle,” *New Englander* (January 1965), Reprinted from *National Wildlife* magazine.

<sup>26</sup> Rome, *Bulldozer in the Countryside*, 128-139.

<sup>27</sup> For more about land regulation and population control, see James G. Coke and Charles S. Liebman, “Political Values and Population Density Control,” *Land Economics* 37 (November, 1961).

residents formed the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust in 1957 for the purpose of “maintaining the rural character of the community.”<sup>28</sup> The Trust purchased land surrounding the town’s idyllic reservoir, in order to prevent encroaching development.<sup>29</sup> Over next decade, the Trust employed tax-deductible land donations and easements across private property to expand the size of the area to create more than 12 miles of trails for walking, biking and horseback riding.<sup>30</sup> Around the same time, Concord too, established the Concord Land Conservation Trust “to assist in and promote the preservation of the rural character of the Town, the development of walking and riding trails therein, and the establishment of sound conservational practices.”<sup>31</sup> In its first two years, the Concord trust acquired a large pond and a square mile of wetlands. The open space agenda of these private land acquisition organizations provided, in the words of Adam Rome, “a critical stage in the evolution of the modern environmental movement.”<sup>32</sup>

The open space movement in the Route 128 suburbs, nevertheless, would not have reached the magnitude and success it did without the development of the Massachusetts Conservation Commission program. The conservation commissions, like the land trusts, had roots in the preservation impulses of white middle-class suburbanites. In 1955, around the same time that the SVT began to purchase its first acres of wetlands,

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<sup>28</sup> League of Women Voters of Lincoln Massachusetts, “Lincoln: Guide to Government, 1963,” Box 3, Folder 31, LWVL.

<sup>29</sup> Open Space Institute, “Landsaving, Lincoln Style,” *Open Space Action*, 1968 (reprinted by the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust), Box 3, Folder 39, LER.

<sup>30</sup> For example, a Lincoln resident sought sell a thirty-acre tract of trail lined wood and marsh to a real estate developer, the town used its conservation fund to buy part of the land, an local resident purchased the adjoining section and donated it to the Land Conservation Trust and the planning board waived the zoning requirements for the property, see Paul Brooks, “Suburban Land Use” *The Conservation Leader*, Vol. 4 No 1 (September 1968), Box 7, Folder 90, LER.

<sup>31</sup> Concord Land Conservation Trust, “Agreement and Declaration of Trust,” No Date, Collection of materials issued by or relating to the Concord Land Conservation Trust, Special Collections, Concord Public Library, Concord, Massachusetts (hereafter: “CLCT”).

<sup>32</sup> Rome, *Bulldozer in the Countryside*, 120.

a group of residents in the North Shore town of Ipswich grew “indignant” when they learned that a builder had begun “a drain and fill” project on a large plot of marshland. In their attempts to stop the project, the resourceful residents of this idyllic town discovered an existing Massachusetts statute related to industrial development giving a community the power to acquire land, which “enhanced community values.”<sup>33</sup> With the help of their state representative John F. Dolan, the Ipswich group drafted a more comprehensive piece of legislation. The proposed statute called for the created of conservation commissions conceived of as official agencies consisting of three to seven unpaid members appointed by the city manager or selectman that would inventory local open and wet lands, coordinate resource programs, advise authorities on proper natural resource protection policies, and undertake “action projects” to advance the community’s preservation interests. The bill passed in 1957 without controversy since most legislators interpreted it as an extension of the earlier legislation and did not involve the outlay of any funds.<sup>34</sup> In its first years of existence, the program received little notice and by 1960 less than 20 percent of communities in Massachusetts admitted to even awareness of the Conservation Commission Act.<sup>35</sup> When Charles H.W. Foster became Commissioner of Natural Resources in 1960, nevertheless, he recognized the potential of this town-centered program. He saw it as means to build support for the programs and policies of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), to strengthen government and citizen relations, and to shift some of the responsibilities of natural resource protection and

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<sup>33</sup> Andrew J.W. Scheffey, *Conservation Commissions in Massachusetts* (Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation, 1969), 30; Mary Ann Guttar, “When Communities Care” *New York Times*, December 14, 1969.

<sup>34</sup> Scheffey, *Conservation Commissions*, 30.

<sup>35</sup> Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources, Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Natural Resources 1958, 1959, 1960, SLM.

regulation onto local communities.<sup>36</sup> Under his leadership, the DNR launched a public relations and educational outreach campaign in order to expand the program sending copy of the law and a fact sheet highlighting its provisions to every town and city in the Commonwealth.

The DNR promotional campaign received the most enthusiastic response from residents in the towns along Route 128 that identified residential and commercial development as the dominant threat to the core values of their communities. The commission network's growth in places such as Lincoln and Concord and Weston led supporters and skeptics alike to deem it a "suburban-centered movement."<sup>37</sup> Many observers would later praise the bodies as phenomena that grew not from "the drawing board" but the "bottom up," and since suburban residents had drafted the initial legislation it inscribed a particular worldview into the structure of the commissions.<sup>38</sup> The suburban orientation propelled the commission agenda largely toward open space preservation. This focus made the program less appealing to more growth-oriented lower middle-class suburbs like Burlington and Waltham or to larger cities like Boston and Springfield, where residents saw open space preservation as threat to their tax base and demonstrated an overall indifference to conservation issues.<sup>39</sup> The communities that became most active in the program had already initiated the process of land control by

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<sup>36</sup> Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources, Press Release, January, 19, 1969 Box 2, Folder Publicity DNR, 1960-1961, CHWF. Foster believed that the commissions "offer the most promising opportunity for the state to work effectively with local communities on natural resources matters" and contended that "these bodies can become focal points for action and interest within a city or town" and "form a valuable and constructive team with parallel agencies at the state level."

<sup>37</sup> Monica A. Amiel, "A Comparative Analysis of Conservation Commission Enabling Legislation in Seven Northeastern States Within the Context of National Environmental Policy (Masters Thesis, University of Massachusetts, 1972); Scheffey, *Conservation Commissions*, 59.

<sup>38</sup> Scheffey, *Conservation Commissions*, 12.

<sup>39</sup> League of Women Voters of Lincoln, "A Study of the Impact of Light Industry on the Character and Economy of Nine Boston Area Towns," April 1963, Box 2, Folder 24, LWVL.

establishing strict zoning policies and local planning boards.<sup>40</sup> The commission structure also aligned most amenable with the political organization and ideological orientation of small and affluent communities. In a study of the bodies, Andrew Scheffey deemed them a “distinctly ‘yankee’ phenomenon tied unmistakably to the tradition of the town meeting, the common and home rule.”<sup>41</sup> The non-partisan commission model was particularly appealing to the reform-minded residents in these affluent and traditionally liberal communities who praised government control and management and eschewed formal identification with either political party.

The structure of the commissions also lent itself best to upper middle-class communities where the residents boasted both strong professional expertise and active volunteer social networks. Charles Foster conceded that the commissions operated most successfully if the members represented “a scattering of professional backgrounds” noting that “legal, engineering, educational and public relations experience” were most useful. The influx of scientists and engineers to the Route 128 suburbs proved particularly instrumental to the success of the commission cause. Mrs. Luther Davis, a Wayland housewife, observed that many of the most dedicated conservationists in her town consisted of transplanted engineers as well as “landscape architects, city planners, geographers cartographers.”<sup>42</sup> Many of these trained scientists brought a pragmatic view of land conservation to their commission work. For instance, Thomas Flint, an engineer, who became the first head of Concord Commission claimed he was less aligned with “passionate conservationists” and, rather, viewed the movement’s purpose to be

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<sup>40</sup> Lincoln: Guide to Government, 1963.

<sup>41</sup> Scheffey, *Conservation Commissions*, 12.

<sup>42</sup> John H. Fenton, “Town Enacts Law to Save Streams,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1967.

“resource management and regeneration” not complete land protectionism.<sup>43</sup> His interpretation revealed that for several participants the program’s title was not strictly a useful alliterative. Many residents who became involved in the commission movement also had experience in town government and other local civic organizations. Flint, for instance, had previously served as chairman of the local Finance Committee, Public Works Department, Water Department and Long Range Comprehensive Commission.

The knowledge and contacts Flint and other commissioners acquired from these earlier experiences not only made them familiar with the procedural elements of participating in a local governmental group, but also helped to create close relationships between the members of the commission and other town agencies. These contacts proved particularly invaluable in convincing their respective town meetings to allocate funds for acquisition of conservation land. The commissioners, moreover, relied upon the well-established social networks of their respective municipalities. The Concord commission credited its success largely “to the voluntary support and assistance of many capable individuals in the community who were not only aware of the problems and the needs but willing to do something about them.”<sup>44</sup> Like the grassroots activists championing for civil rights and against the Vietnam War, the conservation movement drew on contacts in neighborhoods, schools, churches, country clubs and civic organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, to raise awareness and support for their conservationist agenda.

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<sup>43</sup> Massachusetts Forest & Parks Association, *Forest & Parks News*, Volume XXXVI, No.2 1972. Box 6, Folder 25, Environmental League of Massachusetts Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA (hereafter: “ELM”).

<sup>44</sup> Scheffey, *Conservation Commissions*, 116.

## “Self-Help”

While the grassroots infrastructure played a crucial role in laying the base for the commission movement, state policy and financial assistance ultimately ensured the agenda's success. In 1960 the Massachusetts legislature approved the ambitious Self-Help Conservation Program enabling the DNR to reimburse up to 50 percent of the land acquisitions of the local conservation commissions. The Self-Help guidelines stipulated that each project and the eventual land acquired had to be planned and executed entirely by the local commission, with the state serving “as merely as an advisor and fiscal partner.”<sup>45</sup> The pioneering policy made Massachusetts the first state in the nation to use financial incentives to fulfill conservation responsibilities.<sup>47</sup> The use of “Self-Help” in the title, however, evokes a charged discourse laden more with conservative rather than conservation ideology. Like the mortgage policies of the Federal Housing Administration, the generous subsidies that underwrote this project illuminated another way in which government policies provided a set of entitlements to suburbanites masked in seemingly neutral terms. The program demanded that a community have a conservation commission to qualify and such commissions disproportionately existed in wealthier suburbs such as Lexington, Concord, Lincoln and Weston. Low-income and industry-heavy communities like Burlington and New Bedford were slow to establish commissions. The city councils in these cash-strapped cities lacked the budget surplus to fund even a fraction of the costs for the conservation initiative.<sup>48</sup> Wealthier suburbs, by

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<sup>45</sup> Charles H.W. Foster, “Commissions... a progress report,” *Massachusetts Wildlife* (September-October 1961), Box 1, Conservation Commission Folder, CHWF.

<sup>47</sup> Department of Natural Resources, Annual Report 1960, SLM.

<sup>48</sup> LWVL, “A Study of the Impact of Light Industry on the Character and Economy of Nine Boston Area Towns”; Scheffey, *Conservation Commissions*, 76.

contrast, had well-established conservation networks and the surplus to cover the initial investment for state-subsidized acquisition program. The Self-Help program, therefore, further enhanced the open space priorities of places like Concord, where the Town Meeting annually allocated the maximum amount allowed by the state to participate in the initiative. Thus, although, the Concord commission spent \$60,000 on open space purchases between 1959 and 1964, the state reimbursed \$24,750.

The federal subsidization of the Self-Help program only served to increase the inequalities in the conservation agendas of tony suburbs and lower-income communities. In 1965, Congress passed the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, which established a fund to help states develop water and land resources by providing 50 percent of the money. In 1966, Massachusetts conservationists built upon the momentum of the federal law to persuade the state legislature to increase the annual budget of the Self-Help program from \$200,000 to \$700,000.<sup>49</sup> In addition to increasing the budget, the legislature also approved policy changes that enabled any commission that applied to a federal conservation, recreation or open space program to then receive an additional 25 percent reimbursement from the state. This combined state and federal funding meant that local commissions could receive up to 75 percent reimbursement of total acquisition costs.<sup>50</sup> The federal funds encouraged a more diverse range of communities to join the conservation movement so they could benefit from the budgetary windfall. In 1966 the cities and towns Brookline, Burlington, Cambridge, Melrose and Watertown all established units, and by 1969 275 municipalities across the state had created

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<sup>49</sup> Division of Conservation Services, "Annual report for Fiscal Year 1966," SLM.

<sup>50</sup> Division of Conservation Services, "Annual report for Fiscal Year 1966"; Department of Natural Resources, Press Release, July 18, 1966, Box 2, Folder Publicity, DNR, 1966, CHWF.

commissions.<sup>51</sup> Affluent suburban communities, nevertheless, continued to disproportionately benefit from the Self-Help program.<sup>52</sup> For instance, the town of Lincoln consistently received more state land acquisition funds than any other municipality in Massachusetts, which is particularly remarkable given the small population of the community.<sup>53</sup> These forms of state and federal subsidy also explain why these open space expenditures experienced little opposition from suburban residents since in most towns land acquisition constituted a small fraction of their annual budgets.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, the program provided the conservation movement more power within suburban municipalities because it served as an avenue to channel state and federal money into the community.

The combination of this public and private, local and national land conservation efforts in Concord and its neighboring communities demonstrates the ways in which grassroots suburban activists successfully navigated the formal channels of the political system in order to protect their communities from the destructive effects of urban sprawl. Other historic preservation and conservation activities of the state and federal government also significantly enhanced the open space and anti-growth agenda of these affluent suburbs. In the postwar decades both the federal and state government continued

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<sup>51</sup> Division of Conservation Services, "Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1966."

<sup>52</sup> A report by the DNR from the early 1970s found that the affluent suburbs ringing Boston where "the pressures of development are the greatest, but the financial and human resources to cope with the pressures are plentiful" had consistently served as the most active participants in the program. Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources, Number Ten *Environmental Resource*, (Autumn 1973), Collection of materials issued by or relating to the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Natural Resources, and the Natural Resources Commission of Concord, Mass., Special Collections, Concord Public Library, Concord, MA (hereafter: "CDNR").

<sup>53</sup> Siskind, "Growth and Its Discontents."

<sup>54</sup> Siskind, "Growth and Its Discontents."

their ambitious programs to preserve historic sites and wilderness lands.<sup>55</sup> During this period, Concord became a “regional center” of state and federal parks and lands. Within the town’s 24.96 square miles lay the idyllic state-owned Walden Pond and surrounding.<sup>56</sup> Just a few miles away lay the federally-owned 750-acre Minuteman National Park, which the U.S. Congress had created in 1959 in order to preserve the scene of the initial battles of the American Revolution. The park stretched along Route 2A into Lincoln and Lexington and included several historic sites and buildings in those towns, but the Old North Bridge in Concord served as the main area.<sup>57</sup> During this period, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also established the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge’s 2,727 acres of marshland spread through six suburbs including Concord. Thus, despite the town’s proximity to a major transportation and industrial nexus of Route 128 and Route 2, by the late 1960s, over a fourth of the total acreage of Concord was state, federal, local or privately-owned conservation land.

Active involvement in the deliberate process of land protection in the Boston suburbs directly enhanced local residents’ connection to the communities and physical spaces in which they lived. Adam Rome contends that the open space movement across the nation “helped to define communities, to mark one place off from another, and so gave residents a sense of belonging, a vital rootedness.”<sup>58</sup> For residents who had recently moved to these towns along Route 128 appreciating the natural amenities served a parallel function as joining in various social institutions offering a means of feeling part

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<sup>55</sup> For more on the state and national efforts to preserve natural spaces through state and national park systems see Samuel Hays, *Beauty, Health, Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 99-136.

<sup>56</sup> Concord Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Report, July 1972, CDNR.

<sup>57</sup> Concord Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Report.

<sup>58</sup> Rome, *Bulldozer in the Countryside*, 125.

of the community and connected to its past. In places like Concord, Lincoln, and Lexington, this project and process took on a heightened meaning since it fused saving the average meadow or marshes with preserving exceptional spaces like Walden Pond and the Old North Bridge. The large amounts of open space coupled with the proximity of these historic landmarks offered residents further confirmation that their communities differed from the average suburb of sprawling ranch homes and strip malls. These markers also suggested by virtue of opting to live there the residents were distinct from the average suburbanite.

This grassroots conservation movement also strengthened the growth-control politics and priorities of the affluent communities along Route 128. Throughout these suburbs, “conservation commissions have become a strong arm of local government,” a reporter observed in 1969.<sup>59</sup> “In Concord today, or in Wayland or Lincoln or Sudbury,” another reporter commented in the mid-1960s, “a hard core of conservation-minded citizens make up a healthy majority of the Town Members...It is a rare conservation article that doesn’t sail through virtually without opposition.”<sup>60</sup> The attention to conservation by these towns enhanced certain features of the suburban political sensibility, especially a commitment to property values and lower local taxes. In 1965, the Lincoln planning committee asserted, “the economic incentives for a perpetuation of Lincoln’s fields and forests are real: the market value of property in the Town is enhanced by open space, and the cost of a program to secure from adverse development is low.”<sup>61</sup> These communities also recognized that land preservation kept tax rates low and prevented multi-unit development projects. The Concord Conservation Commission

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<sup>59</sup> Guttar, “When Communities Care.”

<sup>60</sup> “Conservation--A Do It Yourself Miracle,” 33.

<sup>61</sup> Lincoln Planning Board, Comprehensive Development Plan for the Town of Lincoln.

successfully convinced the town to acquire a 92-acre parcel by invoking cost as a main consideration. The Commission deemed the acquisition a “bargain” since “State Funds cut the cost to Concord Taxpayers in half” and was “wise investment” since it “will save the Town costs of many town services which would result from housing development.”<sup>62</sup> This growth-control agenda, thus, limited the amount of land available for new development, especially dense multi-unit housing, affordable to most lower and middle-income people. Thus, by limiting the property available for development, open space movement compounded the severe housing shortage throughout metropolitan. This, in turn, exacerbated overcrowded conditions in the city and many inner-ring suburbs.

By the late 1960s, the Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources began to raise concerns that the open space movement had constructed literal and figurative barriers around suburban communities. The state Department of Natural Resources clearly supported the push against rather than for urban development. Yet, the preservation impulse, DNR officials observed, fostered “forms of ecological and political isolationism” because communities were “very reluctant to cooperate with their less well-to-do neighbors for fear of having to share their natural resources.”<sup>63</sup> This resistance to collaboration with their “less well-to-do neighbors” stifled serious discussion regarding how forms of land preservation themselves increased racial and class inequality and often burdened other parts of the metropolitan region. Some advocates had proposed more coordination between communities, but most suburban residents’ locally based understanding of environmental issues prevented this type of cooperation from occurring.

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<sup>62</sup> Concord Natural Resources Commission, “Article 46: Punkatasset” Flyer, 1971, CDNR.

<sup>63</sup> Conservation Commissions At A Crossroads, Environmental Resource, Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources, Number Ten (Autumn 1973), Folder 890, Jack Backman Papers, Special Collections, State Library of Massachusetts (hereafter: “Backman”).

While members of the movement often claimed that their local conservation areas were open to anyone, the lack of easily accessible public transportation routes to left such places beyond the reach of most lower-income and car-less people.

Notwithstanding the broader effects, many participants and observers extolled the positive and democratizing potential of conservation activism among suburban residents. The author of a study of the commission movement from the early 1970s noted that they had shaped “public opinion at the local level” and created “a major catalyst in giving political backing to environmental decisions going through the legislative process” at the state and federal levels.<sup>64</sup> By the late 1960s, most of the commissions had expanded their scope of activities beyond just open space preservation in their own municipalities into other actions that demonstrated concern and consciousness about the wider ecosystem including regulation of wetlands, water pollution control, solid waste disposal, and educating their communities about various issues related to environmental quality.<sup>65</sup> Scholars such as Andrew Scheffey still wondered if the suburban-based conservation activities were “primarily a protectionist device” or could they “meet the needs of an expanding metropolis.”<sup>66</sup> As the suburban environmental movement joined in the effort to stop highway development it revealed the possibilities and limits of this form of activism to protect the environment on a metropolitan scale.

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<sup>64</sup> Amiel, “A Comparative Analysis of Conservation Commission Enabling Legislation.” The conservation movement in Massachusetts had also inspired active conservation commissions network in several other Northeastern states including Connecticut, New York and New Jersey primarily in affluent suburbs such as Greenwich and New Canaan and Westchester County. By 1969 Connecticut had 101 commissions, New York 20 and New Jersey, 54, see Guitar, “When Communities Care.”

<sup>65</sup> Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources, *Environmental Resource* (August 1973).

<sup>66</sup> Scheffey, *Conservation Commissions*, 150.

## “People Before Highways ”

The battle to save Fowl Meadow, a 400-acre wildlife preserve in the southern suburbs of Canton and Milton, thrust local conservationists into an ongoing urban-based battle being waged to oppose highway construction. Fowl Meadow exemplified the type of open spaces that the conservation commissions clamored to protect, but the site conflicted with plans for the construction of the Southwest Expressway. The seeds for the controversy had its roots in the Master Highway Plan for Metropolitan Boston issued in 1948. The Massachusetts Department of Public Works (DPW) proposed an ambitious web of circumferential highways and radial roads that would become the basis of state transportation decision for the next half-century. In the Bay State this new federal windfall enabled the building of Route 128, the Southeast Expressway, and the Central Artery, a partially elevated expressway that cut through the heart of downtown Boston. As the lynchpin of the Master plan, the architects envisioned an “Inner Belt” within the boundaries of Route 128 connecting Cambridge, Somerville, Brookline and the Boston neighborhoods of Roxbury, Charlestown and the Fenway. Additionally, the “Inner Belt” would link seven radial routes including Route 2, I-93 North, I-95 North and South, and the Southeast Expressway. To the planners, the belt would enable drivers to go around Boston without going through its center.<sup>67</sup>

By the end of the 1950s, federal funding enabled DPW officials to implement most of the Master Plan, and the Inner Belt remained the biggest missing piece. The state sought to fill in that gap. The Inner Belt plan, however, threatened to cut through the

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<sup>67</sup> Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, “A Background Paper: Subject: Interstate 695-The Inner Belt, September, 1964,” Box 15, Folder 6. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Planning Office, MIT Institute Archives & Special Collections, Cambridge, Massachusetts (hereafter: “MIT”); Lupo, et al. *Rites of Way*, 13.

heart of a series of largely three-decker dotted lower middle-class and working-class neighborhoods.<sup>68</sup> In Cambridge, residents decided to fight back to preserve the cohesiveness and socioeconomic diversity of their neighborhoods. In threatened areas yard signs and placards in storefront windows, declared, “Cambridge is a city not a highway.” The protest spread to residents in neighborhoods throughout Boston whose homes the Inner Belt would also destroy. The opposition soon included African-Americans from Roxbury, a racially and economically diverse group of residents from the South End, working class whites from Somerville and Jamaica Plain, and white upper middle class residents of the inner-ring suburb of Brookline. With the help of several MIT-affiliated experts, this racially and economically diverse group of residents coalesced into the Greater Boston Transportation Committee on the Transportation Crisis (GBC). The coalition shared the immediate goal of stopping the construction of any new projects within the circumference of Route 128, but they also hoped to direct the metropolitan transportation system away from “its current over-emphasis on serving suburban auto-commuters at the expense of inner-city neighborhoods.”<sup>69</sup> This twin agenda led the group to formulate a serious challenge to the pro-growth agenda of officials at the city, state and federal level.

The anti-highway activists made little headway convincing Governor John Volpe. As a former construction official, the first federal highway administrator during the Eisenhower and the Massachusetts’ Commissioner of Public Works in the 1950s, Volpe had a long history of pro-road politics. When Volpe accepted the position as the

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<sup>68</sup> “O’Neil, Council Join Citizens in Campaign to Stop Belt Highway,” *Cambridge Chronicle*, May 19, 1960; “Belt Route Delay Seen by O’Neil,” *Cambridge Chronicle*, June 9, 1960.

<sup>69</sup> HIGHWAY OPPOSITION GROUPS JOIN FORCES FOR STATE HOUSE DEMONSTRATION, Boston, January 19, 1969 Box 116, People’s March Folder, FWS.

Secretary of Transportation under President Richard Nixon, however, the anti-Inner Belt movement had a crucial window of opportunity, and GBC seized it in a rally called “People Before Highways.” On Saturday January 25, 1969, two thousand people converged on Boston Common by the entrance of the State House to participate. The participants included busloads from Cambridge, East Boston, the South End, Mattapan, Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, and Brookline. The collection of participants did not resemble the typical protest of the late 1960s. The rally radiated a “festive, almost carnival mood,” “ballgame atmosphere.”<sup>70</sup> Middle-aged Irish Catholic housewives and young African-American community organizers stood side-by-side, holding signs: “Stop the Belt,” “Don’t Belt Us,” “Can You Roller Skate on an Expressway?” A dog wore a sign attached to a collar announcing, “I need a belt, but Cambridge doesn’t,” and many children clutched red balloons printed with the slogan, “Homes Not Highways.” Governor Sargent, just two days into his term, eventually emerged on the State House. Appropriating the demonstration’s theme, he declared: “Never, never will this administration make decision that place people below concrete.” At that, the crowd erupted in loud applause.<sup>71</sup>

Although the movement initially pitted the state government and the grassroots movement against each other, following the People Before Highways rally, the grassroots coalition partnered with Sargent and his staff. The activists effectively capitalized on the unique personal ideology and leadership style of the new governor. Like his predecessor, Sargent was both a Republican and former Public Works Commissioner, but his pedigree

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<sup>70</sup> Tom Sewell, “2000 in State House Protest,” *Sunday Herald Traveler*, January 24, 1969; Alan Lupo, “Road Protestors Mass,” *Boston Globe*, January 26, 1969; Alan Lupo, “Roads the Case for a Moratorium,” *Boston Globe*, February 1, 1970; Lupo et al, *Rites of Way*, 45.

<sup>71</sup> Lupo, “Road Protestors Mass”; Sewell, “2000 in State House Protest.”

and path to that position differed significantly from Volpe. Sargent's path to the governorship would ultimately shape his reaction to the Inner Belt issue. He had owned a sporting goods shop and commercial fishing business on Cape Cod, which led him first to the post as associate director of the DPW in charge of waterways and then head of the Department of Public Works. As Commissioner, Sargent had endorsed the Inner Belt, but his unusual resume made him open to reconsideration.<sup>72</sup> In the months following the rally, he made no official announcement about his decision regarding the fate of the Inner Belt, but gradually shifted his position and that of the state government. In a series of speeches following the protest, he asserted that the nation's long preoccupation with highways had diminished attention to other forms of transit that might serve the needs of urban residents more effectively. Instead, Sargent began to call for adoption of a "balanced transportation system" that would count highways as one form of transit among many other options. During his first months in office, the Governor also became more outspoken in his support of basic principles of the environmental movement. In an early speech as governor, Sargent asserted "protecting trees and guarding streams for fishing and saving flowers for the garden-club" was no longer sufficient and the people of Massachusetts had to instead focus on "saving our very selves." He acknowledged while Massachusetts had some of the strongest anti-pollution laws in the nation, they were not enough and pledged to strengthen them significantly. This heightened understanding of the environment directly informed his changed attitude on the highway issue.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Sargent had declared, "The road is key to the entire Massachusetts transportation system. It has to be built, with as little disruption as possible, and it has to be designed as attractively as possible. We'll be working hard to get the necessary approval for this road." See, Lupo, et al. *Rites of Way*, 41.

<sup>73</sup> Governor's Press Office, Press Release, October 28, 1969, Box 109, Gov. Speeches Folder, FWS.

In the aftermath of the People Before Highways rally, the anti-highway coalition also began to fine-tune its tactics to move the state's priorities away from roadway construction and toward a mass transit-based policy for metropolitan Boston. This focus on mass transit caused the coalition to forge alliances with suburban residents. The organization believed that mass transit would help prevent the destruction of low-income neighborhoods in Roxbury and South End and increase the opportunities for poor Bostonians who lacked access to a car. However, the GBC also recognized transit as opposed to highways would benefit suburban residents as well. "The core city is not the only area which will be adversely affected," the GBC posited. "the present plan destroys suburban communities as well." Adopting the anti-growth arguments of the open space movement, the GBC explained "new expressways encourage the present patterns of suburban sprawl which nullifies many of the features which drew people to the suburbs in the first place" as "quiet streets become busy connecting roads overnight; ugly and unplanned shopping centers bring noise and traffic." Further fusing the issues of conservation and social inequality, the GBC acknowledged the problems of automobile-produced air pollution had detrimental consequences for both poor inner-city residents and affluent suburbanites. The GBC distributed a plea to "concerned citizens" throughout the metropolitan area to join in the fight for a better regional transit system.<sup>74</sup> During the spring of 1969, the group also reached out to the area's well-established networks of suburban-based liberal organizations including the Massachusetts Federation of Housing and Equal Rights and Citizens for Participation Politics, both of which had

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<sup>74</sup> Greater Boston Committee on the Transportation Crisis, A PLEA FOR CONCERNED CITIZENS TO JOIN THE FIGHT FOR A BETTER REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, July 4, 1969, Gordon Fellman Papers, Robert D. Farber University Archives and Special Collections, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA (hereafter: "Fellman").

significant knowledge of working within the formal channels of the political system. The most crucial white liberal allies of GBC, nevertheless, would prove to be suburban environmental groups.

In the summer of 1969, the GBC allied with the group of environmentalists trying to stop the DPW from routing the Southwest Expressway directly through the Fowl Meadow wildlife preserve. Since in the early 1960s, the conservation commissions and environmental groups in the suburbs of Milton, Canton, Dedham, and Cohasset along the southern portion of Route 128 had sought to stop the plan. In doing so, they had devised an alternate route, which lessened the impact on the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) owned area.<sup>75</sup> These conservation groups in the suburbs surrounding Fowl Meadow established a separate organization called the Committee for Safety and Conservation (CCS) explicitly to fight the DPW plans. Illustrating its commitment to both parts of their name, the icon the group adopted for its letterhead and other materials featured a flock of birds flying over an empty highway. The well-organized group initiated legal action against the DPW, which stalled the construction. For over two years, two concrete-slabs stood in the middle of the Canton woods, while the case remained in the courts. In February 1969, the state Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) ruled that diverting “parkland, great ponds, reservations and kindred areas to a new inconsistent public use” needed the sanction of the state legislature. In response to the SJC’s decision, the DPW took the offensive. They filed legislation to obtain a right-of-way to purchase a part of

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<sup>75</sup> Milton Conservation Commission to Jules Sussman, Subject: PRESERVATION OF THE FOWL MEADOW BETWEEN BRUSH HILL ROAD, MILTON AND ROUTE 128, CANTON, Box 116, I-95 Folder, FWS; “Fowl Meadow Threatened,” Massachusetts Audubon Newsletter, Volume 6, No. 2. October 1966, Box 116, I-95 Folder, FWS; Allen H. Morgan to Mrs. Joan Richardson, August 12, 1966, Box 116, I-95 Folder, FWS.

Fowl Meadow from the MDC. This action put the state legislature directly into the center of the highway controversy.<sup>76</sup>

The SJC's Fowl Meadow ruling also brought the open space advocates and anti-highway activists into alliance. To serve as its lobbyist, the CCS hired Guy Rosmarin, a young lawyer and political consultant from Brookline. Rosmarin previously worked for Democratic politicians Robert Wagner and Endicott Peabody. His initial efforts for the CCS had brought him into contact with the GBC who were trying to stop the entire highway plan. Rosmarin soon began attending their meetings staged in storefronts and the basements of public housing projects in Boston and quickly became a "workhorse" for the GBC and one of its main spokespeople. Rosmarin recognized that the suburban residents in the CCS were trying to fight "the route, not the road," but he thought it might be a better tactic to oppose entire state highway plan rather than only the part of I-95 slated to run through Fowl Meadow. Rosmarin convinced the Committee for Safety and Conservation to join with the GBC to challenge the whole plan. This linking of the two campaigns provided the means to create a truly metropolitan alliance by bridging the spatial, economic and ideological divisions between the residents of the city and the suburbs and to better connect the issues of neighborhood and environmental destruction at the heart of the highway proposal.

The first chance to test the effectiveness of the partnership occurred when Milton state legislator M. Joseph Manning sought to add an amendment to House Bill 5270, the DPW's request for the land transfer. Manning represented the district from which many of the members of the CCS resided, and his amendment required the road agency to

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<sup>76</sup> *Robbins v. Department of Public Works* (355 Mass. 328, 244 N.E.2d 577); Helen E. Sullivan, "Court Ruling Nullifies Rte. I-95 Agreement," *Patriot Ledger*, February 6, 1969.

prepare a feasibility study of the route.<sup>77</sup> The anti-highway movement relied on its new suburban and conservation contacts to lobby the state legislature to support the measure such as members of the Fair Housing Federation and CPP. The region's leading conservation groups also actively participated and encouraged their large membership bases to pressure their various state representatives. In its monthly Legislative Bulletin, the Massachusetts Forest and Park Association, one of the area's oldest conservation groups, stated that the Fowl Meadow controversy had important implications for all its members because it tested the increasingly common question if "citizen-taxpayers" should have the opportunity to reduce the effect of highways on their natural environment. The Association also gently prodded members by suggesting, "the day may soon come when you will need reciprocal support on a local conservation issue."<sup>78</sup> Stuart DeBard, a member of the CCS and a leading Massachusetts conservationist, sent a copy of the bulletin to Sargent aide Albert Kramer with a handwritten note scrawled at the top alerting him that "this goes to several thousand people."<sup>79</sup>

The letters flooding the State House confirmed both the numerical and geographic reach of the grassroots conservation network as well as its effectiveness at pressuring state politicians. On July 16, the House of Representatives voted 132 to 90 in favor of the amendment. Michael Dukakis, then a young representative from Brookline, believed that the conservationists directly influenced the vote's outcome and called their success "one

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<sup>77</sup>Manning announced his intentions to request the study in a letter to the Governor that included the signatures of over 40 other primarily suburban state senators and asked for his support, see M. Joseph Manning et al. to Francis W. Sargent, May 17, 1969, Box 116, Folder I-95, FWS.

<sup>78</sup>Massachusetts Forest and Park Association, Conservation Legislative Bulletin, Volume 5. No. 12 (May 6, 1969), Box 116, I-95, FWS.

<sup>79</sup>Massachusetts Forest and Park Association, Conservation Legislative Bulletin, Volume 5. No. 12; Stuart De Bard to Albert L. Kramer, Re: Interstate 95-Fowl Meadow, April 7, 1969, Box 116, and Folder I-95, FWS.

of the most exciting things I've seen since I've been in the legislature."<sup>80</sup> The vote indicated the growing political persuasiveness of the conservationists over the legislature. But the road-building agency reasserted its power forcing a reconsideration, which passed by four votes. Supporters of the westerly route rushed to save the project. After a series of additions and deletions, including at one point a proposal to depress the highway through Fowl Meadow, the bill moved to the governor's desk. By law, Sargent had ten days to decide whether or not to veto the bill.

During the period Sargent deliberated, a group of grassroots organizations formed a coalition in an attempt to sway the governor to veto the bill. The group, which called itself the Emergency Coalition Against House Bill 5270, illustrates the breadth of issues and interests the anti-highway platform the highway fight encompassed. The Emergency Coalition joined conservationist organizations the MFPA, MACC, and the Neponset Valley Conservation Association, the urban-based GBC, South End Tenants Council and Council of Urban Priests and the liberal CPP and Americans for Democratic Action.<sup>81</sup> To underscore the conservation concerns at the heart of the anti-highway stance and catch the governor's attention, the Emergency Coalition sent Sargent a letter that used his own words against him. The group began their letter by quoting a speech Sargent had delivered a few months earlier. In that address, Sargent had delivered the promise that: "The day I became Governor I told the people of my state that I would not tolerate the reckless ruin of environment. I will not. Nor should you."<sup>82</sup> Sargent's aide Albert Kramer

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<sup>80</sup> Lupo, et al. *Rites of Way*, 76.

<sup>81</sup> See for examples Marian J. Homans to Francis W. Sargent, August 11, 1969, FWS, Box 116, I-95; Ann Bird to Francis W. Sargent, August 8, 1969, FWS, Box 116, I-95; Charles F. Batchelder to Francis W. Sargent, August 8, 1969, FWS, Box 116, I-95; F. Gregg Bemis to Francis W. Sargent, August 11, 1969, FWS, Box 116, I-95.

<sup>82</sup> EMERGENCY COALITION AGAINST BILL 5270 to Francis W. Sargent, c. 1969, Box 47, Transportation Task Force Folder, FWS.

recognized the larger strategy of the anti-highway movement. “Their base had broadened beyond neighborhoods to conservation, which the Governor instantly responds to because he relates to that.” Kramer conceded Guy Rosmarin and his allies “were effective. They knew what they were doing on that.”<sup>83</sup> The new conservation-centered strategy failed to wholly convince Sargent to side with the anti-highway coalition. The governor did, however, offer a compromise. He signed the bill enabling the transfer of Fowl Meadow, but stipulated the transfer be withheld until a special task force completed a study of the project. The movement proved unable to stop I-95 from running through Fowl Meadow. The controversy, however, had solidified the coalition’s metropolitan dimensions, strengthened ties between the grassroots activists and Sargent’s staff, and equally important, transformed the highway issue from a problem of neighborhood disruption into one of environmental destruction. All of these dimensions would be crucial as the coalition intensified its focus on getting the governor to impose a moratorium on all highway construction.

### **Moratorium**

The Fowl Meadow fight electrified the GBC and its collaborators, and in its aftermath they began to focus their attention primarily on getting the governor to declare a stoppage of all highway construction and a complete restudy. In order to build support for the moratorium both on the streets and at the State House, the publicity committee began to distribute sheets of statistics confirming how the technical knowledge of urban planners continued to buttress the campaign in crucial ways. Steve Teichner, a former VISTA lawyer, led the legislative committee working to draft bills that represented the

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<sup>83</sup> Lupo, et al. *Rites of Way*, 78.

organization's position of construction stoppage and public transit. Guy Rosmarin also maintained almost daily contact with Albert Kramer and other members of the Sargent administration coordinating meetings between the Governor, the GBC and heads of other conservation, liberal, and social justice groups.<sup>84</sup>

The Fowl Meadow fight had reinforced for the GBC the importance of getting suburbanites involved in their campaign and, therefore, the activists sought to expand their base farther outside of the city. Citizens for Participation Politics proved a crucial ally in this outreach campaign. As chapter 4 discusses, CPP had begun in 1968 as a new political group committed to the election of liberal candidates and the passage of liberal legislation. It proved itself extremely effective at galvanizing suburban residents in support of these causes. The GBC's commitment to citizen participation aligned closely to the name and mission of the CPP. At its first state convention in May 1969, CPP endorsed state and federal legislation that would both halt all highway construction within Route 128 and involve citizens in the policy-making and planning process.<sup>85</sup> A particularly crucial ally to the GBC campaign was CPP member Susan Straight, who would eventually head its suburban organizing committee. Culling the CPP and the Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights memberships to find contacts, Straight launched "a suburban push" by arranging meetings in variety of affluent suburbs such as Belmont, Brookline, Lexington, Wellesley and Weston.<sup>86</sup> She urged her contacts that only "through joint political pressure from the city and suburbs that the governor will act"

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<sup>84</sup> Guy D. Rosmarin to Albert Kramer, November 13, 1969, FWS, Box 116, Beverly-Salem Connector Folder, FWS.

<sup>85</sup> CPP Delegate Ballot As Authorized by resolution of the CPP State Convention, May 11, 1969, Urban Affairs Proposals HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION, CPPAX Box 6, VI.5, CPPAX.

<sup>86</sup> CPP Coordinator Bulletin, January 2, 1970, Box 6, Folder VI.13, CPPAX.

and warned that as suburban residents hedged “people’s homes and recreation areas are being demolished.”<sup>87</sup>

The enthusiastic response Straight received from the suburban liberal groups she contacted demonstrated the metropolitan dimensions of the anti-highway issue. It also illustrates the increased interest environmental issues inspired among grassroots liberal groups and their members. In Straight’s view, suburban residents enthusiasm reflected their realization that the “United States has failed to develop workable environmental models, whether they be called urban centers or suburban communities.”<sup>88</sup> In 1970, CPP established an Environmental Problems Committee to propose and lobby for state anti-pollution legislation to regulate auto emissions and industrial water use, and to ban several pesticides.<sup>89</sup> The anti-highway activities helped make environmental concerns a central component of the grassroots liberal political agenda in the years to come.

The highway debate also inspired the formation of a moderate Republican grassroots organization called Citizens for Proper Transportation Planning (CPTP). A Republican law student named Stephen Crosby founded the ad hoc organization to galvanize suburban commuters and downtown business elites, who served as the foundation of Sargent’s base, to join the cause. In order to demonstrate to the governor “the wide spectrum of people who are dissatisfied with the highway-automobile-highway spiral” and in favor of “a fundamental reconsideration of the transportation dilemma,” Crosby arranged a meeting between Sargent and the well-heeled CPTP membership.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Greater Boston Committee on the Transportation Crisis, Letter from Susan Straight, No Date, c. Fall 1969, Box 6, Folder VI. 12, CPPAX.

<sup>88</sup> CPP, Citizens for Participation Politics announces state wide campaign against Governor’s Sargent metropolitan highway plans and calls for the formation of anti-highway Alliance between Boston and suburban residents”! January 1970, Box 6, Folder VI.36, CPPAX.

<sup>89</sup> CPP, Meeting Environmental Problems Committee Flier, January 1970, Box 6, Folder VI.36, CPPAX.

<sup>90</sup> Stephen P. Crosby to Francis W. Sargent, November 26, 1969, Box 116, Folder General, FWS.

The CPTP's pleas became important in showing the governor that anti-highway sentiment was not exclusive to those whose homes fell within the roadway's path. Following the meeting, Sargent wrote to Crosby: "I well understand the suburbanite's realization that a highway, which reduces his commuting time by five minutes, still may not be in his overall interest."<sup>91</sup> Sargent also told Crosby "the lesson of the Sixties—that the corollary, and often destructive, effect of man's 'progress' is direct and pervasive—has come home to all citizens whether they live in the city or suburbia."<sup>92</sup> Sargent, as these comments show, was persuaded by the anti-highway coalition's arguments that planning bureaucrats embraced an arbitrary and often irresponsible definition of the public interest. This realization had forced him to question the basic tenets of technocratic liberalism.<sup>93</sup>

On February 11, 1970, Sargent made "the most far-reaching and significant decision I have made during my term as Governor." He announced he had "decided to reverse the transportation policy of the Commonwealth."<sup>94</sup> He called for the creation of a new plan, based on the concept of balanced transportation, which questioned not simply "where and how to build expressway, but whether he should complete them at all." Sargent thereby ordered a stop to all highway construction within Route 128, including work on Southwest Expressway, Route 2, and the Inner Belt until the release of his new program. "Four years ago I was the Commissioner of the Department of Public Works," Sargent candidly stated, "then, nearly everyone was sure highways were the only answer to transportation problems for years to come. We were wrong." The last three words

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<sup>91</sup> Francis W. Sargent to Stephen P. Crosby, December 30, 1969, Box 116, Folder General, FWS.

<sup>92</sup> Sargent to Crosby, December 30, 1969.

<sup>93</sup> Lupo, *Rites of Way*, 3.

<sup>94</sup> Governor's Press Office, Press Release, February 11, 1970, Box 109, Gov. Speeches, FWS.

summarized the entire speech and Sargent's efforts to reverse the basic tenets of growth liberalism. The decision solidified the governor's popularity with voters throughout the state, but particularly suburban liberals. CPP, a barometer of suburban liberal sentiment, interpreted his transportation decisions as a sign of he had rejected "benevolent liberalism" and in favor of his "own brand of participatory democracy."<sup>95</sup> The towns along Boston's outer ring such as Newton, Lexington Concord and Lincoln proved essential in Sargent's successful re-election the following November.

The announcement put a hold on both the destruction of neighborhoods and open spaces like Fowl Meadow and thereby revealed the possibilities for changing policy when grassroots groups created broad alliances that transcended metropolitan lines and combined a broad range of people and issues.<sup>96</sup> The effectiveness of the GBC directly depended on its combination of neighborhood activists, affluent suburbanites and white-collar professionals. Brad Yoneka, a community activist in the South End and coalition leader, conceded that the GBC would not have achieved the moratorium without the "help from conservationists, liberal republicans" and the members of CPP. He also declared that the success of the GBC proved that "communities can define the issue, but middle-class skills are needed."<sup>97</sup> White middle-class experts were particularly instrumental in helping the group forge a close working relationship with members of the governor's staff. These bonds became so close that, following Sargent's announcement, several members of the GBC, including Guy Rosmarin, decided to take positions within the administration as they believed they could contribute more to the cause by working

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<sup>95</sup> No Author, Gov Francis Sargent (Republican), July 1970, Box VI, Folder 42, CPPAX.

<sup>96</sup> Sargent told the GBC that it deserved "a great deal of credit for bringing the people to understand the need for balanced transportation." See, Francis W. Sargent to Father Thomas D. Corrigan, February 18, 1970, Box 116, General Folder, FWS.

<sup>97</sup> Lupo, et al. *Rites of Way*, 61.

within the system of government.<sup>98</sup> These decisions strengthened the ties between anti-highway activists and State House officials, which, in turn, shaped future transportation policies of the Bay State.

In order to bring the bullet points of his speech into a coherent policy, Sargent created the Boston Transportation Planning Review (BTPR) to help him evaluate whether he should declare a permanent halt on highway construction within Route 128. He aimed for the \$3.8 million study to be “open broadly participatory” and attentive to “transportation, socioeconomic and environmental values.”<sup>99</sup> Alan Altshuler oversaw the seventy-five person committee, which included representatives from state agencies, municipalities around metropolitan Boston and groups such as the GBC, the Sierra Club and the Boston Chamber of Commerce. The BTPR’s focus on participation and openness transformed the process into an extended discussion between government bureaucrats, politicians, business people, and community activists and served as a model for transportation planning across the nation.<sup>100</sup> According to Guy Rosmarin the BTPR “restored public confidence in government, dissolved the wall of hostility and suspicion” and “brought together people from the suburbs and the cities, rich and poor black people” to work “in common cause.”<sup>101</sup> The GBC lauded the study as “precedent setting,” especially its awareness “that social and environmental costs must be included in any

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<sup>98</sup> Sargent wrote to Father Corrigan after his announcement, “Members of my staff have worked closely with your group, particularly Guy Rosmarin, and I would hope that relationship could continue.” See, Francis W. Sargent to Father Thomas D. Corrigan, February 18, 1970, , Box 116, General Folder, FWS; Lupo, et al. *Rites of Way*, 110.

<sup>99</sup> Francis W Sargent, Policy Statement on Transportation Crisis in the Boston Region, November 30, 1972, Box 32, Transportation Readings Folder, FWS.

<sup>100</sup> During its two years of work the BTPR heard testimony from more than a thousand individuals and organizations, Lawrence Susskind, ed. *The Land Use Controversy in Massachusetts Case Studies and Policy Options* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1975), 44. Ralph Gakenheimer, *Transportation Planning As Response to Controversy; The Boston Case* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1975), 1-5.

<sup>101</sup> Guy D. Rosmarin to Governor Francis W. Sargent Memorandum, Re: Metropolitan Boston Transportation Decisions, November 2, 1972, Box 20, and Staff Position Papers BTPR Folder, FWS.

consideration of the benefits of building a transportation system.”<sup>102</sup> Throughout the restudy process, the region’s network of environmental groups remained among the loudest voices opposing highway construction in favor of the development of mass transit, which illustrated the increasing fusion of transportation and environmental concerns. The representatives of greater Boston Conservation Commissions as well as members of the Audubon Society and Sierra Club frequently lobbied the governor, and they claimed the study’s the outcome one of the “most significant environmental judgments made by a Massachusetts Governor in the latter half of the twentieth century.”<sup>103</sup> Grassroots groups were not the only ones pressuring officials to pay close attention environmental issues. Rather, a series of new pieces of legislation and court decisions at the federal level made environmental concerns take on new importance in both the discourse and decisions surrounding the future of highway building in Massachusetts.

### **The Federal Government’s “Discovery” of the Environmental Crisis**

The announcement of the moratorium and creation of the BTPR coincided with a new epoch of environmental politics in the United States. In the late 1960s, the discontent about the environmental crisis exploded at the national level. These developments significantly changed the terrain of both local and national environmental policy and politics. Just before the moratorium on highway construction, Sargent deemed 1970 the “year of the environment,” which both reflected and galvanized the concern of

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<sup>102</sup> Greater Boston Committee on the Transportation Crisis, Free Transit Newsletter, Number 1, October 1970, Box 73, Folder 8, MIT.

<sup>103</sup> See for instance, Brookline Conservation Commission, Press Release, November 21, 1972, Box 20 Restudy Comments II, FWS; Francis X. Meaney, Eugenie Beal, et al to Francis W. Sargent, November 21, 1972, Box 20 Restudy Comments II, FWS.

Massachusetts residents. The state Director of Conservation Services observed that residents throughout the state increasingly wanted to “do ‘their thing’ to make “Massachusetts a better place in which to live.”<sup>104</sup> On April 22, 1970, almost 20 million people across the United States participated in Earth Day, which signified an important turning point in the popularization of environmental issues and created a favorable context for the passage of new laws in that pivotal year. In addition to the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, Richard Nixon signed into law the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which one observer referred to as “the most sweeping environmental law ever enacted by a United States Congress.”<sup>105</sup> The Act had three provisions: first, it asserted environmental quality as a leading national priority; second, it established procedures for incorporating environmental concerns into federal agency decision-making; third, it created the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (the precursor to the EPA) to coordinate all federal environmental actions.<sup>106</sup> The second provision, Section 102, had the most direct effect on the highway controversy. It mandated that all federally funded projects prepare a detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that described the environmental effects of the action, identify any unavoidable harms, list any alternatives, and make all this information available to the public.<sup>107</sup> The broad law provided environmental officials a crucial mechanism with which to hold federal agencies accountable for the social, economic and ecological consequences of their plans.

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<sup>104</sup> Division of Conservation Services, Annual Report Fiscal Year 1970, SLM.

<sup>105</sup> Richard A. Liroff, *A National Policy for the Environment: NEPA and Its Aftermath* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1976), 3.

<sup>106</sup> The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 Pub. L. 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, January 1, 1970.

<sup>107</sup> Alan A. Altshuler and David E. Luberoff, *Mega-Projects: The Changing Politics of Urban Public Investment*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2003), 86. NEPA still left the decision of whether or not to proceed with the project to the discretion federal officials, but demanded a public hearing first and authorized citizen suits to make sure all issues had been comprehensively addressed.

If 1970 served as the year of the environment on Capitol Hill, then 1971 represented its year in federal courts. First, the Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling related to a highway battle in Memphis, which called for all transportation decisions to consider environmental costs and the citizen's interests. Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 had barred highway incursion could occur on public, conserved land, where a "feasible and prudent" alternative to building the highway existed. Section 4(f) differed slightly from NEPA because it specified more explicitly the types of circumstances in which impacts could occur. In *Citizens of Overton Park v. Volpe*, the Supreme Court upheld the law, reasoning the federal statute "indicates that protection of parkland was to be given paramount importance."<sup>108</sup> While the Court still left the final decision to the DOT, the ruling set clear boundaries on the agency's discretion. In a related ruling, in the case *Calvert Coordinating Cliffs' Coordinating Committee v. United States Atomic Energy Commission*, a federal court further clarified NEPA guidelines setting standards for compliance and future court action.<sup>109</sup> Judge Skelley Wright determined that an Environmental Impact Statement was not simply a procedural requirement, but could itself be reviewed for quality and substance. Condemning non-compliance, he also found that an incomplete environmental review could be legal grounds for overturning a project. The complex dimensions of these new federal laws and rulings and their in role in establishing a new era of environmental activism came into sharp focus relief in the fight to prevent the expansion of Route 2 in Concord and Lincoln.

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<sup>108</sup> *Citizens of Overton Park v. Volpe* 401 U.S. 402 (1971).

<sup>109</sup> *Calvert Coordinating Cliff' Coordinating Committee v. United States Atomic Energy Commission*, 449 F.2D 1109 (1971). See also, Matthew J. Lindstrom & Zachary A. Smith, *The National Environmental Policy Act: Judicial Misconstruction, Legislative Indifference & Executive Neglect* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 115-117.

## **A Superhighway in Thoreau's Backyard**

The plan for expanding Route 2 fell outside the official boundaries of the BTPR restudy, but the fight it spawned reveals both how new federal policy and grassroots activism around environmental issues together altered the debate about urban sprawl. Route 2 began in western Massachusetts and moved directly eastward traversing through rural towns in the center of the state, the suburbs of Acton, Concord, Lincoln and Lexington and bisected Route 128 before ended in Cambridge. Route 2 served as the major commuter road for residents in the western suburbs, but it was built in the first half of century and had struggled to absorb the increased traffic produced by postwar suburbanization. The 1948 Master Plan had first proposed significant expansion in order to make Route 2 an official expressway. While Sargent's moratorium stalled plans to extend Route 2 farther into Cambridge and link it to Inner Belt, the DPW still sought to expand it in the other direction. The DPW, therefore, developed plans to partially relocate and expand an 11-mile section of Route 2 between Acton and Lexington, doubling it from four to eight lanes and adding a 64-foot wide median strip, overpasses, and a large cloverleaf. The DPW argued that these improvements would both increase the safety of the road and transform it into "the major freeway serving the northwest quadrant of the state."<sup>110</sup> The plan would have the most disruptive effects on the towns of Lincoln and Concord, where it demanded the relocation of a cluster of homes and would take two hundred acres of protected open space.<sup>111</sup> The Department of Public Works received federal approval for the project in 1969 and was anxious to complete the highway in time

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<sup>110</sup> Department of Public Works, Design Hearing Route 2 Acton-Concord-Lincoln and Lexington, 1970, Collection of Materials issued by or relating to the Concord Route 2 Committee, Special Collections, Concord Free Library (hereafter: "Route 2 Committee").

<sup>111</sup> Joan Mahoney, "Lincoln Families charge DPW Harasses, Threatens," *Boston Evening Globe*, May 15, 1972.

for the Bicentennial celebration of the battles of Lexington and Concord, which it predicted would bring an influx of traffic to the area.

The residents of Lincoln and Concord grew extremely outraged at the prospect that a road comparable in size to Route 128 would slash through their idyllic communities, taking their homes and valuable conservation lands. On October 15, 1970, the Department of Public Works officials staged a public hearing at Concord-Carlisle High School about the proposed construction where they explained their objectives.<sup>112</sup> Citizens filled the school's auditorium to capacity in order to voice objections to the proposal, especially its seeming disregard for the environment. Many residents believed that the placement of a large cloverleaf almost adjacent to Walden Pond was reason enough to cancel the project. Other people became indignant about the road's proximity to Minuteman National Park. "This enormous highway with its noise, air, and visual pollution, is totally incompatible with the historical character of this park which commemorates the birth of our nation," Lynn W. Gelhar bemoaned. Gelhar denounced the plans as an "affront" to "all Americans, who through their taxes are paying for this facility."<sup>113</sup> The suburban homeowners used similar taxpayer logic to discuss the threat to local conservation lands. This response highlights Concord residents' heightened sense of ownership over local open space since, indeed, the combination of their grassroots activism and tax dollars had directly contributed to preserving these places.

The rise of the mainstream environmental movement in the late 1960s also fueled and informed residents' outrage. While Concord residents had demonstrated a longstanding commitment to land conservation, the rapid rise of the modern

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<sup>112</sup> Department of Public Works, Design Hearing Route 2.

<sup>113</sup> Lynn W. Gelhar to the Editor, *Concord Journal*, October 19, 1970.

environmental movement through events like Earth Day the previous spring had spawned, in the words of the Concord Department of Natural Resources, “an awakening of ecological concern” and increased involvement of “the citizenry in the environmental crisis.”<sup>114</sup> The growing national awareness about the environment thus broadened the scope of local citizens’ concerns about the highway and infused it with a more ecological focus. Many residents feared the expansion of Route 2 would significantly alter the ecology of the land surrounding the road by creating flooding, erosion, and the air pollution that would harm wildlife, vegetation, and water of the region. For instance, Concord resident and PhD candidate in Environmental Sciences and Engineering Richard Harris pointedly asked his fellow residents of the DPW plan: “Do we understand the magnitude of the ecological consequences, and more importantly are we willing to accept the consequences?”<sup>115</sup>

The recent passage of landmark federal environmental laws coupled with the moratorium also empowered local officials to confront the highway bureaucracy. Town leaders recognized that they had a unique responsibility to stand up to the road builders and protect their land and residents since, according to Lincoln Selectman Kemon Taschigou, “this is where conservation began.”<sup>116</sup> Following the October hearing, Lincoln and Concord officials collaborated to create an alternative design for the expansion. Their design suggested a diamond interchange in the place of the large cloverleaf, which avoided traversing through valuable conservation areas. According to reporter Sareen Gerson, the proposal by Concord and Lincoln sent a strong message.

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<sup>114</sup> The Annual Report for the Town of Concord, ending in December 1970, Concord Public Library, Concord, MA.

<sup>115</sup> Robert H. Harris, “Are There Alternatives?” *Minute-Man Supplement*, October 22, 1970.

<sup>116</sup> Sareen R. Gerson, “New Breed of Local Officials Developing During Rte. 2 Battle,” *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, January 7, 1971.

Local officials and planners, Gerson opined, were “simply not swallowing, in the ‘old style’ way, plans for huge highways.”<sup>117</sup> The strong dissatisfaction of local citizens and officials led the DPW to announce that it would delay plans to expand Route 2 and redraw the design in order to take these criticisms into consideration. The announcement of their restudy coincided with the enactment of NEPA, which meant that the DPW would also have to produce an Environmental Impact Statement in order to gain approval. The project marked the first EIS that the state DPW had to complete, and the bureaucrats took extra care in order to understand the new process and create a model for future statements.<sup>118</sup>

The delay in the project also allowed for grassroots mobilization of local residents in opposition to the proposal. Following the DPW hearing, a group of Concord residents formed the Citizens for Balanced Transportation (CBT). The name’s allusion to Sargent’s balanced transportation philosophy revealed the organizers’ politically savvy and their desire to ingratiate themselves with the governor and other politicians. The moniker also reflected the members’ desire to connote the group’s moderation, which had also inspired Sargent to embrace the terminology. The CBT was not categorically opposed to automobile travel or highways and agreed that the segment of Route 2 under consideration was unsafe and needed improvement. Yet the group believed there were ways to enhance safety without expanding roads. The CBT leaders also firmly believed the highways should not be the only form of transportation available to Concord residents. In order to gain support for their position the members of the CBT adopted the features and tactics of many other suburban grassroots organizations. Like their

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<sup>117</sup> Gerson, “New Breed of Local Officials Developing During Rte. 2 Battle.”

<sup>118</sup> A.S. Plotkin, “Six Lane highway to replace Rte 2,” *Boston Globe*, September 8, 1972.

counterparts in civil rights, peace and conservation movement, the overwhelmingly white middle-class group relied on suburban social networks to encourage local citizens to participate.<sup>119</sup> The CBT believed strongly that channeling this grassroots mobilization toward the formal structures of government provided the best way to stop the expansion of the highway and redirect the state transportation policy. “We write a lot of position papers, we circulate petitions, we write letters,” declared CBT leader and Harvard Business School professor Cyrus Gibson. Explaining the group’s conscious deviation from more direct action techniques, Gibson elaborated, “we tend to deal through channels rather than go through courts—or push baby carriages in front of the bulldozers.”<sup>120</sup>

Although the CBT explicitly presented itself to government officials as an “ad hoc citizens group” of amateurs, the group’s published materials exposed several members’ high level of professional expertise about engineering and road design.<sup>121</sup> Like the conservation commission groups and other forms of grassroots suburban activism that emerged from Concord and its neighboring affluent communities, the CBT included several engineers and scientists who used their professional skills to study details of the plans and propose alternative designs. To show that the safety of the road could be improved in “less environmentally destructive and quicker ways,” the group produced a set of studies. It reinterpreted the traffic projections for 1990 to suggest increasing rail transportation in the area, which would make the extra highway lanes unnecessary. The group also stressed that if safety was the main concern of the DPW it should take these immediate actions rather than wait for federal approval for the expansion. The increased

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<sup>119</sup> Citizens for Balanced Transportation, Facts on the Proposed Route 2 Construction in Lexington, Lincoln, Concord and Lexington, December 20, 1971, Box 20, Folder Route 2, FWS.

<sup>120</sup> Joan Mahoney, “Citizens Groups Up in Arms over Route 2,” *Boston Globe*, May 23, 1972.

<sup>121</sup> George Barker to Bruce Campbell, December 15, 1971, Box 20, Route 2 Folder, FWS.

emphasis on citizen participation in new transportation and environmental policy coupled with the members' position as white middle-class professional from the affluent suburbs ensured that the CBT received access to officials at the top levels of state government including Environment Secretary Charles H.W. Foster Transportation Secretary Alan Altshuler, Commissioner of Public Works Bruce Campbell, and Governor Sargent and his close advisors. Between 1971 and 1972, CBT representatives and their grassroots suburban allies met regularly with officials at the State House and Public Works Department forging close relationships that would prove essential in preventing the roadway's expansion.<sup>122</sup>

The argument that CBT and its collaborators constructed to gain the support of local residents and state officials demonstrate the clear influence of both the urban anti-highway and mainstream environmental movements on suburban open space activism. The CBT literature acknowledged that the success of the GBC in Boston and the Supreme Court's *Overton* decision signaled "that the time is appropriate for local initiative to halt mindless construction of the highway." Likewise, Lincoln resident Gregory DeBarshye declared that while a decade earlier, the DPW might have had a "legitimate" case for the expansion, the indefinite delay of the Inner Belt and the growing recognition of the environmental impacts of roadway construction made those justifications "obsolete."<sup>123</sup> The CBT borrowed the populist language of the urban-based activists, denouncing the DPW as "a bureaucracy that doesn't want to change—a group

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<sup>122</sup> Barker to Campbell, December 15, 1971; Memorandum from Allen H. Morgan to Charles H.W. Foster, re: Route 2 reconstruction (Lincoln-Acton), May 24, 1972, Box 20, Route 2 Folder, FWS; Charles H.W. Foster to Mrs. Alan Barrett, July 28, 1972, Box 20, Route 2 Folder, FWS; "CBT Told Route 2 to Become State's Major East-West Highway" *Concord Journal*, February 17, 1972; "Altshuler Meets with Route 2 Coalition," *Concord Journal*, May 11, 1972.

<sup>122</sup> Mahoney, "Citizens Groups Up in Arms over Route 2."

<sup>123</sup> "165 Lincoln Residents to the Editor," *Lincoln Fence Viewer*, April 6, 1972.

of highway builders who are going to build come hell or high water.”<sup>124</sup> The CBT and other suburban groups also shared the anti-highway protestors belief in the need to shift the state’s transportation priorities away from a focus on the automobile and toward mass transit. In one of its position papers, the CBT asserted, “ the use of the automobile for commuting imposes direct and indirect social costs on the total population which make it a poor alternative to mass transportation systems.”<sup>125</sup> Cyrus Gibson publicly elaborated, “I think this new feeling—that maybe we’ve had enough of the automobile—is national, a national philosophy.”<sup>126</sup>

The CBT, nevertheless, viewed mass transit as a way of increasing the quality of life of white suburbanites rather than as a route to create environmental and social justice. Instead of advocating that mass transit would increase the mobility of urban residents, they argued that mass transit would preserve the physical landscape and amenities of Concord. The CBT pointedly asserted that the expansion of the highway would significantly affect the “quality of life here in the future,” create the “pressure to build more housing,” the “irreparable shrinkage of land in the Walden reservation, and other historic and recreational parts,” and cause substantial “social and environmental effects.”<sup>127</sup> The CBT, therefore, believed that mass transit offered a far more viable option, as it was less environmentally destructive and would not create the same corresponding sprawl. The group warned “if local and national pressures against highway construction continue to mount, Route 2 may be the last such road in the region,” which

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<sup>124</sup> Mahoney, “Citizens groups in arms over Route 2.”

<sup>125</sup> Citizens for Balanced Transportation, “The Proposed Route 2: A Challenge to Concord,” April 15, 1971, Box 20, Route 2 Folder, FWS.

<sup>126</sup> Mahoney, “Citizens groups in arms over Route 2.”

<sup>127</sup> Citizens for Balanced Transportation, “The Proposed Route 2”; Citizens for Balanced Transportation, “Facts on the Proposed Route 2 Construction.”

could “lead to a rapid population growth in this area the pressure for housing construction” onto Concord.”<sup>128</sup> In a further inversion of the arguments of the GBC and other social justice groups, the CBT and its allies presented the victims of inadequate transit not as jobless low-income minorities, but white middle-class homeowners isolated in the suburbs.<sup>129</sup> Ultimately, the CBT reduced its aims to preserving “the character” and “the transportation vitality” of the area.<sup>130</sup> The CBT’s emphasis on “character” reveals the implicitly exclusionary undercurrent of their vision. This emphasis helped legitimate the anti-growth ideology, providing an easier justification for suburbanites in Concord and elsewhere to oppose any form of new development, including mixed-income housing that would potentially change both aesthetic and social “character” of these communities. The equal value the group placed on character and transportation, moreover, punctuates the CBT’s belief that increasing mass transit offered the means of preserving rather than challenging socioeconomic dynamics of Concord and its neighboring suburbs.

When DPW released the much-awaited draft Environmental Impact Statement for Route 2 in September 1972, it demonstrated the success and limits of this grassroots mobilization on influencing the altered design. The DPW acknowledged that the towns affected by the highway were distinctive in their “rural, colonial atmosphere” and sense of “heritage” with “rolling hills,” “rambling stone walls,” “white steeples,” and village greens that “mark the authenticity of the New England type background of the

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<sup>128</sup> Citizens for Balanced Transportation, “The Proposed Route 2.”

<sup>129</sup> Reflecting this line of reasoning Lincoln resident Mary Splinder called for mass transit to Concord complaining “I personally hardly ever go into Cambridge or Boston because the train is not convenient and driving and parking is too difficult, see Mary Splinder to the Editor, *Lincoln Fence Viewer*, October 19, 1972.

<sup>130</sup> Citizens for Balanced Transportation, “Facts on the Proposed Route 2 Construction.”

communities.”<sup>131</sup> It observed that the towns were “proud of their part in American history” and have “reflected that pride by preserving the Yankee characteristics of their communities.” The DPW conceded that the project would require taking of several residences primarily in Lincoln, but suggested that since they were all single-family homes on large lots of land widely spaced apart it would “have minimal effect on the existing neighborhood integrity.” The DPW remained confident that these residents would be able to find similar homes elsewhere in their communities.

The DPW’s efforts to demonstrate an environmental consciousness constituted the most compelling components of the statement. The engineers downplayed the ecological impact and instead emphasized the ways in which the plan would complement the area’s aesthetic beauty and commitment to open space. The design included several stone arch overpasses, which the engineers contended would enable “horse-back, bicycle and pedestrian traffic” and wildlife to move “unhindered” between Lincoln and Concord’s many acres of open space. The statement even included a sketch of a pastoral scene with a well-crafted elevated stone arch bridge surrounded by trees and plants and crossing underneath a bicyclist and horseback rider, both of whom the artist had depicted as white.<sup>132</sup> The DPW clearly believed that bikes and horses offered sufficient alternative means of travel as the statement firmly dismissed the idea of increasing mass transit. The DPW asserted that the area already had “sufficient rail service” on the commuter line which in fact were “far from capacity” and that this existing lack of riders would create “financial disaster” if the rapid transit extended into the area past Route 128.

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<sup>131</sup> Massachusetts Department of Public Works, Draft Environmental/Section 4 (f) Statement for Route 2 in Acton, Concord, Lincoln & Lexington, April 1972, Collection of materials relating to the Environmental Impact of the Redesigning and Reengineering of Route 2 on Several Mass. Towns, Special Collections, Concord Public Library, Concord, MA (hereafter: “Redesign”).

<sup>132</sup> Draft Environmental/Section 4 (f) Statement for Route 2 in Acton, Concord, Lincoln & Lexington.

The guidelines of NEPA mandated the DPW stage a hearing and accept comments on the plan before they officially submitted the EIS to the Federal Highway Administration. This process invited citizen input in new ways. The DPW's official hearing on the draft impact statement in late September drew over a hundred people who "fired questions" at the bureaucrats.<sup>133</sup> The CBT voiced the strongest outcry against the plan formulating a critique grounded in its anti-sprawl philosophy. CBT leader Cyrus Gibson was particularly frustrated at how glibly the statement rejected a mass transit alternative and implied that people did not want rail service. "I believe commuters and others would flock to an efficient rail service which stopped where it should," Gibson asserted. Like the CBT's early position papers, Gibson raised fears that the highway would spread urban sprawl. He uncovered a single sentence in which the DPW suggested that a larger highway would make "the location of new industry in the area more feasible."<sup>134</sup> He suggested this new development would negate Concord's twenty-year effort to prevent commercial and industrial development and population in its communities through rigid zoning policies. Gibson invoked a recent article from the *New York Times* about how Concord had taken vigorous steps to uphold the principles of *Walden* and look much as it did when Thoreau wrote it.<sup>135</sup> Gibson implored that "if this road gets built "Thoreau's Concord' would totally unrecognizable to him and unacceptable to him, I think and unacceptable to today's Concordians too."<sup>136</sup> Ultimately, Gibson indicted that the EIS represented "an insult to the intelligence of the citizens of

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<sup>133</sup> "A Super Highway to Boston- And What Happens to the Dump," *Concord Journal*, October 5, 1972.

<sup>134</sup> Statement by Mr. Cyrus F. Gibson at Selectman's Hearing on Environmental Impact Statement, Town of Concord, Xavier High School, September 27, 1972, Route 2 Committee.

<sup>135</sup> Howard Whitman, "Thoreau's Concord is Willing to Leave Nature's Work Alone," *New York Times*, September 17, 1972.

<sup>136</sup> Gibson Statement.

Concord” stating he could “list three hundred failings if I had to.”<sup>137</sup> Although slightly fewer than three hundred, the CBT did conduct a more formal point-by-point critique of the EIS that cited dozens of shortcomings.<sup>138</sup> The stipulations of NEPA required that the DPW include this critique and that of other citizens group in the final study it presented to the Federal Highway Administration.

The release of the draft statement sparked the formation of another grassroots group of Concord citizens who enhanced the activities of the CBT by adopting an even more localist approach to the issue. The group called itself Residents Opposed to the Urban Traffic Encouragement (ROUTE) and had initially organized out a concern over a narrow section of the redesign containing Walden Pond, the town forest, the local public high school, and the Alcott Elementary School. The group quickly, nevertheless, expanded to include the entire community.<sup>139</sup> “It is time for all Concordians to take a hard look,” ROUTE stated of its organizing philosophy, and “insist that the essential nature of the Town be preserved.” In order to fulfill this aim, the group prepared a critique of the draft impact statement that dubbed it “a desperate attempt to justify a collection of decisions that were made before the first shots of the present Environmental Revolution began to echo around the globe.”<sup>140</sup> “The authors of the impact statement know what a highway is and a superhighway,” ROUTE derided, “But there is less certainty that they are as familiar with meaning of the word ‘Environment.’”<sup>141</sup> The group rejected the DPW’s attempt to satisfy environmental concerns through plantings and

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<sup>137</sup> Gibson Statement.

<sup>138</sup> Research Committee of the Route 2 Coalition, “Comments on Draft Environmental/Section 4 (f) Statement for Route 2 in Acton, Concord, Lincoln & Lexington,” October 20, 1972, Box 20, Route 2 Folder, FWS.

<sup>139</sup> R.O.U.T.E, “Positions and Objectives,” October 9, 1972, Redesign.

<sup>140</sup> R.O.U.T.E The Environment at Walden: A Concrete Example,” October 9, 1972, Redesign; “100 Residents Attend Route Two Hearing,” *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, October 19, 1972.

<sup>141</sup> R.O.U.T.E “The Environment at Walden: A Concrete Example.”

stone arch bridges as trying to “dress their old and obsolete ideas in a flimsy dress of the new concern for the environment.” ROUTE concluded that it was clear that “nation-wide clamor against the disruptions and damage, the fumes and the noise of superhighways of the last ten years had not reached the ears of the authors of this report.”<sup>142</sup> ROUTE’s arguments moved the discussion around the fate of Route 2 even further away from issues of metropolitan equality and more squarely toward the realm of suburban individualism.

If members of ROUTE criticized the DPW for taking an outmoded view of the environment, their statements revealed their own definition centered on issues associated with suburban quality of life. The group largely concentrated on the ways in which the highway would disrupt the high standards of living and pastoral charm that Concord citizens had come to appreciate and expect. “Have you driven on the freeways in New York or Chicago or Los Angeles lately?” A ROUTE letter asked, “Do you prefer the country woods we have in Concord?” “Picture what the plan will do to our town,” ROUTE beseeched, “once the concrete is poured it will be too late to protest.”<sup>143</sup> Like early open space activists, ROUTE sought to marshal the Concord residents’ investment in their distinctiveness from the rest of the nation. At the same time, ROUTE’s localist and populist discourse effectively transformed the affluent suburban residents as the innocent victims of the nefarious highway planners and the problems of urban sprawl. ROUTE accused the DPW of not addressing “the effects of a major East-West Massachusetts Highway upon the environment of a small community bisected by eight

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<sup>142</sup> R.O.U.T.E “The Environment at Walden: A Concrete Example.”

<sup>143</sup> Jane Richardson to the Editor, *Concord Journal*, October 5, 1972.

ribbons of concrete, and an infinity, nearly, of approach ramps.”<sup>144</sup> This type of argument erased suburban residents own complicity in the processes they aimed to prevent. In doing so, this victim stance allowed ROUTE and its white suburban allies to avoid considering how their own “lifestyle” choices and consumer practices had directly contributed to the environmental crisis and traffic problems in the first place.<sup>145</sup>

Several Concord residents offered a competing definition of high quality of life. These homeowners supported the expansion as a means to give suburban residence safer roadways and faster access to downtown Boston. Thomas Flint served as the de facto head of this informal constituency. Flint, the inaugural head of the Concord Conservation Commission and a leading area conservationist, appeared an unlikely proponent of the highway expansion. Yet, Flint was a trained engineer who had consistently adopted both a pragmatic view of resource conservation and a firm faith in the power of expert knowledge. Flint argued that Concord already contained some eight square miles of open space and the road threatened only about 1 percent of this land, which he dismissed as “less than the town will probably purchase at the next town meeting.”<sup>146</sup> Flint’s comments created a window for other local residents to criticize the arguments and tactics of the CBT. In a letter to the *Concord Journal*, Mary LaBounty reported that she had informally surveyed seven members of the CBT about their own commuting practices and discovered that six of the seven members she polled traveled to Boston by car, thus accusing the organization of promoting an agenda of “do as I say and not as I

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<sup>144</sup> R.O.U.T.E “The Environment at Walden: A Concrete Example.”

<sup>145</sup> For more on this critique of the universalist language of the mainstream environmental movement see Finis Dunaway, “Gas Masks, Pogo, and the Ecological Indian: Earth Day and the Visual Politics of American Environmentalism” *American Quarterly* 60.1 (2008), 67-97.

<sup>146</sup> “Tom Flint Talks About Route 2,” *Concord Journal*, November 9, 1972; Thomas Flint to the Editor, *Concord Journal*, November 16, 1972.

do.” LaBounty argued that the Route 2 expansion was necessary not just for Concord residents to commute into Boston, but also for the many people who flocked to the town for its exceptional recreational and historic sites. Her reasoning, nevertheless, ignored the fact that the expansion would still only increase accessibility for the town to people who owned a car.<sup>147</sup>

These criticisms did not hinder CBT’s and ROUTE’s campaign to stop the Route 2 expansion. During the fall of 1972, the groups continued to simultaneously work at the grassroots and the formal channels of government. The groups created a petition objecting to the present plans by DPW and demanding a restudy. In just four days, the groups gathered 2,500 signatures. They urged residents to sign if they were “interested in the FUTURE OF CONCORD.”<sup>148</sup> This strong support motivated the anti-highway leaders to write Senators Brooke and Kennedy and other federal officials warning them that the proposed Route 2 expansion would “irreparably damage the rural character of Concord, a historically significant town.”<sup>149</sup> These citizens also relied on the lines of communication they had established at the State House. The CBT sent Sargent administration officials Al Kramer and Guy Rosmarin a large packet including the various statements of groups and individuals and newspaper clippings on the issue in order to demonstrate the strong grassroots desire for a restudy of DPW plan.<sup>150</sup>

The activities revealed the scope of opposition and the overall success of the suburban-based group at working within the political system. The New England Sierra

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<sup>147</sup> Mary J.E. LaBounty to Editor, *Concord Journal*, November 30, 1972.

<sup>148</sup> R.O.U.T.E to the Editor, *Concord Journal*, October 19, 1972; “Residents Band Together To Oppose Route 2 Plans,” *Concord Journal*, October 26, 1972.

<sup>149</sup> “Residents Band Together to Oppose Route 2 Plans.”

<sup>150</sup> Cyrus F. Gibson to Al Kramer and Guy Rosmarin, October 30, 1972, Box 20, Route 2 Folder, FWS; See also Peter Koff to Steve Teichner, September 23, 1972, Box 20, Route 2 Folder, FWS.

Club joined in the lobbying efforts as well. The group galvanized its wide metropolitan-wide membership by stressing the “adverse environmental impact of the project” which included the taking of several public areas purchased through the federal and state Self-Help program that were “endowed with significant historic, conservation and education and environmental values.”<sup>151</sup> This outpouring of opposition forced the DPW, once again, to order a restudy of the expansion. The CBT and Route 2 Coalition with the support of Sierra Club, GBC and CPP pleaded with Alan Altshuler to ensure the restudy of Route 2 proceeded in a “fair and open manner” and that citizens groups like them be brought into the process.<sup>152</sup> The lobbying worked. Altshuler proposed that the BTPR consult on the process in order to ensure that the new EIS became a “first-class document.”<sup>153</sup>

The restudy process did, in fact, involve more participation from local citizens and more attention to the ecological impact of the roadway, especially its effect on adjacent conservation lands and the water resources.<sup>154</sup> The updated version of the EIS and implemented roadway revealed the direct influence of this grassroots-based input. The DPW abandoned the plans to add lanes and instead adopted a series of smaller improvements. Limiting the number of lanes ensured not only the preservation of key conservation land, but also alleviated the development pressures and sprawl that the larger highway might have introduced. Thus, the new highway plans ensured that

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<sup>151</sup> Peter Koff, “Route 2 Environmental Impact Report Confirms Adverse Effects of Proposed Superhighway, New England Sierra: A Bulletin of the New England Chapter of the Sierra Club Vo1.3 No.8, Box 20, Route 2 Folder, FWS.

<sup>152</sup> P.G. DeBaryshe to Alan Altshuler, December 22, 1972, Box 1, Correspondence Folder, Redesign.

<sup>153</sup> Guy Rosmarin to Alan Altshuler, Route 2, January 4, 1973, Box 20, Route 2 Folder, FWS.

<sup>154</sup> Priscilla Korell “Towns to see Route 2 designs in January,” *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, December 12, 1974; Minutes of Working Committee on Environmental Impact Statement for Route 2 in Acton, Concord, Lincoln, Lexington June 19, 1975, Box 1, Loose Material Folder, Redesign.

Concord and Lincoln maintained their historic charm and socioeconomic exclusivity.<sup>155</sup>

The outcome of the battle demonstrates citizen opposition to state-sponsored growth was particularly effective in communities that contained residents with a high level of expert knowledge. These citizens could point out nuanced deficiencies in the design and had the resources to be persistent in fighting the bureaucracy of the state and federal government. Yet as the controversy finally subsided, it revealed that it was far more difficult to shift this type of activism away from opposing highway construction toward support for bringing mass transit into the suburbs.

### **A New Era in Transportation Policy**

On November 30, 1972, just as controversy over Route 2 began to wane, Governor Sargent appeared on television to announce his momentous decision about the future of Massachusetts transportation policy. He declared that in order to “right the balance of transportation” policy “future investment must concentrate overwhelmingly on the improvement of public transportation.” Sargent announced that he would permanently stop all highway construction inside Route 128, including the Southwest Expressway, and instead focus on increasing public transit in the areas that would have been served by new roadways.<sup>156</sup> “I have borne in mind the impact of these facilities would have on the social, economic and environmental fabric of the region,” he stated, and had come to realize “the cost inevitably associated with these facilities would have exceeded their

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<sup>155</sup> Brad Kane, “Uncorking the bottlenecks - State to ease tie-ups on Route 2 with \$124m makeover,” *Boston Globe*, October 23, 2008.

<sup>156</sup> The proposal did not completely stop all construction, as exceptions to his no-build policy, he called for the creation of a special two-lane road and tunnel from Downtown Boston to Logan Airport open solely to buses, taxis and trucks. Francis W. Sargent, Policy Statement on Transportation in the Boston Region, NOVEMBER 30, 1972, Box 32, Transportation Readings Folder, FWS.

benefits.” As the most obvious example of this cost-benefit analysis, Sargent cited the earlier plan to run an elevated highway directly through Fowl Meadow. This illustration indicated how much the efforts of the suburban environmentalist influenced the governor’s decision. Sargent canceled \$1 billion of expressway funding and received widespread praise both locally and nationally as a cutting-edge approach for recognizing the environmental concerns at the heart of transportation policy. An administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency even declared: “Sargent is blocking downfield for us.”<sup>157</sup>

Following his landmark announcement, Sargent made several trips to Washington in order to help redirect the nation’s transportation policy as well. Sargent sought, first and foremost, to change the distribution of the federal road building funds. Congress had established the Federal Highway Trust Fund in 1956 in order to ensure a reliable source of financial support for the construction and maintenance of the Interstate Highway System. The fund drew its money from a tax levied on gasoline purchases and stipulated that money cordoned off in the account could only be used for road construction. Sargent became a national champion and lobbyist for this cause of freeing the \$4 billion per year in the fund from what one reporter dubbed its “straight jacket.”<sup>158</sup> The governor’s affiliation with the Republican Party and close ties to Secretary of Transportation John Volpe made him an effective lobbyist and crucial to convincing the Nixon administration to reassess its stance about the nation’s transportation system.<sup>159</sup> Sargent stressed in these

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<sup>157</sup> Peter Braestrup, “The Boston Freeway Halt,” *Washington Post*, December 25, 1972,

<sup>158</sup> John Lear, “The Road-Tax Rebellion,” *Saturday Review* (July 4, 1970).

<sup>159</sup> Francis W. Sargent to Republican Legislators, May 13, 1970, Box 116, General Folder, FWS; Sargent also sought to persuade his former boss John Volpe to support his revised transportation stance. Volpe increasingly recognized the importance of public transit in meeting the nation’s transportation needs. See, John A. Volpe to Francis W. Sargent, May 21, 1970, Box 116, Transportation Task Force Folder, FWS; Francis W. Sargent to John A. Volpe, June 2, 1970, Box 116, Transportation Task Force Folder; FWS,

lobbying outings that “support for mass transportation is coming not only from intercity residents. It’s coming from suburbanites as well,” who “write in support of balanced transportation, with a heavy emphasis on mass transit.”<sup>160</sup> Members of the Nixon administration and Congress both proved “surprisingly receptive” to the cause.<sup>161</sup> Congress eventually passed the Federal Highway Act of 1973, which offered an 80 percent federal match to state and local funds and authorized urban areas to divert their share of interstate highway funds toward the construction of mass transit facilities. The Highway Act not only validated Massachusetts’ pioneering transportation policy but also included stipulations offered state officials much more flexibility and money in creating alternatives to highways.

### **From Subway to Bikeway**

The loosening of federal highway funds provided Massachusetts the financial means to expand and improve the region’s subway service. The state began in earnest to replace the routes of the Master Plan with mass transit lines. In the ensuing decade the state oversaw projects to reroute the Orange Line through the proposed site of the Southwest Corridor and extend the Red Line southward to Braintree to partially mirror the abandoned Southwest corridor and northward past Harvard Square to Alewife Brook at end of Route in place of the Route 2 expansion. The station’s position at the nexus of Route 2 and Alewife Brook Parkway provided an ideal site for suburban commuters to leave their cars at an adjoining parking garage and take public transit downtown, thereby upholding a major component of Sargent’s vision for a reoriented system.

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<sup>160</sup> Francis W. Sargent, Testimony of Governor Sargent Before Sub Committee of Public Roads of the Senate Public Works Committee, May 14, 1970, Box 20, Press Statements Folder, FWS.

<sup>161</sup> Altshuler and Luberoff, *Mega-Projects*, 187.

The BTPR also proposed continuing the route of Red Line past Alewife and through the western suburbs to a terminal near the interchange of Route 2 and Route 128. This extension would both provide suburban residents an alternative form of travel into Boston and enhance access for inner city residents to the employment opportunities in the many industries located along the high-tech corridor.<sup>162</sup> The BTPR suggested the line could follow the existing Right-Of-Way (ROW) of the Boston and Maine's railroad through Arlington to Lexington with stations in Arlington Center, Arlington Heights, and Lexington Center ending at Route 128 in Lexington. The cities of Cambridge and Somerville enthusiastically supported the plan, but the citizens of Lexington and Arlington expressed more reticence. Many of these residents endorsed the idea of the expansion but raised concerns about having stations in their communities. Their stance led Secretary of Transportation Alan Altshuler to observe that "Every town that does accept a transit system wants it to keep on going. They want to terminal somewhere else."<sup>163</sup>

On the surface, the proposal for the Red Line extension fulfilled the calls of grassroots groups like the Citizens for Balanced Transportation, as it urged for mass transit into the suburbs adjacent to Route 2 and Route 128. Yet the CBT failed to marshal its grassroots infrastructure in support of the cause. Although the proposed subway line would end in the adjoining town, the CBT opted to remain a locally based group, and stayed silent during the controversy.<sup>164</sup> In fact soon after the DPW submitted an acceptable plan for Route 2, the CBT had dissipated, and its voice was conspicuously

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<sup>162</sup> Phillip Alhbohn, "BTPR Transit Plans Include \$45M Line to Lexington Landfill," *Lexington Minute-man Supplement*, April 5, 1973.

<sup>163</sup> Anne R. Sciligano, "Will Red Line End Here?" *Lexington Minute-man*, July 19, 1973.

<sup>164</sup> Urban Planning Aid, Inc. Transit Notes, Volume 1, Number 1, Box 20, BTPR/GBC Folder, FWS.

absent during the debate about the extension to the Red Line. The CBT's disbandment suggests its members and their allies remained content with the smaller Route 2 and the commuter rail line. These routes, however, made for difficult logistics for lower income people trying to gain access to work in the Route 128 area. Moreover, while the compromise advanced the group's anti-sprawl goals, it did little to alleviate the traffic problems in Concord. However, most Concord residents accepted this traffic as an acceptable trade-off for protection of their community's aesthetic charm and socioeconomic exclusivity.<sup>165</sup>

No parallel to the CBT took shape in Lexington and Arlington to fight in favor of mass transit. Many citizens, nevertheless, supported the prospect of the Red Line extension. A few of the residents believed the project fulfilled the objectives of the modern environmental movement. For instance, longtime liberal activist Nancy Earsy dubbed the project "Lexington's best opportunity to make a real commitment to ecological preservation and clean air."<sup>166</sup> Most residents who supported the project, however, saw it less as a means to endorse ecological concerns and more to reduce the hassles of commuting by automobile or bus, thereby increasing their own quality of life. A study conducted by the *Lexington Minute-man* exposed residents overwhelming dissatisfaction with the situation and the fact that most drove into Boston not by choice but force because of the unpredictability and slowness of the bus service.<sup>167</sup> Automobile commuters complained of paying a "high price in frazzled nerves" and one fed up resident declared, "I have had it with traffic and better train service would ease my day

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<sup>165</sup> Ellis to the Editor, *Concord Journal*.

<sup>166</sup> Nancy Earsy to the Editor, *Lexington Minute-man*, June 28, 1973.

<sup>167</sup> "Residents Want More, Better Public Transit, Split Between Rail, Bus," *Lexington Minute-Man*, August 8, 1974; "Commuters demand dependable transit," *Lexington Minute-man*, August 15, 1974.

considerably.”<sup>168</sup> While the vast majority of residents recognized the need to reform the current system, many began to voice equal concerns about the prospect of a subway terminal in their town center.

Similar to the battle over the Route 2 expansion, the response of Lexington and Arlington residents revealed that the term “quality of life” was open to conflicting interpretations. Many people argued that the expansion of the mass transit system posed a threat to the very privileges of suburban residency. The negative reaction to the proposal for the Red Line extension rested primarily on the anti-growth reasoning that had steadily come to define the local agenda of the communities along Route 128.<sup>169</sup> A study of the area conducted in the mid-1970s concluded, “More than anything else suburban residents fear that if population continues to grow” then “the character of their communities will be lost.”<sup>170</sup> In the minds of many local citizens in places like Lexington and Arlington, concerns about an influx of newcomers placing a strain on municipal services trumped complaints about traffic. The comments from local residents upheld this observation voicing relentless concern that the project would destroy the “New England charm” of their “towns” and make them “automatically and inexorably become urbanized and cified.”<sup>171</sup>

Opponents to the extension also began to couch their anti-growth ideology in the more explicit terms of environmental protection. Lexington resident John Lahiff declared that extending mass transit would “have a detrimental effect on the environmental and

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<sup>168</sup> “Commuters Demand Dependable Transit.”

<sup>169</sup> John O’Keefe, “Towns Want Slow, Planned Growth, But Fear Transportation ‘improvements,’” *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, November 25, 1976.

<sup>170</sup> O’Keefe, “Towns Want Slow, Planned Growth.”

<sup>171</sup> Stephen Pollit, “Red Line Terminal at Rte. 128 ‘not feasible,’” *Lexington Minute-Man*, June 12, 1975; “What Will the Impact of the Red Line Extension Be on Town?” *Lexington Minute-Man*, September 13, 1973.

especially population density of our town.”<sup>172</sup> Residents like Lahiff inverted the environmental reasons that the CBT and allies had adopted about the value of the mass transit expansion in order to fight it. Dr. Herbert Meyer, a Lexington conservationist, argued the plan would increase noise, air and water pollution, and others suggested it would encourage sprawl and thereby deplete open spaces.<sup>173</sup> The parallels between this reasoning and the type of arguments anti-highway activists used to promote mass transit exposed the flexibility of environmentalist logic in these types of battles. At least one Lexington resident aimed to point out the contradictions in the anti-growth discourse of Meyer and collaborators. Tom Forstmann warned that the pressures of suburban development would continue with or without the Red Line and saw the transit line as a means to actually control rather than encourage sprawl. “There is nothing charming about our congested and polluted roads,” he declared in order to support his contention that “the aims of providing transportation and limiting development” as “fundamentally compatible.”<sup>174</sup> Fortsmann failed, however, in getting the majority of residents of Arlington and Lexington to understand those connections.

Even more than the battles over open space and the highway extension, the reaction to mass transit exposed the racial and class based fears animating the anti-growth philosophy of many white suburban homeowners in purportedly liberal places like Lexington. Although residents used words such as “charm” and “character,” it was not simply the aesthetic beauty of their communities that they saw threatened, but also their socioeconomic status and physical safety. Some residents raised fears about “roving

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<sup>172</sup> John Lahiff to the Editor, *Lexington Minute-Man*, January 24, 1974.

<sup>173</sup> Phillip Albohn, “Red Line Expansion Plan Could Create Ruckus—Lexington vs. Neighbors,” *Lexington Minute-man Supplement*, May 3, 1973.

<sup>174</sup> Tom Forstmann to the Editor, *Lexington Minute-man*, June 26, 1975.

gangs on the transit system invading the calm of the suburban lifestyle” and increasing the incidence of crime.<sup>175</sup> These comments echoed suburban whites in Atlanta who, as Kevin Kruse points out, claimed their opposition to a metropolitan transit system was “rooted not in racism, but rather in concrete worries about the influx of criminals would surely flow out into the city.”<sup>176</sup> Even more terrifying to Lexington residents than “roving gangs,” however, was the prospect of low-income people moving into their communities because of the subway. A sympathetic state representative summarized the attitude of residents in the western suburbs in noticeably racialized terms: “wherever rapid transit has gone in other places, people would be fact to follow and many a rural area has become a rural jungle.”<sup>177</sup> A study committee sponsored by the town of Lexington aimed to address the issue head on. It declared: “Most of us are aware, although one does not hear it articulated very directly” of the concern that “extension of rapid transit service will lead to an influx of lower income or lower class families to the town.” The study’s authors promised, nevertheless, that due to the high property values and lack of existing apartments in Lexington, unless the town took extremely deliberate action to encourage multi-unit development such an outcome would not occur. Instead, the increase in transit options, the study argued, would most likely raise local property values making Lexington even more economically exclusive.<sup>178</sup> Most residents remained skeptical. A group of residents in Arlington even formed an organization called the Arlington Red Line Action Movement (ALARM) to galvanize grassroots opposition to

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<sup>175</sup> “Red Line to Rte 128?, What path, Which terminal, ” *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, March 3, 1977.

<sup>176</sup> Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 249.

<sup>177</sup> Jason H. Korell, “Red Line Extension Moving Closer to 128, Most say “inevitable,” *Lexington Minute-man Supplement*, May 10, 1977.

<sup>178</sup> “What Will the Impact of the Red Line Extension Be on Town?”

the proposal. The leaders included MIT economist Vincent A. Fulmer, who reduced the movement's goals to preserving "quality of life" and preventing "irreversible transformation" to the character of the community.<sup>179</sup> Transportation official Fred Salvucci saw through this rhetoric and publicly accused the group of using "racial fear and blatant mistruths" in the campaign against the proposal.<sup>180</sup>

The arguments that supporters of the proposal adopted about the metropolitan implications of bringing the mass transit line to Route 128 served only to enflame the individualist sensibilities of suburban opponents of the plan. The Lexington study committee concluded that the plan would have few negative effects on the town, but would significantly help the overall region, especially for people who lived or worked along Route 128. This logic made some Lexington and Arlington citizens even more insistent that they should not have to endure the slightest inconvenience in order to help the broader region. "It all comes down to regional interests versus the community," one Lexington woman declared. A fellow community member agreed, lamenting that the proposal would make the town a "sacrificial lamb on the alter of regional interests."<sup>181</sup> A resident from Arlington embraced the populist role of victim to confront head-on the arguments that the town must share responsibility for urban inequality. "Arlington has contributed its share to the Metco experiment," H.H. Seward scoffed, but "many of neighbors seem to feel that Arlington should take on even more of burden." Seward

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<sup>179</sup> Arlington Says No to MBTA Red Line," *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, March 10, 1977.

<sup>180</sup> "Transportation Chief Urges Transit Growth," *Lexington Minute-Man*, June 2, 1977.

<sup>181</sup> Cheryl Waixel, "Red Line Extension Receives Mixed Reaction at BTPR Hearing," *Lexington Minute-man*, April 19, 1973.

urged his fellow taxpayers to oppose the plan in order to “protect the quality of your home and investment in Arlington.”<sup>182</sup>

A series of hearings and studies turned the debate around Red Line extension into a five year battle. The protracted process showed some of the limitations of the increased emphasis on community participation in environmental and transportation policy.

Although the new procedures aimed to give residents a larger voice and more control over policy decisions that affected their communities, in many suburban municipalities, it did not lead to more social and spatial equality. In fact, just the opposite occurred. These procedures provided residents with another means to undermine efforts to delay or thwart policy decisions. In the case of the Red Line extension, this citizen participation effectively killed the project. Embracing the populist tenets of citizen participation, ALARM leader John F. Cusack enthusiastically declared of this outcome, “it shows the people can beat the machine.”<sup>183</sup> A state planner expressed far less enthusiasm. Peter Murphy mournfully observed, “You’ll probably never see in your lifetime or mine a heavy rail commuter system to Route 128 in Lexington.”<sup>184</sup>

Once suburban residents revolted against the plans, the MBTA had to determine a use for the Right-of-Way per a bankruptcy court ruling. The MBTA eventually decided to accept a proposal from the communities of Lexington, Arlington, Bedford and Cambridge to create a bikeway directly along the ROW.<sup>185</sup> The towns suggested that “the very attractive” and relatively inexpensive pathway would create little physical or

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<sup>182</sup> H.H. Seward to the Editor, *Arlington Advocate*, December 9, 1976.

<sup>183</sup> “Arlington Says No to MBTA Red Line.”

<sup>184</sup> Lou Conrad, “MBTA Rail Plan Interred,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, June 6, 1978.

<sup>185</sup> The town planner in Arlington first conceived of the project in 1974 during discussions of the Red Line running underground through the community. He proposed that a linear park or bikeway could go on top of the subway route, see John Laidler, “His Dream Was a Road More Traveled,” *Boston Globe*, July 6, 2003.

environmental impact, provide commuter access from the suburbs to Boston and increase the accessibility of the town centers, schools and historic sites of the communities it bisected.<sup>186</sup> The Minuteman Commuter Bikeway officially opened in 1992. The 11-mile long 12 foot wide route runs from Alewife Station---across bridges, alongsides ponds, parks, through the town centers of Arlington and Lexington, before ending in the rolling pastures of Bedford. The popular path, which closely follows Paul Revere's historic ride, functions primarily as a space of "healthy recreation" for suburban residents not as a major commuting artery.<sup>187</sup> If the pathway has limited commuter benefits for suburban residents, particularly because of unpredictable New England weather patterns, it is a woefully ineffective means for inner-city residents to reach jobs concentrated along Route 128. The bikeway was never intended to entirely replace the plans for the extension of the Red Line, but it still reveals the choices and priorities of many white suburban residents. The bikepath ultimately offers these suburban communities many of the same benefits of the conservation projects that it traverses: a means of maintaining open space, historic distinctiveness, and socioeconomic exclusivity.

## **Conclusion**

The diverse alliance of grassroots activists and governmental officials that came together around the highway issue succeeded in changing the purview and scope of state and national transportation and environmental policy. The remarkable coalition, however,

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<sup>186</sup> Vollmer Associates, MBTA Lexington Branch R.R. Right-of-Way Study, Historical Collection, Rollins Library, Arlington, MA.

<sup>187</sup>The pathways accessibility for all forms of travel has dispelled this harmonious vision creating has created many conflicts between walkers and bikers that local police have dubbed "bikeway rage." Matt Viser, "Rage on the bikeway-Walkers and cyclists clash on Minuteman path," *Boston Globe*, July 1, 2007. There has been a recent effort to improve the path's commuter capacity see Ethan Gilsdorf, "Popular Bike Trail Gets Even Better," *Boston Globe*, June 29, 2008.

never achieved a sustained movement to simultaneously reduce dependency on automobiles among suburbanites and provide car-less urbanites better access to jobs outside of the city. The effort to protect open space and stop highway construction their once again proved the effectiveness of suburban liberals to create policy changes and ensured that at least rhetorical support for the environment became a basic prerequisite for any candidate running for the governor in Massachusetts. It also helped to make a concern about the environment a component of the plank of both political parties in Massachusetts and other parts of the Northeast. At the same time, this movement produced a set of stringent controls on growth that built upon exclusionary zoning policies and exacerbated the localist tendencies and individualist and discriminatory attitudes about property among the suburban residents in the affluent suburbs along Route 128.<sup>188</sup> These efforts injected a particular mentality about preserving the “character” of their landscapes, that also made places like Concord and Lexington adverse to any form of development, including public transit and affordable housing, as a later chapter explores. The movement’s emphasis on citizen participation also empowered suburban residents in places like Concord, Lexington and Lincoln to believe that they had power to change state and federal policy and stop new forms of land development, which the battles over affordable housing reveals had progressive and problematic implications.

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<sup>188</sup> For the pitfalls of localism see Sugrue, “All Politics is Local.”

## **Chapter 6: “The One and Only”**

### **Introduction**

On January 15, 1972, more than 3,000 Massachusetts citizens participated in a caucus designed to unify liberal and peace voters around a single candidate in the upcoming presidential race. Organized by the suburban-based groups Political Action for Peace (PAX) and Citizens for Participation Politics (CPP), the event demonstrated the shared commitment of their members to the principles and practices of participation and working through the formal channels of power to end the Vietnam War. The coordinators had adopted as the model for the convention a smaller caucus they had staged two years earlier that led directly to the election of liberal priest Father Robert Drinan to Congress. They also drew upon the new reforms established by the Democratic National Committee to make the nomination process fairer and more transparent. At the end of the all-day affair, the participants selected South Dakota Senator George McGovern out of a field that included Shirley Chisholm, Eugene McCarthy and Edward Muskie. The caucus established locally and nationally the credibility and legitimacy both of the McGovern candidacy and the suburban liberals who had organized it as major forces. Following the convention the grassroots suburban-centered movement focused its resources and network exclusively on the McGovern campaign. These efforts directly contributed to his victory in the state primary in April, his nomination by the Democratic

Convention in July and his solitary success in Massachusetts and Washington, DC in the November general election.

In the nearly four decades since the 1972 race, commentators have used the imbalanced election results as confirmation of both the decline of postwar liberalism and the inherent progressivism of Massachusetts voters.<sup>1</sup> These explanations, however, naturalize the mythology of Massachusetts and obscure a more complicated story about Bay State and national politics and the more complex role of suburban liberals. For the suburban volunteers the election results punctuated a decade of grassroots political activism for peace. These suburban peace activists drew on the ideas, contacts and tactics they had cultivated in earlier mobilization efforts such as the Vietnam Moratorium to spearhead key campaigns for liberal antiwar politicians for Congress and the presidency. Through these efforts, this grassroots movement not only ensured the reputation of Massachusetts as the most liberal state in the nation by the 1972 election but also exerted a large and enduring influence on the politics and platform of the national Democratic Party.

This mobilization complicates the declension and ascension narrative frameworks that have dominated discussions of the politics of the 1970s and the 1972 election in particular. Scholars of postwar politics have traditionally concentrated on the 1968 presidential election as the breaking point of the New Deal coalition and subsequent “unraveling of liberalism.”<sup>2</sup> A new generation of scholars has swung the analytic pendulum in the other direction and focused on the grassroots mobilization of the New

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this tendency among political observers see Eric Alterman, *Why We're Liberals: A Political Handbook for Post-Bush America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 1-2; Susan Page and Jill Lawrence, “Does ‘Massachusetts liberal’ label still matter?,” *USA Today*, July 25, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> See Matusow, *Unraveling of America* Fraser and Gerstle, *Rise and Fall of the New Order*.

Right, viewing the campaign of Barry Goldwater in 1964 as a starting point and leading directly to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980.<sup>3</sup> These accounts together treat the 1972 election as merely the confirmation of liberalism's demise and the augur of Reagan's monumental victory in 1980. Bruce Miroff's *The Liberals' Moment* has provided an invaluable corrective to these conventional narratives of the 1972 election, persuasively arguing that the McGovern campaign helped redefine the contours of the contemporary Democratic Party as it transformed its base from blue-collar urban ethnics to issue-oriented suburbanites.<sup>4</sup> In order to draw these important conclusions, however, Miroff focuses primarily on the events and activities of McGovern's national campaign, which he characterizes as a classic example of insurgent politics. While the McGovern candidacy perhaps constituted a sudden uprising at the national level, among grassroots suburban volunteers in Massachusetts, the campaign marked the culmination of a decade of intense political activity. This constituency's imprint on state and national politics continued long after the end of the Vietnam War and illuminates that the electoral arena constituted the space where the suburban liberal peace movement would ultimately have its most lasting state and national influence.

Though pundits have long described McGovern as the "Goldwater of the Left," the campaign did not lead to a parallel awakening and remaking of liberals and the Democratic Party as several scholars have argued Barry Goldwater's 1964 candidacy accomplished for the New Right and the Republican Party.<sup>5</sup> The 1972 election, moreover, clearly did not mark the disappearance of suburban liberals or the Democratic

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<sup>3</sup>For the best example of this framework see McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*. See also, Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm; Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Miroff, *Liberals' Moment*.

<sup>5</sup> "Front and Center for George McGovern," *Time* (May 8, 1972); Miroff, *Liberals' Moment*, 6.

Party either. Since the McGovern campaign, many suburban liberals in Massachusetts have continued to mobilize at the grassroots for candidates and issues that align with their political vision and in doing so have helped transform the state's congressional delegation and legislature into the most progressive in the nation. Focusing on this movement also reveals the inadequacies of framing the politics of the 1970s solely in terms of the presidential elections of 1968, 1972 and 1980. This approach, in particular, fails to address other pivotal campaigns at the state and local level in which suburban liberals, especially peace activists, played an important role. Indeed, many of the grassroots liberals who first became politically active in the suburban antiwar movement came to hold key leadership roles in the state and national Democratic Party and related organizations and campaigns. Through these various activities suburban liberals have become a major constituency and political force within the Democratic Party at the state and national levels. The outcome of the 1972 election and the role of Massachusetts in it, proved to be not an aberration from mainstream trends, but, rather, a template for the future of liberal politics in the United States.

### **“The Whole Country is Watching”**

The campaign for the passage into state law of the Shea-Wells Act in early 1970 marked the first effort by the suburban-centered peace movement to channel the energy of the Vietnam Moratorium activities, a one day protest that became the largest civil demonstration in American history, more directly into policy and political action. President Nixon's call immediately following the October events for the “Vietnamization” of the war had dulled the enthusiasm and excitement of the Moratorium

and left both suburban activists and their less overtly political neighbors disillusioned and doubtful that they could actual influence governmental decisions. The Act, which called into question the constitutionality of the draft and the president's power to wage war, helped renew faith in the possibilities of working within the formal channels of power and demonstrated the specific ways in which suburban liberals could be effective in this effort. The Act also evoked a considerable national attention and debate and further helped solidify the reputation of Massachusetts as the most antiwar state in the country, which in and of itself had far-reaching consequences.

The Shea-Wells Act evolved directly from the affluent Boston suburbs and the network of grassroots peace activists. The unconventional legislation originated from Reverend John Wells, the popular pastor of the Unitarian Church in Lexington. A native Georgian, Korean War veteran, and trained lawyer, Wells had been active in the civil rights movement in the South before coming north where he became an early and outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War. In Lexington, Wells took a leading role in the local antiwar activities, chairing both the anti-ABM committee and Moratorium planning committee. Participating in the well-attended Moratorium rally on the Lexington Battle Green moved Wells to remember that “the revolution was fought for the right of people to participate—in the decision making process.”<sup>6</sup> He resolved to fulfill this ideal by taking action on his long-fermenting idea to introduce legislation testing the president's constitutional power to send soldiers to fight in an undeclared war. The Supreme Court had repeatedly refused to hear individuals' cases testing the President's war-making power, but Wells believed that a challenge by a state government offered the surest way

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<sup>6</sup> John M. Wells, “The Minister's Story” in *The People vs. Presidential War*, John Wells, ed. (New York: University Press of Cambridge, Mass, 1970), 8-9.

to receive judicial review. Soon after the Moratorium, Wells began to work with a local law school professor to draft a bill requiring the state Attorney General to represent before the Supreme Court Massachusetts soldiers forced to fight in undeclared wars. In early December, Wells brought a version of the bill to H. James Shea, a young state representative from Newton with a strong record on peace and civil liberties. She agreed to sponsor it in the legislature.

Shea and Wells realized that in order to get this experimental bill passed they needed significant grassroots support and mobilization, especially from the suburban peace movement. Shea and Wells had each worked with CPP and PAX on the ABM campaign, the Moratorium, and other antiwar activities, and they contacted the two suburban groups for help in this effort. CPP chair John Elder and executive secretary Ray Dougan agreed to participate and provide the political resources of their organization. Although Elder and Dougan believed that the bill had only a remote chance of passing, they, nevertheless, saw the campaign as an opportunity to create a public forum for expression of antiwar sentiment, to renew activity after the moratorium, and to show concerned citizens that the state legislature could be a “significant political force.”<sup>7</sup> PAX executive secretary Jane Webb also voiced enthusiasm for the Shea-Wells concept. She had first declared opposition to Vietnam intervention at a Voice of Women (VOW) meeting in 1964, and after six years of frustration, the bill appeared to be “the golden opportunity to channel our hitherto fruitless antiwar efforts into legitimate and effective political action that had not been tried before.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John Elder, “Grass Roots Political Action” and Richard Cauchi “Grass Roots Political Action” in *The People vs. Presidential War*, 85-90.

<sup>8</sup> Jane Webb, “Grassroots Political Action” in *The People vs. Presidential War*, 94.

Shea, Wells and their allies created a strategy that focused on mobilizing support leading up to the state Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the bill on February 11, 1970. Activists with experience at the State House worked with Shea to begin lobbying the members of the Judiciary Committee, while the rest of the volunteers focused on creating a large turnout for the hearing.<sup>9</sup> The organizers recognized that “a large and vocal crowd” would help “illustrate the diversity and strength of this movement” and therefore aimed to create a “balanced audience” of housewives, elderly citizens, students, and legal experts from across the state. The groups urged their members to come and testify at the hearing, selling it as “a chance to discuss the war with elected officials.” The suburban chapters of CPP and PAX along with the often overlapping members of Wells’s congregation and Shea’s district enthusiastically embraced this call to action. The informal coalition distributed flyers, formed telephone trees, spoke at community meetings and church gatherings, and contacted local newspapers and talk shows to alert fellow suburban residents about both the bill and the public hearing. Fred King, a member of the Newton chapter of the CPP who had met Shea during the local campaign for Eugene McCarthy, earned the title of “Johnny Appleseed of the Bill,” as he alone printed twenty thousand leaflets about the hearing and encouraged local CPP and PAX chapters, universities, and the members of various churches to distribute them through their personal and professional social networks.<sup>10</sup>

Proving the effectiveness of the CPP and PAX in mobilizing a strong outpouring of activism, more than a thousand citizens, mostly from the Route 128 suburbs, appeared at the hearing on February 11, 1970. The committee had to relocate to the largest room in

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<sup>9</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics “Facts About CPP,” c. 1970, Box 36, Folder CPP, FWS.

<sup>10</sup> Fred King, “The Battle of the Leaflets” in *The People vs.. Presidential War*, 147.

the State House, which still filled to overflow capacity. Shea carefully orchestrated the three hours of testimony that ranged from ministers, Gold Star mothers, and wounded veterans to nationally prominent legal scholars such as former Senator Ernest Gruening of Alaska and Kansas law professor Lawrence Velvel, who declared that the bill could resolve “the far-reaching constitutional issue of our time.” Wells deemed it “an outpouring of the desire of the people to make the system work.”<sup>11</sup> Committee chairman Joseph Ward called the hearing “the most impressive he had seen during his twenty years as a legislator.”<sup>12</sup> The wide-ranging testimony coupled with additional grassroots lobbying convinced the previously skeptical Judiciary Committee to give the bill a favorable report. The committee members did, however, require revisions to the language of the amateurly drafted bill before its sponsors submitted it for a House vote. Shea dubbed the decision a clear “response to this remarkable instance of citizen participation.”<sup>13</sup>

As the legislation wended through the revision process, CPP, PAX and their suburban allies realized that the bill’s passage was not the long shot they once had predicted and thereupon intensified mobilizing grassroots support. Mary Ann Seitz, a member of Well’s congregation who had helped organize the Moratorium events in Lexington the previous October, committed her full energy to the project. She later recalled that for her and several other volunteers “everything else got lost—our home lives, our jobs, our work—and we lived the Shea-Wells Bill probably twelve hours a

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<sup>11</sup> Wells, “Minister’s Story,” 12.

<sup>12</sup> King, “The Battles of the Leaflets” 148.

<sup>13</sup> Rep. H. James Shea, Jr. Press Release, March 11, 1970, Box 29, Folder 95, Jack Backman Papers, Special Collections, State Library of Massachusetts (hereafter “Backman”).

day.”<sup>14</sup> The group compiled a list with the home numbers of the members of House and Senate and distributed 30,000-40,000 copies of the bill through contacts colleges, high schools churches and peace organizations across the state.<sup>15</sup> Representative Moe Fry received more than five hundred phone calls in three days. Rep. May Newman later complained that she had not eaten much during this period because every time she tried to prepare a meal the phone rang and the food would burn. Rep. Martin Linsky of Brookline called it one of “the most effective and high-caliber lobbying jobs” he had ever seen.<sup>16</sup>

By the time the bill came to the floor, the movement had made contact with every member of the House, urging each of them to allow for the Supreme Court to rule on this crucial constitutional question. Suburban activists also filled the House gallery during the debate and provided an informal soundtrack of applause and laughter.<sup>17</sup> The lobbying efforts directly shaped the discussion of the bill on the floor. The representatives in support of the bill couched their approval in a combination of constitutional legal expertise, sympathetic references to local soldiers fighting in Vietnam and allusions to Massachusetts’s long history of bold and principled action.<sup>18</sup> The bill, H. 2396, faced a large number of detractors including Rep. James Burke of Brockton who called it “a piece of ----.”<sup>19</sup> These opponents voiced concern that the bill would make the Commonwealth “the laughing stock of the nation” and would encourage draftees to move to Massachusetts. In a telling indication of the state’s political climate, none of

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<sup>14</sup> Mary Ann Seitz, “Making the System Work” in *The People vs. Presidential War*, 124.

<sup>15</sup> Seitz, “Making the System Work,” 120; King, “Battle of the Leaflets,” 147-148.

<sup>16</sup> David Lustig, “Getting to the People” in *The People vs. Presidential War*, 156.

<sup>17</sup> Seitz, “Making the System Work,” 122.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth D. Campbell, “Bartley Speaks Our for Non-Viet Bill,” *Boston Evening Globe*, March 12, 1970; Robert L. Turner, “War Bill Clears House Test, 116-110,” *Boston Globe*, March 13, 1970; Kenneth D. Campbell, “Many if facing Viet War Bill,” *Boston Evening Globe*, March 13, 1970.

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth D. Campbell, “Viet War Bill Heads for Senate,” *Boston Evening Globe*, March 17, 1970.

these opponents made any hawkish statements in support of the war or the idea of sending more troops to fight.<sup>20</sup> After two rounds of debates and votes, the Shea-Wells Bill passed in the House by 132-92 and soon after passed in the Senate by 33-6. The focus of the campaign then turned to Governor Sargent, who despite previously voicing opposition to the war had remained silent about the bill itself.<sup>21</sup> As Sargent deliberated, the *Boston Globe* led the efforts to pressure him to pass the experimental law. The paper urged in a editorial entitled “The Whole Country is Watching” that Sargent “Let Massachusetts once again, as she did in her proudest days, show the nation the way!”<sup>22</sup> The governor bowed to the pressure and signed the bill into law on April 3, 1970.<sup>23</sup>

The enactment of Shea-Wells upheld the symbolic reputation of Massachusetts the epicenter of antiwar politics. It made Massachusetts, in the words of Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz, “the first state to go on record against this atrocious war.”<sup>24</sup> The Act provided a model for action across the country. Other states legislatures including Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, California and Alaska, initiated processes during the spring to take similar action. Senator William Fulbright told Wells that the Commonwealth’s action had “awakened the conscience of the Congress,” and in late April of 1970 Senators George McGovern and Mark Hatfield

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<sup>20</sup> In the most dramatic moment, House Speaker David Bartley stepped down from the podium to voice his own support for the bill declaring that “It is time for the legislative branch of government to reassert itself.” He suggested “If the Shea Bill eventually becomes law then we will have done something important not only for our own people, but for all of the people of this nation.” Kenneth D. Campbell, “Bartley Speaks Out for Non-War Viet Bill,” *Boston Evening Globe*, March 6, 1970.

<sup>21</sup> “Massachusetts Governor Weighs a Bill Challenging Legality of Vietnam War,” *New York Times*, March 29, 1970.

<sup>22</sup> “The Whole Country is Watching,” *Boston Globe*, April 1, 1970,

<sup>23</sup> Whipple, “The Single Pebble Cast,” 2.

<sup>24</sup> Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* (New York: Horizon Books, 1989), 315.

introduced similar legislation at the federal level.<sup>25</sup> While many politicians used allusions to Massachusetts exceptionalism to make the Act appear a historic inevitability, many others directly credited the grassroots activists with the success of the legislation. Fulbright declared the Act an instance of “democracy in action,” noting that “college students, university professors housewives, gold-star mothers, and veterans joined together to be politicians in the best sense.”<sup>26</sup> The author of the CPP newsletter more directly asserted the bill had passed only after “strong constituent lobbying efforts” not because of the “innate liberalism” of the Massachusetts Legislature “which each year routinely defeats” progressive bills on issues such as birth control and election law reform.<sup>27</sup> This dig provided perhaps the clearest summary of both the success of the grassroots activism and the often-inconsistent liberalism of Massachusetts and its legislature.

As the Attorney General’s office began to develop its argument for the Supreme Court during the spring, a series of tragic events provided the Shea-Wells proponents with an even clearer moral imperative. The revelation of the United States invasion of Cambodia in early May, followed by the fatal shooting of four students at Kent State, awakened citizen protest both nationally and locally. James Shea, who had increased his antiwar activism after the passage of his namesake bill, had become deeply troubled and disillusioned by both the war and the protest that surrounded it and on May 10<sup>th</sup> he committed suicide.<sup>28</sup> Many prominent state politicians issued statements of tribute and grief. House Speaker David Bartley declared that the death was “tragic, particularly

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<sup>25</sup> Wells, “The Minister’s Story,” 16.

<sup>26</sup> J. William Fulbright, “Foreword” in *The People vs. Presidential War*, xvi.

<sup>27</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics, CPP Newsletter, May 1970, Vol 2. No. 1, Box 6, Folder VI.10, CPPAX.

<sup>28</sup> “Final Rites for Rep. Shea Bring Tributes from Nation, and State,” *Newton Graphic*, May 14, 1970.

coming as it does in this time of trouble, for his was a voice speaking on behalf of peace among men.”<sup>29</sup> On the base of a statute opposite the State House appeared the spray-paint obituary: “Shea- He Lives.”<sup>30</sup> Soon after the funeral, the state Attorney General formally filed the case *Massachusetts v. Melvin Laird* with the Supreme Court, arguing “participation of the United States in the military action in Vietnam is unconstitutional.”<sup>31</sup> In a 6-3 decision the Supreme Court sided with the Department of Defense and refused to hear the case.<sup>32</sup> Despite the fact that the Shea-Wells Act did not achieve its goal of forcing the Court to take action, the successful campaign to enact the law did reveal the possibilities of working within the formal channels of power to end the war. “Our experience has proved,” Wells declared soon after the bill’s passage, “that the system can work if we will work within it.”<sup>33</sup> The piece of Massachusetts legislation had its most enduring legacy in both shaping public opinion about executive power and led the passage of the War Powers Resolution in 1973, which stipulated that the president can only send U.S. armed forces into action by authorization of Congress. The legislation also provided a model for the suburban peace movement’s future action as it sought to focus the growing network of antiwar citizens to influencing the national policy and

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<sup>29</sup> “Shock, Grief Expressed at Solon’s Death,” *Newton Graphic*, May 14, 1970.

<sup>30</sup> The *Boston Globe* declared that Shea’s legacy would “be given still more meaning if his work is continued by others who believe in this kind of practical action within the law. The soul of Jim Shea, like that of John Brown, can go marching on. Whipple, “The Little Pebble Cast.”

<sup>31</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts v. Melvin Laird, Brief for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in Support of Its Motion for Leave to File Complaint, July 1970, Box 29, Folder 946, Backman. In order to assist in this argument, local peace activists got hundreds of suburban residents to sign Amicus Curiae briefs. *Commonwealth of Massachusetts v. Melvin Laird*, Reply Brief of John Wells Et Al, Amicus Curiae, Box 29, Folder 946, Backman The Federal Government countered that the Bay State lacked standing to litigate individual citizens rights, and that the question of the war’s legality was not proper for resolution by the courts.

<sup>32</sup> Justice William O. Douglas issued a long dissent dubbing the question “neither academic nor political” and argued the Court should hear the case. Justices Potter Stewart and John M. Harlan, two more conservative members of the courts, released a separate dissent opposing on the ground that it was an effort to cut procedural corners. Fred P. Graham, “Justices Reject Bay State’s Suit on Vietnam War,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1970.

<sup>33</sup> Wells, “The Minister’s Story,” 16.

electoral politics. This approach would ultimately prove more effective and sustainable than working through the state legislature with the Shea-Wells Act.

### **New Politics**

In the late 1960s, suburban liberal peace activists had begun to develop an alternative strategy of working within the system to influence U.S. policy on the Vietnam War by nominating candidates to Congress. These activists renewed their conviction that supporting candidates for Congress who shared their vision of domestic and international policy provided an effective means to stop the “nagging issues of the unending war” and “the continued pursuit of topsy-turvy national priorities.”<sup>34</sup> Despite the heightened liberal and antiwar activity in Massachusetts, moderate Democrats who largely supported the direction of U.S. foreign policy continued to dominate its congressional delegation. In 1968, four of twelve Massachusetts congressional incumbents had run opposed, the worst ratio in the nation. PAX and its collaborator Citizens for Participation Politics decided to apply the strategies of grassroots mobilization they had perfected in the Moratorium toward the campaigns of liberal challengers. In this effort, Bay State suburban liberal activists also drew inspiration and lessons from their involvement in McCarthy’s presidential campaign the previous year, the style of which press had deemed “New Politics” in contrast to the “old politics” of the Democratic Party “Establishment.”<sup>35</sup> Extending the goals of the McCarthy campaign, veteran activists aimed to use these campaigns to reshape the priorities and representatives of the Democratic Party to make them both more socially liberal and explicitly antiwar.

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<sup>34</sup> Alvin Levin, Raymond Dougan Letter, February 11, 1970, Box 36, CPPAX.

<sup>35</sup> For more on “New Politics” see Davis, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*.

Michael Harrington's successful candidacy in the fall of 1969 offered the first confirmation of the possibilities of applying a "new politics" approach to congressional campaigns. In a special election to represent a traditionally conservative North Shore district, Harrington, a 33 year-old openly antiwar liberal state senator, faced William Saltonstall, the son of Republican Senator Leverett Saltonstall. CPP, which had emerged directly from the suburban-based infrastructure of the McCarthy 1968 presidential campaign, spearheaded the drive for Harrington's victory. The district included the previously moderate towns of Reading and North Andover, had become incubators of antiwar activity after the Army the previous winter announced plans to put Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) sites in the communities. CPP relied on the contact list it had developed in these towns during the ABM campaign to build support for Harrington. In a letter to these contacts, CPP praised Harrington as "issue-oriented" and an "early and firm opponent of the wasteful and dangerous ABM program."<sup>36</sup> The group prodded voters that the election offered a chance "to express your opposition to the ABM at the ballot box" and send "a clear signal to the Nixon Administration to take a second look at its priorities." CPP members also staged a district-wide, door-to-door canvass to identify potential Harrington supporters and dissatisfied Republicans. Volunteers offered to drive or baby-sit for residents so they could go to the polls. Harrington won the September 30 contest by a clear margin, carrying the city of Lynn along with several traditionally Republican suburbs.<sup>37</sup> The *Boston Globe* published a headline declaring "Harrington Owes Win to 'New Politics.'" <sup>38</sup> The election demonstrated not only the effectiveness of

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<sup>36</sup>Jean B Meehl, John D. Elder Letter, 1969, Box 36, CPPAX.

<sup>37</sup> "Harrington Says Polls Not Used to Form Policies," *Boston Globe*, October 10, 1969.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Healy, "Harrington Owes Win to New Politics," *Boston Globe*, October 5, 1969.

CPP and the “new politics” approach to campaigning but also evidence of a strong peace vote in Massachusetts, especially in its suburbs.

The victory of the first successful peace-backed candidate confirmed to the activists in CPP and PAX that they had previously failed to recognize congressional races as effective means to pressure prominent politicians about the war, expand public support, and solidify the grassroots peace movement.<sup>39</sup> Thus, in late fall and early winter of 1970, the movement shifted its focus to the Third Congressional District, which 71 year-old Philip Philbin had represented for 27 years. Philbin was a hawkish Democrat “party hack” who served as vice-chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.<sup>40</sup> The district had traditionally consisted of small rural and blue-collar towns in the central part of the state, but reapportionment in 1967 had dropped two clusters of western towns from the district and added the affluent and more liberal Boston suburbs of Newton, Concord, Lincoln, Weston along with Watertown and Waltham. In 1968, peace-minded candidates Thomas Boylston Adams and Joseph Bradley had challenged Philbin in the Democratic primary. The two candidates, nevertheless, split the liberal vote and Philbin won with a minority percentage. Liberal activists realized that if two unorganized candidates could together get more votes than the incumbent, a better organized and more unified campaign could allow for a peace politician win.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the suburban-centered peace movement sought a way to create a unified front to defeat Philbin in 1970.

In December 1969, Paul Counihan, the former chair of McCarthy’s Massachusetts campaign and the local ABM committee, and later a leading advocate for affordable

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<sup>39</sup> Grossman, *Relentless Liberal*, 59.

<sup>40</sup> Norman C. Miller, “Good Old Phil’: How One Congressman Holds on to his Seat by Wooing Home Folks,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 8, 1970.

<sup>41</sup> Grossman, *Relentless Liberal*, 59.

housing in the suburbs, hosted a meeting at his Concord home of 14 “politically aware” district members to discuss a strategy for channeling the antiwar sentiment of the Moratorium into electoral politics. “The moratorium’s day was done,” Counihan declared. “That’s why we moved over to finding a candidate.”<sup>42</sup> The “very dovish” group included Alvin Levin, a lawyer, Lincoln resident and CPP co-founder, and others other members of that group as well as representatives from PAX, Voice of Women (VOW) and Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). At the meeting, these activists developed the idea of a caucus to bring together liberal voters in the district in support of the candidate best capable of defeating Philbin in the Democratic Primary. The organizers began to devise the rules and details for the event agreeing that the winner would receive financial support and volunteer workers from their groups.

Levin took charge of organization for the Third District Caucus and began recruiting participants and potential candidates. Newton CPP member Arthur S. Obermeyer suggested an unusual choice for the position. As president of a Cambridge-based chemical research company called Moleculon, which relied on Defense Department contracts, he appeared an unlikely peace activist. Obermeyer, nevertheless, deeply resented politicians like Philbin who squandered money on needless and dangerous programs. He wanted to replace him with a candidate who saw foreign and domestic issues in moral terms.<sup>43</sup> Thus, he suggested Father Robert Drinan, a Jesuit Priest and Dean of Boston College Law School, who had been an outspoken supporter of peace, civil rights, and other liberal issues including birth control. Obermeyer approached

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<sup>42</sup>Deckle McClean, “Causes and Caucuses,” *Boston Sunday Globe Magazine*, April 12, 1970.

<sup>43</sup> McClean, “Causes and Caucuses.”

Drinan about running and the forty-nine-year-old Priest responded “Why not?”<sup>44</sup> Drinan believed that there was no bar to a “clergyman entering the political process” and said, “perhaps now is the time.” Drinan joined the field that included state representatives Gordon Martin, Charles Ohanian, Harrison Chandler Stevens and John Kerry, a twenty-six-year-old Vietnam veteran making his first run for political office.

The caucus took place on Saturday February 21, 1970, at the Concord-Carlisle High School auditorium, drawing two thousand citizens and lasting from 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. While the organizers invited all members of the Third Congressional District, most of the participants had ties to the suburban peace movement. Political reporter Robert Healey dubbed it “one of the most unusual experiments in Massachusetts politics.”<sup>45</sup> The organizers assigned each city and town a proportionate number of votes according to population, which made only 852 of the participants eligible to cast a ballot. During the morning, each candidate presented his platform to the assembled audience. Galvanizing the peace vote, Drinan told the crowd that the “over-arching issues haunting all Americans” included a militaristic society “with an obsession against communism,” a complex situation in the Middle East and inflation.<sup>46</sup> Supporters of the various candidates then argued over which politician would be best suited to withstand the pressures of office and represent the interests of the caucus. After three rounds of ballot-based elimination voting, the field narrowed to Kerry and Drinan. Before the fourth round, Kerry withdrew his name. He left the stage shouting “Let’s Beat Philbin!” which drew a standing ovation from the audience, many of whom believed he had a bright

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<sup>44</sup>Robert Healey, “Philbin Foes to Try Unity,” *Boston Globe*, February, 1970.

<sup>45</sup> Healey, “Philbin Foes to Try Unity.”

<sup>46</sup>Carol Liston, “3d District Caucus Nominates Fr. Drinan to Oppose Philbin,” *Boston Globe*, February 22, 1970.

future ahead. Drinan went on to win the unanimous endorsement of the caucus as the candidate most likely to beat Philbin in the September primary.

The experimental caucus and its outcome drew state and national attention, both as a symbol of Massachusetts political progressiveness and as an example of the effectiveness of participation politics.<sup>47</sup> The event underscored the seriousness of suburban liberals' efforts to remake the Democratic Party. A reporter deemed the event "the unprecedented revolt of Democratic liberals against the establishment."<sup>48</sup> The participants themselves believed that the event marked the continuation of their earlier efforts. Jerome Grossman saw the caucus as the direct culmination of three previous activities: "The McCarthy organization, the Moratorium organization and the Citizens for Participation Politics organization," which had collectively "opened up the peace movement to everyone."<sup>49</sup> Longtime activist Ray Dougan acknowledged the caucus also showed the movement's new commitment to working more directly within the conventions of electoral politics. He observed, "The McCarthy campaign was energy without form. Now we are together in a really rational way."<sup>50</sup> The caucus had also not deviated from the middle-class white liberal and suburban composition of many of the earlier peace and political activities. Many observers raised concerns about how the more moderate voters throughout the district would respond to the unusual first-time candidate who had the manners of an academic and the wardrobe of a priest.

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<sup>47</sup> Robert Healy, "Now's the Time to Participate," *Boston Globe*, March 2, 1970.

<sup>48</sup> "Father Drinan was 'the People's Choice' At Citizen's Caucus," *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, February 26, 1970. The caucus also served as inspiration for similar action. A few weeks later, voters in the 12<sup>th</sup> district, an area that included many of the South Shore suburbs tried the experiment to unseat Democratic incumbent Hasting Keith electing Garry Studds. Voters in New Bedford area selected another peace candidate Bernard Yaffe, a longtime member of PAX to challenge Margaret Heckler.

<sup>49</sup> John S. Saloma, "Citizens Caucus...a political innovation," *Boston Globe*, February 28, 1970.

<sup>50</sup> Saloma, "Citizens Caucus...a political innovation."

## **“Our Father Who Art in Congress”**

The effort to secure the nomination for Father Drinan in the Democratic primary developed into one of most-well organized campaigns in American political history. It built directly on the infrastructure, techniques, and membership of the grassroots peace movement, which gave the campaign a suburban-centered ideological and organizational orientation. The early participants recruited as campaign manager John Martilla, 29-year-old Detroit native and recently converted Republican who applied his past experience working on grassroots-based political efforts. In one of his earliest decisions, Martilla commissioned a private polling company to conduct a systematic survey of the Third District. Drawing on its data, the pollsters from the Oliver Quayle Company instructed, “If Father Drinan has to select one major focus of the campaign, it must be the suburbs.”<sup>51</sup> The consultants stressed that suburban and upper-middle class parts of the district appeared most receptive to Drinan's dovish stance and thoughtful demeanor. They suggested, therefore, that the campaign focus its energy on suburban-centered activities like block parties and coffee-klatches, conduct canvassing in more affluent neighborhoods, and abstain completely from going to the more blue-collar areas in the district.

This advice of the pollsters provided Martilla and his staff the basic outline for their suburban-centered campaign strategy. Martilla began operating on the belief that “one idealistic housewife is better than all the ward heelers you can get.” He set out to prove that “You can campaign on principles” and “really battle for people’s minds.”<sup>52</sup> In

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<sup>51</sup>Oliver Quayle and Company A Survey of the Political Climate in Massachusetts’ Third Congressional District, May 1970, Papers of Robert F. Drinan, Special Collections, Burns Library, Boston College (hereafter: “Drinan Papers”).

<sup>52</sup>Friedman, “How to Win The Primary By Really Trying.”

order to do so, the campaign coordinated a district-wide canvass that combined simple old politics and new technology with the earlier tactics of the antiwar movement. During the summer of 1970, 3,500 Drinan volunteers each went to an average of 25 homes and together made direct contact with residents in 41,000 households, about 70-80 percent of the voters in the district. This campaign used canvassing to determine the sentiment of the residents toward the candidate and then focused on the voters who supported Drinan. They rated each voter on a five-point scale from “very favorable” to “negative.” In one of the earliest examples of targeted direct mailing, the canvassers entered the information from the interviews into a computer and then followed up with phone calls and appropriate mailed literature.<sup>53</sup> As with the Moratorium, this effort focused primarily on galvanizing previously politically uncommitted moderate suburbanites.

The campaign materials the volunteers distributed further underscore the suburban-centered dimension of Drinan’s strategy. These pamphlets placed the candidacy in a non-threatening language of conviction, integrity, and respectability that struck at the heart of the political culture of the Route 128 suburbs, like Newton and Concord, that comprised the district. One flyer suggested as Drinan’s overriding goal a clear “desire to make the national government more responsive to the legitimate needs of the people and to reshape our national priorities.” Several pamphlets presented Drinan as not merely a peace candidate, but, rather, an “issue-oriented” politician distributing information with his positions on the economy, health care, housing, labor and drugs. Placing the war and economy in directly consumer terms, one pamphlet declared: “You’re Fighting the

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<sup>53</sup> Robert Healy, “Drinan Victory Upset of the Year,” *Boston Evening Globe*, September 17, 1970.

Vietnam War at the Checkout Counter.”<sup>54</sup> In the overwhelmingly white and non-urban Third District, few if any of these pamphlets had racial minorities as the target audience. One particularly provocative piece of literature played directly to suburban anxieties about youth by featuring a picture of a white longhaired teenage girl in a skirt sitting on her floral bedspread injecting heroin. The image sat above the tagline “If the thought of hard drugs in your town makes you feel scared and helpless, maybe it will make you read the other side.”<sup>55</sup> The backside outlined what Drinan proposed to do about local and national drug abuse continuing to place the issue in largely white suburban terms.

Jerome Grossman coordinated the fundraising for this expensive undertaking, relying on a successful combination of his professional acumen and suburban liberal contacts. He concentrated on the 2,000 people who had attended the caucus, pressuring them to donate repeatedly by reminding them “This isn’t Drinan’s campaign; it’s your campaign.”<sup>56</sup> While Grossman did receive contributions from some national organizations and wealthy donors, he operated on the assumption that small sums were as important as bigger ones. In total Grossman sent out requests to 100,000 people, raising \$125,000 through the donations of 2,200 individuals most of who lived in the district. Grossman also encouraged suburban volunteers to solicit money and votes through their social networks just as they done for McCarthy and the Moratorium. Throughout the summer and fall suburban residents in Newton, Concord, Watertown and Lexington (which was not even in the district) raised money by hosting traditional suburban-style events such as a “Drinan Garage Sale,” and several types of parties, including wine and

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<sup>54</sup> Drinan for Congress, “You’re Fighting the Vietnam War at the Checkout Counter,” Flyer, 1970, Drinan Papers.

<sup>55</sup> Drinan for Congress, “If the thought of hard drugs in your town makes you feel scared and helpless, maybe it will make you read the other side,” Flyer, 1970, Drinan Papers.

<sup>56</sup> Grossman, *Relentless Liberal*, 62.

cheese, garden, and “punch and politics” gatherings. The candidate himself attended many of these parties using them as a chance to talk with potential voters one-on-one.<sup>57</sup>

Grossman later noted that the fundraising experience taught him an important lesson for both his peace activism and business management that “giving responsibility and increasing participation is the way to build personal satisfaction and productivity.”<sup>58</sup>

In the last weeks of the campaign, volunteers raised the level of intensity. The staff secured one Drinan worker for every twenty-five voters, assigning them duties such as ward chairmen, canvassers, poll watchers and sign carriers and providing them with detailed manuals. The zeal of the middle-class suburban volunteers and their college-aged counterparts resembled that of a “moral crusade.”<sup>59</sup> Newton residents Harry Crosby and his wife took a month off from their professional and familial obligations to work overtime for the campaign.<sup>60</sup> On primary day, despite rainy conditions, the volunteers amassed an unprecedented turnout particularly in suburban precincts. The computer information provided town and city coordinators with the names, phone numbers and addresses of people most likely to vote for Drinan. Harry Crosby saw that some Newton supporters on his list had not gone to the polls, and he dispatched fifty volunteers to go out into the pouring rain, track them down, and implore them to vote. “If there was a reasonably liberal housewife at home with her four kids almost anywhere in the district,” a *Boston Phoenix* reporter half-kidded, “someone who would probably vote for Drinan

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<sup>57</sup>Drinan for Congress, “So You’re Going to Have a Drinan Yard Sale,” 1970, Drinan Papers; Physicians for Drinan, “Wine and Cheese Party to meet Robert F. Drinan” Newton Centre, June 5, 1970; Dr. and Mrs. James S. Skinner, 18 Oxbow road, “Concord fundraising Garden party with Robert F. Drinan,” c 1970; Mr. and Earl Kim, Lexington hosted benefit opera performance for Drinan, July 31, 1970; Pat and Jack Hunter, West Newton “Punch and Politics” party in honor of Drinan, June 12, 1970, Mr and Mrs. Boylston Adams, Lincoln Garden Party to meet Drinan, May 30, 1970, Drinan Papers.

<sup>58</sup> Grossman, *Relentless Liberal*, 62-63.

<sup>59</sup> Eliot Friedman, “How to Win The Primary By Really Trying,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, October 18, 1970.

<sup>60</sup> “Computer, enthusiastic workers,” *Boston Globe*, September 17, 1970.

but who would be discouraged by the rain—on election day she was probably called two, possibly three times. The Drinan group would provide a babysitter while she voted, and a ride both ways.”<sup>61</sup>

In the primary, Drinan beat Philbin by a vote of 28,612 to 22,132. The *Globe* deemed it the “political upset of the year.”<sup>62</sup> The candidate himself called the victory “a miracle,” though he did concede with a wink that he had written his victory speech two days earlier.<sup>63</sup> Not surprisingly, Drinan’s strongest support came from the district’s affluent suburbs.<sup>64</sup> He received 69.4 percent of the vote in Newton as opposed to only 29 percent in the more blue-collar Fitchburg. The low turnout in certain areas was also part of the campaign strategy. Based on the advice of the private polling analysts, organizers had decided targeting more working-class communities would have brought more votes for Philbin and therefore avoided them altogether.<sup>65</sup> Further contributing to the upset, the incumbent had done little more to campaign than to distribute a few mailings and bus posters.

In addition to the fact that Drinan was a priest and had run one of the more “overtly dovish” campaigns in the country, the primary received national press attention for the way it showed a reshaping of the political process.<sup>66</sup> The upset demonstrated the importance of congressional primaries as a space for challenging party regulars and incumbents. The outcome, therefore, sent a strong message to complacent members of Congress that they must fight to maintain their seats. The campaign also exposed benefits

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<sup>61</sup>Vin McLellan, “Father Drinan: A Victory in the Rain,” *Boston Phoenix*, September 26, 1970.

<sup>62</sup>Healy, “Drinan Victory Upset of the Year.”

<sup>63</sup>Richard Connolly, “Fr. Drinan Ready for Vote ‘Miracle,’” *Boston Evening Globe*, September 16, 1970.

<sup>64</sup>Robert Healey, “The Message of Drinan Win,” *Boston Globe*, September 27, 1970.

<sup>65</sup>Friedman, “How to Win The Primary By Really Trying.”

<sup>66</sup>“New Politics and Old,” *Time* (September 28, 1970); R.W. Apple, Jr, “Some Post-Primary Observations,” *New York Times*, September 17, 1970.

of combining old and new political strategies in order to win. Drinan himself credited his victory to the fact that he and his suburban liberal volunteer base “were organized and computerized” and “held together right up until the last minute.”<sup>67</sup> The victory ultimately confirmed to both outside observers and participants themselves the possibilities and power of mobilizing suburban residents to work within the political system.<sup>68</sup>

The general election proved an equally important test of the grassroots suburban peace movement’s strength. Drinan faced moderate Republican John McGlennon from Concord, who also had strong suburban support. Philbin had decided to launch a write-in campaign to remain on the ballot, making a tough race that much more difficult. Rather than focusing on his policy plans, the newly energized Philbin instead concentrated on attacking Drinan and his supporters. In statements to the media, the party regular described the Jesuit priest’s campaign as an effort by “minions of wealth of the New Left” and “ultra-liberal extremists and outsiders.”<sup>69</sup> He further lobbed the accusation that “thousands and thousands of dollars have been poured in a golden stream into Massachusetts from outside sources to defeat me.”<sup>70</sup> Drinan supporters sought to challenge these claims. Arthur Obermeyer sent a letter to the *Boston Globe* strongly refuting Philbin’s charge that New York outsiders played a behind-the-scenes hand in the Drinan candidacy. He raised the example of the Third District Caucus and stressed that he and the other suburban participants “could hardly be called representatives of the New Left Outsiders.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> “Computer, enthusiastic workers.”

<sup>68</sup> Voice of Women-New England, VOW Newsletter, October 1970, Box 1, Folder 22, VOW.

<sup>69</sup> S.J. Micciche, “An Angry Philbin Will Run Via Stickers,” *Boston Globe*, October 7, 1970.

<sup>70</sup> Carol Liston, “Philbin claims Drinan Spreads Unrest,” *Boston Globe*, October 21, 1970.

<sup>71</sup> Arthur S. Obermeyer to Editor, *Boston Globe*, October 28, 1970.

In the weeks leading up to the general election the campaign focused on facing head-on the various charges against Drinan. The staff provided volunteers with a set of answers to common misconceptions including that the Priest was “a one-issue candidate,” a suburbanite who did not understand the concerns of rural parts of the state, and a supporter of the Black Panthers and draft evaders.<sup>72</sup> The candidate himself also sought to turn his religious commitment into a positive feature by dubbing his campaign “a manifestation of my priesthood” and claiming that “a priest is a mediator who preaches moral values.” He encouraged voters by contending that he did not think that the first state to send a Catholic to the White House and an African-American to the Senate would shy from the sending a Jesuit to Congress.<sup>73</sup> The campaign supplemented these statements by replicating its techniques from the primary. Throughout October, the campaign coordinated further canvassing, distributed new flyers and ran a series of TV ads that all sought to emphasize his credentials and commitment to moral issues. On November 3, 1970, Drinan won by a margin of 3,000 votes, earning the lowest percentage victory of any congressional candidate in the state.<sup>74</sup> The communities of Newton, Waltham and Watertown provided 56 percent of his vote and he came close behind McGlennon in the affluent suburbs of Lincoln, Concord and Weston. Though Philbin only carried his hometown of working-class Clinton, Drinan continued to have a poor showing in the blue-collar areas in central Massachusetts.<sup>75</sup> At the election night celebration, the children of Newton activist Anita Greenbaum hoisted a hand painted sign that read “Our Father Who Art in Congress,” a picture of which the *Boston Globe* placed

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<sup>72</sup> Drinan for Congress, “Suggested Responses to Common Questions,” c.1970, Drinan Papers.

<sup>73</sup> Connolly, “Fr Drinan Ready for ‘Vote Miracle.’”

<sup>74</sup> Marcie Hemmelstein, “Ralph Nader Congress Project Citizens Look at Congress: Robert F. Drinan, 1972,” Drinan Papers.

<sup>75</sup> “Election Results: Third Congressional District,” 1970, Drinan Papers.

on its front-page next to a series of articles heralding the nomination of the first Jesuit priest to the U.S. House of Representatives.<sup>76</sup> Discussing the historic election, Drinan declared simply: “This victory means there is one more person who will wage a war on war.”<sup>77</sup>

The 1970 election by no means symbolized a takeover of the Massachusetts Democratic Party and U.S. Congress by the suburban-based peace movement. Two other CPP and PAX supported candidates lost their respective races. In a perhaps more symbolically troubling development, Louise Day Hicks won the nomination in the district that abutted the Third District. The success of Drinan’s race, nevertheless, did mark for many in the suburban peace movement the culmination of the efforts that it had begun eight years earlier with Stuart Hughes’s symbolic senate campaign. Jerome Grossman later drew a direct comparison between Drinan and Hughes as each in his mind represented “a model of integrity, a brilliant speaker and a person of conscience.”<sup>78</sup> The difference in outcome of the candidacies exposed larger changes in the state, national and international landscape between 1962 and 1970, as well as the increased effectiveness of the grassroots liberal movement to work directly within the political system. Grossman declared that the victory served as a “watershed,” proving that “liberals could pull themselves together and gather so many people and so many dollars to elect such an unlikely candidate” and could take its “moveable feast” to other districts and races.<sup>79</sup> As the 1972 election approached, the suburban-based movement hoped to apply the same successful grassroots strategy to challenge to Richard Nixon for the presidency.

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<sup>76</sup> See *Boston Evening Globe*, November 4, 1970.

<sup>77</sup> Carol Liston, “Fr. Drinan Won’t Make Any ‘Grandiose Promises,’” *Boston Globe*, November 5, 1970.

<sup>78</sup> Jerome Grossman, “From Stuart Hughes to Robert Drinan” in “The Hughes Campaign: 25 Years Later, 1962-1987,” CPPAX Education Fund, 1987, Box 29, CPPAX.

<sup>79</sup> Grossman, “From Stuart Hughes to Robert Drinan.”

## **Suburban Doves**

While the leadership of PAX and CPP looked toward the presidential race in 1972, the suburban peace movement remained energized through a variety of less overtly electorally-focused campaigns. These efforts helped keep the suburban liberal political landscape fertile for the upcoming election. Though not expressly tied to particular candidates, many liberal suburban residents, especially women, became influential in shaping both the grassroots opposition to the Vietnam War and the political landscape of the Bay State and the nation. The leaders of Voice of Women (VOW) stood at the forefront of liberal peace activities, continuing to develop strategies to deploy the racial, spatial, class and gender privileges of its largely affluent white suburban membership toward the antiwar cause. VOW recognized that the Nixon administration had dismissed the struggle for peace “with the lying labels” of “campus bums” and “long-haired freaks.” They believed that if the administration would not listen to their children, it should “make them hear us!”<sup>80</sup> The group, therefore, developed a series of campaigns that simultaneously lent the anti-war movement credibility and appealed directly to the individualist and symbolic sensibilities of many moderate suburban residents.

VOW’s activities underscored the consumerist and maternalist underpinnings of the organization and the grassroots suburban movement as a whole. In November 1968, VOW chairman Rhona Shoul decided to take over the lease of the Newton McCarthy Committee Headquarters. VOW turned the storefront into a multi-use space housing both its headquarters and a clearinghouse of antiwar information and literature for groups that

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<sup>80</sup> Voice of Women-New England, VOW Newsletter, Summer 1970, Box 1, Folder 22, VOW.

wanted to reach suburban residents.<sup>81</sup> In addition, the group converted part of the office into a full-time “Peace Boutique” selling jewelry, homemade arts and crafts, and political souvenirs in order to raise money for antiwar organizations and causes. The store became an immediate success. The Boutique made \$3000 in its first six months and 100-200 shoppers a day came through its doors during the Christmas rush. At the checkout counter, salespeople encouraged shoppers to sign various antiwar petitions and take peace-related literature with them. The Peace Boutique quickly emerged as an important center for organizing volunteers for the Drinan campaign and other antiwar activities. The store also provided a moment of awakening for many of the volunteer salespeople, and several of them went on to take full-time staff positions for the peace groups for whom they raised money. Many of the members would later recall working at the Boutique as one of the high points of their activist careers.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to raising funds for peace at the Boutique, VOW also experimented with ways to withhold spending as a means to protest the Vietnam War. By deploying their positions as middle-class consumers, VOW members exposed the unique ways in which suburban residents, especially women, could contribute to the antiwar cause. In the late 1960s, VOW initiated a boycott of all items made by companies complicit in the war effort, including Standard Oil, General Electric, RCA, and ITT, the maker of such suburban household staples as Wonder Bread.<sup>83</sup> In partnership with the local chapter of the Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF), VOW quickly

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<sup>81</sup> Voice of Women-New England, VOW Newsletter, November 1968, Box 1, Folder 21, VOW.

<sup>82</sup> See for example Sue Berkeley’s response to the questionnaire “30 years later: Voice of Women Reunion,” Box 1, Folder 51, VOW.

<sup>83</sup> Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom, “He’s Shopping With Our Money,” Box 1, Folder 19, Records of Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom, Boston Chapter, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University (hereafter: “WILPF”).

intensified this effort by launching a campaign called “Mourning Tuesday” to stop shopping all together once a week. Through the weekly act, the women symbolically refused contributing to the United States economy until the government and took “war off its shopping list.”<sup>84</sup>

Many VOW members also tested the privileges of consumer citizenship by engaging in forms of tax refusal. Beginning in 1970, the group participated in an ambitious initiative entitled “Hang Up on War” that encouraged citizens to withhold the 10 percent excise tax on their phone bills. The U.S. government had introduced the federal excise tax in 1966 as a means to raise funds for the Vietnam War. VOW distributed a printed card for participants to include with their monthly bills with a picture of Vietnamese children and an explanation that the customer could not “in good conscience continue to pay.”<sup>85</sup> VOW members took pride in the fact that this action had become a nationally burgeoning movement with 18,000 citizens across the country participating.<sup>86</sup> Several VOW members also announced a refusal to pay either all of their taxes or just the projected 69 cents per dollar that went to defense spending. They also engaged in routine pickets of the local Internal Revenue Service headquarters. While these activities clearly did not make a dent in the defense budget, they did help draw attention to the war’s burden on American citizens.

VOW simultaneously created a series of campaigns whereby participants could provide the gendered privileges of motherhood to the antiwar cause. Building upon their

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<sup>84</sup> Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom “Shopper’ Stoppage” Flyer, Box 1, Folder 19, WILPF.

<sup>85</sup> Voice of Women-New England, “Phone Tax Card,” Box 1, Folder 29, VOW. In May 1970, VOW organized an event where members collectively mailed their phone bills without the tax and then marched to protest outside the local telephone company office. Voice of Women-New England, VOW Newsletter, March 1970; Voice of Women-New England, VOW Newsletter, May 1970, Box 1, Folder 22, VOW.

<sup>86</sup> Voice of Women-New England, VOW Newsletter, February 1970; Voice of Women-New England, VOW Newsletter, March 1970, Box 1, Folder 22, VOW.

involvement in the draft resistance movement, three VOW members conceived of a protest project in the spring of 1971 called "Save Our Sons." The campaign encouraged women to send snapshots of sons, nephews and other male relatives to President Nixon at the White House along with a form letter that VOW had drafted. The letter presented the senders in explicitly maternalist and non-threatening terms as "housewives and mothers" who as "students have been organizing protests had "stayed home, done our work and kept quiet." The signers announced, however, that they refused to "pay the price of war with the loss of sons any longer."<sup>87</sup> The project received an instantly positive response. Thirty VOW members spent "Mourning Tuesday" distributing 2,000 copies of the letters at the Park Street subway station in downtown Boston. The activists convinced 250 women to sign the letter on the spot. Women in many Boston suburbs, including Newton, Norwood, Milton and Quincy established ad hoc committees to gather more signed letters and photographs in their communities.

This grassroots campaign quickly expanded from a state into a national movement with Women Strike for Peace chapters across the country joining and sending their pictures to the White House. Congresswoman Bella Abzug became a strong supporter of the effort and encouraged women to send the mailings directly to her. Upon receiving thousands of signed copies, Abzug read the form letter into the Congressional Record in April declaring that "these women are 55 percent of the population" who "were examining their own rights in the political and social arenas" and coming to recognize "the full potential of their political power."<sup>88</sup> The action culminated during the summer when a group of activists pasted 50,000 copies of the letter and pictures to bunting and

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<sup>87</sup> Save Our Sons to President Nixon, 1971, Box 1, Folder 23, VOW.

<sup>88</sup> Voice of Women-New England, VOW Newsletter, May 1971, Box 1, Folder 23, VOW.

then unfurled it in front of the White House. Nixon refused to meet with these women or discuss the matter with the Democratic Congresswomen Abzug, Shirley Chisholm, Patsy Mink and Ella Grasso. Despite the scope of the campaign, its limited impact on Nixon administration policy frustrated VOW and its suburban members and led many of them direct to more direct forms of action. Throughout 1970 and 1971, VOW members joined a series of large protests that occurred in the suburbs of Boston that often led to the arrest of participants. These activities underscore both that participation in peace activity among local residents remained as strong as ever and that during the early 1970s many major Boston-area protests occurred not on the campuses or the Boston Common but in the suburbs.<sup>89</sup>

The most extreme of these protests brought into sharp focus the ways suburban liberals could and did assist the antiwar effort. The 1971 event, sponsored by Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), took place on the Lexington Battle Green, and resulted in the largest mass arrest in Bay State history.<sup>90</sup> With its new leader John Kerry, the Boston Chapter of VVAW had become increasingly active in the early 1970s. A month after a successful march in Washington where they camped on the Mall and Kerry offered powerful testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the group decided to retrace Paul Revere's ride in reverse. The VVAW planned the three-day march over Memorial Day weekend, spending a night each at the Old North Bridge in Concord, the Lexington Battle Green, and the Bunker Hill Monument and culminating with a rally on Boston Common where they would read the Declaration of Independence. The group

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<sup>89</sup> The Natick Peace Action Committee increased from 200 members in late 1969 to 1500 to 2000 "active people" by 1971, Rabinowitz "Suburban Doves are Taking Anti-War Struggle to the Ballot Box."

<sup>90</sup> For much more on the VVAW demonstration see the documentary "Democracy and Dissent made by Lexington participants and the website surrounding the documentary and the event. [www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com) (last accessed April 3, 2009).

aimed to appropriate the symbolism of the American Revolution, echoing earlier antiwar and civil rights protests that also took place on these spaces.

The VVAW hoped to gain support and sympathy from the suburban communities through which they would pass. The Lexington CPP chapter had worked in advance with the VVAW to help with preparations for the night in the town. The Lexington selectmen, however, refused to grant the VVAW a permit to bivouac on the Green because it might upset the community, get out of hand, and ruin the grass. The VVAW decided to camp anyway and many Lexington residents joined the event in order to show solidarity with the veterans and their cause. Longtime peace movement participants like Emily Frankovich, Jean Rubenstein, Bonnie Jones and Nancy Earsy participated to prove that both suburban people opposed the war and the demonstration was not the product of outside agitators.<sup>91</sup> At 3 a.m. local police rounded up the 458-person crowd and took them by buses to a makeshift jail in the building where the Department of Public Works kept its trucks. In the morning police herded the protestors to the Concord District Courthouse where the veterans and their suburban supporters pleaded guilty and received misdemeanor trespassing charges. Although the VVAW never completed its journey, the arrests stirred enough outrage to bring them the media and public attention they had sought.

The event had an even greater impact on the Lexington community, its stance on the war, and its commitment to liberal ideals. Although a small minority of citizens supported the selectmen, most Lexington residents sided with the demonstrators, interpreting the dramatic action as a clear example of the mythological exceptionalism of

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<sup>91</sup> Nancy Earsy interview by Robert Robbat, July 1, 1991, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. [www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com) (last accessed April 3, 2009). ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed April 3, 2009).

the community and its revolutionary roots. For local antiwar activists the event did not just stir a sense of the town's progressive distinctiveness, but also revealed the unique ways in which white middle-class people could contribute to progressive causes. Like the Moratorium, the VVAW protest demonstrated how local action could expand the opposition to the war. Bonnie Jones recalled that it was important because "It was a very respectable group of people, middle class and older." She said, "It was in my hometown. You are not of a half million people walking in Washington where nobody knows you. Your name is the local paper and your neighbors are going to know."<sup>92</sup>

While the VVAW protest revealed the power of suburban residents to legitimize the antiwar movement, for activists such as Emily Frankovich it also demonstrated the limits of direct action protest. After spending the night in the makeshift jail, Frankovich, like many liberal activists, continued to advocate using more formal political channels to achieve change. She later remembered learning this lesson most clearly around the same time as the VVAW demonstration when she took part in a CPP-sponsored trip to Washington to meet with members of the Massachusetts delegation. When she and other CPP members got to Senator Edward Brooke's office, they saw a group of veterans waiting outside because they did not have an appointment. The CPP group went right in to see Brooke, reinforcing for Frankovich that "If you're going to make change you have to do it through the system."<sup>93</sup> Frankovich soon after took an early and leading role in the McGovern campaign.

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<sup>92</sup> Bonnie Jones, interview conducted by Norma McGavern-Norland, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc. ([www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com](http://www.lexingtonbattlegreen1971.com), last accessed April 3, 2009).

<sup>93</sup> Frankovich Interview.

## Citizens Caucus

The leaders of CPP and PAX sought to harness the increasing suburban opposition to the war and direct it toward the voting booth in the upcoming presidential election. The *Boston Herald* ran a story in late 1971 with the headline “Suburban Doves are Taking Anti-War Struggle to the Ballot Box.” The article featured interviews with several suburban peace activists who insisted that local residents were still outraged about the ongoing war but had begun to abandon “the picket signs for the ballot box.”<sup>94</sup> Wellesley attorney Paul Jameson observed of his fellow peace-minded residents “They’ve marched, they’ve talked that didn’t achieve their goal so now they are going to the ballot box.” Jerome Grossman similarly declared, “The marches and demonstrations of previous year were necessary to indicate the vast numbers who were opposed to the war. Now what remains to be done is to translate these numbers into political power.”<sup>95</sup> The article confidently predicted that PAX and other groups would use their suburban-centered connections and tactics to successfully “springboard” antiwar candidates into office, looking forward especially to the state’s upcoming presidential primary.

Before focusing on the outcome of the presidential election itself, the suburban-centered peace movement first sought to alter the candidate selection process at the national and state levels. The members of the movement shared the outrage of many in the Democratic Party that despite the fact that Eugene McCarthy had won more state primaries, Hubert Humphrey had still emerged from the 1968 Chicago Convention as the favored candidate. After the election, the Democratic National Committee appointed the Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection to examine reform. The body,

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<sup>94</sup> Rabinowitz, “Suburban Doves are Taking Anti-War Struggle to the Ballot Box.”

<sup>95</sup> Rabinowitz, “Suburban Doves are Taking Anti-War Struggle to the Ballot Box.”

better known as the McGovern Commission, mainly sought to help state parties change their nominating processes. The members of the Massachusetts peace movement contributed to this dialogue by providing testimony when the Commission came to Boston in July 1969. Jerome Grossman told the Commission of “the overwhelming need for the deepest kind of reform of the party structure both nationally and within Massachusetts.” He described that the new system must take note of the shift in the Democratic center of gravity from white working-class in South Boston toward suburban middle-class residents in places like Newton. “A new electorate is on hand,” Grossman warned, “which is highly-issued oriented, demanding rapid change and non-responsive to the ethnic loyalties which have created the sinecures of so many current political figures.”<sup>96</sup> The Commission took to heart these comments on political realignment eventually designing a set of guidelines for state delegate selection designed especially to eliminate preferential treatment and promote the fair representation of minority views. Most significantly, the body urged that every delegation include racial minorities, women, and young people among its ranks. These rules transformed how the Democrats selected their presidential nominee and would have wide-reaching effects at the state and national levels.<sup>97</sup>

The McGovern Commission’s findings assisted the Massachusetts peace movement’s ongoing effort to reform the state Democratic Party. In 1966, Massachusetts had passed a law that made Bay State voters’ choices for delegate non-binding and gave the parties the power to determine representation at the national convention. This law

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<sup>96</sup> Statement of Jerome Grossman Before the National Democratic Committee’s Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection, Boston, Massachusetts, July 10, 1969, Box 5, Folder V.27, CPPAX.

<sup>97</sup> For a more thorough explanation of the McGovern Commission and its significance see Miroff, *Liberals’ Moment*, 19-23; See also Byron Schafer, *Quiet Revolution: The Struggle for the Democratic Party and the Shaping of Post-Reform Politics* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983).

effectively allowed the Democratic establishment in Massachusetts to marginalize McCarthy and his delegates from the national convention. Between 1968 and 1971, CPP had filed annual legislation to abolish the earlier law on the grounds that it prevented popular participation and in the belief, in the words of Alvin Levin, that “the people who do the voting in the primary should be the people represented in the convention.”<sup>98</sup> The combination of the McGovern Commission findings and CPP pressure convinced the state legislature to re-evaluate the process and eventually passed a law to remove the non-binding stipulation and abolish the winner-take-all approach. In addition, the Massachusetts State Democratic Party voted to essentially remove itself from the delegate selection process.<sup>99</sup>

The members of the suburban-based peace movement then concentrated on how best to enact the procedural changes in order to nominate a candidate capable of defeating Richard Nixon. Many activists believed that in 1968 the McCarthy and Kennedy campaigns had divided the peace vote and wasted energies and resources fighting each other rather than pro-war candidates.<sup>100</sup> In order to avoid repeating that mistake, members of the movement decided to build on the success of the Third District Caucus and the Drinan campaign and expand the model to a statewide and hopefully national scale. A group of PAX and CPP members developed a proposal to hold a presidential caucus where participants could select one candidate to endorse in the April 1972 state

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<sup>98</sup> “CPP Pushes for Reform Presidential Primary This Week,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, July 1, 1971; Emily Weston Frankovich, “Delegate-choosing reform looms for ’72,” *Boston Globe*, May 10, 1971; “Coming reforms on elections,” *Boston Globe*, June 5, 1971.

<sup>99</sup> Richard Weintraub “Bay State Democrats change process of Selecting Candidate,” *Boston Globe*, December 19, 1971.

<sup>100</sup> Jerome Grossman, A Proposal for a Massachusetts Presidential Caucus, October 6, 1971, Box 6, Folder VI.36, CPPAX,; See also David Nyhan, “Peace Groups Aim: One Candidate,” *Boston Globe*, October 5, 1971.

Democratic Primary.<sup>101</sup> The principles of “participation politics” clearly animated the idea. The group believed that “this process of choice by activists at the grassroots will release enormous energies and funds, assure the victory of the selected candidate” and build “strong political organizations.”<sup>102</sup> CPP member John Elder deemed it a means of “broadening participation at every stage of the electoral process” and to “restore vitality to the principles and practices of self-government.”<sup>103</sup> In the official announcement, Alvin Levin of CPP recapitulated the mantra of the suburban peace movement since the Moratorium declaring, “The time is ripe to translate our community strength into real political power.”<sup>104</sup> CPP and PAX dispatched members into more than 50 cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth to alert citizens about the event and urge them to select delegates to attend. The leaders hoped these meetings would not just increase participation, but also forge lasting contacts in these municipalities. The organizers also sought to entice candidates to get involved by both promising an endorsement to the winners and the mailing lists of the two groups, which amounted to 50,000 names.

The idea for the caucus generated many raised eyebrows throughout Massachusetts political circles. Democratic party officials refused to endorse the event or its selected candidate. Even though the organizers described the project as getting liberals together “so a liberal can win this state,” the Massachusetts chapter of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) deemed the caucus “inappropriate” and declined to participate.<sup>105</sup> Several naysayers noted the CPP and PAX’s past experience in and close

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<sup>101</sup> “Grossman Outlines Liberal Plan to Capture ’72 Delegate Seats,” *Newton Times*, October 6, 1971.

<sup>102</sup> Grossman, “A Proposal for a Massachusetts Presidential Caucus.”

<sup>103</sup> John Elder to Editor, *Boston Globe*, January 13, 1972.

<sup>104</sup> Massachusetts Citizens Presidential Caucus, “Plans for Statewide Caucus Announced,” 1971, Box 29, CPPAX.

<sup>105</sup> Robert Jordan, “Mass Caucus Upsets Critics,” *Boston Globe*, December 23, 1971.

connection to the McCarthy campaign and believed the caucus served merely a ploy to help the former Minnesota Senator win the Massachusetts primary for a second time.<sup>106</sup> Despite close ties to McCarthy, Grossman and other peace leaders publicly promised to remain uncommitted until the caucus participants had selected a winner.<sup>107</sup> Organizers further defended themselves by citing the success of the Third District Caucus and by attacking such critics for not understanding “the prime initiative in politics should flow from the grass-roots upward,” rather than from self-styled “leaders” down to the people.<sup>108</sup>

Many local civil rights and labor activists, however, sharply criticized the caucus organizers for confining their definition of grassroots participation exclusively to middle-class whites from the suburbs. This criticism underscored the ways in which the suburban-centered movement had essentially abandoned efforts of the early 1960s to unify the issues of peace and civil rights. Instead, the movement increasingly focused exclusively on galvanizing middle-class people against the war and electing candidates who felt the same way. Despite its efforts at more inclusiveness, the caucus disproportionately benefited middle-class white suburbanites and contributed to a shift in the balance of power within the Democratic Party in their favor. Marvin Harrell, chairman of the Massachusetts Minority Political Committee, publicly criticized the organizers for not including “viable minority input at the planning stages” and for not providing a way to present a “slate of minority issues.” Harrell declared the caucus a case study of “how the system has traditionally excluded minorities from the nuts and

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<sup>106</sup> Richard M. Weintraub, “Contest developing for Mass Caucus,” *Boston Globe*, January 9, 1972.

<sup>107</sup> Nyhan, “Peace groups aim: one candidate.”

<sup>108</sup> John Elder to Editor.

bolts of political activity.”<sup>109</sup> In a telling rebuke, Grossman responded that the caucus intentionally included “a certain kind of people—peace and reform Democrats---the people behind the revolt of 1968 and was “not trying to represent the entire state.”<sup>110</sup> This comment reflects the viewpoint that had both undergirded the mobilization for Moratorium and the McCarthy and Drinan campaigns. By focusing on making antiwar issues and candidates acceptable to middle-class white suburban residents, PAX and its allies had excluded other parts of the population from participation. The specific yet myopic goals and vision of Grossman and the peace movement undoubtedly constrained its ability to forge broader coalitions and policy changes.

Revealing a schism in African-American local politics, other black leaders urged members of the community to participate in the caucus. A faction led by Hubert Jones and Byron Rushing worked with organizers to get Bay State African-Americans to attend. Jones and Rushing hoped to use the caucus to create “an ongoing organizational procedure and mechanism capable of effective coalition politics.” In particular, these activists realized that if African-Americans wanted to oust Louise Day Hicks from her seat in Congress, it would have “to be in alliance with white liberals” and saw the caucus as the first step in that process.<sup>111</sup> Jones and Rushing, therefore, released a series of radio announcements and flyers publicly urging members of the African-American community to attend, stressing “Black people cannot willingly absent themselves from any potentially important political process.”<sup>112</sup> This call would have an unexpected impact on the event’s results.

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<sup>109</sup> Jordan, “Mass Caucus Upsets Critics.”

<sup>110</sup> Jordan, “Mass Caucus Upsets Critics.”

<sup>111</sup> Weintraub, “Contest developing for Mass Caucus.”

<sup>112</sup> “Blacks for and against Mass. Caucus,” *Boston Globe*, January 13, 1972.

More than 3,000 people attended the presidential caucus at Assumption College in Worcester on January 15, 1972.<sup>113</sup> Bennett Alter of Brookline represented the typical participant. He attended because of a sense that the political system provided the last resort for stopping the Vietnam War. “My wife and I signed the first ad against the Vietnam War in the Times eight years ago,” Alter declared. “If there’s one thing to come out of it, it will be good. Everything else has failed.”<sup>114</sup> The ballot for the caucus included committed Democratic candidates Shirley Chisholm, John Lindsay, George McGovern, and Edmund Muskie. The announcement of the event had convinced Eugene McCarthy to officially enter the presidential race (though only in the Massachusetts primary) and he was the only candidate to speak before the crowd in Worcester.<sup>115</sup> McGovern and Chisholm sent proxies, and while Muskie and Lindsay declined to participate in any capacity.

The unexpected results of the all-day balloting illuminated the potential power of grassroots political participation. McGovern won with 62 percent, Chisholm received 23 percent, McCarthy 13 percent and Muskie, Lindsay, and Edward Kennedy split the remaining two percent between them. Chisholm’s strong showing was surprising given the white, middle-class and peace slant of the event. In the four days before the event, however, Jones and Rushing had launched an aggressive mobilization drive to get people of color to attend by promising free transportation. These participants voted overwhelmingly for Chisholm. Moreover, many white suburban women who had intended to vote for McCarthy became drawn to the feminist dimensions of Chisholm’s candidacy and changed their minds. In the western suburbs of Lexington, Concord,

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<sup>113</sup>Richard Weintraub, “Liberal Caucus Picks Sen. McGovern,” *Boston Globe*, January 16, 1972.

<sup>114</sup>Weintraub, “Liberal Caucus Picks Sen. McGovern.”

<sup>115</sup>Bill Kovach, “McCarthy, Casually, Enters the ’72 Race,” *New York Times*, December 18, 1971.

Lincoln, and Bedford, the female participants divided their support equally between Chisholm and McGovern. The results convinced Chisholm to concentrate on Massachusetts, a state she had previously planned to bypass. McGovern's decisive rout of McCarthy surprised observers even more. Many had assumed that McCarthy would easily win the nomination, especially since CPP had evolved directly from his 1968 campaign. Although McCarthy refused to withdraw from the race, the caucus represented a very ill omen for his candidacy. It led one pundit to cautiously warn, "Massachusetts is McCarthy's kind of turf. If he cannot put over his candidacy here among his own kind of liberals, he cannot make it anywhere."<sup>116</sup> The results of the caucus did not impel Muskie and Lindsey to withdraw from the primary either. Although the Massachusetts caucus did not fulfill the organizers' vision of unifying activists around one candidate, it did provide the first illustration that McGovern was a serious candidate.<sup>117</sup>

### **The McGovern Campaign**

McGovern's success at the caucus did not emerge from a fluke, but was the direct product of the network of grassroots suburban liberal activists who had already converged in support of his candidacy. McGovern had recognized early in his candidacy that suburban residents would provide invaluable financial and volunteer support for his presidential bid. In the winter of 1971, he had sent out 200,000 letters to grassroots contacts across the country, which yielded both a million dollars and many interested individuals.<sup>118</sup> In Massachusetts a nucleus of support grew in Lexington, led by Emily

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<sup>116</sup> Robert Healy, "Important Win for McGovern," *Boston Globe*, January 17, 1972.

<sup>117</sup> Martin F. Nolan, "McGovern staff sees victory in Caucus Vote," *Boston Globe*, January 19, 1972.

<sup>118</sup>"Sen, McGovern Claims Jump on Candidates Helping Him Get Funds," *Lexington Minute-Man*, October 14, 1971.

Frankovich, who together with fellow residents Harriet Kaufman and Alice Piece launched “Massachusetts Citizens for McGovern,” using Piece’s home as a makeshift headquarters. Although PAX and CPP had refused to get involved in any campaign until after the presidential caucus, activists like Frankovich applied the tactics of suburban mobilization those groups had cultivated in their earlier political efforts toward building support for McGovern. The group called contacts they had developed through the Moratorium and other activities and encouraged them to “set up an embryonic district organization.”<sup>119</sup> They distributed leaflets and bumper stickers in support of the candidate and also started a newsletter that tracked McGovern’s activities. In October 1971, the group along with the Lexington Democratic Club and residents of other suburban communities sponsored a fundraiser at the Lexington Armory, at which McGovern himself spoke. The crowd of 750 people applauded “thunderously” when McGovern promised to end the war and reorder national priorities. Many people in the audience offered financial contributions and began to volunteer for the campaign.<sup>120</sup> This effort inspired residents in Newton and other Route 128 suburbs to establish their own local McGovern Committees. After hearing about the caucus, the local groups focused on turning out a large vote for McGovern at the Worcester event. By the late fall, Frankovich had shifted from the head of Massachusetts for McGovern to state fundraising chair. National campaign manager Garry Hart had expressed skepticism about the caucus sponsored by PAX and CPP. Frankovich pleaded with him to charter buses to “get as many people to the caucus as possible,” stressing, “We can’t afford to

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<sup>119</sup>Emily Frankovich to District Contacts for the McGovern Campaign, June 7, 1971, Box 33, CPPAX.

<sup>120</sup>“Sen, McGovern Claims Jump.”

lose it.”<sup>121</sup> The advice clearly paid off, as these McGovern supporters comprised a large segment of the caucus participants.

After the caucus, CPP and PAX quickly took a leading role in the McGovern campaign. Upon receiving the endorsement McGovern received a phone call from Ted Kennedy congratulating him because the support of CPP and PAX meant that “you are on your way now. That group is hardworking and effective. They will kill themselves for you.”<sup>122</sup> CPP and PAX supported McGovern not only because they believed he was the best candidate, but also because they recognized it would legitimize the caucus and their approach to politics. The personalities and philosophies of these groups aligned smoothly with the grassroots model the McGovern campaign had established locally and nationally.<sup>123</sup> The newly fortified Massachusetts staff applied their localized social networks and strategies to challenging the predictions of a crushing victory by frontrunner Muskie.<sup>124</sup> CPP and PAX encouraged their supporters to apply the experience they had gained in “prior campaigns” and from overall “commitment to grassroots politics.”<sup>125</sup> They sought to build explicitly on the campaign model established during Father Drinan’s successful run for Congress two years earlier. During February and March 1972, members of PAX and CPP did extensive neighborhood canvassing across the state to identify McGovern supporters. The office then entered the information into a computer-operated database and followed up with targeted literature about the

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<sup>121</sup> Frankovich interview.

<sup>122</sup> Grossman, *Relentless Liberal*, 68.

<sup>123</sup> For more on the grassroots strategy of the McGovern campaign see Miroff, *Liberals’ Moment*, especially pp. 154-176. Miroff focuses primarily on the activities surrounding the New Hampshire and Wisconsin primary and pays little attention to Massachusetts.

<sup>124</sup> Frankovich maintained the position as fundraising chair and Mary Williamson of Ipswich, CPP vice-president and former McCarthy coordinator took over as chair of field organization. See Richard M. Weintraub, “Fragile Coalition puts together McGovern,” *Boston Globe*, April 26, 1972.

<sup>125</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics, Newsletter, Vol.4 No.2, April 20, 1972, Box 6 Folder VI.11, CPPAX.

candidate.<sup>126</sup> This well-organized suburban-centered drive, coupled with strong opposition to the war among most Massachusetts residents, helped McGovern pass Muskie as the clear leader weeks before the actual vote. By early April, polls revealed that McGovern had an 11-point lead on Muskie and a 21 percent lead over Humphrey.<sup>127</sup>

Massachusetts for McGovern, CPP, and PAX did not prematurely relax and instead focused on the races for delegate posts as means to ensure that Muskie did not gain the nomination in Miami despite a loss in the primaries. The groups sought to develop district delegate slates for the primary that not only met the Party's new rules for race, gender and age balance but also were "truly representative of the peace and new politics constituency."<sup>128</sup> Many members of the suburban liberal peace movement themselves ran as McGovern delegates in their respective districts. One such candidate was Newton's Anita Greenbaum, who was a member of both PAX and VOW and had been a key volunteer in the Drinan campaign. Greenbaum would have been an extremely unlikely and unwilling delegate to the Democratic Convention four years earlier. She had, in fact, protested outside the Chicago Convention in 1968. But, like many members of the movement, she came to believe that working within the political process provided a better means to fight to end the war and improve U.S. social conditions.<sup>129</sup> A friend drafted a homemade campaign flyer with the message: "ANITA GREENBAUM OF NEWTON, NOT YOUR EVERY-DAY HOUSEWIFE," citing her participation in various peace and political activities including a rap sheet of arrests at various Vietnam demonstrations. The

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<sup>126</sup> Mass PAX, Mass Pax Coordinators' Bulletin, March 9 1972, Box 5, Folder V. 3, CPPAX.

<sup>127</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics, CPP Newsletter, April 20, 1972, Box 6, Folder VI.2, CPPAX.

<sup>128</sup> Mass PAX. Mass Pax Coordinators' Bulletin January 29, 1972, Box 5, Folder V.3, CPPAX.

<sup>129</sup> "Massachusetts Delegate Profile," *Boston Sunday Globe*, July 9, 1972.

flyer jokingly stated, “Just as McGovern’s record speaks for itself so does ANITA’S.”<sup>130</sup>

She joined with PAX and CPP members such as Jerome Grossman, Alvin Levin and John Elders, who also put their names on the delegate ballot.

CPP and PAX recognized that these delegates would not just deliver McGovern the nomination but would also reshape the demography and priorities of the state and national Democratic Party. In the week before the primary, the groups devoted their full resources and energy to ensuring these homegrown delegates achieved victory. CPP distributed leaflets, sample ballots and more than 25,000 copies of brochures emphasizing: “The future course of the Democratic Party is also much involved in the choice of delegates.” CPP intimated that these diverse slates “could result in a spectacular change of the state and national party.”<sup>131</sup> PAX made an equally impassioned plea encouraging members to stress to ambivalent voters that these delegates were not “professional politicians,” but “conscientious citizens from the grassroots who wish to revive and democratize the Democratic Party.”<sup>132</sup> Shirley Chisholm’s campaign helped arouse further grassroots suburban liberal activism and activity in the primary and the delegate contest. During March and April, Chisholm came to Massachusetts several times, stumping both on Roxbury street corners and cocktail parties in Newton.<sup>133</sup> She met loud applause in both venues when she announced, “It may take a black woman to put our country together.” Mark Solomon, the head of the Newton chapter of CPP and the leader of the Newton Chisholm effort, wittily dubbed her “a dark horse in a gray field of

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<sup>130</sup> “!!!KNOW ANITA...MCGOVERN SUPPORTER!!!,” c. 1972, Drinan Papers.

<sup>131</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics, Newsletter, Vol.4 No.2, April 20, 1972, Box 6 Folder VI.11, CPPAX.

<sup>132</sup> Mass PAX, Mass Pax Coordinators’ Bulletin, March 9 1972, Box 5, Folder V. 3, CPPAX.

<sup>133</sup> Richard M. Weintraub, “Shirley Chisholm stumps in Hub for primary votes,” *Boston Globe*, March 26, 1972.

white male candidates.”<sup>134</sup> These endorsements and events stirred even more suburban liberal support for Chisholm, convincing residents not just to donate money and vote for her but also to run as delegates on her behalf.

The results of the Bay State’s Democratic presidential primary on April 20, 1972, demonstrated the effectiveness of the peace movement’s strategy to both ensure McGovern’s success and to reshape the state’s political landscape. McGovern ran away with the primary, winning an overwhelming 48 percent of the vote more than twice that of second-place Edmund Muskie. Shirley Chisholm took fifth place with six percent of the vote. George Wallace’s third place showing constituted the most unexpected result of primary. Wallace had campaigned for a grand total of one hour in Massachusetts one day before the election, so his surprisingly strong finish especially in Boston’s heavily white working-class wards exposed the racial and economic anxieties of many residents. Some pundits, however, believed that by exacerbating the anger of many blue collar Democrats Wallace actually helped McGovern. The South Dakota senator’s less angry platform of a more equitable economic system and an end to the war appealed to voters in Boston, which had one of the highest rates of unemployment in the country. The precinct figures from the city’s working-class wards, where McGovern beat Muskie by a two-to-one ratio, showed that, in the words of one reporter, “George Wallace just warmed up the voters.”<sup>135</sup> Statewide McGovern did best both in suburban areas where CPP, PAX, and other groups had strong bases of support and with younger voters on the state’s many college campuses. *Globe* political columnist Robert Healy observed that the election results indicated the rise of a new Democratic coalition comprised of “the young, the

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<sup>134</sup>M.F. Poverman, “Cocktails for Shirley at a White House,” *Newton Times*, March 29, 1972.

<sup>135</sup>Robert Healy, “Blue Collars, suburbs and youth give George a Big Win,” *Boston Globe*, April 26, 1972.

suburbanite liberal and the blue collar worker.”<sup>136</sup> He predicted this alliance could give “Richard Nixon a hard time in November.” McGovern himself stated of the Massachusetts primary results: “We are forming a new center (of the Democratic Party).”<sup>137</sup>

The primary solidified McGovern’s position the leader nationally in the Democratic race. Following the crucial victory in Massachusetts, McGovern reached the peak of his national popularity. In May 1972, a Gallup poll placed him just seven points behind Richard Nixon.<sup>138</sup> This success also legitimized the CPP and PAX’s vision and approach of getting peace and new politics supporters behind one candidate. CPP celebrated the results as a victory “at every level from national to neighborhood” and another indication of the effectiveness of its grassroots organizing strategy. CPP boasted that “a combination of good local organization and voter interest in the issue” of the war proved to be an “irresistible force” and looked with confidence toward the general election.<sup>139</sup>

The primary results indicated another important way that the suburban-centered peace movement had reshaped the local and national political system. The majority of the Massachusetts Democratic Party faithful, including Mayor Kevin White, Congressmen Tip O’Neil, State Senate President Kevin Harrington and future Governor Michael Dukakis, ran as Muskie delegates. The primary loss put them out of contention for seats at the Democratic Convention.<sup>140</sup> Instead the Bay State delegation consisted of many

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<sup>136</sup> Healy, “Blue Collars, suburbs and youth.”

<sup>137</sup> Jonathan Fuerbringer, “McGovern links victory to his ‘New Democrats,’” *Boston Evening Globe*, April 26, 1972.

<sup>138</sup> Davis, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, 164.

<sup>139</sup> Citizens for Participation Politics, CPP Coordinators Bulletin, May 5, 1972, Box 6, Folder VI.14, CPPAX.

<sup>140</sup> Michael Kenney, “White sees two-to-one defeat for party’s big names,” *Boston Globe*. April 26, 1972.

people who, while certainly not household names in Massachusetts political circles, had been long active in suburban liberal organizations. Jerome Grossman, Helen Rees, Ruth Terazghi, John Elder, Alvin Levin, Jean Rubenstein, Jane Trudeau and other members of PAX, CPP and VOW all received seats. Grossman later described the constituency as people who “had been handing out leaflets for years without ever receiving any goodies.”<sup>141</sup> The convention offered these grassroots leaders a long-awaited chance to directly influence electoral politics. For Grossman, the nomination marked one of the highpoints of his activist career and reinforced his faith that working within the system provided the most effective means to both end the war and change the political process. A few months later, Grossman also won a much-coveted position as a Massachusetts representative on the Democratic National Committee. His eight-year tenure in the post offers another clear illustration of the ways in which Bay State liberal activism had come to exert direct influence on national party politics.

The Massachusetts representation at the 1972 Democratic Convention in Miami constituted the most diverse and inclusive delegation the state had every fielded as large numbers of women, minorities and young people replaced Democratic regulars. In addition to prominent liberals like Father Drinan and John Kenneth Galbraith, the 153 delegates included Roxbury activist Doris Bunte, Ellen Jackson, the founder of Operation Exodus, Ruth Batson, the former director of METCO, Patricia Simon, a Newton Gold Star Mother, had become active in antiwar politics who after her son David died, Barbara Ackermann, the progressive Mayor of Cambridge, Roberta Benjamin a Belmont resident and president of the Boston chapter of the National Organization of Women, and

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<sup>141</sup>Grossman, *Relentless Liberal*, 69; Stephen Wermeil, “Mass Pax drinks deep of victory’s wine,” *Boston Globe*, May 22, 1972.

conscientious objector S. Mark Tuller. This diverse Bay State Delegation traveled by plane, train, and Volkswagen bus to Miami in July for what was for most their first encounter with national party politics. The members had met in May to select an unusual slate of officers including Father Drinan as Chairperson, Ruth Batson as Vice-Chair, and as Secretary Ron Deiner, a history PhD candidate at Harvard about to take his general exams. “The best thing about the week in Miami,” one delegate from a suburb west of Boston later enthusiastically asserted, “was being able to do political things day and night without your family around telling you what a stupid way to spend your time.”<sup>142</sup> The comment set the tone for the inexperienced groups’ approach to the entire event.

Democrat officials recognized that the diverse delegation symbolized the new face of the party and placed the Massachusetts group in the front row of the hall. This decision proved a misstep. Despite a conscious effort before the convention to create unity among the delegates, the Bay State contingent broke into a fight on the floor before the gaze of the television cameras.<sup>143</sup> The tension began as some of the most progressive members of the delegation gradually recognized certain components of McGovern’s platform, particularly on busing, abortion, and party reform, was too conciliatory and centrist for their taste. In particular, they opposed McGovern’s statement that he would maintain a small force of soldiers in Thailand pending the release of all prisoners of war. What bothered the most liberal delegates more than the positions themselves was that McGovern and his advisors made the decisions behind closed doors, thus betraying his commitment to “new politics.” “This is supposed to be a grass roots campaign,” Barbara

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<sup>142</sup> Betty Levin, “Area Demo Delegates React to ‘New Politics,’” *Lexington Minute-man Supplement*, July 20, 1972.

<sup>143</sup> The Committee to Elect the McGovern Slate Letter, April 29, 1972, Drinan Papers.

Ackermann decried.<sup>144</sup> An informal discussion among the Bay State delegates about the matter unexpectedly escalated into an unofficial caucus. Leading dissenter Jean Rubenstein of Lexington CPP stated, “If you are going to fill a hall with ‘new politics’ people, you’ve got to deal with the issues that brought them there.”<sup>145</sup> John Elder drafted a statement calling for McGovern to confirm his commitment on troop withdrawal, a \$6500 minimum income, tenants, abortion and gay rights. Elder, Ackerman, Rubenstein, Caroline Rees, Carolyn Stauffer and Alvin Levin all signed and urged others to do the same. The delegation broke into open disagreement. Just before the balloting this contingency threatened revolt and only capitulated after economist and Harvard professor John Kenneth Galbraith counseled that nomination night in the front row of the convention hall was an inappropriate time and place for a fight.<sup>146</sup>

While the dissenting delegates capitulated and continued with the formal balloting, this dispute revealed the clear frustrations some grassroots peace activist experienced with working within the political system, especially within formal party lines. The disagreement also exposed deeper tensions within McGovern supporters and the Democratic Party that would continue to haunt both in the future. Several Massachusetts delegates as well as their supporters at home emerged from the historic convention feeling disillusioned rather than energized. Many participants did emphasize the importance of taking part in the “unique experience” of “men and women, blacks and whites, and all kinds mixed together.” For others, however, frustration with the McGovern campaign trumped this sense of multicultural euphoria. Roberta Benjamin of NOW spent much of the convention engaged in the discussions of the women’s caucus.

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<sup>144</sup> Richard M. Weintraub, “Floor Rift Threatened Bay State Unity,” *Boston Evening Globe*, July 20, 1972.

<sup>145</sup> Levin, “Area Demo Delegates React to ‘New Politics.’”

<sup>146</sup> Weintraub, “Floor Rift Threatened Bay State Unity.”

Upon coming home, she expressed dismay at how the McGovern campaign handled many of the issues particularly surrounding women's rights and stated that it left many of women involved with the sentiment: "We will never again be so powerless." She declared that the McGovern campaign proved it did not want to work to "play new politics with old political styles." Jane Trudeau, a delegate from Lexington, deemed the McGovern organization "really out of touch with the people they're dealing with. Their politics are not my politics."<sup>147</sup> McGovern's campaign in the Bay State and nationally flagged considerably following the convention especially after vice-presidential nominee Thomas Eagleton unceremoniously relinquished the post after the press uncovered his history of psychiatric instability. The controversy lasted for three weeks and constituted, in the words of Bruce Miroff, "the greatest campaign fiasco in modern times" and severely harmed McGovern's campaign and reputation.<sup>148</sup> The event directly benefited President Nixon and bolstered his efforts to discredit both McGovern specifically and liberals generally.

Following the convention, CPP and PAX and their liberal grassroots allies began to focus more of their attention on the upcoming congressional races. This decision stemmed both from a frustration with the centrist shift of the McGovern campaign and a sense that even if he won he would get little done with a conservative-dominated Congress.<sup>149</sup> Most importantly, these suburban activists continued to believe that reshaping the Massachusetts congressional delegation provided an important way to implement their political vision. Another round of redistricting had placed Newton and Brookline in the newly drawn Fourth District and pitted Father Drinan against Martin

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<sup>147</sup> Levin, "Area Demo Delegates React to 'New Politics.'"

<sup>148</sup> Miroff, *Liberals' Moment*, 1, 84-97.

<sup>149</sup> Mass Pax, MASS PAX Coordinators' Bulletin, August 18, 1972, Box 5, Folder V.3, CPPAX.

Linsky, a popular liberal Republican state representative with whom he shared a base. Jerome Grossman and other Drinan supporters actively contributed to the liberal priest's difficult re-election fight. Admiring his work and leadership in the VVAW protest the previous year, many Lexington residents had also gotten involved in John Kerry's attempt to win in the Fifth District that included their town as well as many of more deindustrialized former mill towns nearby. In other parts of the state, residents joined in the campaigns of incumbent Michael Harrington and newcomers Garry Studds and Hubert Jones, the social worker and activist who had encouraged African-American participation in the caucus.

The McGovern campaign experimented with a variety of tactics to recapture the energy of liberal voters.<sup>150</sup> Although they never re-created the excitement of the primary, Bay State suburban liberals did increase their organizational intensity in the final months of the campaign. Affiliates of the McGovern campaign convinced more than 200,000 people to register between August 19 and October 17, 1972, PAX encouraged its members to get involved in the registration effort aware that the new voters would not only help McGovern but also the other "new politics" congressional candidates.<sup>151</sup> The presidential campaign also distributed "street-hawker kits" consisting of McGovern buttons, bumper stickers, t-shirts, and literature as a way to make the campaign more visible and to raise funds. PAX supplemented the project by suggesting that its suburban members devote time "street hawking" on local sidewalks, shopping centers and other

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<sup>150</sup> Montel Yerby, Women's Unit Special Projects Letter, No Date, CPPAX Box 33; Jerome Grossman, "Plan for McGovern Delegates," September 11, 1972 Box 33, CPPAX.

<sup>151</sup> Mass Pax, Mass Pax Coordinators' Bulletin, August 18, 1972, Box 5, Folder 3, CPPAX; CPP, Newsletter, Vol.4, No.4, September, 1972; Mass Pax Coordinators' Bulletin, September 15, 1972, Box 5, Folder V.3, CPPAX.

public places.<sup>152</sup> With the help of convention delegate Helen Rees, the campaign also arranged a day of fundraising activities throughout the suburbs on October 11 that included wine and cheese parties in Wayland, Winchester, Medway and Rockport, flea markets in Groton and New Bedford, a Greek dance in Natick, a bike-a-thon in Worcester, a poker party in Holden and an “in absentia” auction of the Nixon Administration in Lincoln.<sup>153</sup>

The Route 128 suburbs generally, and Lexington in particular, remained a center of McGovern campaign activity. While the campaign headquarters had moved to Boston well before the April primary, the financial and direct mail operations offices remained in Lexington due to the town’s success in the initial fundraising drive. Throughout the fall, volunteers relied upon their social networks in Lexington and the surrounding communities to raise funds using such tactics as phone-banking and potlucks.<sup>154</sup> Bay State suburbanites also enthusiastically responded to the McGovern campaign’s direct-mail solicitations by sending in small donations. The mailings alone yielded between \$20-25 million and McGovern’s list of donors included 600,000 names. Through these combined efforts, fundraising remained the strongest part of the campaign locally and nationally throughout the fall.<sup>155</sup>

Suburban residents did not lessen their activity even when pollsters began to predict that McGovern would easily carry Massachusetts. The McGovern campaign continued to sponsor neighborhood canvassing and identify even more potential voters. During the final week of October hundreds of volunteers in Lexington visited homes to

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<sup>152</sup> Mass Pax Coordinators’ Bulletin, August 18 1972.

<sup>153</sup> “McGovern Fund Day Wednesday,” *Boston Globe*, October 5, 1972.

<sup>154</sup> “\$2500 for McGovern,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, October 19, 1972.

<sup>155</sup> Miroff, *Liberals’ Moment*, 168.

campaign for McGovern and John Kerry, carrying with them position papers from both candidates. In addition, residents helped with phone banking and envelope-licking at the town McGovern headquarters to solicit votes at the local, state and national level.<sup>156</sup> In the final weeks, a few thousand particularly dedicated volunteers left Massachusetts to offer their services to the McGovern outfits in the other parts of the country. In response to this effort, McGovern sent a letter to the hundreds of grassroots volunteers, declaring: “Historians of the future may write whole chapters about the extraordinary part played by people like you in this 1972 Presidential Campaign.”<sup>157</sup>

The campaign in Massachusetts also remained vibrant due to the strength of the state Democratic Party. Following the Miami Convention, McGovern’s staff sought to repair the rift created during the caucus and primary between its supporters and state Democratic regulars. The campaign staged a “unity breakfast” in August and received endorsements and pledges of help from major operators including Ted Kennedy, Tip O’Neil, Charlie Flaherty, and Louise Day Hicks. In the fall, the state party mobilized its own grassroots network of local committees and district supporters in campaign activities such as voter registration, fundraising, and canvassing.<sup>158</sup> Kennedy also mobilized his own popularity and that of his family behind the candidate and did a great deal of last minute campaigning invigorating party loyalists.<sup>159</sup> The national McGovern campaign had focused the majority of its attention in other parts of the country and the combined efforts of party politicians and suburban grassroots volunteers filled the leadership void.

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<sup>156</sup> “McGovern, Kerry Volunteers Canvass Town,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, October 26, 1972.

<sup>157</sup> George McGovern Letter, c. Fall 1972, Box 34, CPPAX.

<sup>158</sup> David Nyhan, “It was a ho-hum presidential campaign in Massachusetts,” *Boston Globe*, November 5, 1972.

<sup>159</sup> “McGovern fund day Wednesday.”

Polls in the weeks leading up to the election placed McGovern with a solid ten-point lead over Nixon, by far his best numbers in the country.<sup>160</sup>

On Election Day, McGovern won the Bay State with a decisive 54.8 percent of the vote. Other than the District of Columbia, however, Massachusetts was the only state President Nixon did not capture. Although most predictions had placed Nixon with a strong lead, few predicted the lopsided results. The fact that it was the first time in American history such an electoral outcome had occurred did not embarrass most Massachusetts residents, but, rather, solidified their sense of the state's exceptionalism. *New York Times* journalist J. Anthony Lukas visited Massachusetts a few weeks after the election and observed that it was "obsessed with its singularity." Residents across the political and socioeconomic spectrum articulated pride in the ways in which the vote set them apart from the rest of the nation. These boosters ranged from John Kenneth Galbraith, who gleefully announced, "Invariably the country has been out of step with Massachusetts," to Boston beer delivery man Marty Kelly, who gruffly surmised, "The other 49 states are all wrong."<sup>161</sup> The *Boston Globe* featured a cartoon of Nixon with gardening shears in one hand and a 49-star flag in the other.<sup>162</sup> *Globe* columnist Fred Pillsbury kidded that the election might help the tourist industry as people would "go to Massachusetts this vacation and look at the liberals."<sup>163</sup> Buttons and bumper stickers reading "Massachusetts—We'd Rather Be Right," "The Lone Star State," "The One and Only," and "Don't Blame Me—I'm from Massachusetts" circulated on lapels and cars

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<sup>160</sup> "McGovern 49%, Nixon 39% in Bay State," *Boston Sunday Globe*, November 5, 1972.

<sup>161</sup> J. Anthony Lukas, "As Massachusetts Went- I'm from Massachusetts Don't Blame Me," *New York Times*, January 14, 1973; Bob Sales, "To Bay Staters; the other 49 are out of step," *Boston Globe*, November 9, 1972.

<sup>162</sup> Lukas, "As Massachusetts Went."

<sup>163</sup> Fred Pillsbury, "Bay State now Political Island," *Boston Globe*, November 9, 1972.

across the Commonwealth, further inscribing this sense of distinctiveness into the public consciousness. These articulations of Massachusetts singularity also laid the foundation for the embrace of the “blue state” mystique that came into vogue at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The progressive enlightenment of the Massachusetts electorate, however, did not fully explain the results and, in fact, obscured other equally important factors. Many observers quickly dismissed the Massachusetts’s aberrant vote as the product of the state’s more than 300,000 college-aged residents. It was true that the youth in Massachusetts did vote in large numbers, but a sizable percentage of these students voted absentee in other states. Moreover, the 95,000 young people who voted in state clearly did not by themselves explain the 220,000-vote margin in favor of McGovern. Still, the students who sported McGovern buttons to class throughout the fall may have had an indirect effect on the overall tally. “They created a presence for McGovern that simply didn’t exist in most states,” Michael Dukakis observed of the college students. “You looked around and you really felt McGovern was going to win.”<sup>164</sup> Other causes, however, provided more important lessons about the local and national political landscape.

A closer examination of the election results reveals the limits to Nixon’s supposed white ethnic strategy in the Bay State and perhaps nationally. Just as in the primary, blue-collar voters favored McGovern due to a combination of party loyalty and frustration about the war and economy. All twenty-two wards in Boston, including the white ethnic strongholds in South Boston and the North End, voted for McGovern. Representing the attitudes of many of his working class white ethnic counterparts, William Ellis, a Mission

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<sup>164</sup> Lukas, “As Massachusetts Went.”

Hill laborer, declared, “I’ve been a Democrat all my life...why should I change now?” Voicing clear dislike of the Nixon administration as a reason for his support of McGovern, Sam Del Bene of the largely Italian North End simply stated, “I don’t like Tricky Dick.”<sup>165</sup> This constituency, moreover, found appealing McGovern’s populist message of change and promise to end the war. Placing the blue collar vote in the Bay State in exceptionalist overtones, state Democratic Chairman Charles Flaherty posited, “People are much more aware” in the Bay State and “look beyond the headlines and the TV. They went beyond the two men to the issues.”<sup>166</sup> The fact that the Nixon campaign all but abandoned Massachusetts during his first term and the election clearly compounded this commitment to the Democratic Party and anger at the president’s leadership. Neither Nixon nor Spiro Agnew campaigned in Massachusetts because they recognized it was McGovern’s strongest state, where they had lost it by a 2-1 margin in 1968.<sup>167</sup> Republican officeholders did little to pick up the slack. Moderate Republicans Governor Francis Sargent and Senator Edward Brooke showed little public enthusiasm for Nixon, which may have contributed to the lukewarm Republican turnout.

The strength of the suburban liberal activist infrastructure provided the most convincing explanation for McGovern’s success in the Bay State. For these groups the elections results evidenced the culmination of a decade-long struggle to create political change. The so-called “dean” of the “Massachusetts Movement,” Jerome Grossman, declared the peace movement’s “10-year crusade” represented the single most important

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<sup>165</sup> Sales, “To Bay Staters; the other 49 are out of step.”

<sup>166</sup>David Nyhan, “Bay State a lonely outpost of Camelot in Nixon sweep,” *Boston Globe*, November 9, 1972.

<sup>167</sup>Lukas, “As Massachusetts Went.”

factor in McGovern's victory.<sup>168</sup> The movement's electoral and educational campaigns, from the McCarthy and Drinan campaigns to the Moratorium, had prepared local residents for McGovern's antiwar message. The canvassing and fundraising in both the primary and the general election built upon these earlier efforts and had helped make McGovern a well-known and well-liked candidate. In both the primary and general elections, McGovern received his strongest support in the Boston suburbs, especially liberal strongholds like Newton, Lexington and Brookline as well as more moderate communities. Examining the importance of the antiwar suburban activists in the election results, Lukas observed that the Massachusetts peace movement was not the largest in the country but that its impact went far beyond membership numbers because it constituted the "strongest, most effective, such force of anywhere in the United States." Grossman explained to Lukas that in the 1950s Massachusetts was the most "hawkish state in the nation," but "we helped change all that. We made peace the single-most important issue here and we made the politicians take us seriously. Nobody's frigging around with us anymore."<sup>169</sup> Although undoubtedly self-serving, Grossman's comment confirms that the 1972 vote symbolized the success not failure of the suburban-centered peace movement's vision.

The state legislature and congressional races provide even clearer testimony of the success of the suburban-based grassroots strategy. Candidates Barney Frank and Lois Pines enhanced the liberal reputation of the Massachusetts legislature when they won their respective races for state representative. CPP and PAX-backed candidates Drinan and Harrington as well as newcomers Garry Studds and Joseph Moakley, all captured

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<sup>168</sup> Lukas, "As Massachusetts Went."

<sup>169</sup> Lukas, "As Massachusetts Went."

seats in the Congress. Although John Kerry lost his race in the heavily industrialized and working-class Fifth District, he did win overwhelmingly in Lexington. At least one observer, nevertheless, believed that the loss was less because of his stance on peace and more because blue-collar residents distrusted his “slick, preppy style.”<sup>170</sup> These results actually put Massachusetts more in step with the voting patterns of the rest of the country. Unlike other presidential landslides, a sweep of the U.S. Congress did not coincide with Nixon’s win. Democrats retained strong majorities in both chambers of Congress and actually gained seats in the Senate, which showed the persistent strength of liberals not just in the Bay State but in other parts of the country, too.

Writing in the aftermath of the 1972 election, national political strategist Lanny Davis argued in *Emerging Democratic Majority* that the results in the Bay State represented not a sign of the Party’s failure but actually a blueprint for subsequent action. He confidently declared, “Massachusetts is a prototype of the new coalition of blue-collar, blacks and New Politics activists of which the Democratic Party is capable across the nation.”<sup>171</sup> Davis effectively outlined the eventual composition of the Democratic Party both in the Bay State and the nation in the years following the 1972 election.

## **Conclusion**

The 1972 election marked the zenith of the suburban peace movement in Massachusetts, but by no means the start of a decline of the political activism of its participants. Immediately following the November vote, CPP and PAX decided to merge into a single organization. Recognizing the similarities in their respective activities, they

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<sup>170</sup> Lukas, “As Massachusetts Went.”

<sup>171</sup> Davis, *Emerging Democratic Majority*, 224.

decided that joining together would strengthen the “new politics” mission by reducing overlap in projects, money, and volunteers.<sup>172</sup> Reflecting their shared commitment to the ideals of “new politics,” the groups selected as the name for the new joint organization Citizens for Participation in Political Action or CPPAX.<sup>173</sup> Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, CPPAX stood at the forefront of central state issues and policy controversies, including public transportation, alternative energy, the busing crisis, women’s rights, welfare, and taxes. The group also continued to concentrate heavily on the issues of peace and nuclear arms even after the eventual winding down of the Vietnam War.<sup>174</sup> As CPPAX adopted a wider mandate, many of the individual members began to take on a narrower focus. Some activists returned to the issue of anti-nuclear power that had led them to peace politics in the first place but which the attention to the Vietnam War had eclipsed. Many members took leading roles in opposition to the use of nuclear energy and weapons, becoming involved in the Clamshell Alliance and the Nuclear Freeze, thereby placing both Massachusetts and its national representatives at the forefront of the “No Nukes” campaigns.<sup>175</sup>

The suburban peace movement had its largest and most lasting impact on state and national electoral politics. The activities of CPPAX and other grassroots liberal organizations helped ensure that the Massachusetts congressional delegation remained the most liberal in the nation. In addition to Father Drinan, who served in the House until 1980, CPPAX and its collaborators played a central role in the election of

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<sup>172</sup> Mass PAX, Mass PAX Coordinators Bulletin September 15, 1972, Box 5, Folder 3, CPPAX.

<sup>173</sup>Memorandum from Richard Cauchi to Active CPP Local Groups, Re: CPP-PAX merger, December 11, 1972, Box 7, CPPAX.

<sup>174</sup> CPPAX, CPPAX: Action Gets Results, c. 1979, Box 4, Folder 53, Papers of Ethel Alper, Special Collections, Healey Library, University of Massachusetts-Boston.

<sup>175</sup> For much more on the role of the anti-nuclear movements in Massachusetts see Robert E. Surbrug, Jr. “Thinking Globally’: Political Movements on the Left in Massachusetts” (PhD Dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2003).

Representatives Barney Frank, Edward Markey, Martin Meehan and Senators Ted Kennedy, Paul Tsongas, and John Kerry. These liberal politicians led the Democratic Party to reject its Cold War anti-communists roots and supported and sponsored legislation that promoted the suburban liberal peace agenda of opposition to excessive military weapons buildups and overseas interventions, as well as support of multilateral solutions. In the span of a few decades, the Hughes campaigners who began as outliers within the Democratic Party through their unflagging commitment to working within the system came to shape and animate its center. Political writer E.J. Dionne contended in his seminal 1991 work *Why Americans Hate Politics* that the “radicals” of the Hughes campaign now comprise “the Massachusetts mainstream and help define liberalism” both in the Bay State and the nation.<sup>176</sup>

Through its relentless political efforts, these middle-class liberal activists have helped make the Democratic Party more attuned to suburban-centered issues, agendas and voters. Since the 1970s, the Democratic Party has become more progressive on issues such as racial, gender and sexual equality, more environmentally minded and more internationalist in the arena of foreign policy. Likewise, Jerome Grossman and his longtime collaborators came to take central leadership positions in the state and national Democratic Party structure. Yet, this transformation had both progressive and problematic implications. The suburban-centered tactics of these activists forged a new political base for liberal political candidates, yet one comprised primarily of white middle-class people with priorities that have increasingly excluded lower-income voters and racial minorities from its frame of focus. Moreover, the poll returns in the 1972 election and other key votes have emboldened Massachusetts residents’ exceptionalist

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<sup>176</sup> Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, 48, 123.

view of both suburban liberal identity and the state's political landscape. As the subsequent chapters reveal, both suburban liberalism and Massachusetts politics since the McGovern campaign have become far more complicated, contradictory and moderate than the electoral map of 1972 would have predicted.

## **Chapter 7: Liberalism Stops At Your Driveway**

### **Introduction**

“I have always thought of my community to be the bastion of suburban liberalism,” lamented a Newton resident in 1970, “However the recent controversy over the Newton Community Development Foundation have shown my assumptions to be mistaken.”<sup>1</sup> The commentator, Frederick Andelman, was referring to the vicious battle that engulfed the largely white, upper middle-class, and purportedly progressive suburb. The clash occurred after a local interfaith organization called the Newton Community Development Foundation attempted to build a scattered development of 500 units spread across ten sites around the city. During the 1960s, Newton had garnered a national reputation for its progressiveness. *Newsweek* deemed the town a “seedbed for liberal causes, from vigorous antiwar activity to exuberant civil rights activity.”<sup>2</sup> The community also served as a key force in the campaigns of such liberal politicians as Eugene McCarthy, Father Robert Drinan and later George McGovern. Reacting to the suburb’s identity of liberal distinctiveness, the chairman of the affordable housing initiative had confidently declared, “If Newton can’t do it, who on earth can?” The answer to this exceptionalist question soon became clear as the efforts to build the mixed-income project developed into a protracted nine-year controversy. The ensuing battle would sharply divide the community and test the boundaries of suburban liberalism. As

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Andelman to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, May 14, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> “Liberalism in the Suburbs,” *Newsweek* (July 6, 1970).

one local resident aptly characterized the situation: “I guess it’s true that liberalism stops at your own driveway.”<sup>3</sup>

In the late 1960s, many experts, politicians, and activists across the nation joined the concerned residents of Newton in recognizing that the suburbs represented the next frontier in the ongoing struggle to create racial equality. After the legislative victories of the mainstream Civil Rights Movement in 1964 and 1965, a series of riots, combined with the nation’s increasing suburban demographic shift toward the suburbs, prompted many observers to view residential segregation as the root cause of the related problems of urban poverty and school segregation. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders’ Kerner Report in 1968 sounded an urgent call for the nation to overcome the patterns of racial and spatial inequality and sparked a three-pronged assault at the federal, state, and local levels, which sought to challenge the structures of suburban exclusionary zoning through mixed income housing initiatives. By the beginning of the 1970s, several observers dubbed this “battle over the suburbs” as “the major domestic social and political battle of the decade ahead.”<sup>4</sup> The attempts to build mixed-income housing triggered massive grassroots opposition among white middle-class residents in subdivisions throughout the nation.<sup>5</sup> By the end of the decade few, however, initiatives succeeded and the “battle” quickly faded from the national spotlight.

The Boston suburbs stood on the front lines of this national “battle.”

Massachusetts had enhanced its liberal image in 1969 when its legislature passed Chapter 774, or “the Anti-Snob Zoning Act.” The statute distinguished Massachusetts as the first

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<sup>3</sup> “Liberalism in the Suburbs.”

<sup>4</sup> Charles M. Haar and Demetrius S. Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia: Public Policy at the Grass Roots* (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1974), 1. “The Battle Over the Suburbs,” *Newsweek*, (November 15, 1971).

<sup>5</sup> “The Battle Over the Suburbs.”

state to try to curb the exclusionary zoning practices of suburban municipalities. By and large, however, the efforts to challenge the structures of racial and spatial segregation in the Bay State still failed. The controversies that erupted in the traditionally liberal strongholds of Newton, Concord, and Lexington provide a means to explore the multifaceted factors that contributed to this difficulty. By interweaving the stories of Concord, Lexington, and Newton, this chapter challenges several assumptions about the reaction to affordable housing in the suburbs and offers new insights into the dialectic relationship between government policy and grassroots activism, the potential and the constraints of state laws regulating both racial discrimination and land use, the tensions and divisions within suburban political culture, and the possibilities and limits of liberalism.

Most accounts of the battles to challenge the structures of suburban exclusion have overlooked the controversies that erupted in liberal communities. Instead, scholars have focused on the federal government, in particular Housing and Urban Development Secretary George Romney's failed attempt to overcome these patterns of racial and spatial inequality in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>6</sup> This chapter reveals that initiatives to construct units in the suburbs emerged not simply from a top-down federal government mandate but also came from bottom-up mobilization by local liberal citizens constructing what Charles M. Haar and Charles M. Iatridis have termed "public policy at the

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<sup>6</sup> The works of social scientists Christopher Bonastia and Charles Lamb provide important insight into the concerted efforts of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and its secretary George Romney efforts to open up the suburbs. These studies focus on the ways in which Richard Nixon effectively squandered this moment of opportunity by promoting a fierce opposition to government-imposed integration. See, Christopher Bonastia, *Knocking on the Door: The Federal Government's Attempt to Desegregate the Suburbs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Charles M. Lamb, *Housing Segregation in Suburban America Since 1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For two books that have gone beyond the purview of the federal government, see Danielson, *The Politics of Exclusion*; David L. Kirp, John P. Sawyer and Larry Rosenthal, *Our Town: Race, Housing and the Soul of Suburbia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

grassroots.”<sup>7</sup> As an outgrowth of metropolitan Boston’s fair housing movement, residents in several Route 128 suburbs took the calls of the Kerner Commission seriously and their actions reveal the vibrant grassroots suburban liberal activism present well into the late 1960s and early 1970s. These residents played an important role in lobbying for the passage and enforcement of the Anti-Snob Zoning Act. They also led action to construct affordable housing within their communities, developing plans and strategies rooted in a middle-class individualist sensibility and suburban-centered aesthetic.

The grassroots affordable housing advocates, however, confronted another collection of locally based activists who relied on both the delay mechanisms of the Anti-Snob Zoning Act and anti-growth and open space clauses of new environmental laws to permanently thwart or significantly downscale the projects. This form of opposition and activism had its roots in the suburban environmental movement discussed in Chapter 5. In the decades after World War II, this initiative arose in many of the area’s most affluent suburbs, including Concord and Lexington. The movement’s leaders aimed to preserve open space and to combat sprawl and its consequences, especially in their own communities. Suburban environmentalists, like the affordable housing advocates, also worked directly through the channels of state government. This effort contributed directly to the passage of many new pieces of environmental protection legislation, such as the innovative Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act, which gave municipal conservation commissions far greater control over local planning decisions. In the early 1970s, a study sponsored by the national Council on Environmental Quality cited the Anti-Snob Zoning Act as one example of the type of innovative state law that had produced a “Quiet Revolution in Land Use Control.” By enhancing state oversight of land use patterns, the

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<sup>7</sup> Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 11-17.

report boldly argued, the Act had contributed to silent overthrow of the “*ancien regime*.”<sup>8</sup> As another facet of this quiet overthrow the authors touted the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act.

The battles to build low-income housing in Newton, Lexington and particularly Concord, however, reveals the limits to the glorious environmental revolution as the conflict placed the purposes and stipulations of the Anti-Snob Zoning and Wetland Protection Acts into direct competition. These controversies demonstrate that the new state laws did not unify, but rather severed, the links and commonalities between the civil rights and environmental drives to challenge suburban land use patterns. More broadly, the battles pitted two important liberal issues and constituencies directly against each other. On the surface, these fights over affordable housing seemingly exposed both the contradictory NIMBY worldview and practices within the nation’s most liberal suburbs and the ways in which residents used environmentalism to advance an exclusionary political agenda. This conventional interpretation, however, falls short in two important ways. First, it dismisses the genuine commitment of many suburban residents to the causes of open space and environmental protection. Second, this explanation erases the contributions of the liberal activists in these communities, who were, in fact, deeply committed to reducing metropolitan segregation.

These battles offer new perspective on the limits of suburban liberalism to challenge structural segregation. The individualist and localist strategies that grassroots liberals adopted to achieve their vision of equity were undoubtedly successful in campaigns of progressive candidates like George McGovern and policies such as the

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<sup>8</sup> Fred P. Bosselman and David L. Callies *The Quiet Revolution in Land Use Control* (Washington, DC: United States Council on Environmental Quality, 1971).

Racial Imbalance Act and the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO). This form of activism proved unable to challenge suburban political culture's dominant sensibility of market-based individualism and racial and class exclusivity. These battles, therefore, also reveal the strain of property values conservatism that existed even in supposed bastions of liberalism such as Newton, Concord, and Lexington. Despite the fact that many white middle-class residents in these communities supported candidates, laws, and policies that embodied abstract liberal ideals, many such residents simultaneously demonstrated a patent unwillingness to take more tangible steps toward accepting responsibility for the problems and solutions of spatial segregation. By the mid-1970s, such retrenchment led grassroots affordable housing advocates to either significantly scale back or discard altogether plans for mixed-income developments in their communities. The eventual abandonment of this campaign did not just ensure non-diverse housing stock outside the city, but also solidified class exclusivity as a natural feature of both the suburban landscape and grassroots liberalism.

### **Kerner Report at the Grassroots**

The release of the Kerner Report by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in the late winter of 1968 markedly changed the national dialogue concerning racial and spatial segregation. The commission, appointed in the aftermath of the Detroit and Newark riots, famously warned, "We are rapidly becoming two societies, one black, and the other white, separate and unequal." The Report outlined the roots of this racial segregation, urging white Americans to take responsibility for their role in creating and maintaining these patterns of structural inequality. The text ominously cautioned: "To

continue with our present policies is to make permanent the division in our country into two societies: one largely Negro and poor, located in central cities; the other, predominately white and affluent located in the suburbs.”<sup>9</sup> The majority of Americans and their elected officials would willfully ignore such powerful warnings.<sup>10</sup> The report, nevertheless, sparked an immediate discussion of the need to challenge these patterns of racial and spatial segregation by increasing the housing opportunities for people of color and the poor outside of central cities. While the more famous 1968 Fair Housing Act did not address explicitly these findings, the Housing and Urban Development Act passed that same year called on the federal government to increase and diversify housing opportunities in the suburbs.<sup>11</sup> When George Romney assumed the position as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in 1969, he built upon these developments and made reducing the barriers of suburban exclusion a top priority.

The Kerner Report’s clarion call motivated grassroots activists affiliated with the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights. By the late 1960s, the suburban civil rights network had lost the energy and cohesive membership that had defined its work on fair housing and school desegregation.<sup>12</sup> Shifts of the focus and philosophy within the national and civil rights movement, coupled with the growing

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<sup>9</sup> United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: New York Times, Co., 1968), 2.

<sup>10</sup> For a longer discussion of the willful repudiation of the Kerner Report by many white middle-class Americans and politicians especially Richard Nixon see Lassiter, *Silent Majority*.

<sup>11</sup> The President’s Task Force of Suburban Problems had asserted any federal programs that contributed to making “the suburbs separated, pockets of privilege...encourage and perpetuate injustice and discrimination.” United States President’s Commission on Urban Housing, *A Decent Home* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), quoted in Daniels, the *Politics of Exclusion*, 80. The legislation’s Section 236 program offered mortgage payment subsidies to non-profit and limited dividend developers with the twin goals of helping moderate income families who had previously fallen outside the federal government’s public housing programs and expanding the stock of affordable housing in suburban communities.

<sup>12</sup> The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights noted that by the mid-1960s “many of these groups lost much of their cohesion and largely dissolved.” See U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, 57.

interest of suburban liberals in environmental and antiwar activism, contributed to this period of decline. The president of the Lexington Civil Rights Committee anxiously observed in the fall of 1967, “White middle class (predominately liberal) suburbia has begun to think of itself as somewhat superfluous to the current struggle.”<sup>13</sup> The release of the Kerner Report, compounded by the assassination of Martin Luther King in the spring of 1968, re-energized suburban concern with the plight of African-Americans in Boston.<sup>14</sup> The Federation immediately urged its local chapters to initiate “aggressive programs” to implement the recommendations of the Kerner Report.<sup>15</sup>

In response to these demands for action, residents in several communities along Route 128 reignited a discussion of how they could help alleviate the problems of spatial and racial discrimination. Concerned citizens in Brookline, Newton, Lexington, Concord, Lincoln and elsewhere sponsored town-wide study groups or forums that one local reporter deemed an articulation of the “Kerner Report at the Grass Roots.”<sup>16</sup> In Concord, residents staged a neighborhood coffee series called “Opportunity for Action.”<sup>17</sup> Brookline went further, creating an official Committee on Urban Responsibility and Lexington soon followed that model, establishing a Committee on Suburban Responsibility to examine “what bearing our community has on the ability of the metropolitan area as whole to meet the needs of the impoverished and minority-group

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<sup>13</sup> Irving Kenneth Zola, “Will Anyone Listen,” *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, November 23, 1967.

<sup>14</sup> U.S Commission on Civil Rights *Route 128*, 56-57.

<sup>15</sup> Citizens Housing and Planning Association, “Federation Instructs Suburban Chapters,” CHPA Letter Vol. 2 No.3, Box 16. Folder 9. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Planning Office Records AC 205, Institute Archives and Special Collections, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (hereafter: “MIT”).

<sup>16</sup> Carolyn Kaplan, “Kerner Report at Grass Roots,” *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, May 23, 1968; Carolyn Kaplan, “Town-Wide Task Force Urged for ‘Action Now,’” *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, May 30, 1968; “Newton to Examine Suburban Challenge,” *Newton Graphic*, May 29, 1968; “WLPF Actively Works for Understanding of the Ghettos,” *Concord Journal*, March 28, 1968.

<sup>17</sup> “Heat from the Audience But None from the Furnace,” *Concord Journal*, February 4, 1971.

citizens who are largely concentrated in the central city.”<sup>18</sup> The discussion of these various grassroots initiatives quickly honed in on the question of low and moderate housing. Leading the way, Newton residents aimed to put these ideas directly into practice.

### **“No Ordinary Suburb”**

Newton stood at the vanguard of the suburban grassroots effort to build affordable housing in Massachusetts. The city had long taken prided in its image as a citadel of liberalism, even embracing the marketing slogan: “No Ordinary Suburb.”<sup>19</sup> Although 98 percent white, the 90,000 person population was more ethnically and religiously heterogeneous than most Boston suburbs.<sup>20</sup> Its patchwork geography of fourteen villages made it an ideal site to absorb low and moderate-income residents. Despite its social and physical heterogeneity, the vast majority of Newton’s housing stock contained expensive single-family homes and most of its population was in the highest income brackets. Like most suburbs, Newton relied heavily on property taxes for its annual expenditures and that rate had increased rapidly between 1967 and 1970, making it significantly higher than any of its neighboring communities.<sup>21</sup> In the postwar period, Newton, like many Route 128 suburbs, had enacted stringent zoning controls that emphasized sizable lots and limited the amount of multi-family units in the city. Although these policies did enable Newton to preserve its prewar reputation as the “Garden City,” they led to a rapid

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<sup>18</sup> “Group Proposes Formation of Responsibility Comm.” *Lexington Minute-Man*, June 13, 1968; “Responsibility Committee to Begin Work by July 1,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, June 20, 1968.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Haar and Demetrius Iatridis observed, “Of all Boston suburban communities, Newton best embodies the progressive tradition of America.” Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> See Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 28-31.

<sup>21</sup> Newton increased its tax rate, per \$1,000 of assessed value from \$76.20 in 1967 to \$113.000 in 1970 and \$139.60 in 1972. Newton had a rate almost three times higher than Concord, Stoughton, Canton according to Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 25.

decrease in the number of lower and even middle-income families living in the community.<sup>22</sup>

The tumultuous events in the spring of 1968 impelled many Newton residents to make the expansion of low-income housing a top priority. In early June, several religious and civic groups sponsored a conference “to define ‘accurately’ and ‘clearly’ the role of the suburb in regard to urban ills in America,” which broached the topic of mixed-income housing.<sup>23</sup> Responding to this conference, twenty-two local ministers, priests and rabbis decided to establish a foundation with the mission of increasing the number of moderate and low-income families in Newton. Calling itself the Newton Community Development Foundation (NCDF), the non-profit and grassroots-centered organization would serve as developer of a federally funded scattered-site development of five hundred apartment units spread throughout ten of the city’s villages.<sup>24</sup> The interfaith group elected a board of directors comprised of businessmen, lawyers, architects, and other white-collar workers with experience in local politics who sought to apply their professional expertise toward the cause. Robert Casselman, a former MIT faculty member with experience in state and local government, agreed to act as chairman of the board. In the summer of 1969, the group opened an office and hired attorney and Newton native Marc Slotnick as its executive director.

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<sup>22</sup> Fearing that the loss of this demographic would negatively alter the character of the suburb, the alderman had established special subcommittee in 1967 to examine the problem. This committees recommended that the town construct 200 units “in small numbers of scattered sites to preclude the creation of low income ghettos” and to align with village-based geography of Newton.

Newton Planning Department, Low-Moderate Income Housing Study An Element of the Comprehensive Plan, Newton, Massachusetts, September 1968, Newton Collection, Newton Public Library, Newton, MA (hereafter “NC”).

<sup>23</sup> “Newton to Examine Suburban Challenge,” *Newton Graphic*, May 29, 1968.

<sup>24</sup> “Churchmen Create Newton Foundation,” *Newton Graphic*, July 11, 1968.

The NCDF plan for scattered site housing embodied the suburban liberal belief in individualist remedies to structural problems. Explaining the short and long terms goals of the organization, Robert Casselman stressed in an interview that that plan was not intended as the sole solution to metropolitan Boston's housing or urban crisis. "508 new units can't even solve Newton problems," he conceded, but "if Newton can pull it off, then 20 other suburbs can do it too. That's 10,000 units. And that begins to cut into the metropolitan problem, which the suburbs have to help solve."<sup>25</sup> The fundraising and publicity efforts of the organization illustrate the grassroots and localized dimension of the endeavor. The NCDF appeals frequently emphasized the exceptionalist identity of the community and even borrowed the slogan "Newton...No Ordinary Suburb" for the title of informational brochures. The NCDF simultaneously stressed the metropolitan and national importance of the initiative. The group's members never failed to mention that the NCDF represented the first suburban organization in the nation to undertake a comprehensive low-density scattered-site project. They often noted that communities in Boston and around the country would watch the project closely and suggested that this "model suburban solution" marked "the beginning of a trend toward finding solutions to the nation's housing crisis."<sup>26</sup> This exceptionalist pitch worked. By the spring of 1970, the NCDF received endorsements and donations from more than 600 families and 30 religious, civic, and business groups in Newton.<sup>27</sup>

The actual blueprints for the project further underscore the localized and suburban centric underpinnings of NCDF's vision. The low-density and scattered site approach was

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<sup>25</sup> Winthrop P. Baker, Jim Lightfoot, "Action on the Suburban Housing Front," WBZ TV and Radio, April 17, 1970, Box 4, Folder 3, PMR.

<sup>26</sup> Newton Community Development Foundation, "Housing for families of moderate and low income in Newton," 1969, Box 4, Folder 3, PMR.

<sup>27</sup> "Major Housing Plan Filed Here," *Newton Graphic*, April 16, 1970.

a conscious departure from the modernist public housing structures erected in Boston and other urban centers immediately following World War II. Instead, the designs aligned with a specifically suburban aesthetic. The two-story wood-frames houses of the NCDF plan sought to blend into the existing built and natural topography of Newton. The plan included many trees and every site had over 40 percent of the land reserved for open space in order to complement the suburb's reputation as the Garden City. Demonstrating its commitment to a nuclear family ideal, the design contained large playgrounds and community rooms ideal for residents to host Boy Scout troop meetings and organize daycare centers. The NCDF presented the potential inhabitants in explicitly non-threatening and race-neutral terms. It emphasized that increasing the low-income housing options would enable Newton to maintain a "cross section of population" who provided a sense of "vitality" to the community.<sup>28</sup> Building upon this paean to diversity, the organization painted a sympathetic and racially and gender-conservative portrait of the people in need of moderate-income housing. The NCDF aimed to recruit young Newton natives who could not afford to bring their own children up in the town, city employees who provided mail and sanitation services, and local senior citizens looking to downsize. The units ranged in size from one to four bedrooms as a means to ensure a mixture of young families and single elderly residents. An aside about wanting to recruit some METCO families represented the singular racially-coded reference in the proposal. Throughout its visual appeals, the NCDF chose pictures and drawing of white children

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<sup>28</sup> Newton Community Development Foundation, "Housing for families of moderate and low income in Newton."

swimming or playing, reflecting its effort to erase the racialized stigma affixed to the concept of low-income housing.<sup>29</sup>

The locally-based organization expected concerns that these active youngsters would overcrowd the city's education system and thus used apartment size and bedroom numbers as a means to limit the of children at each site and corresponding schools.<sup>30</sup> The NCDF planned to set the rent for the units at 25 percent of a family's income, which it predicted would range from \$120 to \$170 per month, thus keeping the potential inhabitants well above the state poverty line.<sup>31</sup> Anticipating fears about school overcrowding and its financial side effects, the NCDF devised a strategy that departed from their suburban civil rights forbearers. Suburban fair housing advocates in the early 1960s had frequently invoked imagery of the heteronormative nuclear family to emphasize the middle-class and respectable dimensions of the potential residents. These allusions show that moderate-income housing advocates recognized that in the context of their project, the idea of "family" raised associations to the discourse of black single mothers that had emerged in the popular consciousness in the mid-1960s.<sup>32</sup> NCDF advocates increasingly described the potential inhabitants as "young marrieds" and "couples" as an implicit assurance that these beneficiaries would not overburden the school system or tax rate of Newton.

Despite the NCDF's efforts to diffuse anxiety, the release of their plan in the spring of 1970 ignited fierce and vigorous resistance throughout the community.

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<sup>29</sup> Newton Community Development Foundation, "Newton...No Ordinary Suburb."

<sup>30</sup> FHA regulations stated that no more than two children could operate one bedroom and that children of the opposite sex had to have separate rooms.

<sup>31</sup> Newton Community Development Foundation, "Housing for families of moderate and low income in Newton."

<sup>32</sup> For more about the discourse surrounding welfare mothers see for example Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White*.

Opposition erupted first and most intensely in the Oak Hill section, a squarely middle-class postwar development. Oak Hill residents immediately circulated petitions against any rezoning of the neighborhood from single-family subdivisions to multi-unit dwellings. Robert Stiller organized and led this grassroots resistance. Stiller, who had moved from the working-class Boston neighborhood of Mattapan, saw the detached-home-filled Garden City as a refuge and sought to protect the community from the encroachment of apartments and the influx of “urban ghetto blacks” that he contended would inevitably populate them. He explicitly disagreed with the notion that the suburbs should create housing opportunities for urban African-Americans, arguing that “Newton owes nothing more to the city of Boston” and “people should have the freedom to choose their neighbor.”<sup>33</sup> Stiller recruited residents from other neighborhoods throughout the city to form the Newton Land Use and Civic Association (NLUCA). The seemingly innocuously named group quickly began holding meetings, canvassing neighbors, and printing pamphlets in order to build support for their oppositional cause, directly mirroring the strategies of the NCDF.

Just as the effectiveness of the NCDF built on its homegrown familiarity with the dynamics of Newton’s political culture, so, too, did the NLUCA use its grassroots perspective to aggravate resistance to the plan. In its first pamphlet, the group crafted a discourse of fiscal anxieties and suburban victimization that would define their campaign. The flier “Have You Heard What’s Happening in Newton?” focused primarily on mixed-income housing’s threat to the community’s most sacred issues: the rising tax rate and the

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<sup>33</sup> Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 78.

quality of its schools.<sup>34</sup> NLUCA contended that the scatter site proposal would “overload” and hamper “Newton’s ability to maintain its excellent school system,” by potentially upsetting the favorable 25-to-1 student-teacher ratio. Furthermore, NLUCA estimated that the new residents would require an additional annual outlay of \$1 million for educational and other city services such as trash collection, snow plowing, and fire and police protection. For emphasis, NLUCA borrowed the campaign rhetoric of Richard Nixon charging, “The ‘silent majority’ of Newton must speak up. This may be our last chance to save the ‘Garden City.’”<sup>35</sup>

In May 1970, seven hundred residents representing every village signed a petition that gave six reasons why they supported the NCDF. The next week NLUCA countered this effort by announcing that it had gathered more than nine thousand signatures for a statement opposing the development.<sup>36</sup> Newton residents on both sides flooded the local weekly newspaper with a profusion of passionately worded letters, revealing the wide range of potentially divisive issues encompassed by the controversy. As support and opposition broadened beyond NCDF and NLUCA to include the entire city, the proposed projects pitted the community’s two booster slogans, “No Ordinary Suburb” and “The Garden City,” into direct conflict. In addition to exposing larger schisms within the political, social and racial attitudes of Newton citizens, the issue of low-income housing also illuminated the broad spectrum of definitions of suburban responsibility that existed within the community.

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<sup>34</sup> Newton Land Use and Civic Association, “Have you heard what’s happening in Newton???” c. 1970, Box 4, Folder 11, PMR.

<sup>35</sup> Newton Land Use and Civic Association, “Have you heard what’s happening in Newton???”

<sup>36</sup> “Newton Citizens Give Six Reasons Why They Support The Newton Community Development Foundation,” *Newton Graphic*, May 21, 1970; “Civic Group Obtains 9000 Signatures Opposing NCDF,” *Newton Graphic*, May 28, 1970.

Many of the self-identified members of Newton's "Silent Majority" extended and refined NLUCA's discourse of suburban victimization, articulating a form of homeowner populism rooted in a set of class privilege and race-based entitlements.<sup>37</sup> A group of abutters to the Walnut Street site claimed the NCDF project created "unfairness to homeowners in this neighborhood" who "invested their money and bought their homes in a single residence area feeling that they could depend on the well-established and strictly maintained zoning laws of the City of Newton."<sup>38</sup> Other residents shared this sense of outrage that the plan might challenge the sacred status of the community's zoning policies, claiming, "These laws are the only shield a home buyer has to protect the value of his property" and that they had served as the main factor that led them to purchase a home in "The Garden City."<sup>39</sup> Several white Newtonites, like Robert Stiller, couched their opposition in the individualist mythology of their own upward mobility.<sup>40</sup> Sydney Brunell of Oak Park warned that public housing "could turn into malignant tumors that destroy the neighborhoods," using his own childhood in Boston as the source of his expertise and basis of his feeling of reverse discrimination. "It is a sad commentary on the religious, civic and political leaders of Newton," Brunell asserted, "when the welfare and interests of the industrious people who contribute so heavily to make the community what it is, are totally ignored."<sup>41</sup>

Some citizens adopted a discourse of middle-class resentment that combined this sense of victimization with a frustration about Newton's liberal political culture. Invoking

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<sup>37</sup> For on this discourse of middle class privilege see Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 148-174.

<sup>38</sup> "Open Letter from One Area Presents Housing Argument," *Newton Graphic*, April 30, 1970.

<sup>39</sup> Mr. & Mrs. Jason Tonkongy to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, May 21, 1970.

<sup>40</sup> For more on the uses of these individualist narratives see Lassiter, *Silent Majority* and Kirp, Dwyer and Rosenthal, *Our Town*, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Sidney Brunell to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, May 7, 1970.

the social and economic cognitive geography of metropolitan Boston, one anonymous resident asked in reference to the suburb's tony neighbors, "Do you see Weston and Wellesley getting involved in anything like this? They are keeping their skirts clean."<sup>42</sup> Other letter writers directed their class-based ire toward "snobbish" and "uppity" NCDF supporters, asserting that the "Silent Majority of Newton should rise and voice their protest before the city is given away by well-intentioned, but misdirected liberal dogooders."<sup>43</sup> Despite the fact that the NCDF proposal spread across almost every neighborhood, many opponents believed that more moderate-priced portions of the city would disproportionately bear the burden while the richer neighborhoods remained exempted. "You don't see any NCDF members upset because they put sites next to their homes," one abutter complained. "They all live in big expensive homes and are trying to ruin the neighborhoods of people like me, who have worked hard to be able to live in a moderate but comfortable home in Newton."<sup>44</sup> One anonymous citizen agreed, asserting, "It's so easy for Newton's wealthy people who live in spacious residential neighborhoods... to clear their conscience with financial aid to N.C.D.F., just as long as it isn't in their backyard."<sup>45</sup> This anger at the seemingly misguided attitudes of suburban liberals echoed the sentiments of many Boston residents embroiled in the ongoing battle over school desegregation.<sup>46</sup>

Other Newton citizens placed their opinion of the NCDF project in a different spatial logic. This brand of suburban isolationism endorsed low-income housing in

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<sup>42</sup> A Worried Citizen of Newton (Name Withheld) to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, April 30, 1970.

<sup>43</sup> A Newtonville Resident to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, May 28, 1970; Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 82.

<sup>44</sup> Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 82.

<sup>45</sup> Anonymous to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, July 16, 1970.

<sup>46</sup> See for example, Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 178-179.

principle but believed that the program should be “committed to Newton residents first and foremost.”<sup>47</sup> This attitude reflected the difference that many citizens drew between “deserving” beneficiaries of the housing, such as elderly and moderate-income white Newton natives, and “undeserving” African-American outsiders. This distinction rested on a spatial and racial ideology that naturalized Newton natives as white and newcomers as poor black émigrés from the Roxbury ghetto. This attitude overlooked both the fact that NCDF had intended for the majority of the units to house moderate-income families and that most poor African-American families in Boston, even those receiving government assistance, could not or did not want to move to Newton. The racial fears embodied in this reaction against low-income housing in particular exacerbated concerns about the potential harm of black children to both the community’s prided school system and already high tax rate. Many citizens clearly drew a connection between the concept of potential residents of the housing developments and the image of the poor single black mother toting multiple school-age children. According to Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Gitlin, new students could “only result in overcrowding and more tax dollars.” The city, they warned, “cannot allow our tax rate to soar ad infinitum.”<sup>48</sup>

In addition to igniting these fiscally-based fears, the NCDF proposal also mobilized the community’s self-identified liberal citizens to provide an alternative version of suburban-centered politics. Many supporters believed the community had to take responsibility for the problems of racial and spatial inequality. “We are fortunate to be able to live in this fine community—with good schools, grass trees, etc,” one couple wrote. “It is simple logic to extend these benefits to people less fortunate than

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<sup>47</sup> “NCDF Policy Sound,” *Newton Graphic*, May 14, 1970; A Worried Citizen of Newton (Name Withheld) to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*.

<sup>48</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Gitlin to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, May 28, 1970.

ourselves.”<sup>49</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Winsor, active members of the state chapter of Americans for Democratic Action, declared, “We don’t wish to live in a community which only the well-heeled can afford and which erects restrictive zoning barriers to keep out others.”<sup>50</sup> Mrs. Lawrence Little, who had just moved to Newton, explained that her family had decided to live there because of “its closeness to Boston, fine school system, its reputation for being a strong-hold of liberal thinking and acting and heterogenic make-up.” For these same reasons Newton “must take responsibility of breaking through the low-cost housing hang-up.” Newton, she stressed, “cannot be an island, ignoring the problems of surrounding communities.”<sup>51</sup>

Upholding the centrality of quality education to the political culture of Newton, many NCDF sympathizers believed the project would not hurt, but rather, enhance, the community’s schools. These supporters built upon the argument that METCO founders had adopted to rally suburban participation by stressing the ways in which racially and socioeconomically integrated classrooms benefited white middle-class children. Like the suburban liberal architects of METCO, these proponents inverted claims of disadvantage and victimization to suggest that excluding low-income students would hurt Newton children’s chances of succeeding in a multiracial world. Martin and Honora Kaplan, for example, argued that rejecting the NCDF plan would “cheat our children twice—once in their education, and again in the foreclosure of relationships and awareness which are a priceless aspect of education (in the broadest sense).”<sup>52</sup> Likewise, Donald Arnestine, a professor of education at Boston University, warned, “Unless the children of Newton are

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<sup>49</sup> Martin S. Kaplan, Honora A. Kaplan to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, May 21, 1970.

<sup>50</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Winsor to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, May 28, 1970.

<sup>51</sup> Mrs. Lawrence Little to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, May 28, 1970.

<sup>52</sup> Martin S. Kaplan, Honora A. Kaplan to the Editor. *Newton Graphic*.

to grow up as narrow and insensitive as many of their parents, we had better give them a chance to have other kids around them, to play with and go to school with, who are different from them.”<sup>53</sup> Some residents acknowledged that the “Metco program has been a feeble step in the direction of teaching this lesson,” and mixed-income housing provided a better means of bringing Newton’s youth into contact with children from different backgrounds.<sup>54</sup>

The support for the NCDF proposal punctuated the ways in which the plan complemented the basic tenets of suburban liberalism and Newton exceptionalism. Citizens gushed that the “work of the Newton Community Development Foundation makes us proud to live here.”<sup>55</sup> The attitudes of these NCDF supporters also show the scattered-site plan for low-density townhouses appealed to the aesthetic sensibility of certain suburban residents. One married couple declared, “The scattered site concept is imaginative and realistic” and confidently predicted that it would avoid the “adverse social and economic effects on the surrounding community and on the project itself which so often characterize massive single-site housing developments.”<sup>56</sup> Many residents also approved of the ways in which the grassroots-based initiative privileged the home rule and localist dimensions of suburban political ideology. Stephen Adelson extolled it as “Newton’s solution to Newton’s own problem.” He suggested that complying with the NCDF plan was a better alternative than enduring “some massive project enforced upon it by the State or Federal Government.”<sup>57</sup> Many residents noted approvingly that the federal not local government would underwrite the project. Like the

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<sup>53</sup> Donald Arnestine to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, May 28, 1970.

<sup>54</sup> Mr. & Mrs. Arnold Lezberg to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, May 28, 1970.

<sup>55</sup> George and Ellen Goodwin to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, May 7, 1970.

<sup>56</sup> Martin S. Kaplan, Honora A. Kaplan to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen M. Adelson to the Editor of the *Newton Graphic*, May 7, 1970.

METCO program, the NCDF plan also aligned with the priorities of many suburban liberals who subscribed in principle to low-income housing or voluntary integration but remained reluctant to use local taxes to finance these causes.

The letters and statements showed a sharply divided community and created the context for city-mandated public hearings on the NCDF sites. More than 1,000 people turned out for the first hearing where NCDF and NLUCA and their respective supporters reiterated their respective positions to the city alderman. The discussion lasted until 1:45 a.m.<sup>58</sup> At another meeting that went until 3 a.m., the booing, hissing and catcalls reached such a high pitch that the aldermen had to remind the audience it was not a baseball game.<sup>59</sup> Following these contentious hearings, the officials took no immediate action, but instead elected to use the summer to ruminate on rezoning the sites. During this period of deliberation, the case reached the national stage. George Romney, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and a proponent of increasing affordable housing in the suburbs, praised the NCDF plan as the type of “rational” and “responsible” approach to the problem that he advocated. In an open letter to the mayor, Romney claimed, “I look at this proposal as not merely an experiment for Newton, but as one having significance throughout the state and the nation.”<sup>60</sup> Despite Romney’s endorsement, the aldermen remained unconvinced. As the summer of 1970 drew to a close, the town officials voted against rezoning the ten sites. Although chastened, the NCDF did not abandon the proposal and looked to the newly enacted Massachusetts zoning appeals law as another avenue through which to realize their vision for affordable housing in Newton.

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<sup>58</sup> “1000 Jam Hearing for Planned Housing Here,” *Newton Graphic*, May 28, 1970.

<sup>59</sup> Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 83.

<sup>60</sup> “Secretary Romney Backs NCDF Plans,” *Newton Graphic*, June 4, 1970.

## **The Anti-Snob Zoning Act**

While residents in Newton acted locally to enhance the availability of low and moderate-income housing outside of Boston, the Massachusetts state government was also tackling the issue. Throughout the 1960s Massachusetts had passed a series of landmark fair housing laws. None of these acts, however, had successfully reduced the problems of suburban racial and economic exclusion by much. The limitations of these policies stemmed from the fact that the laws had not granted the state oversight over local zoning ordinances. Although the issue of the need for state oversight first appeared in the 1930s, fears of opposition by local residents and officials had led the Massachusetts legislature to consistently reject these demands for reform.<sup>61</sup> By 1969, however, Bay State policymakers had agreed that the shortage of low- and moderate income housing in metropolitan Boston and the inextricably connected issues of racial and spatial segregation constituted the central social problems of the decade.

In direct response to the calls for action as a result of the Kerner Report and the King assassination, legislators submitted five bills in 1969 intended to provide state control over local zoning laws. These various proposals suggested setting a 15,000-foot maximum lot size, requiring at least 15 percent of a city or town to be zoned for apartments, establishing special districts within lower-density communities, and exempting all subsidized housing from local restrictions. The Joint Committee of Urban Affairs, which oversaw housing, zoning and redevelopment issues, spent the winter and spring evaluating these various proposals. The committee eventually concluded, however,

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<sup>61</sup> Karen Jean Schneider, "Innovation in State Legislation: The Massachusetts Suburban Zoning Act" (Honors Thesis, Radcliffe College, 1970). Between 1920-1970, the state had commissioned more than 11 studies of local planning issues.

that none provided a realistic or politically possible solution.<sup>62</sup> Committee member Sen. Martin Linsky, a liberal Republican from Brookline, understood both the necessity of the law and the extent of most suburban residents' resistance to limiting local zoning powers. He predicted that suburban communities firmly invested in the concept of home rule would thwart any state encroachment on this power by creating their own plans for low-income housing in their respective communities. Like the founders of the METCO program, Linsky identified and sought to exploit a basic tenet of suburban liberal thinking that favored voluntary "indigenous" solutions rather than top-down remedies to social problems. He decided, therefore, to form a subcommittee to draft a compromise bill that would at the very least stimulate public discussion of suburban responsibility for urban problems.<sup>63</sup>

To help refashion the zoning legislation, Linsky turned to Boston's liberal grassroots housing movement. In early April, he contacted longtime suburban housing activist Helen LeVine, who proved instrumental in the passage of state fair housing laws and the Racial Imbalance Act. LeVine had resigned from her leadership position at the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing for Equal Rights to work as the legislative coordinator for a legal services organization called the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI). LeVine recruited one of the group's young lawyers to help Linsky and his committee redraft the legislation. Linsky and the MLRI lawyer eventually formulated the Zoning Appeals Bill, the linchpin of which was a two-step administrative process. First, in communities where such dwellings comprised less than ten percent of the total

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<sup>62</sup>The committee, chaired by future United States Congressman Joe Moakley, included three Harvard Law graduates, a professor of Social Welfare, a transportation expert and one of Boston's largest realtors, had earned the status in its three-years existence as being both "dominated an aggressive liberal majority" and effective at getting legislation passed, Schneider, "Innovation in State Legislation."

<sup>63</sup> Schneider, "Innovation in State Legislation."

number of units the proposed statute provided a mechanism for low-income housing developers to appeal local zoning, building, public health, and subdivision control regulations. Second, it vested the power to override local decisions in a state-appointed special committee operating under the Massachusetts Department of Community Affairs. The drafters took painstaking efforts to make the law able to withstand the objections of local communities making its provisions somewhat vague and confusing.<sup>64</sup> In order to clarify its intent, the Committee submitted a report alongside the bill which explained that it believed these measures provided the “least interference with the power of a community to plan for its future” while still preventing towns from “unreasonably obstruct[ing] the construction of a limited amount of adequate low cost housing.”<sup>65</sup> This report reaffirmed Linsky’s overarching hope that the legislation would ultimately encourage municipalities “to establish such conditions on such housing which will be consistent with local needs.”<sup>66</sup>

The press, nevertheless, interpreted the potential implications of the law differently. On April 29, 1969, the proposed legislation became a front-page feature in the *Boston Globe*. In the lead paragraph, reporter Robert Turner declared, “Apartments housing thousands of low and middle-income families will soon spring up in Boston’s plushiest suburbs if the Legislature’s Urban Affairs Committee has its way.”<sup>67</sup> As Turner explained it, the bill would require every community in the state to allow construction of

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<sup>64</sup> Linsky and fellow subcommittee member Representative Maurice Frye of Boston later explained that these safeguards sought “to relieve some of the pressure to construct low and moderate income housing without endangering the basic character of suburban communities or destroying the integrity of the zoning powers itself.” Martin A. Linsky and Maurice E. Frye, “What Suburban Zoning Will Do,” *Boston Globe*, August 22, 1969.

<sup>65</sup> Department of Community Affairs, “Rules and Regulations for the Conduct of Hearings by the Housing Appeals Committee Affairs, Draft” February 12, 1970, Box 108, Housing Legislation Folder, FWS.

<sup>66</sup> Department of Community Affairs, “Rules and Regulations for the Conduct of Hearings by the Housing Appeals Committee Affairs, Draft.”

<sup>67</sup> Robert L. Turner, “Bill Would Open Towns to Low-Rent Apartments,” *Boston Globe*, April 29, 1969.

low and moderate-income developments on 1 percent of its “buildable property” each year until 5 percent of the community contained such housing. Turner extrapolated that one-acre zoning laws could not prevent such developments and thereby predicted that “wealthy towns like Dover and Weston, which have large-lot zoning and low population density, could experience a population explosion of 50 percent or more in a few years.”<sup>68</sup> A reporter for the *Boston Herald* echoed this assessment predicting that the impact of the law would be “fantastic” and could “trigger” the construction of moderate cost housing “everywhere” and “generate an exodus from the teeming urban and ghetto areas.”<sup>69</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1969, the press continued to play a key discursive role in shaping public perception of the legislation. Many reporters appropriated the colloquial catch-phrase of “snob zoning” which had become a common description of exclusionary zoning in their discussion of the bill. The *Herald* challenged “suburban snobbishness,” and the *Globe* contended that “snob zoning” had no “proper place in a democratic society.”<sup>70</sup> Soon the Zoning Appeals legislation earned the indelible title as the “Anti-Snob Zoning Bill.” This “snob zoning” terminology compounded the feelings of resentment and victimization of many suburbanites who disliked both the label of snobbishness and the implications of the Zoning Appeals Bill. The press also presented a distorted image of the suburban response to the bill. The area newspapers only printed letters from suburban opponents to the bill such as Robert Clarke of Belmont, who called it “perverted social engineering with a vengeance.”<sup>71</sup> Likewise, reporters only solicited

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<sup>68</sup> Turner, “Bill Would Open Towns to Low-Rent Apartments.”

<sup>69</sup> Thomas C. Gallagher, “Reform for Reformers,” *Boston Herald Traveler*, August 6, 1969.

<sup>70</sup> “Time to Unlock Suburbia,” *Boston Herald Traveler*, August 12, 1969; “Snob Zoning Reform,” *Boston Globe*, August 8, 1969.

<sup>71</sup> Robert P. Clark to the Editor, *Boston Globe*, August 9, 1969.

negative comments from suburban officials and failed to seek commentary from members of organizations like the NCDF.<sup>72</sup>

In fact, many suburban residents supported and even lobbied for the legislation. Helen LeVine led this grassroots mobilization. She relied on the contacts, networks and tactics she had established during previous civil rights law campaigns, recruiting to the cause thirty-five church, and civic organizations such as the Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights, Americans for Democratic Action, and Citizens for Participation Politics, all of which had sizable suburban constituencies. The activities of these anti-snob zoning proponents illustrate once again the effectiveness of grassroots suburban liberals to work within the channels of formal government to create legislation that aligned with their vision of racial and spatial equality. By 1969 the suburban civil rights network did not boast the same numerical strength as in its earlier campaigns for fair housing measures, but it still contributed significantly, encouraging members and their contacts to pressure their local officials and representatives to support the legislation. LeVine and her collaborators circulated a question and answer sheet directly designed to assuage the anxieties of suburbanites, which they also sent to members of the state legislature and the governor.<sup>73</sup> The leaflet sought to remove the racialized stigma associated with the issue of low-income housing. It promised that the bill would not create an influx of poor blacks into their neighborhoods, describing the potential beneficiaries rather as “local municipal employees, police, fireman, teachers, young

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<sup>72</sup> Schneider, “Innovation in State Legislation.”

<sup>73</sup> Sumner Z. Kaplan to Members of the General Court, July 1, 1969, Box 112 Low Moderate Income Housing Legislation Folder, FWS.

couples and returning Vietnam veterans.”<sup>74</sup> In addition, it stressed that the new laws would neither affect property values, tax rates, and the “character” of communities, nor would they violate home rule.

LeVine recognized the importance of building cross-racial support for the law and sought to solicit participation from the area’s African-American community. African-American organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the United Front rejected LeVine’s outreach attempts.

Representatives of the Urban League told her that the bill “does not go far enough” and was “too middle class to deserve their support.”<sup>75</sup> After this rebuff, the politically-savvy suburban activists abandoned their active pursuit of support of such organizations for fear of making their proposal into a “black bill.”<sup>76</sup> The unwillingness of African-American leaders to join in a coalition with white suburbanites to support low-income housing provides insight into not only the priorities and agendas of the local civil rights movement but also the contours of the Anti-Snob Zoning Bill. By the late 1960s, most African-American activists remained more invested in community empowerment and black economic development than in gaining a foothold in suburbia. This emphasis demonstrated the ways in which the zoning restriction law, as well as the cause of affordable housing outside of the city more generally, represented a distinctly white suburban liberal remedy to the problem of racial and spatial segregation.

The proponents of the Anti-Snob Zoning Bill, nevertheless, discovered unlikely allies among a group of Boston’s white state representatives. These urban legislators

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<sup>74</sup> Committee for Better Communities, “The Zoning Bill-How it Works,” Box 112 Low Moderate Income Housing Legislation Folder, FWS.

<sup>75</sup> Schneider, “Innovation in State Legislation.”

<sup>76</sup> Schneider, “Innovation in State Legislation.”

proved crucial to the legislation's eventual passage. This unusual support from traditionally racially conservative Boston legislators derived less from their newfound sympathy for the plight of poor African-Americans and more because they recognized the bill as an opportunity to "punish the do-gooder suburbanites" for their support of the Racial Imbalance Act four years earlier. Suburban politicians and their constituents had served as the primary supporters of the legislation aimed at reducing segregation in public schools despite (or more likely because of) the fact that it did not affect their districts. The urban politicians' statements in support of the zoning bill dripped with a discourse of class and geographic-based resentment. Ignoring the grassroots suburban activists who lobbied for the zoning measure, State Senator William Bulger of South Boston combatively noted the absence at the State House of "those busloads of women from suburbia" who failed "to make their voices heard on legislation which represents an honest-to-goodness attempt to really do something about the problem which they were so concerned with when they zeroed in on the racial imbalance law."<sup>77</sup>

Liberal politicians like Martin Linsky initially balked at cooperating with legislators like Bulger with whom they usually disagreed. However, Linsky recognized the Zoning Appeals Law's success depended on such endorsements and embraced these "strange bedfellows."<sup>78</sup> The support for the school integration and zoning restriction measures therefore roughly inverted along spatial and partisan lines with suburban liberals as the only bloc to support both measures.<sup>79</sup> After many rounds of debate, this "unusual coalition of liberals and urban conservatives" successfully overcame the strong

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<sup>77</sup> Gallagher, "Reform for the Reformers."

<sup>78</sup> Schneider, "Innovation in State Legislation."

<sup>79</sup> Karen Schneider in her excellent study of the legislative history of the zoning act discovered that geography far more than American for Democratic Action ratings or party affiliation provided the best indicator of a legislator's position (Schneider, "Innovation in State Legislation").

opposition of many moderate and conservative suburban representatives and led the Zoning Appeals Bill to passage.<sup>80</sup> On August 23, 1969, Governor Francis Sargent signed into law Chapter 774 of 40B, unofficially called the “Anti-Snob Zoning Act.”<sup>81</sup>

The Anti-Snob Zoning Act earned Massachusetts the status as the first state to pass legislation directly targeted at spatial discrimination, an impressive accomplishment given the suburban slant of the Commonwealth’s population and legislature. As the Racial Imbalance Act had done four years earlier, Chapter 774 enhanced the Bay’s State’s liberal image and reputation for innovative legislation. However, also like the Racial Imbalance Act, the law had more symbolic than statutory power. To make the measure politically palatable, the drafters sought to preserve local zoning control and limit the state government’s role. The law, therefore, lacked requirements for construction of affordable housing (as New Jersey would enact under court order a few years later) and set quotas for units in terms of minimums not maximums. The two-step administrative procedure injected methods of delay that, as the chapter later discusses, thwarted subsidized development and benefited suburban governments. Concord, the first community that sought to test its power, most clearly exposed the possibilities and limits of both Chapter 774 and suburban liberals to challenge the structures of racial and spatial segregation.

### **An Affordable Utopia**

The idea of building a mixed-income development in Concord predated the passage of the Anti-Snob Zoning Act. The community had a longstanding reputation of dedication to issues of racial tolerance dating back to its days as the epicenter of the

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<sup>80</sup> Gallagher, “Reform for the Reformers.”

<sup>81</sup> See Chapter 774 of the Acts and Resolves of 1969 (New Chapter 40B of the General Laws).

Transcendentalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and more recently apparent in its participation in the fair housing movement and METCO program. As in Newton, the combination of the Kerner Report and the King assassination in the spring of 1968 motivated a group of Concord residents to try to build a small moderate-income housing development as a means to extend the community's commitment to racial equality.<sup>82</sup> These efforts came in direct conflict with Concord's focus on open space and environmentalism, which long served as unifying principles of the town's identity and political agenda. This prolonged controversy between advocates of spatial integration and environmentalism exposed a fundamental tension both within the exceptionalist identity of Concord and the ideology of suburban liberalism. The battle also brought into sharp focus the problems with the state's procedure for challenging the structures of suburban exclusion.

The effort to build affordable housing in Concord arose directly out of the grassroots and exceptionalist dimensions of suburban liberalism. In the late spring of 1968, a group of fourteen married couples from the town's Conantum section sent a letter to their neighbors proposing that the community sponsor a "venture in integrated 'garden apartment' housing" either within the development or another site in Concord.<sup>83</sup> The letter senders, including Jim and Diane Craig, Paul Counihan and Carl Koch, noted that although "all the Boston suburbs" had considered similar projects "as a result of hundred discussions of race and urban problems, and the concern of thousands of conscientious, articulate and active citizens—nothing yet has been done." However, the group suggested, "Conantum may be better situated with the practicalities of this thing than any

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<sup>82</sup> Martin A. Linsky and Robert L. Turner, "Snob-Zoning Law Gets Acid Test in Concord," *Boston Globe*, February 18, 1973.

<sup>83</sup> Craigs et al to Conantum Residents, June 25 1968, Records of the Concord Home Owning Corporation, Concord Special Collections, Concord Free Public Library, Concord, MA, unprocessed collection, (hereafter: "CHOC").

other sub-community in the Boston area (in the country, for that matter).” The letter referred to the neighborhood’s longstanding reputation for liberal minded residents and a high concentration of academics affiliated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Following their initial letter, the group staged coffee klatches and distributed a questionnaire in order to gauge the views of their fellow residents.

The responses to this inquiry provide an important window into suburban liberal attitudes about racial and spatial discrimination and reveal the spectrum of opinion even within this purportedly progressive and somewhat utopian community. Some residents were in favor, noting, “More than other national issue, I feel substantial low cost housing in the suburbs is mandatory—for both white and black” and “White racism in the United States calls for strong measures and real sacrifice.”<sup>84</sup> Others, however, adopted a view of racial integration that rested on an ideology of class exclusivity. They would be willing to invite “qualified black lawyers” and their families “who could afford it” to move in, but opposed building any units for the specific purpose of including at low-income minority renters who “could not survive economically out here.” One Conantum inhabitant called the plan “forced integration”; another said, “I am uneasy playing God,” and suggested “approaching this in a matter reminiscent of the Harvard Business School rather than group therapy.” Ultimately, however, the responding Conantum residents overwhelmingly rejected the original proposal, yet the majority of those who replied to the inquiry said that they would support and even donate money to a project within the town of Concord as a whole rather than Conantum specifically.

The original proponents of the Conantum project did not abandon their vision of integrated housing and decided to extend their campaign beyond the boundaries of the

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<sup>84</sup> Conantum Integrated Housing Proposal, c. Summer 1968, CHOC.

quasi-utopian development. During the summer of 1968, the Conantum contingent joined force with members of the local fair housing committee to form the Moderate Income Housing for Concord Committee. The committee, which “believed that community life is enriched by diversity,” pledged to “broaden the range of housing costs in Concord and to persuade people of varied incomes to move to the town.”<sup>85</sup> The committee thoroughly surveyed the available land in Concord to identify a suitable site for an apartment development. This quest proved quixotic, since Concord’s stringent zoning regulations and open space agenda left only twenty-nine acres of land (.025 of the total zoned land) available for multi-unit development. Moreover, these remaining eligible parcels had either water problems or unwilling sellers.<sup>86</sup>

The Moderate Income Housing Committee, therefore, shifted its focus away from new construction, and instead devised a strategy that identified properties for sale in Concord, purchasing these homes and then reselling them to low-income black and white families from Boston. This tactic built directly on the techniques of the suburban fair housing movement, but with a more specific class-based focus. The committee in 1969 formed the Concord Home Owning Corporation (CHOC) as a subset, so that it could use money from loans taken by its officers and private donations to purchase two homes.<sup>87</sup> The first house quickly resold to a Roxbury family with a child in the METCO program in Concord and a father employed in the town. The second property, however, remained unsold, showing the drawbacks of its Trojan-Horse approach and forcing the group to search for another strategy. Two important developments led the CHOC back to its original vision of new construction. First, Chapter 774 went into effect that fall and the

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<sup>85</sup> Moderate Income Housing for Concord Committee, Minutes of Meeting, September 11, 1968, CHOC.

<sup>86</sup> Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 142.

<sup>87</sup> Moderate Income Housing for Concord Committee, Minutes of Meeting, January 14, 1969, CHOC.

group believed the new law would help them surmount Concord's rigid zoning statutes. Second, a number of residents with professional expertise in land use law and real estate development joined the CHOC executive committee. This new board included attorney and leading McCarthy supporter Paul Counihan, attorney John Clymer, MIT Electrical Engineering Professor Richard Thornton, Arthur D. Little executive Elliott Wilbur, and Assistant Dean at Boston University School of Law John Wilson.<sup>88</sup> As its new president, the CHOC elected Conantum inhabitant James Craig, who had twenty years of experience in commercial real estate, developing hotels and motels as Vice President of the Hotel Corporation of America and later as the President of the Boston Waterfront Development Corporation. Like his fellow board members, Craig sought to apply his professional knowledge directly to the endeavor.

The newly-reenergized CHOC soon found interested sellers of a 5.5 acre plot on Sudbury Road near the town center. Close to retail stores, local schools and the commuter rail station, the site appeared an ideal location for a multi-family development. Water and soil conditions on the property, however, did create one serious obstacle. In 1960, the Town Meeting had denied a prior plan to place apartments on the site citing unsuitability for building.<sup>89</sup> The Town of Concord had, in fact, offered in April 1969 to buy the property for park and recreational purposes. The Wheelers, one of Concord's oldest families who had owned the property since the seventeenth century, had rejected the offer because they believed the site should help diversify the town's housing stock.<sup>90</sup> Given its

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<sup>88</sup> Concord Home Owning Corporation, "A Proposal For a Moderate Income Apartment Complex in Concord," c. 1970, CHOC.

<sup>89</sup> Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 145.

<sup>90</sup> Swamp Brook Preservation Association, "APARTMENTS PROPOSED FOR THE WHEELER LAND—AGAIN!" c. 1970, Box 1, Folder 1, Swamp Brook Preservation Association Records, Concord Special Collections, Concord Free Public Library, Concord, MA (hereafter: "SBPA").

controversial history, CHOC enlisted members with backgrounds in engineering and municipal politics to conduct feasibility studies of the property. These local engineers concluded the site suitable for construction. The group then proceeded with plans to create an affordable housing development on the plot.

The CHOC design reflected its efforts to make the project uphold Concord's physical and philosophical identity. The low-density plan created by Carl Koch's architectural firm adhered to and aimed to accentuate Concord's commitment to open space. The design envisioned a 50-60-unit development with 1-4 bedroom townhouses with clapboard frames, pitched roofs, and patios, in clusters around large landscaped courtyards. Emphasizing the town's "country environment" in the design, the CHOC board members, like their counterparts in Newton, remained committed to making the physical structure and inhabitants of the project integrate into the existing community.<sup>91</sup> Board members Margaret Cooper, Diane Clymer, and Mary Wilinsky also provided input to the architects about ways to make the design adaptable to families. Their suggestions revealed that the specifically gendered division of labor of many postwar homes extended into grassroots suburban activism as well. The women based their idea on their own marital and child-rearing experiences, or as Margaret Cooper termed it, time spent caring for children while "living in an inexpensive apartment during my husband's graduate school days."<sup>92</sup> They recommended that setting kitchen appliances within four steps of each other and dark patterns for the floor tile to hide dirt. The women also emphasized the importance of open space, suggesting particular types of shrubs, and proposing that

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<sup>91</sup> Concord Home Owning Corporation, "A Proposal For a Moderate Income Apartment Complex in Concord."

<sup>92</sup> Margaret Cooper to James S. Craig, July 6, 1971, CHOC. Margaret Cooper, Diane Clymer and Mary Wilinsky, SOME CRITERIA FOR BUILDING AN APARTMENT COMPLEX TO ACCOMMODATE FAMILIES OF VARYING SIZES AND INCOMES, No Date. CHOC.

some of the land at the edge of the development could be used for vegetable and flower gardens. These recommendations reinforce the suburban-centric underpinnings of the CHOC membership and mission.

With their blueprints, CHOC then turned to the recently launched Massachusetts Housing Financing Agency (MHFA) in order to secure financial support and the status as a qualified developer. Many observers had hailed the establishment 1966 by the state legislature of independent of the MHFA as an independent public authority to issue low-interest loans through tax-exempt bonds to non-profit and limited-dividend private developers for the construction of housing for low and moderate income people. Questions about the constitutionality of the endeavor had prevented the institution from opening its doors until 1968.<sup>93</sup> The MHFA, nevertheless, quickly made up for lost time after the legislature raised its bonding ceiling from \$50 to 500 million in January 1970.<sup>94</sup> Just six months later, the agency had committed \$400 million to developers and had earned a reputation as a far more flexible and less complicated form of financing than the comparable FHA program.<sup>95</sup> The CHOC proposal requested MHFA money for a demonstration project intended to prove “that quality housing can be provided to reverse trends of income level stratification in towns such as Concord.”<sup>96</sup> Unlike NCDF, which sought to downplay its goals of racial integration, CHOC explicitly stated its aim for a “substantial portion” of the units to be for “people living in the center city, particularly

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<sup>93</sup> Anthony J. Yudis, “State Housing Agency Exists—In Limbo,” *Boston Globe*, December 11, 1966.

<sup>94</sup> Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, Second Annual Report, September 1970, SLM.

<sup>95</sup> Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, Third Annual Report, September 1971, SLM; Concord Home Owning Corporation and Moderate Income Housing Committee, Meeting Minutes, January 14, 1970, CHOC); Concord Home Owning Corporation MEMO RE MODERATE INCOME HOUSING, No Date, CHOC.

<sup>96</sup> Concord Home Owning Corporation, “Application to Massachusetts Housing Financing Agency, Draft,” c. 1970, CHOC.

Blacks from the Roxbury ghetto area.”<sup>97</sup> CHOC noted that Concord had actively participated in METCO and they hoped that to make arrangements so that many of the children in the program and their families could move to town. CHOC, like NCDF, also hoped to attract people “who work but do not live in Concord,” older people with reduced income, and newlyweds with “modest resources.” The MHFA approved the organization’s proposal in May 1970, with the requirement that 25 percent or 15 units be set aside explicitly for low-income families. CHOC never hid its intent to follow the process laid out by the Anti-Snob Zoning Act, but it did try sought to follow “chapter 774 in a friendly way.”<sup>98</sup> It did so by both making its plan align with the aesthetic and social ideals of the suburb and keeping local officials and the property’s abutters apprised of its intentions.<sup>99</sup>

These efforts did not diffuse opposition from the residents of the South Meadows neighborhood adjacent to the site. Unlike the controversies in other towns where opponents offered a wide range of reasons for resistance to moderate-income development, these Concord citizens centered primarily on just one issue: flooding.<sup>100</sup> These abutters believed that the five-acre plot sat on the watershed of Swamp Brook and opposed the development on the theory that the property exhibited the characteristics of an inland wetland. Reaching back into the annals of town history, these residents frequently cited the fact that in 1694 Concord had required Joshua Wheeler to sign a pledge agreeing to repay any damages incurred by damming Swamp Brook on his property and suggested that the potential for damage had worsened over the course of 300

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<sup>97</sup> Concord Home Owning Corporation, “Application to Massachusetts Housing Financing Agency, Draft.”

<sup>98</sup> James Craig, Address, No Date, CHOC.

<sup>99</sup> James Craig, Address, No Date.

<sup>100</sup>E.A. Sisson, “APARTMENTS PROPOSED FOR THE WHEELER LAND—AGAIN!” November 18, 1970, Box 1, Folder 1, SBPA.

years. The South Meadow residents claimed that they already had overworked sump pumps and believed that the additional construction would flood their basements and their backyards.<sup>101</sup>

These abutters quickly extended their campaign beyond the Wheeler property to reflect a genuine concern for larger environmental issues, especially wetland protection and open space preservation.<sup>102</sup> The South Meadow residents adopted the name Swamp Brook Preservation Association (SBPA) and had as their logo a picture of a hand-drawn turtle, which conjoined the concern about flooded basements with an explicitly ecological appeal. Edith Sisson, who lived down the road from the Wheeler land, taught natural history, ecology and other science courses at the Massachusetts Audubon Society, led this effort. She provided SBPA a level of scientific expertise unusual for the typical neighborhood association. Using information from U.S. Soil Conservation Agency and hand-drawn maps to support these claims, the residents showed that like CHOC, they relied on their own professional knowledge to make their case.<sup>103</sup> In their pamphlets and statements, the group repeatedly emphasized “wetlands have been encroached upon at a rate of about 1% a year in Massachusetts.”<sup>104</sup> Such facts helped SBPA create a discourse that fused fears about their own property with a genuine concern for the issue of wetland protection. By adopting an ecological rather than strictly exclusionary emphasis, the

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<sup>101</sup> The CHOC proposal did not represent the first time that this informal neighborhood group had challenged construction on the property. Carleton Gray and Walter Miles, who lived near the site, had even created a report for town officials in early 1969 estimating that homeowners in the area pumped one million gallons a day from their drainage systems (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Natural Resources, File No. 137-4 Concord Boston, Massachusetts, May 29, 1974, Box 2, SBPA).

<sup>102</sup> E.A. Sisson, PROBLEMS OF THE WHEELER SITE FOR HIGH DENSITY DEVELOPMENT, January 20, 1971, Box 1, Folder 1, SBPA.

<sup>103</sup> Sisson, PROBLEMS OF THE WHEELER SITE FOR HIGH DENSITY DEVELOPMENT.

<sup>104</sup> E.A. Sisson, PROBLEMS OF THE WHEELER SITE FOR HIGH DENSITY DEVELOPMENT.

SBPA increasingly shifted the discussion surrounding CHOC's proposals away from racial and spatial segregation towards wetland preservation.

Concord's explicit investment in its environmental identity and distinctiveness made SBPA's campaign particularly powerful. The Concord Board of Appeals held a public hearing on January 28, 1971 devoted to the CHOC proposal, which offered further evidence of the effectiveness of SBPA's advocates and arguments. Few of the residents from South Meadow who spoke in opposition to the proposal challenged the need for low-cost housing in Concord, but sought to emphasize the need for a shift in location of such a project. Prior to the hearing SBPA had circulated a pamphlet that succinctly summarized the groups' position. It asked, "Are there not other more suitable sites in Concord for high density development?"<sup>105</sup> This question suggested a convenient lack of familiarity with Concord's stringent zoning bylaws. In a letter to the *Concord Journal* the week of the hearing, Angela Finneran scoffed at the idea that "now under the sacred banner of 'low-income housing'" the town would allow construction on "marginal land" and suggested that it "reflects an unusual degree of mental incompetence and borders on the ridiculous."<sup>106</sup>

At the hearing, residents took a far less outspoken stance to ask essentially the same question. "I hope that after the issue of this hearing are over," SBPA leader Edith Sisson told the Board of Appeals, "Town officials and boards and Town citizens will give serious and constructive consideration to problems of housing in our Town."<sup>107</sup> At the hearing Charles Holt used personal anecdotes to describe the area's poor drainage,

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<sup>105</sup> "APARTMENTS PROPOSED FOR THE WHEELER LAND—AGAIN!"

<sup>106</sup> Angela E. Finneran to the Editor, *Concord Journal*, January 14, 1971.

<sup>107</sup> Edith A. Sisson to Board of Appeals, January 27, 1971, Box 1, Folder 1, SBPA.

testified that CHOC “had the right idea,” but had picked the wrong site.<sup>108</sup> The members of this grassroots campaign took no affirmative steps to assist CHOC find an alternative site for their project further raising doubts about their motives. James Craig aptly observed that for many residents consciously or unconsciously “garden apartments means urbanization, urbanization means crime and dope and change and tax rate. Yet all those gut feelings can get behind any semi-legitimate issue like schools and water and make that issue awfully powerful.”<sup>109</sup> In Concord, which rested its identity so heavily on its natural landscape, these arguments were especially potent.

SBPA’s pleas successfully persuaded the Board of Appeals to unanimously reject CHOC’s rezoning petition in April 1971, on the grounds that granting a permit “would not be consistent with local needs, as it could be detrimental to the health and safety of the residents of the Town.”<sup>110</sup> The decision did not deter, but, rather, galvanized CHOC. Following the ruling, the group decided to shift their fight away from Concord and toward the structures of state government. With its heavy concentration of lawyers and liberals, the membership shared a faith in using legal procedures to uphold the constitutionality of the statute and sought to put that belief into practice. Paul Clymer and Paul Counihan, two members of the Board, even served as CHOC’s counsel in its appeal to the state’s Housing Appeals Committee (HAC).<sup>111</sup> In November 1971, HAC announced that the Concord Board of Appeals had been “unreasonable” and directed it to

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<sup>108</sup> “Heat from the Audience But None from the Furnace.”

<sup>109</sup> James Craig, Address, No Date.

<sup>110</sup> “Appeals Board Turns Down Request of Concord Homeowning Corporation,” *Concord Journal*, April 15, 1971.

<sup>111</sup> Paul G. Counihan, John H. Clymer, Applicants Suggested Findings, Application of Concord Home Owing Corporation, c. 1971, CHOC; James Craig, “Concord Home Owing Corporation,” June 29, 1971, CHOC; Clymer and Counihan both agreed to accept payment only on successful results and to abdicate any voting power relating to the case.

issue a permit to CHOC.<sup>112</sup> The decision marked the first successful invocation of Chapter 774 by a non-profit group.<sup>113</sup> The Concord Board of Selectman, nevertheless, immediately voted to further test Chapter 774's administrative mechanisms by appealing the HAC ruling in state superior court.<sup>114</sup> Even before HAC announced its ruling, Jack Clymer and James Craig had met with representatives of the Newton Community Development Foundation, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Citizens Housing and Planning Association and the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights to discuss a shared strategy for the inevitable testing of Chapter 774 in the courts.<sup>115</sup> At the meeting, the participants acknowledged that the Concord case provided an ideal way to strengthen the mandate of the Anti-Snob Zoning Act through the sanction of the highest court in Massachusetts. Thus, when the Selectman announced the vote, CHOC readily accepted it as a challenge to continue its fight.<sup>116</sup>

### **A .000 Batting Average**

By the time that Concord had opted to appeal the HAC decision, many observers had begun to question the effectiveness of Chapter 774. The provision had produced no physical units of housing in its first three years of existence. Louise Day Hicks smugly noted in the winter of 1970, "Not a single spade of dirt has been dug yet to implement the new law."<sup>117</sup> A year later this fact was still true. *Boston Globe* reporter Anthony Yudis observed that the national press and HUD officials often praised the law as "pacesetter"

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<sup>112</sup> Haar and Iatridius, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 155.

<sup>113</sup> "State Agency Gives Green Light to Low Income Housing," *Concord Journal*, November 25, 1971.

<sup>114</sup> "Town will Appeal Housing Decision," *Concord Journal*, December 9, 1971.

<sup>115</sup> John H. Clymer to Paul Counihan Memorandum, Re: Concord Homeowning Corporation—Common Approach to Chapter 774 cases, August 20, 1971, CHOC.

<sup>116</sup> Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 156.

<sup>117</sup> Evelyn Keene, "State's 'Snob Zoning' Law: a Challenge to Suburban Beliefs," *Boston Globe*, January 4, 1970.

and “imaginative” model for other states.<sup>118</sup> In an article entitled “Anti-Snob Zoning Batting Big .000,” Yudis, however, contended that these favorable endorsements of Massachusetts as a “forward-thinking state” obscured both the limitations of the law, especially its mechanisms for delay, and the fact that prior to the Concord case it had not led to any local overrides.<sup>119</sup> The statute placed the burden of launching the appeal on the developer, and few wanted to take the financial risk. The appeals period provided no return on the investment and defeat in court would amount to a financial loss, which most non-profit and limited-dividend developers could not afford. CHOC represented one of the few suburban non-profits to show, according to Anthony Yudis, “the expertise” and financial and psychic “staying power” to sustain this process.<sup>120</sup> Many state legislators recognized these deficiencies and proposed a variety of amendments to clarify and strengthen the original law. None of these provisions, however, passed.<sup>121</sup>

The legislators, nevertheless, did not receive the sole blame for the limits of the law’s effectiveness. Suburban residents themselves had thwarted the efforts to increase the state and national housing supply by “building their own modern drawbridges to keep out their fellow Americans.”<sup>122</sup> Many predicted that the only solution to this problem would be for the courts to intervene and strike down local zoning rights and privileges.

Martin Linsky, the bill’s progenitor, responded to skeptics by clarifying the Anti-Snob

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<sup>118</sup> Anthony J. Yudis, “Anti-Snob Zoning Batting big .000,” *Boston Globe*, July 7, 1971.

<sup>119</sup> Yudis, “Anti-Snob Zoning Batting Big .000”; A report released by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council in 1972 found that the Anti-Snob Zoning Law had been largely “ineffective in increasing construction of low and moderate income housing. The report blamed “high land costs, strong community opposition, and a lengthy and costly appeals process for the lack of new housing.” “MAPC Report Reveals Anti-Snob Zoning Law Ineffective Since ’69,” *Minute-Man Supplement*, April 16, 1972.

<sup>120</sup> Yudis, “Anti-Snob Zoning Batting Big .000.”

<sup>121</sup> For more on these amendments see Bosselman and Caillies, *Quiet Revolution*, 168-169. One legislator in favor of the revisions characterized the reluctant position of his colleague: “We passed Chapter 774 in 1969 to get us off the hook...but don’t ask us to give you any more powers to make it work!” Danielson, *Politics of Exclusion*, 306.

<sup>122</sup> Anthony J. Yudis, “Must Courts or State Banish Zoning Laws,” *Boston Globe*, April 25, 1971.

Zoning Act's legislative history and intent. "We never saw Chapter 774 as a miracle cure to the critical housing shortage," Linsky stated. "We wanted to make it clear to suburban communities that that their land use allocations were not sacred, nor in a vacuum, and the legislature is taking a deep interest in their decision."<sup>123</sup> He suggested that the law had acted as a "catalyst" for local initiatives, particularly because many communities such as Lexington, Winchester, Needham, Hanover, Arlington and many more misunderstood the law's provisions and, fearing a top-down intervention, decided to implement their own programs.<sup>124</sup> Linsky and other proponents recognized these local efforts as an example of the Act's inadvertent success in addressing the problems of suburban exclusion. Most of these towns' projects, however, concentrated on housing for their elderly and actually constituted an effort to skirt the goal of economically and racially diversifying the suburbs.<sup>125</sup>

The controversy that erupted in Lexington exposed both the limitations of the Anti-Snob Zoning Act and the unwillingness of many suburban residents to accept responsibility for the problems of structural inequality especially the exclusionary zoning policies of their own towns. Lexington had served as a pacesetter in the grassroots suburban response to racial and spatial segregation. Since its inception in 1968, the Lexington Committee on Suburban Responsibility had urged the community to build affordable housing.<sup>126</sup> The passage of Chapter 774 quickened the pace of action. The

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<sup>123</sup> Keene, "State's 'Snob Zoning' Law: a Challenge to Suburban Beliefs"; Evelyn Keene, "Antisnob Zoning Law Fails, But Succeeds," *Boston Globe*, January 3, 1971.

<sup>124</sup> Keene, "Antisnob Zoning Law Fails, But Succeeds."

<sup>125</sup> Keene, "Antisnob Zoning Law Fails, But Succeeds."

<sup>126</sup> "Suburban Responsibility Comm. Discusses Program," *Lexington Minute-man*, September 12, 1968; In 1969, several months before the passage of the anti-snob law, the Commission formulated the town's proposal for subsidized housing, which had failed to be enacted but made reasonably priced housing a town objective. Roberta Leviton, "Affordable Housing in a Suburban Town: Lexington Massachusetts,"

members of the town Planning Board resented the implications of the zoning law and believed that solutions should be created by municipalities rather than by state-imposed solutions.<sup>127</sup> This response fulfilled not only Martin Linsky's predictions but also the basic tenets of suburban liberal political culture that favored voluntary rather than top-down remedies.

In the winter of 1970, Lexington town officials developed a subsidized housing program that fused Lexington's perception of its liberal commitment to spatial and racial equality with a firm commitment to home rule and local land control. It used the ratio embedded in Chapter 774 to conclude that Lexington needed to build more than 850 subsidized units over a period of five years to meet a goal of 950 subsidized units or approximately 10 percent of all housing stock.<sup>128</sup> The Planning Board adopted as a corollary policy the support of "no apartment proposal which does not include the mixed income feature."<sup>129</sup> Extending this commitment to challenging suburban exclusion, the Town Meeting approved an addition to Lexington's zoning bylaws for a residential district called "RH Housing," in which 40 percent of the units had to be subsidized for low and moderate-income residents. "All the suburbs are in the same boat, one way or another they will have to build housing," Planning Director Alexander Zaleski explained. "With the RH Zoning we are simply trying to preserve for the town of Lexington some control over its future development and destiny."<sup>130</sup>

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November, 1987, published by the Lexington Planning Department, Lexington Room Collection, Cary Memorial Library, Lexington MA.

<sup>127</sup> Keene, "Antisnob Zoning Law Fails, But Succeeds."

<sup>128</sup> "Planning Board Releases Subsidized Housing Plan," *Lexington Minute-Man*, January 15, 1970. One hundred elderly already built units counted toward the goal.

<sup>129</sup> Leviton, "Affordable Housing in a Suburban Town."

<sup>130</sup> Fran P. Hosken, "Lexington Has Another Chance," *Lexington Minute-man*, March 12, 1970.

With its new program, Lexington appeared primed to fulfill both its affordable housing goals and its heritage as the “Cradle of Liberty.” The new zoning policy did not immediately translate into moderate cost housing and instead had the reverse effect. The RH by-law stipulated that the Town Meeting had to approve the re-zoning of a specific site to RH by a two-thirds vote. The Town Meeting rejected rezoning land for the community’s first two proposals to construct affordable housing, including one proposed by the Town Planning Board itself.<sup>131</sup> In 1971, the Town Meeting finally did approve a third RH petition, which was far more limited and skewed more toward moderate-income elderly residents than the previous proposal. The Center Village project called for 106 units of housing—27 low-income and 79 moderate income—financed by the MHFA and situated on 8.4 acres on Bedford Street.<sup>132</sup> Predictably, homeowners in the neighborhood adjacent to the proposed project decried the vote and immediately formulated an aggressive opposition campaign. Like their counterparts in Newton, Concord, and other neighboring suburbs, these Lexington citizens framed their resistance in the mundane issues of water drainage, traffic and the problems of high-density developments in single-family neighborhoods rather than articulating more racially motivated anxieties. The developer’s attorney Frank Conroy pierced through this seemingly race-neutral discourse. “The word subsidy is scaring people,” Conroy observed. “People feel their taxes are too high. They think that subsidized housing is going to cost them money.”<sup>133</sup> This interpretation captured the myopic viewpoint of white middle-class homeowners who

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<sup>131</sup> The first proposals sponsored by the Interfaith Housing Corporation had a 190 unit development called Clematis Brook Village. The Planning Board itself initiated the second proposal which petitioned for rezoning of 60 acres of unused town-owned land in the Meagherville section for a new elementary school, recreation area and 78 subsidized units. Abutting residents immediately opposed, a typical of objections such as the effects on schools, conservation, drainage, traffic and taxes.

<sup>132</sup> “Final TM Session Approves RH Zone,” *Lexington Minute-man*, April 8, 1971.

<sup>133</sup> Joan Mahoney, “Lexington Joins Housing Foes,” *Boston Evening Globe*, May 4, 1971.

couched their opposition in terms of suburban innocence conveniently, ignoring the ways in which the federal government had subsidized their home purchases as well.

In a bold move, these Lexington abutters circulated a petition that demanded a town-wide referendum asking if citizens upheld the Town Meeting vote.<sup>134</sup> The group received 1188 signatures in just two days.<sup>135</sup> While the letters in the town's newspaper suggested a sharp split in residents' attitudes toward the proposal, the final results revealed that that the difference of opinion did not run all that deep. Rainy conditions did not deter 15,317 people from the polls who voted two-to-one to overrule the Town Meeting's approval of the proposal.<sup>136</sup> The outcome also all but assured the demise of the RH zoning concept and called into question future efforts to bring affordable housing to Lexington. The implications of the referendum extended beyond fate of the specific project or even the town of Lexington to the future of affordable housing in the suburbs in general. News of the vote quickly spread throughout Boston's metropolitan ring as observers sought to make sense of its meaning.<sup>137</sup> The *Globe* editorial staff dubbed the referendum "unquestionably important as a bellwether of suburban thinking."<sup>138</sup> Observers did not just focus on the outcome of the Lexington referendum because of the town's historic reputation as the "Cradle of Liberty," but also because the vote came just a week after the United States Supreme Court had delivered a serious setback to the cause of suburban integration.

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<sup>134</sup> "Sufficient Signatures Secured for Referendum," *Lexington Minute-Man*, April 15, 1971; "Lexington to Vote on Housing," *Boston Globe*, May 3, 1971.

<sup>135</sup> "Residents Organize to Back Proposal," *Lexington Minute-Man*, April 22, 1971.

<sup>136</sup> "Subsidized Housing Defeated 2-1," *Lexington Minute-Man*, May 6, 1971.

<sup>137</sup> It even appeared as a streamer across the evening edition of the *Boston Globe* on the day of the vote, *Boston Evening Globe*, May 1, 1971; Martin F. Nolan, "Hottest Issue '70s: Low Income Homes," *Boston Globe*, May 11, 1971.

<sup>138</sup> "Lexington Shuts the Door," *Boston Globe*, May 9, 1971.

In *James v. Valtierra*, the Court upheld California's constitutional provision that local voters approve by referenda all public housing projects, endorsing the use of such votes as a "a procedure for democratic decision-making" and adopted a very narrow interpretation of the equal protection clause that excluded zoning and other exclusionary practices from its purview.<sup>139</sup> This decision constitutionally sanctioned the results of the Lexington vote.<sup>140</sup> *Valtierra* also inscribed Richard Nixon's attitudes toward suburban integration into law. Like his stance on the heated issue of school desegregation, Nixon had supported the idea of integration but vehemently rejected the methods required to create it.<sup>141</sup> His position aligned directly with the outlook of many residents of Lexington, Concord and Newton who eschewed blatant racial discrimination but accepted and even naturalized economic discrimination. In 1970, Nixon had clarified this distinction between racial and economic equality, affirming that "Open cities, open suburbs, open neighborhoods are a right for every American. Yet, he opposed "using Federal power, Federal coercion, or Federal money to force economic integration."<sup>142</sup> The *Valtierra* decision emboldened Nixon to become even more entrenched in his opposition to government involvement in overcoming the barriers of suburban exclusion. In June 1971, he released an 8,000-word "Statement of Equal Housing Opportunity," which endorsed local control over land use, advocated a limited role for the federal government, and encouraged suburbs to "provide fair, open and adequate housing" on a voluntary basis.<sup>143</sup> The outcome of the Lexington referendum and the reaction to low-income housing

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<sup>139</sup> *James v. Valtierra* 402 U.S. 137 (1971).

<sup>140</sup> For a more extended discussion of the Court's position, Danielson, *Politics of Exclusion*, 180-186; Lamb, *Housing Segregation in Suburban America*, 212-217.

<sup>141</sup> Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 137-138.

<sup>142</sup> Danielson, *Politics of Exclusion*, 228.

<sup>143</sup> Lamb, *Housing Segregation in Suburban America*, 142-143.

proposals in its neighboring communities foreshadowed the impossibility of such a solution to the problems of spatial segregation.

By announcing a moratorium on the production of all new federally funded housing projects in January 1973, Nixon symbolically and materially constrained further the efforts to build affordable housing in the suburbs of Massachusetts and elsewhere the nation. In addition to providing a new justification for suburban residents to oppose local projects, the announcements further circumscribed the plans of non-profit developers who relied on FHA funding. The moratorium also put new pressures on the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, which scrambled to fill “the federal vacuum.”<sup>144</sup> Between 1968 and 1972, MHFA had underwritten the construction of six thousand units in the Bay State suburbs. Most of this housing became occupied by elderly and lower income families from the immediate area and did not have a significant impact on reducing the more systemic problems of metropolitan racial and economic segregation. Yet MFHA still represented the most successful state agency in the nation at providing affordable housing in the suburbs.<sup>145</sup> Since Nixon’s announcement had coincided with a national economic recession, it became difficult for the agency to serve as “the only game in town.” Government-funded production in all parts of the state, including the suburbs, therefore, took a self-described “nose-dive” after 1973.<sup>146</sup>

The combination of these local, federal, and legislative circumstances led low-income housing advocates to see the state courts as their last and best means through which to challenge the structures of suburban exclusion. In March 1973, the

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<sup>144</sup> William J. White, “Statement by the Executive Director” in Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, “Annual Report 1974,” September 1974, SLM.

<sup>145</sup> Danielson, *Politics of Exclusion*, 285.

<sup>146</sup> White, “Statement by the Executive Director.”

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court confirmed this assessment when it upheld the constitutionality of Chapter 774 in a joint decision involving Concord Home Owning Corporation's petition and an appeal raised by the town of Hanover involving a proposal to build 88 units for the elderly.<sup>147</sup> In a 67-page unanimous ruling, the state's highest court confirmed that Chapter 774 did not violate home rule and affirmed the power of Housing Appeals Committee to override local exclusionary practices.<sup>148</sup> While undoubtedly a victory for CHOC, the verdict's impact reached far beyond Concord by potentially paving the way for thousands of units proposed and pending under the umbrella of Chapter 774.<sup>149</sup> Along with the landmark Mount Laurel case in New Jersey, the case confirmed to housing activists that state courts provided the best hope for attacking suburban segregation.<sup>150</sup> By 1975, however, HAC had overruled twenty-two of the twenty-four local zoning cases that had come before it, but most of the losing parties had opted to appeal the decisions in state courts further postponing construction. Only two of those projects had actually broken ground and the total number of Chapter 774 units had barely broken the 600 benchmark.<sup>151</sup> The continued sagas in Newton, Lexington and Concord further demonstrate both the possibilities and limitations of state

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<sup>147</sup> Harvey "Court Allows State to void 'snob zoning.'"

<sup>148</sup> *Board of Appeals of Hanover v. Housing Appeals Committee in Dept. of Community Affairs* 363 Mass. 339, 294 N.E.2d 393 (Mass. 1973).

<sup>149</sup> John O'Keefe, "Touro Ruling Clears Way for Development of 5548 Units of Low-Income Housing," *Boston Globe*, March 26, 1973; Evelyn Keene, "Snob Zoning Rule Only Opens Door for Developers," *Boston Evening Globe*, March 23, 1973.

<sup>150</sup> In 1975 the New Jersey Supreme deemed exclusionary zoning policies unconstitutional and required that municipalities make preparations for mixed-income housing. The vague language of New Jersey's court-ordered remedy brought many years of court battles and prevented construction of moderate cost units in Mount Laurel and the rest of the state. For more on the Mount Laurel Case see Kirp, et al, *Our Town*, For more on the benefits and drawbacks of using state courts to challenge suburban exclusion, see Danielson, *Politics of Exclusion*, 159-198

<sup>151</sup> Bedford and Beverly were the two communities to break ground. Lawrence Susskind, ed., *The Land Use Controversy in Massachusetts: Case Studies and Policy Options* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1975), 11; "A Share of the Suburbs," *Boston Globe*, May 25, 1975; Anne Kircheimer, "Progress Report on Snob Zoning," *Boston Globe*, November 1, 1975.

courts to induce municipalities to create affordable housing and the inability of activists in these communities to develop a coordinated attack on the structures of suburban exclusion.

The residents of Lexington became experts at the Chapter 774 appeals process and their efforts suggest that the procedural mechanisms embedded in the statute served not to ease, but, rather, to delay construction. Undeterred by the outcome of the town's referendum, two religious organizations sought to construct mixed-income housing in Lexington in the early 1970s. The Lexington Interfaith Housing Corporation, a joint venture of the Commission on Suburban Responsibility and the Council of Churches, proposed the first project. The Board of Appeals rejected the Interfaith's petition on the basis that its was not functionally designed for children. The HAC overturned that ruling in August 1973.<sup>152</sup> The Town of Lexington decided to appeal to Massachusetts Superior Court, which in a one sentence opinion upheld the HAC decision in the fall of 1974.<sup>153</sup> Construction began on the six-unit Interfaith Apartments three years after the initial proposal date and the limited project constituted the Lexington's first effort to fulfill the ambitious subsidized housing quota outlined in its 1970 plan.

As Interfaith remained entangled in the appeals process, the Archdiocese of Boston decided to use a portion of St. Brigid Church's property to build its own 16-unit mixed-income development.<sup>154</sup> The Archdiocese Planning Office for Urban Affairs

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<sup>152</sup> Anne R. Scigliano, "Appeals Decision Overruled, Interfaith Wins HAC Case," *Lexington Minute-Man*, August 30, 1973.

<sup>153</sup> Ann R. Scigliano, "Judge Rules in Favor of Interfaith Housing," *Lexington Minute-Man*, October 3, 1974.

<sup>154</sup> When Cardinal Medeiros arrived in Boston from Texas to assume control of the Archdiocese in the early 1970s, he sought to make low-income housing construction a top priority. Recognizing that "the suburbs won't do it, so we have to," the Archdiocese Planning Office for Urban Affairs surveyed its landholdings in Metropolitan Boston for development and identified six possibilities including Lexington. Planning Office for Urban Affairs, Archdiocese of Boston, SUMMARY OF THE ARCHDIOCESEAN

submitted a proposal for a MHFA-underwritten 16-townhouse project of mostly moderate-income units.<sup>155</sup> The town meeting and local Board of Appeals failed to approve the proposal on the grounds that it did not meet the “local needs” clause of Chapter 774. The Archdiocese decided to turn to the state.<sup>156</sup> In a repeat of the situation the year earlier, both the HAC and the Superior Court ruled in favor of the Archdiocese. The Zoning Board of Appeals eventually issued a permit for construction for the project called Pine Grove Village in 1975. The twenty-two units that resulted from the combined efforts of Interfaith and the Archdiocese hardly seemed worth the significant time, resources, and legal fees that both of these organizations had expended in its endeavor and still left the town far short of meeting its affordable housing quota.<sup>157</sup>

The Newton Community Development Foundation’s continued quest for its scattered site project reinforced that the legal route to affordable housing encouraged tactics of delay. Following its defeat in 1970, NCDF recognized that an appeal under the Chapter 774 law represented the only way to keep their project alive.<sup>158</sup> In May 1971, the NCDF submitted a petition for a modified plan, now funded by the MHFA instead of the federal government, that reduced the number of sites from six to ten and the number of

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HOUSING PROGRAM, c. 1974, Box 32, Interfaith Housing Folder, FWS. This inquiry led to a project in Beverly which made the Catholic Church the first successful developer of suburban low-income housing in Massachusetts, Susskind, *Land Use Controversy*, 116.

<sup>155</sup> Despite an endorsement from the Planning Board, abutters claiming that the project would create traffic and parking problems in the surrounding neighborhood and expressed concern that the units would be inhabited by “outsiders.” “Planning Board Supports St. Brigid’s Housing Plan,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, August 9, 1973; Rosemary O’Leary, “State Ruling Favors St. Brigid’s Housing,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, September 8, 1974; “St. Brigid’s Housing: the State’s Reasons,” *Lexington Minute-man*, September 19, 1974.

<sup>156</sup> “Why Did the Appeals Board Deny St. Brigid’s Proposal.”

<sup>157</sup> Leviton, “Affordable Housing in a Suburban Town.”

<sup>158</sup> In making this decision, the group, in fact, communicated with the Concord Home Owning Corporation who recently presented its case to its local Board of Appeals. James S. Craig to Robert C. Casselman, February 16, 1971, CHOC.

units from 508 to 367.<sup>159</sup> In its revised proposal, the NCDF showed its recognition of the fiscal concerns of Newton residents including a new section demonstrating the negligible impact of the development on property tax rates and per pupil costs. But just as the NDCF had revised its strategy, so too had its adversary. The Newton Civic Land Use Committee shifted its energy away from mobilizing grassroots opposition and towards countering the plan with the tools and mechanisms of law. In a flyer entitled “Who Shall Rule Out Destiny?,” NCLUA announced it was “fully prepared to use all legal means available to prevent encroachment of NCDF in the city of Newton.”<sup>160</sup> When the Board of Alderman again rejected the NCDF’s proposal in the summer of 1971 and the non-profit appealed the case to the state Housing Appeals Committee, NLUCA had the chance to fulfill this promise.

NLUCA used the hearings required by HAC to put the case into “slow-motion” and thereby exhaust the NCDF’s financial resources and options on the properties. Between August 1971 and October 1972, HAC held forty-two hearings in the Newton case. NCDF presented its entire argument that the project was “consistent with local needs” within the first hearing, calling only one witness. Roger Cohen, an attorney representing six abutters and serving the interests of NLUCA, filibustered the appeal by calling an endless list of witnesses that included local firefighters, police officers, school officials and housewives. Cohen himself, however, did most of the talking. Included in his hours of pontificating, he described how one site would break up the ethnic character of predominately Italian neighborhood where “in their yards they grow grapevines from which they make wine” and residents “sit on the their lawns, listen to operatic music,

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<sup>159</sup> “NCDF Seeks Permit for Local Housing,” *Newton Graphic*, April 29, 1971.

<sup>160</sup> Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 116-117.

drink wine and play bocci.”<sup>161</sup> Cohen’s flamboyant tactics led one member of HAC to declare, “The theater has been deprived of a considerable talent.” Another panelist stated, “We have seen the most ingenious legal maneuvers to circumvent” the law.<sup>162</sup> Cohen defended his tactics not as stalling, but as trying to ensure that HAC interpret the law “correctly.” His technique, however, earned national media attention and served as warning to other states trying to implement laws similar to Chapter 774.<sup>163</sup>

The prolonged hearings process frustrated the patience and financial resources of NCDF. “The whole purpose,” Marc Slotnick observed of his opponents, is “to wear us down so we’ll run out of time and money.”<sup>164</sup> The NLUCA strategy worked. In the fall of 1972, the NCDF abandoned five of its six sites and underwent a period of self-reflection and considered disbanding.<sup>165</sup> The board ultimately resolved to persist in its efforts but decided to overhaul its image and approach by withdrawing its appeal with HAC and focusing its resources on developing its remaining site on Hamlet Street. In order to do so, NCDF reached a complicated “marriage of convenience” agreement with the developer of a proposed luxury apartment building on adjacent property in order to finance the 50-townhouse project.<sup>166</sup> In 1974, six years after the NCDF had formed, the Board of Alderman approved the Hamlet plans, which became the first low and moderate-income development built in Newton. Yet the celebration of this

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<sup>161</sup> Liz Roman Gallese, “Suburban Stall: Housing for the Poor Blocked Despite Curb on ‘Snob Zoning’ Laws,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 17, 1972.

<sup>162</sup> Gallese, “Suburban Stall.”

<sup>163</sup> Gallese, “Suburban Stall.”

<sup>164</sup> Liz Roman Gallese, “Suburban Stall.”

<sup>165</sup> During this period of reflection, the board considered that it had failed to produce a single unit of housing, the federal government’s strong stance against subsidized housing in the suburbs, and that the units would create a token solution to a structural problem, see Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 124-128.

<sup>166</sup> In the deal the NCDF provided the developer of the Towers with the tax-shelter capability of a limited partnership, while the Tower provided the NCDF with the money it needed to finance the project until it received official funding from the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency. “NCDF, Towers Pass Board” *Newton Graphic*, February 7, 1974; Haar and Iatridis, *Housing the Poor in Suburbia*, 128-131.

accomplishment remained relatively muted. The single site represented a token solution to the problem of low-income housing and paled in comparison to the ambitious initial plans of the organization. NCDF did, nevertheless, succeed in initiating a discussion about the need for low-income housing in Newton and easing the path for developers with more moderate plans for units for elderly residents.<sup>167</sup> The outcome of the Newton saga, nevertheless, demonstrated the problems of invoking the appeals process with its built-in forms of delay as a means to overcome suburban grassroots opposition to low-income housing.

### **Open Space vs. Open Suburbs**

The next chapter in the battle over the Wheeler Property in Concord brought the limitations within the anti-snob appeals process into even sharper relief and underlined the ways in which environmental laws and politics provided further impediments to the construction of affordable housing. The project had endured a sustained challenge from abutting environmentalists and underwent another round of legal appeals only this time under the guise of the Massachusetts wetland protection laws. The next series of hearings in 1973 and 1974 exposed the ways in which the state's purportedly progressive environmental protection policies directly contributed to the delay and eventual prevention of grassroots efforts to challenge suburban exclusion. The confrontation also exposed a basic weakness in both the Anti-Snob Zoning and Wetlands Acts. Despite their emphasis on countering the practices of suburban exclusion and preserving environmental resources, the laws never truly forced the residents of Concord and other affluent communities to grapple with the ways in which their stringent zoning policies

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<sup>167</sup> "120 NHA Units of Low-Income Housing Here," *Newton Graphic*, February 25, 1971.

had made a probable wetland the only land available for an affordable housing development. Instead, these laws and their appeals process left the local affordable housing activists and environmentalists to fight one another.

The Concord Home Owning Corporation had celebrated the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's 1973 ruling as a "sign-post decision" both for their group and for proponents of low-income housing in the suburbs throughout the state.<sup>168</sup> The ruling, however, did not automatically usher in the construction of CHOC's development on the Wheeler property. Even with its sanction from the state's highest court, CHOC still had to follow the environmental regulations for building on potential wetlands. In 1965, the state legislature had passed the Hatch Act, which required a developer considering projects involving the dredging or filling of inland wetlands to apply for a permit from the state. A 1972 amendment had shifted the responsibility of evaluating Hatch Act applications away from the Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources and towards local conservation commissions. Although many observers had hailed this revision, the case in Concord illuminates both the benefits and constraints of the inland wetland protection policy's new emphasis on local control. The process outlined in the procedures of the environmental law provided the members of the Swamp Brook Preservation Association with an alternative means of preventing the CHOC project in order to protect the interests of the South Meadow neighborhood and the wetlands of the state.<sup>169</sup>

When CHOC filed its Hatch Act application and request for a hearing, SBPA immediately launched into action to persuade the Concord Natural Resources

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<sup>168</sup> "Town Won't Appeal Supreme Court Ruling," *Concord Journal*, April 5, 1973.

<sup>169</sup> Soon after the court decision, Edith Sisson, representing the residents of South Meadow, wrote to James Craig, president of the CHOC congratulate him and group for their "out of town victories" and to let him know that the neighborhood was "anxious" to hear their future plans (Edith A. Sisson to James S. Craig, May 20, 1973, CHOC).

Commission (NRC) to take its side in the fight. In making a case against the development, SBPA appealed explicitly to the home rule inclinations of local officials, trying to arouse fears that state agencies and courts had undermined their authority. “It is obvious,” Edith Sisson contended in a letter to the Commission, that “state officials can scarcely be as well acquainted with local environmental problems as local officials.” She asserted that “One could have hardly expect members of the State Department of Community Affairs or a Judge of the State Superior Court to have well qualified backgrounds in drainage problems!”<sup>170</sup> CHOC directly countered these localist claims by maintaining that even if a judge may not possess expertise on water problems, the consultants the group had hired did. The organization reiterated the case it had presented at the Board of Appeals hearings two years earlier about the suitability of the land for development. CHOC contended that cleaning out the brook and adjoining ditches of accumulated silt and debris would not only make the plot acceptable for construction, but also beneficial to abutters suffering from flooded basements and inoperable septic systems.<sup>171</sup>

The Hatch Act hearings revealed the limitations of using environmental discussions as a space for addressing issues of racial and spatial segregation. The technical focus on runoff, silt and water levels, excluded many residents from the discussion. This emphasis also pushed the conversation even further away from a meaningful debate about the issues of suburban responsibility and structural inequality that had initiated the CHOC project five years earlier. The lack of public support for the

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<sup>170</sup> Edith A. Sisson to Natural Resources Commission.

<sup>171</sup> The group also proposed creating a holding pond on the property for rainfall collection so as not to add to flood conditions in the area and promised to grant the town a long-term conservation restriction to guarantee the continual maintenance of Swamp Brook.

proposal or CHOC at the hearings, moreover, brought into sharp relief larger shifts within the political culture of Concord and the surrounding suburbs in the early 1970s. In a study of the problems and politics of suburban exclusion, scholar Michael Danielson contended that across the nation affordable housing advocates “faced increasingly severe competition for and support from the environmental movement” within its “‘natural’ constituency of better-educated affluent suburbanites.”<sup>172</sup> Environmental concern had long served as a foundational feature of Concord identity, but in the 1970s that commitment had undoubtedly intensified and made most residents hesitant about development of any kind. Compounding the problem, Concord also no longer boasted the same type of organized grassroots fair housing movement that had motivated the town’s participation in many of the central civil rights campaigns of the 1960s. By the early 1970s, the Concord committee, like most other suburban civil rights groups, had “lost their cohesion or dissolved.”<sup>173</sup> Likewise, many of the local liberally oriented churches, which had served as another important source of support on social justice issues, experienced both internal tensions and declining memberships, which also contributed to the lack of outspoken response within the community in support of CHOC.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Danielson, *Politics of Exclusion*, 126.

<sup>173</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, 57.

<sup>174</sup> For instance, the Trinity Episcopal Church in Concord roughly went from a membership of 2000 to 500 over the course of the 1970s. Rev. David Barney later stated “most large New England mainline parishes or congregations - mainline is Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Methodist and Episcopal, most congregations of large size in New England lost from 2/3 to 3/4 of their membership in those decades.” Rev. David Barney, interviewed by Renee Garrelick, February 22, 2001 (Concord Oral History Program, ([http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin\\_Aids/OralHistories.htm](http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin_Aids/OralHistories.htm) last accessed March 15, 2010). Likewise, John Buehrens, a Unitarian Universalist minister at the First Parish Church in Lexington in the late 1960s and 1970s, the Vietnam War had created cleavages within his congregation and others in the community. See, Buehrens Interview.

When the Concord NRC released its Order of Conditions for the Wheeler property in early 1974, it demonstrated further that the town's firm environmental ideals trumped a dedication to promoting socioeconomic diversity. The Wetland Protection Act did not grant NRC the legal authority to flatly deny CHOC the right to build, so instead the Commission issued a set of twenty-three conditions with which the nonprofit group had to comply before breaking ground.<sup>175</sup> CHOC believed that the requirements for specific data and alterations surpassed the NRC's authority. It decided to invoke the override clause in the Wetland Act and appealed the decision to the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on the grounds that the 23 conditions exceeded the measures outlined in the Inland Protection Act so patently that it represented a "deliberate effort to frustrate the entire project."<sup>176</sup> DNR agreed to hear the case.

The four sessions of DNR hearings in the early summer of 1974 centered around a highly technical discussion of dredging and draining that further obscured the issue of affordable housing at the heart of the case.<sup>177</sup> SBPA joined the appeal as interveners asking for a denial of development on the Wheeler property. Edith Sisson served as the group's representative and examiner. Despite no advanced training in engineering, hydrology or judicial proceedings, Sisson's involvement in the fight to preserve Swamp Brook afforded her expert status. Most of her presentation addressed the ecological features of the site, not the merits of CHOC's project or purpose. She did voice strong

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<sup>175</sup> "23 Conditions Set for CHOC Before Building," *Concord Journal*, January 10, 1974.

<sup>176</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Natural Resources, File No. 137-4 Concord Boston, Massachusetts, May 20, 1974, Box 2, SBPA.

<sup>177</sup> Linda Baker, "CHOC Hearing Opens Before State DNR," *Concord Free Press*, May 23, 1974. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Natural Resources, File No. 137-4 Concord Boston, Massachusetts, May 20, 1974, Box 2, SBPA; Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Natural Resources, File No. 137-4 Concord Boston, Massachusetts, May 28, 1974, Box 2, SBPA; Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Natural Resources, File No. 137-4 Concord Boston, Massachusetts, May 29, 1974, Box 2, SBPA; Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Natural Resources, File No. 137-4 Concord Boston, Massachusetts, June 10, 1974, Box 2, SBPA.

objection to affordable housing initiatives receiving any special scrutiny stating there was no extenuating circumstance “that should cause MHFA sponsored construction to have any lesser (or greater) impact on the environment than other construction.”<sup>178</sup> DNR agreed with Sisson’s argument, denying CHOC’s application on the grounds that the organization had failed to demonstrate that its development would take the proper protections against flooding.<sup>179</sup> The decision issued a major blow to CHOC. The group confronted severe financial difficulties, having exhausted its loans financing its legal case, and eventually decided to dissolve and abandon its quest to challenge Concord’s structures of exclusion.<sup>180</sup> The outcome exposed that despite the fact that it was less deliberate than the stalling strategy of the lawyers in Newton, the delays imposed by the environmental hearings process in Concord brought roughly the same outcome.

At least one local resident could not ignore the coincidence of the DNR decision, the disbanding of CHOC and the busing crisis raging on the streets of Boston during the fall of 1974. In a letter to the *Concord Journal*, A.K. Lewis wrote, “Let’s put all euphemisms aside” and “admit that Concord had denied an effort to allow black families to move in the community,” which “leaves us free at breakfast time to shake our head over newspaper reports of South Boston and deplore all bigotry.” Lewis asked that residents take “time to look in the mirror” and ask “How much of this injury and

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<sup>178</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Natural Resources, File No. 137-4, June 10, 1974.

<sup>179</sup> Arthur W Brownell, Commissioner, MEMORANDUM OF FINDINGS and DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES on FILE NO. 137-4, CONCORD, HOME OWNING CORPORATION, September 30, 1974, Box 1, Folder 1, SBPA.

<sup>180</sup> James S. Craig to Dick Neil, President Non-Profit Housing Development Corporation, October 12, 1974, CHOC; After failing to receive financial support from either public or private sources the CHOC officially dissolved in 1980 donating the \$1500 of its treasury to the Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council, whom they felt upheld similar aims. James S. Craig to Concord Homeowning Corp. Members, Memorandum, Subj: Proposed Final Meeting C.H.O.C., May 19, 1980, CHOC.

maining, in history's long light, will belong to us?"<sup>181</sup> Few town members took Lewis's call for self-reflection seriously and Concord continued to prove that it privileged open space to open suburbs and socioeconomic diversity. Throughout the 1970s, the town meeting generously allocated funds to land preservation.<sup>182</sup> In 1977, the Town Meeting approved an article to purchase the Wheeler Property for \$29,000 to "preserve and enhance Concord's rural character" and continue its commitment to wetland protection.<sup>183</sup> The acquisition of the Wheeler site and other plots of open space undoubtedly enhanced the attractiveness of Concord, yet at the same time it further heightened the barriers to bringing affordable housing to the community.

### **Conclusion: The Road to Segregation**

If the Kerner Report offered one bookend to the Massachusetts suburban affordable housing experiment, then publication by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights of *Route 128: Boston's Road to Segregation* provided the other. Published in 1975, at the height of the mandatory desegregation of the Boston Public Schools, the Civil Rights Commission's report interpreted the busing crisis as the direct result of the failure of suburban municipalities to take the warnings of the Kerner Commission seriously. *Boston's Road to Segregation* forcefully disproved the optimistic predictions of academics in the late 1960s "that greater racial integration would occur" in the nation's suburbs.<sup>184</sup> Using statistical evidence and expert testimony, the report demonstrated that

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<sup>181</sup> A.K. Lewis to the Editor *Concord Journal*, October 17, 1974.

<sup>182</sup> Concord Natural Resources Commission, "Proposed Conservation Land Acquisitions, 1977," Concord Pamphlet Collection, Concord Special Collections, Concord Free Public Library, Concord, MA.

<sup>183</sup> Proposed Conservation Land Acquisitions, 1977"; The SBPA who had both financially and organizationally assisted in the transaction interpreted it as a major accomplishment, Tom B. Arnold, to Edith Sisson, April 22, 1977, Box 1, Folder 1, SBPA.

<sup>184</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, 1.

residential segregation and discrimination in metropolitan Boston had actually intensified during the 1960s. The authors placed the major blame for this pattern on the exclusionary zoning practices and put to rest any question that resistance to affordable housing constituted anything less than a clear form of racial discrimination. The Commission assailed Chapter 774 suggesting that through tactics such as building housing for the elderly only, the law “stimulate [d] suburban communities with new strategies for circumventing racial inclusion.”<sup>185</sup> Despite its criticism of the law, the report recognized that the only chance for rectifying the problems of suburban exclusion rested in increased state regulation.<sup>186</sup> The Commissioners warned, “Unless the state acts swiftly, forcefully and effectively, suburban residential patterns are likely to be firmly established in a manner which cannot be changed for generations.”<sup>187</sup> State officials and white suburban residents largely ignored the recommendations and this dire prediction became a reality.

The *Boston Globe* reaffirmed in 1989 the findings of the Civil Rights Commission in a series of articles to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Anti-Snob Zoning Act. The articles revealed that 20 years after its passage, only 28 of 351 communities had fulfilled the statute’s 10 percent benchmark and most of these were cities like Boston, Worcester and Springfield.<sup>188</sup> Despite the fact that the state shared the honor of having the most expensive housing in the nation, the majority of its wealthiest towns had failed to build even a single low-income unit. These suburbs continued to assert “herculean

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<sup>185</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Route 128*, 62.

<sup>186</sup> These recommendations include more state oversight over of local housing and land use, the creation of regional rather than local housing authorities and a system that made government subsidies to suburban communities contingent upon developing nondiscriminatory housing, employment and land use policies.

<sup>187</sup> U.S. Civil Rights Commission, *Route 128*, xii.

<sup>188</sup> Peter S. Canellos, “After 20 Years, Anti-Snob Zoning Found Ineffective,” *Boston Globe*, January 21, 1989.

efforts” to challenge any plan to bring mixed-income housing to their communities.<sup>189</sup>

Newton and Lexington both sought to transcend the controversy that had dominated local politics for protracted periods. In the late 1970s, both communities enacted inclusionary zoning policies, which led each town to build a limited number of affordable housing units primarily to serve elderly white residents. These projects provided only token solutions to the twin problems of racial segregation and suburban exclusion and did little to change the predominately white and middle-class demographic of both communities.

The experiments with constructing mixed-income housing in Concord, Lexington and Newton prove that not every suburbanite opposed the concept of living in a socioeconomically diverse community. Many residents fought hard to force their neighbors to accept responsibility for the problems of racial and spatial inequality, but these efforts fell drastically short. The affordable housing effort never sparked any serious discussion of the ways in which stringent zoning laws made questionable sites like the Wheeler Property in Concord the only plots available for multi-family developments. Nor did it lead these affordable housing proponents and environmentalists to recognize that their common enemy of unregulated growth had created the lack of both open space and socioeconomic diversity in the suburbs. This limited solution has also helped further enshrine class segregation as an accepted and guiding principle of the agenda of both political parties as well as federal housing policy.<sup>190</sup>

Like the fair housing movement and the METCO program, affordable housing advocates reveal another important example of the ways in which suburban liberals provided largely individualist and symbolic solutions to the structural problems. These

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<sup>189</sup> Canellos, “After 20 Years, Anti-Snob Zoning Found Ineffective.”

<sup>190</sup> See Bonastia, *Knocking on the Door*; Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 301-323.

activists did succeed in building a small number of units in a few suburbs, just as they had brought a handful of African-American families and students in earlier endeavors, but they failed to alter the structures of exclusion and inequality in any significant way. Ultimately, the battle over affordable housing provides an especially poignant example of the ways the ideology of suburban liberalism has more constricted than assisted the ongoing efforts to create meaningful social equality. These possibility and constraints in suburban liberals' ability to accept responsibility for the consequences of structural segregation came into equally sharp focus during the busing crisis, which is discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 8: Building Walls

### Introduction

In 1975, Newton resident Marjorie Arons wrote an editorial in the local newspaper asking: “Where are Liberals Going?”<sup>1</sup> “It was easier during the Vietnam War—you were either for it or against,” Arons observed, but in the economic recession of the 1970s, “pocketbook concerns conflict with their just goals of a just society and equal distribution of available resources.” In Newton, which carried one of the highest property tax rates in the nation, many residents made their priorities clear. “Belt-tightening seems to have choked off this spirit of altruism, even of equity,” Arons complained. “The community is uptight. We dig a moat.” The community’s wavering commitment to the Metropolitan Council of Educational Opportunity (METCO), the one-way, voluntary and state-funded integration program during the Boston busing crisis, captured the changing outlook at which Aron’s question aimed. The battle that ensued in Newton to preserve the program exposed the fundamental dilemma at the heart of suburban liberalism between fiscal concerns and a commitment to racial and spatial equality.

Throughout the postwar period the issue of quality education shaped both the housing choices and political agenda of a majority of white suburbanites in

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<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Arons, “Where are Liberals Going?” *Newton Times*, April 30, 1975.

Massachusetts and across the nation.<sup>2</sup> Defense of parental autonomy and class and race privilege played central roles in galvanizing suburban backlash to school desegregation in the 1960s and 1970s. Certainly not all suburban residents viewed racial integration programs like METCO as a threat to their children's education, with many supporting one-way integration programs like METCO. This vision of metropolitan integration, however, remained firmly rooted in a suburban-centered ideology that interpreted racial discrimination in terms of personal prejudice rather than structural inequality.

Despite an apparent commitment to the ideals of racial equality, many residents in traditionally liberal communities like Newton clung to a political outlook of middle-class entitlements and market-based individualism. The individualist and consumer-based worldview led its adherents to see racial harmony largely in market-based terms. Thus, they could support one-way, voluntary programs like METCO, which offered the perceived benefits of educational equity without the inconveniences or financial sacrifices of a more systemic fully metropolitan solution. This interpretation of consumer rights allowed many suburbanites to believe they were entitled to the perceived educational benefits of METCO without spending local tax dollars to attain it. The residents in these communities, therefore, supported integration in theory but voiced reluctance to accept any remedy that would potentially affect their property values and tax rates or force them to send their own children into the inner city.

By the time of the mandatory desegregation of the Boston Public Schools in 1974, the nationally recognized METCO program had already placed 2,600 students in more than 30 communities, including 345 in Newton alone. The busing crisis provided an important moment of opportunity for expanding the small program. Amidst the confusion

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<sup>2</sup> See Lassiter, *Silent Majority*; Cohen, *Consumer's Republic*, 194-256;

caused by court-ordered busing, many suburban liberals promoted the expansion of METCO as a middle ground between the proposals of comprehensive metropolitan integration and the violent resistance of the antibusing movement. In response to this call, Newton and other suburban communities sought either to get involved for the first time in the voluntary integration initiative or to increase the number of students currently transported to their towns. The Massachusetts government, however, was in the midst of fiscal crisis and announced it could not afford to finance this rise in participation. Instead, it requested that suburban towns accept limited financial responsibility to keep the program going. Many residents strongly refused, and some began to oppose the initiative's premise outright. The struggles to preserve the program in Newton and elsewhere that took shape against the backdrop of urban busing crisis and the national recession revealed the clear limits of suburban liberalism to foster a sense of collective responsibility for the problems of structural inequality that the busing crisis itself reflected.

Despite the voluminous literature on the Boston busing crisis, most accounts provide little or no discussion of suburban liberals or METCO. These works focus primarily on white working class resistance to mandatory desegregation.<sup>3</sup> In an effort to treat the politically alienated white working-class neighborhood defenders with seriousness and sympathy, these scholars have effectively taken at face value the

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<sup>3</sup> See for example, Emmett Buell, *School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1982); Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*; Lukas, *Common Ground*; Alan Lupo, *Liberty's Chosen Home: The Politics of Violence in Boston* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977); George Metcalf, *From Little Rock to Boston* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983). J. Michael Ross and William M. Berg, "I Respectfully Disagree with The Judge's Order": *The Boston School Desegregation Controversy* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981); J. Brian Sheehan, *The Boston School Integration Dispute: Social Change and Legal Maneuvers* (Columbia University Press, 1984); Steven Taylor, *Desegregation in Boston and Buffalo: The Influence of Local Leaders* (Albany: State University Press of New York Press, 1998).

“antibusers” depictions of “suburban liberals” like Wellesley resident Federal Judge W. Arthur Garrity, as the primary culprits in the controversy without examining fully their role in the desegregation dilemma.<sup>4</sup> These accounts tend to give METCO and the issue of voluntary metropolitan integration only a passing reference and overlook the funding controversies in places like Newton even though they remained front-page news throughout the era of court-ordered busing.<sup>5</sup> A set of civil rights scholars have criticized these works for treating white resistance as the only story of the Boston busing crisis and marginalizing the black community as passive victims. As an important corrective they have concentrated on years of grassroots activism by urban African-Americans for educational equality that culminated in the class action suit of a group of black parents against the Boston Public Schools.<sup>6</sup> These revised accounts, however, also focus primarily on the strategies of residents within the city and thereby also overlook the suburbs and the politics surrounding voluntary busing during the desegregation era. Placing white suburban residents and METCO at the center rather than periphery of the story of the busing crisis challenges these standard narratives. It demonstrates that ordinary white suburban residents were not passive bystanders but played fundamental roles in shaping both the remedies and political legacy of the school desegregation controversy.

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<sup>4</sup> An example of this line of analysis, Formisano draws a comparison to Vietnam asserting, “once again poor blacks and lower-class whites were the foot soldiers for a war initiated and pursued by liberal elites” Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 225.

<sup>5</sup> J. Anthony Lukas does not mention METCO in his 600-page book. Formisano devotes little more than two pages to the program, see Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 38, 230-231, and Lupo spends two pages on it, see Lupo, *Liberty’s Chosen Home*, 308-309.

<sup>6</sup> For examples of the effort to shift attention away from the white working-class toward the struggles of black civil rights activists in the city, see Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, Jeanne Theoharis, “Hidden in Plain Sight,” Theoharis, “I’d Rather Go to School in the South.” Theoharis does discuss METCO at length but focuses exclusively on its black participants, not the role and reaction of white suburbanites. Likewise there have been a series of social scientific works on METCO, most notably Eaton, *The Other Boston Busing Story*, but these have examined mostly its effect on the black students enrolled.

The efforts to preserve METCO expose the vibrant strains of political moderation and conservatism that existed even in such supposed bastions of liberalism as Newton. The combination of historians' emphasis on reactionary populists and dismissive depictions of liberals outside of Boston have together obscured the prevalence of a fiscally moderate suburban worldview that transcended party lines. The battles over the future of METCO reveal the more complex spectrum of political ideologies that operated in suburban settings. Untangling the motivations for many residents' reservations about METCO and the idea of metropolitan integration as a whole provides a more nuanced understanding of liberalism and conservatism and their relationship to one another. It illustrates how, as much as any election, the issues of quality education and taxpayer rights in the suburbs came to shape the political landscape of the 1970s. These battles also reinforce the constraints that this suburban-centered emphasis on fiscal and racial moderation placed upon grassroots liberal activism. As with the largely unsuccessful quest to build affordable housing in the suburbs, the battles over METCO highlight grassroots liberal activists' limited effectiveness at challenging or changing the dominant suburban sensibility of market-based individualism, pocketbook politics, and racial and class exclusivity.

The implications of these forms of fiscal conservatism extend beyond the budgetary battles of 1975 and 1976. The refusal of many suburban residents to accept even limited financial responsibility for the problem of school desegregation had far-reaching consequences. This fiscally moderate stance permanently ended the discussion about more comprehensive metropolitan integration programs in and around Boston and seriously constrained the quest for educational equity nationally. The struggles over

METCO also crystallized a language and outlook of taxpayer rights among suburban residents across the political spectrum. This fiscally moderate agenda culminated in 1980 in the successful suburban-driven ballot initiative for Proposition 2 ½ that placed a cap on property taxes and, by extension, state and local government spending discussed in chapter 10.

This controversy did not spell the demise of METCO or suburban liberalism, as many commentators either feared or celebrated. The outcome of the protracted struggle underscores the ways in which the pragmatic strategy of white liberal activists to pursue their agenda had repercussions at the metropolitan, state and national levels. Both during and after the busing crisis, the black and white leadership of METCO warned supporters and detractors that the program offered very limited relief to the much more complex problems of school desegregation and that its success actually rested on the small number of students it transported into the suburbs. Examining the institutional and ideological limits to METCO, therefore, provides a way of understanding how and why programs rooted in the individualist principles of suburban liberalism have persisted but have failed to ever fully address the enduring dilemmas of structural inequality in Massachusetts and nationwide.

### **Send Wellesley's Children to Roxbury Schools**

From the moment the ink dried on the Racial Imbalance Act (RIA) in 1965, the Boston School Committee engaged in a standoff with the State Board of Education. Although the law sought to provide the state oversight over the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools, the School Committee willfully evaded the demands for the

implementation of such a policy through various forms of delay that actually increased the rate of racial segregation.<sup>7</sup> By 1971, Boston had sixty-seven racially imbalanced (meaning more than half non-white) schools as opposed to forty-six in 1965 and more than 4,000 white students attended schools with no children of color.<sup>8</sup> Frustrated by these evasive tactics, the state Board of Education used its legal power to cut off state funds to the School Committee. Encouraged by the perennial mandate of white Boston voters, however, the Committee members became even more intransigent, leading the state and activists to find other avenues to challenge them.<sup>9</sup>

The RIA not only prevented more forceful state action but also made the desegregation proponents in Massachusetts slower to turn to the courts than in many other major urban areas. The combination of the persistent refusal of the Committee and the success of desegregation cases in other parts of the country, however, led civil rights groups to pursue the issue in both state and federal courts. A series of rulings between 1967 and 1973 by the state's Supreme Judicial Court had upheld the constitutionality of the RIA. These decisions brought the School Committee ever closer to compliance, but the body continued to resist. In 1972, the local chapter of the NAACP also filed a class-action suit in U.S. District Court on behalf of fifteen black Boston parents, claiming that schools officials had intentionally maintained a segregated school system and thereby denied black children equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment. Judge W.

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<sup>7</sup> Harvard Center for Law and Education, *A Study of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act*, 214. In its most extreme maneuver, the committee encouraged the use of the "open enrollment policy" originally intended to allow black students to enroll in primarily white schools to enable white students to transfer from schools in black or transitional other sections of the city.

<sup>8</sup> Harvard Center for Law and Education, *A Study of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act*, i.

<sup>9</sup> Ross and Berg, *I Respectfully Disagree*, 4-5.

Arthur Garrity deliberated on his decision in *Morgan v. Hennigan* for over two years creating a period of increased uncertainty.

While Garrity mulled over the evidence, members of the School Committee and their grassroots supporters launched a campaign to convince the Massachusetts legislature to repeal the Racial Imbalance Act altogether. As the NAACP and other groups focused their energies on the federal case, METCO filled a vacuum, since repealing the RIA would remove the legal footing on which the program's existence and funding rested. This campaign underscored that the program's organizational structure, combining white suburbanites and African-Americans from Boston, made it particularly effective for pressuring the state legislature.<sup>10</sup> These lobbying activities brought METCO both desired and undesired attention as it thrust the program and the concept of metropolitan integration closer to the center of the desegregation drama.

The conversation surrounding the future of the Racial Imbalance Act abruptly ended on June 21, 1974, when Judge Garrity announced his long awaited decision in the federal court case. In *Morgan v. Hennigan*, Garrity flatly rejected the School Committee's argument that residential segregation, not their policies, had created racial imbalance. He ruled the Boston school authorities had "knowingly carried out a systematic program of segregation affecting all the city's students, teachers, and school facilities and had intentionally brought about or maintained a dual school system." He declared, "The entire school system of Boston is unconstitutionally segregated."<sup>11</sup> The 152-page opinion was at least five times the length of the rulings concerning other cities, which Garrity had done purposely both to prevent reversal on appeal and to overwhelm

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<sup>10</sup> METCO, EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES, February 26, 1970, Box 5, Folder 26, METCO.

<sup>11</sup> *Morgan v. Hennigan*, 379 F.Supp. 410 (D.Mass.1974).

the busing opposition through a preponderance of evidence.<sup>12</sup> The Supreme Court decisions in *Swann v. Mecklenberg* and *Keyes v. Denver* gave Garryty firm legal footing to make his ruling, but more importantly he had spent two years parsing out the intricacies of the Boston school's placement policies. He found that Boston officials had used busing, facility construction, district lines and feeder patterns to maintain a segregated system and that their hiring practices had discriminated against black applicants for teaching and administrative positions.<sup>13</sup> While he acknowledged that residential segregation did exist in Boston, he did not believe it had influenced the deliberate actions of the School Committee, nor did the committee appear to uniformly uphold the "neighborhood school" policy, which Garryty deemed "have amounted to a policy at all policy at all."<sup>14</sup> It turned out that the tactics of the School Committee to avoid compliance with the Racial Imbalance Act provided Garryty with even clearer evidence of its willful "intent" to segregate.

Garryty focused his attention more on confirming the existence of the School Committee's segregationist policies than in coming up with an effective remedy. With only three months until the start of the school year, he decided to implement as Phase I of the desegregation remedy a plan already developed by the State Board of Education, which called for the busing of 17,000 to 18,000 students. The arbitrarily drawn plan matched Roxbury and South Boston High Schools, which would prove to have disastrous

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<sup>12</sup> Legally this strategy worked. Six months later the US Court of Appeals ruled, "in light of the ample factual record and the precedents of the Supreme Court, we do not see how the court could have reached any other decision." Lukas, *Common Ground*, 238-239.

<sup>13</sup> *Morgan v. Hennigan*, 379 F.Supp. 473.

<sup>14</sup> *Morgan v. Hennigan*, 379 F.Supp. 473.

consequences.<sup>15</sup> From the first day of school in September 1974 onward, some city neighborhoods became engulfed in violence. Mobs of whites sought to prevent implementation of the court order through a combination of bricks and slurs. The Governor eventually called in the National Guard, but it did little to quell the violence. The showdown lasted for two years, climaxing with the infamous photograph of the white students chasing an African-American man in a business suit with an American flag, which symbolically sealed Boston's reputation as "the most racist city in America."<sup>16</sup> The images of the confrontations transmitted across the country became a flashpoint of attitudes about racial equality. Some interpreted the conflict as evidence of the pervasiveness of white working-class racism, some as the problems of elite suburban liberal social engineers like Garrity trying to impose their vision onto poor whites and blacks. For others it called into question long-held regional distinctions about the supposed backwardness of the South and the enlightenment of the North.

Writers like Ronald Formisano and J. Anthony Lukas have illuminated the classed dimensions of the busing incident by the ways in which spectacled, Harvard-educated and suburban-dwelling federal judge Arthur Garrity became the tangible face for a larger confluence of anger, frustration and class-based resentments of the opponents to the court order.<sup>17</sup> In the years following his decision Garrity received thousands of letters, which demonstrated the range of frustration that Bostonians felt over the desegregation order.

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<sup>15</sup> The architect of the state plan, Charles Glenn, described that the its drawing was "largely mechanical." He explained, "We simply took a large map and started moving across the city in a big arc from northwest to southeast, dividing it into districts so that each school would include the right proportions of black and white kids." Lukas, *Common Ground*, 239.

<sup>16</sup> For more about this incident and its meanings, see Louis P. Masur, *The Soiling of Old Glory: The Story of a Photograph That Shocked America* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> For more about Garrity see Lukas, *Common Ground* 222-251, Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 66-87. These authors sympathize strongly with this antipathy toward Garrity and other officials, suggesting that the federal court orders assured the burden of integration fell on the poor of both races.

These pieces of correspondence, in particular, document the sense of spatial inequity driving much of antibusing movement's anger. Many ordinary citizens sent letters simply addressed to "Judge Garrity, Wellesley" or to his actual home address of 40 Radcliffe Road, demonstrating how much the jurist's hometown became a part of descriptors that both the media and the anti-busing leadership used to present Garrity and his decision.<sup>18</sup> Opponents of busing frequently invoked a list of exclusive suburbs with Wellesley usually at the top. For instance, an angry Boston student wrote to Garrity, "Why should I be discriminated against just because I live in South Boston and not in Newton or Wesley (sic) or Acton or any other rich suburban town."<sup>19</sup> Drawing further attention to the judge's choice of residency, the leading anti-busing group, Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR), staged several protests at Garrity's home following the court order. The largest of these trips took place one Friday night in early October when entire families from various parts of Boston joined a motorcade from the city to Wellesley with the signs "Put Garrity on a Bus" attached to their cars.<sup>20</sup> Almost 3,000 demonstrators filled the street outside the judge's white colonial house, singing "Here We Go Southie," "We Want Garrity," and reciting a mock pledge of allegiance accusing the judge of providing "liberty and justice for none." Further emphasizing the themes of patriotism, democracy and freedom, a young man waved a large American flag at the line of Wellesley Police officers standing on Garrity's front lawn. A small group of demonstrators tried to reach the judge's home on a Saturday night a few weeks later, but

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<sup>18</sup> Garrity meticulously organized and saved all of these letters, which he preserved in chronological order as part of the W. Arthur Garrity Jr. Papers on the Boston Schools Desegregation Case, Archives and Special Collections, Department, Healey Library, University of Massachusetts-Boston (hereafter "JG"). Judge Garrity stipulated that only a single initial of the authors could be published.

<sup>19</sup> Someone who just wants to be EQUAL to W. Arthur Garrity, September 9, 1974, Box 49, Folder 4, JG.

<sup>20</sup> Tom Mulligan, "Wellesley Protest," *South Middlesex News*, October 5, 1974.

police stopped them at the Wellesley line.<sup>21</sup> These trips undoubtedly helped the antibusing activists draw attention to spatial inequities embedded in the desegregation order. The protests solidified Wellesley into a key coordinate point in the antibusers' cognitive cartography of metropolitan's Boston economic privilege.

Opponents of the court order also relied on economic geography to point out that Garrity and prominent liberal politicians' own children remained exempted from the decision and its consequences because they lived in the suburbs or went to private schools. Many citizens placed their anger about the spatial contradictions of Garrity's order in explicitly racially-coded imagery. An angry Bostonian even affixed the handwritten headline "Send Wellesley's Children to Roxbury Schools" to a newspaper clipping about a black man with a gun robbing a white woman and sent it to Garrity's home address.<sup>22</sup> Other white Boston residents framed their outrage and resentment that Garrity and his neighbors did not have to bear the burden of desegregation in terms of class injustice rather than racial antipathy. "You live in the suburbs," an East Boston mother chastised Garrity, "It would be wonderful if children from South Boston, Hyde Park, Roxbury, East Boston, and the rest of the City could go to nice suburban schools...like your kids did, and the children of Senator Kennedy and Senator Brooke and Governor Sargent."<sup>23</sup>

For many more middle-class whites, the exemption of these politicians from the consequences of court-ordered busing embodied their increased frustration about a loss of

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<sup>21</sup> "Anti-busing protest march draws suburbs, politicians," *South Middlesex News*, October 29, 1974.

<sup>22</sup> "Life and Death Drama," September, 1974, JG. Fear of crime was a common theme in the letters to Garrity (Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 184-187).

<sup>23</sup> Formisano *Boston Against Busing*, 178. The anti-busers launched a similar attack on the *Boston Globe*, since it strongly supported desegregation even though most of its staff, including Chief Editor Thomas Winship lived in the suburbs and the paper had a growing reputation for a "suburban orientation." Lukas, *Common Ground*, 473-508; Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 156-157.

individual choice and control over their children's education.<sup>24</sup> An enraged white Boston resident observed that parental choice had become "reserved now for Brookline and Dover," which were the respective hometowns of Michael Dukakis and Francis Sargent, the two candidates in the 1974 gubernatorial race.<sup>25</sup> Public figures like Garrity, Sargent and Dukakis clearly provided a convenient synecdoche for the white antibusers' resentments about suburban liberals as a whole. A creative city resident sent an imagined letter of apology from Garrity to South Boston for singling them out in the desegregation order, declaring, "What was a more segregative act than my own and thousands like me who chose to reside in Wellesley and other racially isolated places?" The letter went on to decry, "Our action was a rather cheap way of showing our liberalism."<sup>26</sup> Opponents on all points of the political spectrum had lobbed dismissive comments against suburban liberals for years, but none had the staying power of the statements of these South Boston protestors. Garrity's naïve surprise at the reaction to his order also, as Lukas has suggested, symbolized liberals' lack of understanding of the social and structural complexities of the city and further reinforced a sense of the spatial and political disjunction between blue-collar city dwellers and white middle-class suburban professionals.

Busing opponents found the METCO program another effective image for pointing out the inequities of both the court order and suburban liberal exclusivity. In opposing the program, many ordinary white citizens assumed a discourse of victimization

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<sup>24</sup> Formisano points out that many middle-class whites in places like West Roxbury saw the issue of busing in more individualist and upwardly mobile terms and voiced concerns about their own children's education than in the more populist terms of lower-income residents of South Boston and Charlestown who sought to defend their neighborhoods. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 133-137.

<sup>25</sup> "Wellesley Garrity," September 1974, Box 49, Folder 4, JG.

<sup>26</sup> A SUGGESTED LETTER FROM WENDELL TO SOUTHIE, February 5, 1975, Box 50, Folder 19, JG.

and inequality that subverted both the rights-based language and themes of civil rights movement and New Deal liberalism.<sup>27</sup> Johanne Tallent of South Boston chafed against the fact that her tax dollars financed a program that she “couldn’t use if I wanted to, because of my color.”<sup>28</sup> Other white parents invoked ideas of reverse discrimination to challenge the race-based admissions policy of the program. “METCO busses black children to suburban schools which are supposed to have a better educational system,” one white Boston parent complained, “Yet if I am dissatisfied with the Boston educational system, I am being discriminated because of my white race and do not have the same right to bus the child to that suburban school.”<sup>29</sup>

Conservative journalist Dick Sennott and antibusing Boston School Committee member John Kerrigan helped their supporters draw the connections between the program and the contradictions in the suburban liberal attitudes.<sup>30</sup> In his widely circulated column, Sennott often denounced “suburban liberals” for telling he and other white Bostonians “what ‘racists’ we are because we object to forced busing. And they go home to their Newtons, their Wellesleys.... where a select few minority kids come out and spend six hours in their schools but are forbidden to live there.”<sup>31</sup> Kerrigan also attacked suburban residents who cited METCO as an example of their commitment and involvement to problems of the city and frequently dubbed the program a “perfect

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<sup>27</sup> For example a Roslindale couple who called themselves “United States citizens, lifetime residents of Boston, homeowners in Roslindale, hardworking taxpayers and parents” wrote to Garrity that they would like our tax money spent for quality education and teachers and not for buses, fuel, police and helicopters and motorcycles around our homes and community constantly.” T and M to Judge Garrity, October 8, 1974, Box 49, Folder 6, JG. For more on the ways that white urban residents appropriated the ideology of the Civil Rights Movement and the New Deal, see Sugrue, *Origins*, 209-229.

<sup>28</sup> Johanne Tallent to Editor, *Boston Herald American*, September 23, 1976.

<sup>29</sup> TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, September 23, 1974, Box 49, Folder 5, JG.

<sup>30</sup> Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 189-190.

example of tokenism.”<sup>32</sup> Even before Garrity’s ruling, Kerrigan had sought to push the limits of this “tokenism” by submitting legislation for a ten-fold expansion of METCO that would transport 19,000 black students to all of the 85 towns within 20 miles of Boston, placing an average of 224 students in each community. He believed his plan provided a strong counterpoint to the ideals of “cocktail party liberals who have damned us from one end of the Commonwealth, . . . who sit comfortably in their lily white communities with their lily white schools.”<sup>33</sup>

The white antibusers were not only Boston residents to invoke the METCO program in order to point out the inequities of the busing order. For many members of the city’s black community, the program reinforced their limited options. Thousands of minority parents tried to put their children in METCO before and after Phase I began, but the program was only equipped to take a few hundred new students each year. In September 1974, Garrity received a poignant handwritten request for reassignment from an African-American girl sent to South Boston High under the court order. The girl explained that she and nine siblings were so scared they had only gone to school twice and instead that he put them in METCO. “I know a girl who goes with Medco to suburb and she is gonna go to college cause they teach you a lot and no one is a scared to go to school,” she implored. “I rely want to go to good school where there is good kid and I will be able to get a good education, so we don’t have to be called poor anymore.” She asked that Judge Garrity send her, her siblings and other black students assigned to schools in South Boston to the suburbs because “We could all learn more and be friends

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<sup>32</sup>Boston School Committee, Proceedings of the School Committee, January 15, 1974, Proceedings of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1974, (City of Boston, Administrative Services Printing Section, 1976).

<sup>33</sup>Boston School Committee, Proceedings of the School Committee, January 15, 1974.

cause the people in better neighborhoods like us better. They would not try to kill us or anything like that.”<sup>34</sup> These desperate pleas from white and black Boston residents helped position METCO and the issues of metropolitan integration and suburban exclusivity at the center of the ongoing debate surrounding desegregation.

### **Metropolitanization**

The focus on the violence of the busing crisis has obscured the centrality of metropolitan integration and the METCO program specifically during the desegregation era. In fact, “metropolitanization” was a key word in Boston residents' lexicon of busing-based terminology. Since the early 1960s, progressive social scientists had contended that a two-way busing program between Boston and its surrounding suburbs offered the best remedy to the intertwined problems of school and housing segregation. Advocates of metropolitan integration had repeatedly stressed that the compact geography of Greater Boston made it ideal for two-way busing. For instance, Roxbury and Brookline are less than two miles apart. Indeed, several of the white suburban liberal architects of METCO had initially envisioned the one-way program as but the first step toward comprehensive metropolitan integration. By 1974, the state's most powerful officials, including Governor Francis Sargent, future Governor Michael Dukakis, and Mayor Kevin White, had joined these calls for a significant expansion of METCO as an alternative to the compulsory integration of the Boston Public Schools. These politicians each suggested significantly more modest increases than John Kerrigan's bold call for involving 19,000

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<sup>34</sup> Anonymous to Judge Garrity, September 1974, Box 49, Folder 5, JG.

students and used a much more moderate language that placed an emphasis on individual choice rather than force to frame the necessity of a metropolitan solution.<sup>35</sup>

During the fall of 1974, with the protests raging outside South Boston High School and tarnishing the progressive image of city, several officials and academics renewed their campaign to involve the suburbs in Phase II of Garrity's remedy. Many ordinary Boston residents joined in, demanding, "Upper and Middle class should be included in busing plans."<sup>36</sup> "The whole idea of metropolitanization would be great," Garrity publicly responded to these suggestions, "if there was a constitutional way to do it."<sup>37</sup> Just weeks after *Morgan* was announced, the Supreme Court voted 5-4 in *Milliken v. Bradley* to overturn a federal court consolidation decree demanding that the suburbs of Detroit, not just the city proper, be held responsible for remedying segregation and therefore be included in school integration plans. The Court limited the desegregation

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<sup>35</sup> In 1973 White issued a position paper called "Achieving Equal Education in Boston" that called for equalizing state aid to schools, building magnet schools to attract suburbanites, and significantly expanding the student body and the funding of METCO, which was part of his recognition that "not the separation of races inside the city, but the separation of classes in and outside the city" that produced educational inequality. Mayor Kevin White, "Achieving Equal Education in Boston," April 10, 1973, Box 4, FWS. Lupo, *Liberty's Chosen Home*, 159-161. In May, 1974, Governor Sargent suggested that instead of mandatory two-way busing, the state adopt a "freedom of choice" plan for minority children by doubling the size of METCO from 1,900 to 4,000 students, increasing the budget of program, creating magnet schools and giving black parents the option of either an imbalanced neighborhood school or an integrated school elsewhere in the city. "Sargent's Televised message on the Racial Imbalance Act," *Boston Globe*, May 11, 1974. His opponent in the upcoming Governor race, Dukakis proposed dividing the city into a dozen equally populated community districts of 60,000 people each along "historical, geographical and natural boundaries." In order to further the goal of offering integrated learning also suggested the expansion of METCO. See, Michael S. Dukakis, "Statement on Racial Imbalance and the Boston Schools," May 14, 1974 Box 20, Folder 649, Jack Backman Papers, Special Collections, State Library of Massachusetts (hereafter "Backman").

<sup>36</sup> D to Judge Garrity, October 16, 1974, Box 49, Folder 8, JG.

<sup>37</sup> Garrity stressed the patent difficulty of proving the deliberate discrimination of the suburbs since Detroit had a higher percentage of school segregation than Boston, with a 73 percent as opposed to 32 percent black student population, and the Court still had not accepted a metropolitan remedy, see Alan Eisner, "NAACP Lawyer Doubtful About Suburban Busing," *Boston Herald-American*, October 18, 1974. Many experts stressed the difficulty of finding such a solution in part because the state's anti-snob zoning law would make it virtually impossible to fulfill a test of deliberate discrimination. Thomas Pettigrew speculated most suburban communities could deflect charges of a segregated school system by asserting they abided by Chapter 774; see James G. Colbert, "Anti-snob zoning law may prevent forced busing to suburbs," *Brookline Ledger*, November 8, 1974.

remedy to the city of Detroit due to the absence of evidence that suburban policies were deliberately discriminatory.<sup>38</sup> *Milliken* effectively thwarted future attempts at the court-ordered consolidation of city and suburban districts across the country, but it still left open the use of voluntary metropolitan integration programs like METCO. Garrity had clearly read the *Milliken* ruling closely and saw that while the Supreme Court had not entirely shut the door to metropolitan remedies, it had made most options extremely legally tenuous. He chided Mayor White and other politicians that “To talk about *Milliken v. Bradley* as if it holds some real prospect of involving the suburbs is not fair to the people of Boston.”<sup>39</sup> During the exchange, Garrity indicated that he would not require full-scale metropolitan integration in his final desegregation order, but that he would probably recommend the expansion of METCO and other voluntary integration programs as a means to bridge the political and social divisions between Boston and the suburbs.<sup>40</sup> This suggestion actually revived, in the words of the *Herald American*, “dormant hopes that metropolitanization might still exist as an alternative to ease the tensions which have crippled the city.”<sup>41</sup>

In spite of Garrity’s stern warnings, the Boston School Committee continued its effort to make METCO a centerpiece of the next phase of the desegregation process.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 314-315.

<sup>39</sup> Muriel Cohen, “Garrity Asks For Bus Plan Involving the Suburbs,” *Boston Globe*, October 16, 1974.

<sup>40</sup> “Garrity Broadens Final Plan Options,” *Boston Globe*, October 17, 1974; Muriel Cohen, “Metco expansion—the choice is up to the suburbs,” *Boston Globe*, October 28, 1974. Judge Garrity ultimately decided not to make METCO or metropolitan integration a major component of his Phase II order that he released in the spring of 1975. In fact, METCO’s lawyer carefully read the entire decision and found only one reference to the program in footnote related to handbook distributed to Boston parents. The Reference read: “Footnote 3: METCO EdCo or similar programs shall not be offered as options, but the booklet shall inform readers of the nature of such programs and shall provide an opportunity for the parent or student to request further information about the programs.” See, Mark A. Michelson to Stephen E. Shaw, May 16, 1975, Box 29, Folder 2, METCO.

<sup>41</sup> “A Second Chance,” *Boston Herald American*, November 1, 1974.

<sup>42</sup> Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the School Committee had tried to use METCO in its court and state mandated compliance with the Racial Imbalance Act. See for example, Nina McCain, “Murphy bill

During the winter of 1974-1975, Committee member Kathleen Sullivan led the campaign to expand METCO into a more widespread metropolitan integration plan. The daughter of the owner of the New England Patriots, Sullivan had developed a reputation as the most moderate and pragmatic member of the committee.<sup>43</sup> Even though Sullivan aimed to distance herself from reactionary populists like Kerrigan and Louise Day Hicks, her invocation of a metropolitan solution built on the antibusing community's resentments of the suburbs and the exclusivity of the METCO program. She collaborated with Representative Michael Daly on a bill for a one-way busing program based on the METCO model that would require all communities within a twenty-mile radius of the city with an above average household income to open 10 percent of their school seats to inner-city children both black and white. Sullivan believed the plan would ease the burden of desegregation on Boston and provide urban parents more choice over where their children went to school.<sup>44</sup> Similar to METCO, the legislation rested on the notion that the state would underwrite the proposal and, like Kerrigan's plan, would provide close to 20,000 spaces for Boston students in suburban districts. Unlike Kerrigan's plan or METCO, however, Sullivan and Daly suggested transporting students on the basis of

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would expand 'Metco' concept," *Boston Globe* August 20, 1971. For instance, in 1971, the committee suggested assigning 3,899 Boston students of color to 71 school systems within thirty miles of Boston and that an equal number of white suburban students be transported to the Boston schools. Education Commissioner Neil Sullivan had surmised, "If some of this same boldness and vision could be applied to the Schools of Boston, racial imbalance could be eliminated with the speed which was intended." See, Statement of Commissioner Neil V. Sullivan to the Board of Education, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1971 on Racial Imbalance in Boston, Box 37, Folder 1209, FH.

<sup>43</sup> Kathleen Sullivan consciously sought to distance herself from the inflammatory rhetoric and tactics of John Kerrigan and Louise Day Hicks by repeatedly stating that while she disagreed with Garrity's orders, she believed that the Committee had a responsibility to follow and implement the law, Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 61. "Suburbs Asked to Share More Seats." *Boston Globe*, September 19, 1975; Rosemary O'Leary, "Parks hits 'missionary role' for suburban schools," *Belmont Citizen*, May 15, 1975.

<sup>44</sup> Alen Jehlen, "Kathleen Sullivan Unafraid to Speak Mind," *Patriot Ledger*, May 15, 1975.

economic class rather than race. Estimates suggested the initiative would cost around \$20 million in state funds.<sup>45</sup>

In early January 1975, Sullivan went before the METCO Executive Committee to seek support for the legislation. On its face, the proposal appeared to complement the basic ideals of the program, and she expected METCO's endorsement. The leaders of METCO, nevertheless, rebuffed her plan.<sup>46</sup> The organization had consistently and publicly objected to the various proposals to use METCO as a solution to the Boston desegregation dilemma, interpreting such proposals regardless if they came from Sullivan, Kerrigan or Sargent, as attempts to circumvent "intra city desegregation."<sup>47</sup> Even before the *Morgan* decision, the METCO leaders had voiced fears that the program would become an "escape hatch" for the Boston School Committee. In 1974, the organization released a statement announcing that while it hoped "the lessons of METCO" could be applied in the resolution of the larger question of integration, it did not want for the program to be "the primary mechanism through which system-wide integration can be accomplished." As Garrity deliberated over his remedy order, the METCO representatives specifically told him they hoped the program could serve as model for developing an integration plan and would gladly offer their services to the

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<sup>45</sup> "Metropolitan school bill could cost \$20 million," *Boston Globe*, January 23, 1975.

<sup>46</sup> METCO, Executive Committee Minutes, January 20, 1975, Box 6, Folder 56, METCO; METCO, Press Release, March 5, 1975, Box 32, Folder 11, METCO.

<sup>47</sup> METCO, Annual Report 1973-1974 to the Board of Directors; Jean McGuire to Mr. John Taylor, January 21, 1974, Box 12, Folder 22, METCO; This stance was consistent with the position many of Boston's leading black activists who had consistently argued against remedies like the Daly-Sullivan Bill because they put the burden of desegregation on black children and diverted money and resources to the suburbs, See for instance, Otto and Muriel Snowden, Ellen Jackson to Hon. Walter J. Boverini, Hon. Michael J. Daly, May 31, 1974, Box 39, Folder 1334, FH; Stephan Curwood, "Criticism and Praise Come from Both Sides," *Boston Globe*, May 11, 1974.

Court, but as a private organization. It was “not equipped or prepared” to be the major part of the long-term solution for the problem of systemic school segregation.<sup>48</sup>

The METCO leaders’ response to the Daly-Sullivan Bill revealed their larger concerns about the programs survival during the flux and uncertainty caused by the busing crisis. The sharp rejection of significant expansion by METCO officials, however, also revealed how the program’s individualist ideology and limited scope had shaped its institutional contours. Executive Director Jean McGuire and the other leaders of the program firmly believed that METCO’s two-pronged mission of providing quality educational opportunities for African-American students and limited racial integration could only be successful when it transported a small number of students into the suburbs on a voluntary basis. The organization was also convinced both that its unique structure of city-suburban governmental cooperation and funding process with the state government essentially paying METCO, Inc. for its services only worked on a small scale.<sup>49</sup>

The METCO staff, moreover, feared that the Daly-Sullivan bill’s call for large-scale expansion would spark strong suburban backlash against the program and thereby heighten, not ease, metropolitan tensions. To quell the potential anxieties of suburban residents, METCO officials adopted a language that combined the therapeutic ideas of racial liberalism with consumer-based terminology of taxpayer rights in order to speak out against the bill. In its statements, the organization aimed to redefine “metropolitanization” within the public debate as “sharing resources” rather than “desegregation.” This clarification extended METCO’s ongoing efforts to convince white

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<sup>48</sup> Mark A. Michelson to W. Arthur Garrity, November 5, 1974, Box 39, Folder 2, METCO.

<sup>49</sup> METCO, Position Paper, c. 1975, Box 20, METCO. Folder 9. Cohen, “Metco expansion—the choice is up to the suburbs.”

suburban parents that METCO had quantifiable benefits for their children. In a position paper outlining its objections to Daly-Sullivan, the program defined itself as a “ model for voluntary urban-suburban cooperation,” which served as an “enriching factor in the fabric of racially and culturally isolated suburban communities” in a way that was “effective in cost and quality.”<sup>50</sup>

METCO leaders’ statements about the class-based components of the Daly-Sullivan proposal also reveal key elements of the ideology and institutional structure of the program. Since its founding METCO had maintained a delicate balance between a largely white suburban-based board and a mostly Boston-based minority staff. Many of the African-American staff members had never articulated a deep-rooted commitment to the goal of integration, but, rather, saw the program primarily as a means to advance the educational opportunities of a select group of minority children. Jean McGuire, who became Executive Director in 1973, clearly promoted this mission, which shaped her reaction to the Daly-Sullivan Bill. The daughter of an Episcopal Minister and life-long resident of Roxbury, McGuire had personal knowledge of the Boston Public Schools and METCO as a former teacher in the city and parent of two children in the program.<sup>51</sup> McGuire understood that the program’s survival partially depended on presenting a positive and sympathetic image of African-Americans to white suburbanites. Drawing on the basic ideals of racial uplift, McGuire frequently stressed certain modes of behavior for the participants and went to great lengths to ensure that the students involved represented an economic cross-section of Boston’s African-American population. McGuire and others saw the inclusion of middle-class children as a way to disrupt white

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<sup>50</sup> METCO, Position Paper, c. 1975.

<sup>51</sup> METCO, News Release c. 1973, METCO Box 10, Folder 77.

suburbanites' assumptions that all African-Americans were poor, uneducated and lived in public housing.<sup>52</sup> They feared that transporting only poor children, as suggested by Sullivan and Daly, would thwart this longstanding agenda.<sup>53</sup> The stance of METCO and its supporters shows the leaders' skill at navigating the shoals of suburban class and racial anxieties. By dismissing the class components of the Daly-Sullivan bill and defining its mission explicitly in terms of race, however, the METCO leaders and their sympathizers ultimately reified the racial liberal principles of the program and ensured that a more serious conversation about the causes and consequences of structural segregation did not take place.

During the late winter of 1975, the leaders of METCO launched a grassroots campaign "to mobilize the necessary political support to kill the Daly-Sullivan measure" and "maintain the integrity of [the] program."<sup>54</sup> In order to do so, the program relied on its extensive network of supporters within the suburbs and the urban black community to build political pressure against the bill. The METCO central office distributed a series of pamphlets, press releases and policy papers both on its school buses and to suburban chapters of the League of Women Voters, civil liberties groups, and liberal organizations. The literature contended that Daly-Sullivan could cost up \$60 million, take 25 percent of students from the city and remove decision-making power from the people most directly

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<sup>52</sup>McGuire would continue to articulate this view throughout her thirty-five tenure as Executive Director. In 2007 she responded to the suggestion the program replace class for race, "I'm not going to send a bus of poor kids to the suburbs. That's cruel. There are enough people who think that all black kids are poor as it is." See, Tracy Jan, "METCO Fears for its Future," *Boston Globe*, July 26, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> For example, Thomas Atkins of the NAACP in opposing Daly-Sullivan articulated fears about the consequences of a program where city participants would be "poor while all the suburban participants would be wealthy." See, "Unlikely group opposes suburban busing," *Dedham Daily Transcript*, April 3, 1975; Frank Thompson, "Voluntary Busing Argued at Hearing," *Boston Herald American*, April 3, 1975.

<sup>54</sup> Memorandum from Stephen E. Shaw to Jean McGuire, Arnold Vanderhoop, Subject: Legislative Agenda, January 16, 1975, Box 19, Folder 38, METCO; METCO, Minutes--METCO Staff Meeting, Box 10, Folder 39, METCO.

affected by busing. Drawing further distinctions between the program and the proposed bill, METCO staffers like Kathy Jones deemed Daly-Sullivan “not an educational program; it’s just busing.”<sup>55</sup> METCO’s campaign successfully shifted the political tide against the Daly-Sullivan Bill. In late April, the Massachusetts state legislature soundly defeated the bill with suburban representatives voting almost unanimously against it. In the aftermath, Kathleen Sullivan credited METCO’s opposition campaign with bringing about the defeat of her proposal. Embracing the language and imagery of her more reactionary colleagues, she bitterly noted that METCO had convinced “hypocritical” suburban liberals to vote against the bill in order to preserve the size of the “token program.”<sup>56</sup>

#### **“Hiding in their Suburban Beds”**

Sullivan was not the only person to call into question the “hypocritical” silence of suburban liberals voices on the busing issue. Antibusers like John Kerrigan frequently charged that “suburban coat-tail party liberals” would not want to get their “lily white suburban hands soiled” by getting involved in the desegregation of the city’s schools. Mayor Kevin White referred to them as “psalm-singing hypocrites.”<sup>57</sup> Supporters of the court order also joined in this attack on the inaction of suburban liberals. A reporter in Weston asked why, with the situation so dire in Boston, “the so-called liberals” of

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<sup>55</sup> “METCO, “Metro’ ride different routes,” *Newton Times*, March 19, 1975.

<sup>56</sup> Jehlen, “Kathleen Sullivan Unafraid to Speak Mind.”

<sup>57</sup> John J. Kerrigan, “The Hub at the Bicentennial,” January 2, 1975, Proceeding of the School Committee, City of Boston, Box 1, Folder 58, METCO; Lupo, *Liberty’s Chosen Home*, 309.

Weston were “hiding in their suburban beds with the covers pulled tightly around their heads.”<sup>58</sup>

Suburban liberals were not, however, as silent or paralyzed as these depictions may have suggested. Throughout the fall of 1974, liberal activists throughout the Route 128 suburbs met to discuss ways to help alleviate the situation in the city.<sup>59</sup> For instance, Herbert and Helene LeVine, the leaders of a variety of suburban grassroots campaigns related to fair housing and civil rights, hosted a brunch at their Newton home for members of the Americans for Democratic Action to develop a strategy for suburban support. Likewise, Citizens for Participation in Political Action (CPPAX), which had over 2500 members, most of whom resided in the suburbs, became particularly active in seeking to create an appropriate and effective response and staged rallies and meetings. Some progressive suburbanites suggested that the network of activists must force their fellow citizens to recognize they “belong to the white noose which surrounds and partly strangles our central cities” by advocating for the “metropolitanization of schools and the sharing of finance in order to achieve full equality.”<sup>60</sup> Yet these committed activists found it difficult to build serious support for such an idea among even those suburban residents who wanted to end racial segregation in the Boston school system.

Liberal activists, therefore, decided that advocating for the expansion for METCO would serve as a more popular way to get their fellow residents to demonstrate their

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<sup>58</sup> Nancy Foster, “Weston School Officials Comment on Controversial Busing in Boston,” *Weston News*, November 1, 1974.

<sup>59</sup> Lupo, *Liberty's Chosen Home*, 310; See, Marjorie Arons, “Liberal task force fears Hub racist triumph,” *Newton Times*, October 16, 1974; Marjorie Arons, “Suburbanites Support Desegregated Schools,” *Newton Times*, November 8, 1974.

<sup>60</sup> “What can suburbs do about busing and Boston in crisis?” *Wayland Town Crier*, October 24, 1974. Citizens for Participation in Political Action, CPPAX BACKS BOSTON INTEGRATION: URGE SUBURBAN SUPPORT FOR THE GARRITY RULING. October 10, 1974, Box 57, Folder 2402, FH; Citizens for Participation in Political Action, STATEMENT FROM THE CPPAX TASK FORCE ON RACIAL JUSTICE, October 10, 1974, Box 57, Folder 2402, FH.

desire to help reduce the problems in Boston. Adding more METCO students to their school systems offered suburbanites in traditionally liberal communities a chance to chart a middle ground between the reactionary populism of the antibusing movement and the suggestions of a full-scale metropolitan remedy. Despite the fact that by 1974 METCO boasted the involvement of over 30 suburbs, the majority of the students attended school in fewer than half of the participating municipalities, with by far the largest enrollments in the historically liberal suburbs around Route 128. The rates of participation closely correlated with the geography of political liberalism and economic affluence. Newton hosted 350 students, Lexington 280, Brookline 245, Wellesley and Weston 161 each, Framingham 144 and Lincoln 120, which remained the largest concentrations of METCO children in any communities.<sup>61</sup>

In the fall of 1974, grassroots liberals initiated a campaign to increase participation in METCO in their own communities and throughout metropolitan Boston. One suburban mother declared, “Metco is a token solution, one that leaves thousands of children behind.” Yet she contended it would give a few students an opportunity that “very likely will be lost otherwise.”<sup>62</sup> Amy Lamson of Newton suggested that adding more METCO students “poses no threat to the largely advantaged residents of Newton” and should be welcomed as an opportunity to take positive action in line with their social consciences.<sup>63</sup> Jean Bartlett also advocated that Newton accept many more METCO students by contending that the program was as beneficial for suburban children as for Boston students. She bemoaned how Newton students suffered from the problems of

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<sup>61</sup> James Worsham, “Metco budget trims may force cuts in programs and participation,” *Boston Globe*, August 17, 1975.

<sup>62</sup> Faith Waltman to the Editor, *Winchester Star*, February 27, 1975.

<sup>63</sup> Amy Lamson to Editor, *Newton Graphic*, October 24, 1974.

“isolation and insulation” and suggested “If there were more opportunity to go to school with Boston children our children would be better prepared to participate in the world in which they live.”<sup>64</sup>

The calls for increased participation in METCO quickly extended beyond concentrated groups of grassroots liberal activists in traditionally affluent and liberal places like Newton and Lexington to moderate suburban residents in more politically conservative and middle-class communities. Several opinion polls revealed that suburban residents across Greater Boston and the political spectrum supported solutions like METCO as long they did not have to pay, busing went one way, and only involved the placement of a few minority students in each classroom.<sup>65</sup> Unlike the antibusers in places like South Boston, many white suburbanites saw METCO not as a threat, but, rather, a means to maintain their neighborhood schools. Suburbs throughout Boston’s ring had experienced severe enrollment declines in the early 1970s, and many believed that filling empty seats with minority students from Boston would provide a means to keep local schools open and funded.<sup>66</sup> Residents who advocated this politically and racially moderate compromise, therefore, seemed more against the closing of their neighborhood elementary schools than having black students in the same classrooms as their children.

Many state officials also saw METCO as a potential middle ground in the desegregation debate and endorsed the grassroots campaign. During the fall of 1974,

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<sup>64</sup> Hildreth Frost, “Newton considering more outside pupils,” *Waltham News-Tribune*, October 17, 1974.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, even prior to Garrity’s ruling, a group of suburban residents responded to a *Globe* opinion poll by 51-38 percent margin that they supported the transportation of black students to their communities, but rejected by a 64-27 the busing of their own children (“Busing: Races Split on the Issue,” *Boston Globe*, May 14, 1974).

<sup>66</sup> “Nothing to Fear from METCO,” *Winchester Star*, January 23, 1975.

State Education Commissioner Gregory Anrig publicly urged suburban school committees to open seats for METCO students, which he promised the state would subsidize. He announced that over \$1.5 million of the state's \$5.3 million appropriation for the program remained unused, which could pay for a thousand more children to get involved. "All we need is a commitment to open the seats," he stated.<sup>67</sup> Anrig saw this drive as a means to alleviate the situation in Boston through limited voluntary action rather through a comprehensive compulsory mandate. He even issued a veiled threat to suburban communities that failure to get involved in METCO at this juncture might result in mandatory metropolitan integration in the future. Anrig's tactic mirrored other state officials who, as discussed in the previous chapter, tried to use the Anti-Snob Zoning Act to threaten suburban communities to build their own affordable housing for fear of a government-imposed remedy. In the case of METCO, this strategy proved initially successful as many residents favored the voluntary action of individual suburban communities over a sweeping mandatory decree by state government.

The combination of grassroots initiatives and government encouragement led seven new communities, including Burlington, Norwood, and Woburn, to join the program. Lexington, Sudbury, Newton, and Wellesley opened dozens more seats to METCO children. Many other suburbs made inquiries about joining in the future.<sup>68</sup> This increased interest placed the leadership of METCO in a complicated position. "The support for the Metropolitan Council is stronger than ever," Jean McGuire declared in the 1974-1975 annual report. Yet she conceded that this attention had put a "tremendous

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<sup>67</sup> Alan Eisner, "Suburbs May be Ordered to Aid in Desegregation in Boston," *Boston Herald American*, October 31, 1974; Muriel Cohen, "Anrig bids suburbs supply 1000 more METCO seats," *Boston Globe*, October 31, 1974. WEEI News Radio Editorial, "Metco," November 8, 1974, Box 8, Folder 66, METCO.

<sup>68</sup> Ann-Mary Currier, "7 more towns may soon take Metco students," *Boston Globe*, November 25, 1974.

burden” on the program.<sup>69</sup> During the 1974-1975 school year, the towns seeking to join or increase their participation created a profusion of work for the staff and stretched the program’s operational capacities to their limits. McGuire complained in the annual report that “Money, time and effort in responding to the requests from new communities strained the existing budget and adversely affected support of the ongoing program.”<sup>70</sup>

At the same time, many more African-American families sought to find ways to get their children out of Boston’s literally explosive learning environment, so the waitlist of applicants had grown to 6,000, each one of whom the staff had to interview. The situation reinforced to McGuire and others that METCO functioned successfully only when it could focus energy and resources on a small number of students, and therefore the program should and could not provide the mechanism for comprehensive metropolitan integration.

### **The Belt Tightens**

The interest in METCO also placed serious strains on the program’s sources of funding. The busing crisis coincided with a national recession, which put the state of Massachusetts in fiscal crisis. When the Massachusetts government allocated a \$5.3 million dollar budget for METCO for the 1975-1976 school year, did not take into consideration the increase in participation or the fact that many more communities would no longer charge a reduced tuition fee. A 1974 amendment had changed the language of the enabling statute of METCO to allow school districts to request “the full cost per pupil

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<sup>69</sup> METCO, Annual Report to Board of Directors, 1974-1975, Box 1 Folder 11, METCO.

<sup>70</sup> METCO, Annual Report to Board of Directors, 1974-1975.

education of each child.”<sup>71</sup> The State Department of Education sent a letter to participating communities urging that despite this policy change, they continue their long-standing practice of charging a reduced fee.<sup>72</sup> Few communities paid this warning any heed. Even though student enrollments had steadily dropped, inflation had kept the school budgets of many communities rising each year, which had placed significant burdens on the local tax rates.<sup>73</sup> The rate of inflation also led to escalating costs especially around transportation, and increased the per-pupil costs of METCO. Thus, 26 of the 36 participating towns in 1975 decided to take advantage of this change in language to request additional or full tuition reimbursement. In a particularly extreme example, Belmont, an upper-middle class suburb west of Boston, raised its rate from \$792 per METCO child in 1974-1975 to \$1257 for the 1975-1976 school year.<sup>74</sup>

The budget requests that the State Board of Education received in late August were, in the words of METCO Associate Director Stephen Shaw, “at a level and magnitude unprecedented in the nine-year history of the program.”<sup>75</sup> Governor Michael Dukakis, who had defeated Francis Sargent the previous November, was the former state representative from Brookline and a longtime METCO booster. Yet he had made fiscal moderation the center plank of his first year in office and therefore announced that he would refuse to grant the full \$6.2 million dollars the Board of Education estimated these additional reimbursement requests would cost. With the first day of school rapidly approaching, the state once again implored suburban communities to be more flexible in

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<sup>71</sup> METCO, “Funding of Education Costs for METCO Communities,” No Date, Box 32, Folder 18, METCO.

<sup>72</sup> Chapter 3 discusses how many communities began to charge reduced tuitions in reaction to the release of the Kerner Commission Report and the King assassination.

<sup>73</sup> “Suburban Schools: The Hardest Lesson is Raising the Money,” *Boston Globe*, September 14, 1975.

<sup>74</sup> “State Acts to Save METCO In Face of Funds Reduction,” *Boston Herald American*, August 27, 1975.

<sup>75</sup> Memorandum from Stephen E. Shaw to Representative Doris Bunte, September 9, 1975 Subject: Rise in Amounts of Financial Support Requests for METCO, Box 2, Folder 78, METCO.

their reimbursement requests. Education Secretary Paul Parks and Commissioner Anrig both sent pleas to all participating communities asking that they reassess their funding levels and try to make at least a 10 percent reduction in their budgets. Parks stated that he was “not insensitive to the fiscal pressure which you also face” and asked simply that towns “tighten their belts and absorb the 10 percent cut until we are out of our present financial crisis.”<sup>76</sup> Charles Glenn, the long-serving Director of the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity, also tried to spark a sense of collective responsibility. He presented the situation in mathematical terms, suggesting that if every town agreed to the 10 percent cut, METCO could replace the 107 students who graduated and add 400 more Boston participants to the program. These entreaties had little effect. Several suburban communities offered a very conditional support of METCO, announcing that without 100 percent reimbursement they would no longer honor their commitment to enroll METCO students.<sup>77</sup> METCO staffer Stephen Shaw predicted that such action would “wreak havoc on the educational plans of hundreds of parents and children” in the short run. He predicted that the “long-range effect would be a regressive public policy, further isolating Black from White, and urban and suburban populations.”<sup>78</sup>

These short and long-term implications convinced Governor Dukakis to make an appeal to the state legislature to provide the necessary supplemental funds. That body also refused to furnish the money needed to keep the program going in several towns.<sup>79</sup> A *Boston Globe* editorial captured many observers objections to the decision by pointing out the “pathetic irony” that the state was spending millions to forcibly desegregate the

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<sup>76</sup> Paul Parks to METCO Communities, August 25, 1975, Box 11, Folder 33, METCO; Memorandum from Gregory R. Anrig to METCO Superintendents, September 2, 1975, METCO, Box 22, Folder 11, METCO.

<sup>77</sup> “State Acts to Save METCO In Face of Funds Reduction.”

<sup>78</sup> Stephen E. Shaw to Representative Doris Bunte, September 9, 1975.

<sup>79</sup> Frank Mahoney, “Funding Talks Fail in METCO crisis,” *Boston Globe*, September 12, 1975.

Boston schools at the same time it denied “financial lifeblood” to many whites and blacks who had “enthusiastically” embraced integration through METCO.<sup>80</sup> The funding crisis extended into a two-month stalemate.<sup>81</sup> A large number of METCO students remained out of school because several towns would not allow their attendance until the state assured full funding.<sup>82</sup> Director Jean McGuire did not hide her anger at Dukakis and other state officials. “Last year because the Commissioner of Education...and Dukakis asked us, we went all over explaining METCO,” she stated bitterly, “We’ve been made fools. We went out and got a lot of people to support us and now we have to tell them there’s going to be no program.”<sup>83</sup> The state and suburban school systems finally reached a compromise in mid-November 1975, when the Massachusetts government agreed to fund 90 percent of METCO’s requested budget. This solution, nevertheless, left many communities with both thousands less in funding than they had requested and with mounting doubts about the viability of the program’s future.<sup>84</sup>

### **The Entering Wedge**

The funding crisis exposed even larger tensions within the Route 128 suburbs over METCO specifically and metropolitan integration in general. While many moderate and conservative suburbanites had offered little vocal or organized opposition to METCO

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<sup>80</sup> “METCO Needs More Help,” *Boston Globe*, September 20, 1975.

<sup>81</sup> Paul Parks, privately discussed the “implications” if the state simply withdrew its support of METCO. In an internal memorandum, Assistant Secretary of Education Richard Ames suggested that the state had to avoid appearing “the principal violator of METCO pupils’ rights by other under appropriation or provoking suburban withdrawal. Ames advised “we should be very careful not to get caught in a posture where we are actually advocating an appropriation insufficient to cover legitimate per pupil costs.” See, Memorandum from Richard Ames to Paul Parks, Subject: METCO, September 23, 1975, Box 35, Folder 3, METCO.

<sup>82</sup> METCO, Press Release: METCO’s Crisis, September 16, 1975, Box 45, Folder 23, METCO.

<sup>83</sup> Mike Barnicle, “The crisis at METCO,” *Boston Globe*, September 22, 1975.

<sup>84</sup> Beverly Shea, “80 Parents Discuss ‘new climate of uncertainty,’” *Waltham News-Tribune*, December 8, 1975.

in its first decade of operation, the fears of metropolitan integration coupled with new fiscal worries due to the recession produced a rippling backlash against the program. Conservative politicians and commentators like Avi Nelson fanned the flames of outrage, warning that the program was only the “entering wedge” to bring thousand more inner-city children into the suburbs.<sup>85</sup> The Daly-Sullivan Bill, with its call for 20,000 students to enroll in suburban schools, compounded this opposition to metropolitan integration as a whole and METCO in particular. During the 1974 and 1975 school year, more than two dozen grassroots suburban groups emerged with the shared goal of preventing metropolitan integration and the expansion of METCO. The groups’ titles all included the words “Citizens” and “Responsible” though their acronyms had slight variation based on the names of the towns they represented. By the spring of 1975, these grassroots antibusing forces united to coordinate their opposition. They formed the umbrella organization Suburbs United (SUN) with a membership base that extended into 30 communities. The coalition converted a small yellow house in the southern middle-class suburb of Dedham into a makeshift headquarters where American flags and strategy maps covered the floral wallpaper. One reporter could not help but note the irony that these suburban residents were “banding together so that in the future they can stay apart.”<sup>86</sup>

Many observers initially dismissed the opposition movement as an extension of the reactionary populism displayed by working-class whites on the streets of South Boston. Communities with strong SUN affiliates, such as Dedham, Quincy, Beverly and

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<sup>85</sup> Avi Nelson, “We’ve allowed our government to slip away from us,” *Norfolk County Press*, April 2, 1975.

<sup>86</sup> Leslie Burdick, “Suburban Foes Fight Metropolitanization Plan,” *Christian Science Monitor*, c. 1975, Box 42, Folder 10, METCO.

Randolph, had established reputations for social conservatism and had experienced a steady increase in migration of blue-collar Irish- and Italian-Americans from Boston over the previous decade.<sup>87</sup> Although SUN did form an alliance with ROAR, several SUN affiliates sought to distance themselves from the Boston-based groups. These suburbanites stressed they were not “Archie Bunker-style bigots” and instead sought to show that their conservatism was far more colorblind.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, where ROAR often invoked metropolitan integration as a means to agitate against the injustice of Garrity’s court order, metropolitanization was the primary target of the SUN campaign. In the minds of many SUN members, full-scale metropolitan integration constituted a violation of both their parental autonomy and class and race privilege. Several SUN members asserted that they did not mind if their children had classes with black children, but they opposed any kind of busing because it violated their rights as middle-class parents and suburban taxpayers to full freedom of choice in decisions about their children’s education. Carole Stacinski, a mother of five who led the opposition to metropolitan integration in Dedham, explained, “If you start losing one of your freedoms, that’s the beginning of the end.”<sup>89</sup> In order to avoid that “anti-democratic nightmare,” Stacinski and her collaborators successfully prevented the Dedham School Committee from accepting a handful of METCO students into the system. Several other middle-class communities took similar action over the course of the 1974-1975 school year, either rejecting participatio outright or refusing to add more children into their systems.<sup>90</sup> In the town of Middleton, the anti-busing group CRAM actually spread rumors that METCO students in

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<sup>87</sup> Nick King, “First Suburban Antibusing Center Opens in Dedham,” *Boston Globe*, April 1, 1975.

<sup>88</sup> Burdick, “Suburban Foes Fight Metropolitanization Plan.”

<sup>89</sup> King, “First Suburban Antibusing Center Opens in Dedham.”

<sup>90</sup> See for instance, Francis C. Anderson, “Once Over Lightly,” *Braintree Observer*, May 25, 1975.

other towns had robbed and raped local residents. These longstanding racist tropes successfully thwarted the community's participation in the program.<sup>91</sup>

As the anti-busing movement extended beyond lower middle-class conservative communities and into upper-middle class areas with large liberal contingents such as Brookline, Concord, Lexington, Newton, Belmont, and Winchester, it forced many observers to rethink their assumptions about the root causes of suburban antipathy to metropolitan integration. The battle that ensued in Winchester emerged as a powerful symbol of the complicated and divided attitudes of suburban residents toward voluntary metropolitan integration. The Winchester School Committee had made two previous attempts to join METCO in the late 1960s, both of which met intense opposition.<sup>92</sup> Thus, while most of the neighboring towns had developed stable programs in the first decade of METCO, Winchester had remained uninvolved. However, the community had always contained a solid base of liberal residents and School Committee members who believed strongly in the ideals of METCO. These sympathizers encouraged Winchester to become one of the first communities to answer Commissioner Anrig's call for action in the fall of 1974 and proposed including 20 or 30 METCO students in the Winchester School System. "Winchester is one of the very few towns of its size and location that doesn't have METCO," School Committee chairman Stephen Parkhurst explained. "That leads us to believe we should reconsider the issue."<sup>93</sup> He also declared "I see Metco as a way to avoid forced busing."<sup>94</sup> Many residents enthusiastically supported participation, dubbing

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<sup>91</sup> Ross and Berg, *I Respectfully Disagree*, 449.

<sup>92</sup> In 1968, in a contentious town-wide referendum residents had rejected participation in the program by a 2-1 margin and METCO officials had deemed the community a hostile climate in which to place African-American children, see William S. Workman, "Winchester to Vote Against METCO," *Boston Sunday Globe*, June 2, 1968.

<sup>93</sup> "METCO Scheduled for Board Airing," *Winchester Star*, November 14, 1974.

<sup>94</sup> Currier, "7 more towns may soon take Metco students."

METCO “long overdue” and recognizing the program as a means to enhance the educational opportunities of white students in the community, fulfill its responsibility to Boston, and avoid involvement in a forced two-way busing scheme in the future.<sup>95</sup>

It soon became clear that the Winchester School Committee had misguided optimism that the town’s attitude toward voluntary integration had changed considerably over the previous seven years. Resident Arthur Hewis, who had led earlier attacks on the program, remained at forefront of the opposition. He and other residents decided to form Citizens for Responsible Education in Winchester (CREW), which eventually became affiliated with both ROAR and SUN. The group interpreted the mandatory component of the Daly-Sullivan Bill as an indication that METCO was merely “cover” for the eventual creation of a metropolitan school system.<sup>96</sup> For many members of CREW and their sympathizers, nevertheless, METCO constituted a concrete target on which to pin larger and more abstract frustrations about the soaring tax rates, the perceived decline in the quality of public education and loss of control over local decisions. In its public statements and literature, CREW fused these fiscal and racial worries, warning that METCO would adversely affect the local tax rate, bring unqualified black teachers into the system, and make black studies courses mandatory.<sup>97</sup> The group directly challenged the School Committee’s assurances that the program would not create any additional costs and would not lead to full-scale metropolitan integration. In one pamphlet the group used distorted information to contend that METCO cost taxpayers in Brookline \$490,228

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<sup>95</sup> See for example Carol Fielke to Editor, *Winchester Star*, November 21, 1974 ; Carolyn Roundey to Editor, *Winchester Star*, November 28, 1974 ; Catherine Fallon, “Town Needs Diversity,” *Winchester Star*, December 5, 1974.

<sup>96</sup> Arthur J. Hewis, Jr. to Editor, *Winchester Star*, November 21, 1974.

<sup>97</sup> “Nothing to Fear from METCO,” *Winchester Star*, January 23, 1975.

per year.<sup>98</sup> CREW also predicted that the program would lead to compulsory metropolitan integration in the future, which it illustrated in one flyer that featured a drawing of “school busing” as a runaway train with steam spelling out “METCO” about to roll over a group of horrified and helpless Winchester citizens lying on the tracks.<sup>99</sup> Clearly internalizing these messages, Vincent Carroli warned in the local paper, “Metco will not come ‘free’ to Winchester because the true cost to our community is hidden behind a smoke screen. One would be most naïve to believe that METCO would not lead to a metropolitan school system.”<sup>100</sup> When the Town Meeting voted 114-73 for participation in METCO after seven hours of debate in late January, CREW immediately initiated a drive for a town-wide referendum on the decision.

The opponents of voluntary integration meanwhile confronted another group of residents who strongly supported METCO and the principles of suburban liberalism more broadly. The arguments that Winchester citizens adopted to defend METCO demonstrated that like CREW they believed that suburban residency entitled them to quality education for their children, but they had different interpretations of what that meant. These advocates stressed that “cultural deprivation is a two-way street” and that bringing METCO to Winchester would “broaden and make more flexible the attitudes of our children who will have to make their way on an increasingly small and pluralistic planet where whites and blacks must show they can get along equally and equitably.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> C.R.E.W. “Before You Vote on the Question of METCO You Should Know,” c. 1975, Box 40, Folder 32, METCO.

<sup>99</sup> Glenon R. Suprenant to the Editor, *Winchester Star*, February 6, 1975; “Vote NO! on Question 3,” c. 1975, Box 40, Folder 32, METCO; Brookline Superintendent Robert Sperber publicly correcting this claim saying “the taxpayers in Brookline don’t pay a penny to METCO. The program costs \$295,000, all of which is paid for by a state grant. There were no local costs whatsoever.” See, “Similar Anti-METCO Campaigns, No Accident, Says Opponent,” *Winchester Star*, April 3, 1975.

<sup>100</sup> Vincent G. Carroli to the Editor, *Winchester Star*, February 6, 1975.

<sup>101</sup> Fallon, “Town Needs Diversity.”

Speaking as a “Winchester parent,” Faith Waltman upheld the ideals of racial liberal individualism, imploring that classroom time with students of color would “have more impact than all thousands of words I could shower on my six-year old about racial understanding.”<sup>102</sup> Proponents of the program directly countered CREW’s statements by emphasizing the voluntary dimensions and lack of financial expenditure of METCO and downplaying it as a very limited solution to the more systemic problem of school segregation. These arguments made but a little dent. In early March 1975, 61 percent of voters in the referendum opposed bringing METCO to Winchester. Only one of six precincts voted in favor of the proposal.<sup>103</sup> The outcome of the vote confirmed wider fears that METCO would not survive if left up to voters rather than the school committees in most participating communities. State Representative Barney Frank skeptically observed of the vote, “If we held referendum in METCO towns today, only about three would be left.”<sup>104</sup>

The Winchester School Committee opted to stand its ground and use its official authority to overrule the referendum and continue with plans to invite forty-five METCO students to enroll in their system. This decision received widespread media attention and praise. The *Boston Globe* devoted an editorial to the stance, stating that other suburbs “would do well, both for themselves and the city that sustains them, if they considered the wisdom of the Winchester School Committee.”<sup>105</sup> This publicity did not lead CREW to give up its fight. Instead, the group initiated legal action to oust the entire School Committee from office. In an act of solidarity with CREW, ROAR and SUN staged a

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<sup>102</sup> Faith Waltman to the Editor, *Winchester Star*, February 27, 1975.

<sup>103</sup> “Heavy Vote Seen As Defeating METCO,” *Winchester Star*, March 6, 1975.

<sup>104</sup> Beverly Shea, “Minimal integration impact on suburbs Rep. Frank say,” *Weston News*, June 5, 1975.

<sup>105</sup> “Metco wins in Winchester,” *Boston Globe*, March 14, 1975.

rally in Winchester in April with 400 participants who came along Route 128 by motorcade. After gathering for a rally in the town center, the participants drove with horns blaring to the homes of the School Committee members. ROAR recreated the protests it had staged outside the house of Judge Garrity the previous fall by standing on the Winchester officials' front lawns, delivering speeches, chants and songs.<sup>106</sup> These actions, nevertheless, discredited rather than expanded CREW's legitimacy for Winchester citizens.<sup>107</sup> Many residents interpreted the protest as a threat to the community's reputation of respectability and reasonableness and thereby strongly objected to the brand of reactionary populism promoted by ROAR and its allies. The neighbors of School Committee member Richard Pharo released a statement declaring that they were "both supporters and opponents of Metco," but all believed in school committee member's "legal and constitutional right to vote as his conscience dictates on this or any other issue without fear or threats of harassment from within or outside of Winchester."<sup>108</sup> These moderate suburbanites clearly believed that civility and compliance with the law outweighed their objections to voluntary integration and thus sought to create a middle ground and find a reasonable solution to the controversy.

The funding crisis, not the CREW campaign, eventually prevented Winchester from joining METCO, which proves the importance of fiscal moderation, not political extremism, in shaping attitudes of most middle-class suburbanites in the Boston area. By the summer of 1975, the Winchester School Committee realized that it could not

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<sup>106</sup> "Crew Joins With 'Roar' in Staging Anti-Busing Rally, Demonstrations," *Winchester Star*, May 1, 1975. This was not the first time that Committee members had experienced racial violence. The previous fall, a group of "White Power" activists had painted anti-black and anti-busing slogans and swastika on Robert T. Pritchard's garage and car.

<sup>107</sup> Sally Kincaid, 'Home Rule' Wrecking Crew Allies With Metro Group," *Winchester Star*, May 1, 1975.

<sup>108</sup> "Crew Joins With 'Roar' in Staging Anti-Busing Rally, Demonstrations," *Winchester Star*, May 1, 1975.

continue to stand firm against CREW and maintain the support of local residents without the guarantee of full state funding. During the last week of August, the Committee made desperate pleas to Dukakis and Parks to assure Winchester the \$110,000 subsidy it needed to participate. School Committee member Catherine Fallon described the lengths that Winchester supporters had gone to fight for the program and observed that it was “poor public policy to cut back on this program just when new and influential towns are joining METCO for the first time, giving it new breadth.”<sup>109</sup> These warnings went to no avail. When the state failed to promise the money, the Winchester School Committee rescinded its earlier decision to accept 45 children into its system, just a few days before the start of the school year.<sup>110</sup> Winchester, therefore, to this day, remains one of few suburban communities in metropolitan Boston not to participate in METCO.

Few participants or observers failed to recognize the symbolic meaning of the Winchester decision, and it became an example of the consequences of the fiscal fight. Dukakis invoked the case in his quest to fund METCO and the *Boston Globe* bemoaned, “Winchester is a particularly poignant victim of the budget-paring.”<sup>111</sup> Its victimized status aside, the outcome in Winchester underscored the unwillingness of suburban residents to bear even a minor financial burden to help ease the problems of racial and spatial inequality and to allow fewer than 50 children from Boston to attend school in their district. *Globe* Columnist Mike Barnicle questioned what role racial fears played in the fiscal conservatism of suburban residents willing to fight tooth and nail against the

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<sup>109</sup> Catherine R. Fallon, William J. Fallon to Michael S. Dukakis, August 21, 1975, Box 20, Folder 22, METCO.

<sup>110</sup> The committee did not officially rule out ever participating, but it did tell Jean McGuire that “the fiscal climate on Beacon Hill bodes ominous not only this year but also the future and we are concerned about starting a program for which there may not be funding in subsequent years.” See, Richard L. Pharo to Jean McGuire, August 25, 1975, Box 41, Folder 37, METCO.

<sup>111</sup> “METCO Needs More Help,” *Boston Globe*, September 20, 1975; Michael S. Dukakis to Ted Jones, October 31, 1975, Box 22, Folder 11, METCO.

introduction of a handful of students into the school system at a minimal cost. “How many halls were filled in Winchester the day Congress voted to bail out Lockheed with a billion dollar loan?” Barnicle asked rhetorically. “Why is it that people get more upset at METCO than they do at the Pentagon?” Jean McGuire also underscored the racial selectiveness of many white suburbanites’ fiscal anxiety. “You talk about a town’s school budget and one person shows up,” she pessimistically stated. “Have a meeting about METCO and the hall is full of people.”<sup>112</sup> The racial contradictions in white middle-class residents’ market-based worldview came into even sharper focus in Newton, the purported epicenter of suburban liberalism.

## VOICE

Newton long had a dual reputation for containing both a liberal population and excellent schools. Since World War II, Newton consistently maintained the highest per-pupil expenditures in the state and spent over \$50 million on school construction. By the early 1970s, education consumed 48 percent of the overall city budget, by far the biggest item. Newton had also initiated many progressive curricular innovations in the 1960s, including METCO.<sup>113</sup> McGuire had dubbed Newton’s METCO program “a showpiece for the country,” praising it for being the biggest, the most successful in hiring staff members of color, and the most innovative in making curricular changes to incorporate more attention to African-American life and history.<sup>114</sup> At the height of the busing crisis, the Newton School Committee decided to take the lead once again and agreed to accept

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<sup>112</sup> Mike Barnicle, “The Crisis at METCO,” *Boston Globe*, September 22, 1975.

<sup>113</sup> Tonnie Katz, “Suburbs Growing Reluctant to Pay for Expensive Education,” *Boston Globe*, March 7, 1976.

<sup>114</sup> V. Nivola, “METCO fares well in Newton—for now” *Newton Times*, December 10, 1975.

one hundred more METCO students in January 1975, and to gradually expand its involvement over the next few years until the suburb achieved a 9.4 percent minority student population.<sup>115</sup> By the following year, however, the community had begun to demonstrate a different attitude toward the program. In 1975, the School Committee voted to add fifty additional METCO students. Yet, it refused to answer the state's request to reduce its tuition so that more students could participate in the program and instead increased the amount of its reimbursement to \$675,000. This decision reflected the swift sea change in Newton's political climate provoked in large part by the economic downturn.<sup>116</sup> While there had been few objections to cost of education in the affluent days of the 1960s, the recession caused Newton residents from across the political spectrum to shift their attitudes. Many residents viewed school funding as the main culprit for Newton's highest tax rate.

In the spring of 1975, a group of citizens came together to form a grassroots group called VOICE with the goal of curbing the "excessive spending" of Newton's local government, especially the "spendthrift" and "out of touch with reality" school committee.<sup>117</sup> The group of "politically moderate people of all parties" believed that unless school funding came under control, "the city of Newton would become a place where few could afford to live."<sup>118</sup> VOICE's stated goals consisted of creating "high-quality education for our children within the constraints of a reasonable tax burden," a curricular focus on basic skills, and a preservation of neighborhood schools. These goals

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<sup>115</sup> "Newton Board votes to add 100 more Metco pupils from Boston," *Boston Globe*, November 26, 1974; Superintendent Aaron Fink provided a detailed proposal for how the system could accommodate this increase. See Memorandum From Aaron Fink to Members of the School Committee, Re: A Proposal to Increase our METCO enrollment, November 7, 1974, Box 20, Folder 650, Backman.

<sup>116</sup> Elizabeth McKinn, "Tax Hike Likely \$10," *Newton Graphic*, August 28, 1975.

<sup>117</sup> Kenneth E. Hartford to the Editor, *Newton Times*, March 3, 1976.

<sup>118</sup> Kenneth E. Hartford to the Editor.

appealed to residents like Howard Passman who declared, “I pay the taxes, but my voice has never been heard.”<sup>119</sup> VOICE stood firmly behind the lone conservative on the school committee, Alvin Mandell, a Raytheon engineer and New Deal Democrat turned staunch Republican, who advocated a “back to basics approach.”<sup>120</sup> Yet, VOICE realized that in order to achieve its goals it would have to gain full control of the School Committee and Board of Alderman. Thus it directed its grassroots energy toward the upcoming local election. The formation of VOICE created more concern within Newton’s liberal contingent “than almost any development in recent years,” and one activist dubbed the community as “under siege.”<sup>121</sup> Several existing liberal groups, including local chapters of the Americans for Democratic Action, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Organization of Women, and Citizens for Participation in Political Action, established a coalition called “Campaign for ’75” in order to consolidate support behind more progressive-leaning incumbents.<sup>122</sup>

Throughout the fight between the two factions, candidates, voters and observers distinguished the two groups using the polarized terminology of “liberal” and “conservative,” thus magnifying their political and ideological differences.<sup>123</sup> These labels did not always fall neatly on the conventional political spectrum. VOICE founders repeatedly emphasized that the group was “non-partisan” and consisted of “Democrats, Republicans and Independents.” Vice-Chairman Kenneth Hartford stressed that membership consisted of “people who classify themselves from conservative to liberal”

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<sup>119</sup> Elizabeth McKinnon, “VOICE makes itself heard,” *Newton Graphic*, August 7, 1975.

<sup>120</sup> Carole Fishberg, “Good Schools= good teachers?=?” *Newton Times*, July 7, 1976.

<sup>121</sup> Harry Crosby, “Crosby speaks his piece on Voice,” *Newton Times*, October 1, 1975.

<sup>122</sup> Crosby, “Crosby speaks his piece on Voice”; Richard Williams, “School Committee Squares Off,” *Newton Graphic*, October 23, 1975; Rick Dollinger, “More personalities than issues involved,” *Waltham News-Tribune*, October 31, 1975.

<sup>123</sup> Richard Williams, “School Committee Squares Off,” *Newton Graphic*, October 23, 1975; Rick Dollinger, “More personalities than issues involved,” *Waltham News-Tribune*, October 31, 1975.

but who shared a belief in “Fiscal Responsibility.”<sup>124</sup> Even VOICE opponent Stephen Crosby observed that several of the VOICE members were “flexible politically and have worked for liberal causes.”<sup>125</sup> These characterizations underscore that the fight over the future of the school committee transcended traditional partisan categories and addressed deeper ideological differences about the privileges and responsibilities of suburban residency.

VOICE’s stance had more in common with the grassroots opposition to affordable housing that took shape in Newton than with ROAR and urban-based antibusing groups. In fact, VOICE had many literal and figurative overlaps with the movement that had emerged in opposition to the efforts of Newton Community Development Foundation (NCDF) to build scattered-site mixed income housing in the suburb a few years earlier. Robert Stiller, the leader of the grassroots resistance movement in the earlier campaign, became a VOICE-backed candidate for alderman, Roger Cohen, the lawyer who successfully frustrated the NCDF’s plans through creative delay tactics, was one of the group’s choices for the School Committee. These candidates sought to galvanize the same anger among Newton residents that had led to the significant scale-back of the moderate-income development. In order to arouse grassroots anxiety, Cohen made anti-metropolitanization a central feature of his candidacy. He declared that metropolitan integration proposals showed “ a total lack of concern about the plight of the taxpayers of Newton and such an attitude cannot be tolerated.” He stressed that the School Committee must “cope with the problems of the City of Newton, not the problems of Boston.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Kenneth E. Hartford to the Editor.

<sup>125</sup> Crosby, “Crosby speaks his piece on Voice.”

<sup>126</sup> “Cohen Scores Opponent for Lack of Concern for Newton Taxpayers,” *Waltham News-Tribune*, September 11, 1975.

Such statements motivated SUN to embrace the Newton School Committee race as an opportunity to make deeper inroads in the suburb. The anti-busing group distributed a pamphlet that attempted to enflame the fiscal concerns of Newton residents declaring, “The state-funded METCO program further erodes community policymaking while forcing additional financial burdens on the taxpayers.”<sup>127</sup> This propagandistic literature helped SUN build support for candidates like Cohen and Michael LeConti, the self-described “father of five children, homeowner taxpayer and citizen of Newton,” who opposed METCO on the grounds that “It is about time that the people who pay the bills have some say on how it should be spent.”<sup>128</sup>

The VOICE campaign reinforced the success of ad hoc grassroots opposition groups at influencing local battles. On election day, VOICE candidates Cohen, LeConti, Paul Ash and Edward Prince defeated four incumbents, including the chairman and vice-chairman, to create with Alvin Mandell and Henry Delicata a clear conservative majority on the School Committee. It was the first time in 24 years that an incumbent had lost in a Newton school committee election. Only one self-identified liberal candidate, Honora Kaplan, achieved victory. Few observers failed to interpret election results as a clear shift in the political climate of the suburb, especially since VOICE candidates also fared well in the Board of Aldermen races. After winning by a large margin, Robert Cohen later declared, “All of a sudden it was an advantage to be labeled a conservative.”<sup>129</sup> The election represented a wider trend of a growing conservative and consumerist approach to

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<sup>127</sup> “Anti-busing battle lines drawn,” *Waltham News-Tribune*, September 26, 1975.

<sup>128</sup> Michael R. LeConti to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, December 5, 1974.

<sup>129</sup> Tonnie Katz, “Suburbs Growing Reluctant to Pay for Expensive Education,” *Boston Globe*, March 7, 1976.

the public school system had begun to take hold throughout metropolitan Boston.<sup>130</sup> “For a long time there was a feeling of trust for educators,” Robert Fobert, the longtime superintendent of the Lexington schools observed. “Now what schools are doing is adopting a more consumer advocate posture—a kind of Nader approach to education.”<sup>131</sup> Unlike Ralph Nader and his followers, however, this new grassroots politics assumed a far more fiscally moderate bent.

### **Ragweed in the Garden City**

The first issue to truly demonstrate the new era of fiscally and politically conservative school governance in Newton involved another voluntary metropolitan integration program. The fight that unfolded in early 1976 over a program called Metropairways, operated by the Metropolitan Planning Project (MPP), provides an important lens through which to understand both the community’s fractured attitude on METCO as well as the continuities and changes in the contours of its political culture. MPP had begun in 1973 through a grant from the federal government’s 1972 Emergency School Aid Act for the development of metropolitan programs in urban areas. The project constituted a separate entity from METCO though they had largely overlapping boards. MPP also shared METCO’s racially liberal premise that individual interaction led to tolerance and equality. Unlike METCO, MPP had emphasized remedies that involved two-way rather than one-way voluntary transportation of students. In order to encourage students of all backgrounds to “participate in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic learning experience,” MPP used its \$980,000 federal grant to sponsor 56 programs that brought

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<sup>130</sup> Tonnie Katz suggested “perhaps nowhere is this changing role of the school committee more obvious than in Newton.” See, Katz, “Suburbs Growing Reluctant to Pay for Expensive Education.”

<sup>131</sup> Katz, “Suburbs Growing Reluctant to Pay for Expensive Education.”

students from Boston and the surrounding suburbs together in educational endeavors on topics such as African-American history, Chinese and Spanish culture and language, theatre and fine arts.<sup>132</sup> Newton served as one of MPP's inaugural partners and had participated in the early initiatives in 1974 and 1975, including taking part in the Metropathways project where high school students from both the suburb and Boston explored the ecology, geography and history of the Charles River.<sup>133</sup>

In the winter of 1976 MPP developed an additional program called Metropairways, for younger students that matched five suburban elementary schools with five in the city. The plan included pairing 125 students at the Angier School in the Waban neighborhood of Newton with the same number of children from the David A. Ellis School in Roxbury to meet about ten times for two hours between mid-March and June, alternating between the two schools and at third sites such as the Museum of Science.<sup>134</sup> The program was to be entirely voluntary, giving parents the option to allow their children to participate in the program. The planners promised that the Ellis School was in a "stable neighborhood" with no problems of physical safety for the children and also assured that the program would last only for a year and there were "no strings attached" for a future commitment to metropolitan education.<sup>135</sup> The proposal received overwhelming support from teachers, administrators, and parents at the Angier School.

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<sup>132</sup> William R. Torbert, THE METROPAIRWAYS PILOT YEAR EVALUATION: A COLLOBORATIVE INQUIRY INTO VOLUNTARY METROPOLITAN DESEGREGATION, June 30, 1976, Box 25, Folder 48, METCO; Muriel Cohen and James Worsham, "13 programs tie suburb, city students," *Boston Globe*, January 20, 1974.

<sup>133</sup> Carole Fischberg, "Metroplans in Newton Schoolrooms?" *Newton Times*, January 29, 1976.

<sup>134</sup> The curriculum varied by grade and included courses called "Me Myself and I" that explored the similarities and differences between humans and animals and "Ethnicity" and "Then and Now" See, Torbert, THE METROPAIRWAYS PILOT YEAR EVALUATION.

<sup>135</sup> Kathy Jones, "The Newton School Committee 'On the Record', c. 1976, Box 4, Folder 4, PMR.

For the fiscally conservative members of the School Committee, however, Metropairways represented a threat to the three pillars of their shared governing philosophy: basic education, local control, and taxpayer accountability. Member Edward Prince immediately denounced the program as a clear diversion of Newton's educational efforts by seeking to effect social change rather than teaching children basic skills and knowledge. He and his fellow Committee members interpreted MPP's broad mission of "eliminat[ing] racial and ethnic isolation in Greater Boston" as a dangerous first step toward mandatory metropolitan integration. Robert Cohen provocatively declared, "The ultimate goal of the Metropolitan Planning Project is metropolitanization—that is the broad issue and this is a block on which that it is to be built."<sup>136</sup> Fusing fears about loss of local control with claims of taxpayer rights, Alvin Mandell ignored assurances that the program would be entirely federally financed and declared, "Am I going to pay Newton taxes to have some of my children educated in some other part of the Greater Boston School District?"<sup>137</sup>

The school committee's stance provoked residents fears about comprehensive metropolitan integration. When Angier principal Roland Barth staged a meeting for parents about the MPP program, half of the audience did not have children enrolled in the Angier School and came from other Newton neighborhoods in order to raise objections that program would lead to metropolitanization. These citizens largely placed their opposition in color-blind terms, emphasizing that they had no problem with their children attending school with African-American children but did not want them to take buses into

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<sup>136</sup> Jones, "The Newton School Committee 'On the Record', c. 1976.

<sup>137</sup> "Newton School Board Chairman raps Area proposal," March 12, 1976, Box 57, Folder 8, METCO.

Roxbury.<sup>138</sup> The objections revealed many residents' highly racialized anxiety about urban crime and drugs and the overall dangers of the city, which partially explains why most Newton residents voiced at least rhetorical support for METCO's one-way integration, while the idea of sending white suburban children into Roxbury through Metropairways evoked strong objections. *Globe* columnist Mike Barnicle mocked the hypocrisy of this position by observing that "You would of thought the children were being bused to Angola."<sup>139</sup> "I certainly wouldn't want to accuse anyone of being a racist," observed Angier principal Roland Barth, adopting a more diplomatic spatial logic, "but if we were planning the program with an elementary school in Wellesley, I don't think you would have seen the same sort of concern about not enough basic education. There's a hell of a lot of fear of the unknown."<sup>140</sup> Placing the program in explicitly racial individualist terms, he declared, "It is the presence of these black kids that make the program educationally important. Many Angier children know no Black people; this isolation perpetuates stereotypes."<sup>141</sup>

Many Newton residents agreed with Barth's interpretation of the benefits of Metropairways. In defense of the initiative, several Newton parents offered an alternative vision of quality education and taxpayer entitlements than that of the conservative School Committee members and their supporters. Like the advocates for METCO in Winchester, these Metropairways supporters did not focus on the issues of structural inequality or even the circumscribed opportunities for African-American children but, instead, stressed that not participating in integrated educational opportunities compromised both the

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<sup>138</sup> Louise E. Riley to the Editor, *Boston Globe*, March 21, 1976.

<sup>139</sup> Mike Barnicle, "A Short Ride, a big distance," *Boston Globe*, January 18, 1976.

<sup>140</sup> Benjamin Taylor, "School Struggle in the Suburbs," *Boston Globe*, March 21, 1976.

<sup>141</sup> "Angier's Connection to Roxbury is Severed by the School Committee," *Newton Times*, March 10, 1976.

education of their children and their rights of citizenship.<sup>142</sup> *Globe* columnist Carole Surkin, whose daughter was in the fifth grade at the Angier school, brought this view of the controversy into the sharpest focus in one of her weekly pieces. Using loaded terminology, she declared that “the rising tide of racism in the community” threatened to “deprive” her daughter of an important innovative educational opportunity.<sup>143</sup> This statement revealed that Surkin saw the program less as means to remedy the problem of structural inequality and rather within the framework of suburban privilege to enhance the quality of her child’s education. “What about us in a democracy?” she asked in reference to herself and her suburban liberal peers. Continuing to explain her sense of liberal victimhood, Surkin stressed that she and her husband had moved to Newton because its schools “were so progressive,” but that they had now begun to consider moving away. Surkin’s comments underscored that quality education did not just define the housing choices and political agenda of the members of groups like SUN and VOICE, but many suburban liberals as well. Concerns about property values and tax rates also influenced liberal residents’ opposition to the School Committee’s action. “It is the reputation for great schools that attract people to Newton and strengthens its real estate market,” reporter Dan Ahern observed. Surkin’s threat of moving confirmed Ahern’s fears that the school committee’s actions could both damage this image and “depress real estate values, push up the tax rate and throw heavier burdens on the budget-minded fears.”<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> For instance Angier Parent Edward Lerner stated “I want my kids to live successfully in the year 2000, and I also want them to learn something. I think this program provides serious content as well as helping children learn together.” Carole Fischberg, “Angier tie to Roxbury Threatened,” *Newton Times*, March 3, 1976.

<sup>143</sup> Carol Surkin, “Newton Faces School Battle,” *Boston Globe*, March 2, 1976.

<sup>144</sup> Ahern, “An Era Ends in Newton.”

When the Newton School Committee held a special meeting about the Metropairways proposal on March 8, 1976, most of the 400-person crowd that assembled shared Surkin's liberal indignation and concern. School superintendent Aaron Fink made an emotional plea that revealed his interpretation of the purpose of public education. Fink, who also served on the Board of the MPP, firmly believed that cultural and human enrichment programs contributed to the "overall education of the child." In response to anti-liberal denunciations from School Committee members and a series of anonymous phone calls, Fink declared, "They are damn right! I am a social engineer—but there are engineers who build bridges and there are those who build walls."<sup>145</sup> Even Fink's warnings that not participating in a voluntary plan might lead to a mandatory court ruling down the road failed to persuade the School Committee. At the end of this emotional session, the body voted 6-3 not to participate in Metropairways. The following day, the *Globe* featured a picture of Superintendent Fink with his head in his hands and Katherine Jones, the Newton METCO coordinator, in a similar pose, a physical sign of her concerns about the vote's implications for that program too.

The response to the vote immediately transcended Newton's municipal boundaries. State Representative and longtime community activist Mel King of Roxbury denounced the decision on the floor of the Massachusetts legislature, saying it sent the message "Put the niggers back in their place, we've done too much for the them."<sup>146</sup> The *Boston Globe* featured a series of articles and editorials on the situation that discussed the implications of the School Committee's action. Erik Van Loon, one of the lawyers who had represented African-American parents in the *Morgan* case, damningly predicted that

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<sup>145</sup> Torbert, THE METROPAIRWAYS PILOT YEAR EVALUATION.

<sup>146</sup> Marjorie Arons, "Roxbury rep calls action racist," *Newton Times*, March 17, 1976.

if an attorney in the future wanted to make an argument “that the suburbs should be involved because they had contributed to the segregation of the Boston public schools, they might be able to use the Newton decision...as one little piece of the puzzle.”<sup>147</sup> This case did not come pass. Yet, the School Committee’s vote and the attention it received did lead Newton to undergo a collective identity crisis and to question the liberal exceptionalism of the community and the cutting-edge quality and reputation of its schools. Many citizens publicly declared that the vote had made them “saddened” and “ashamed” and proved the amount of “Ragweed in the Garden City.”<sup>148</sup> Just weeks after the vote, Betty Klauber suggested the School Committee’s action “creates a bad image for the city of Newton, and real estate brokers report some people already deciding not to buy here.”<sup>149</sup>

These statements, like the outrage that surrounded the NCDF plan defeat, still operated within an understanding that Newton did, in fact, have a culture of distinctiveness. A coalition of local liberal residents fused the discourses of racial liberalism, Newton exceptionalism and suburban privileges, proclaiming that the rejection of participation “undermined the rights of parents to...choose racially integrated programs” and in doing so, “put the label of bigotry upon a city which has thrived and prospered for its enlightenment and commitment to humane values.”<sup>150</sup> Many residents voiced more individualized anxieties about the future of education in the suburb, heeding the warning of former chairman of the School Committee Manuel Beckworth that “one of

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<sup>147</sup> Taylor, “School struggle in the suburbs.”

<sup>148</sup> Lee Bolman to the Editor, *Newton Times*, March 17, 1976; Nicholas Elliott to the Editor, *Newton Times*, March 17, 1976; William F. Beckett to the Editor, *Newton Times*, March 31, 1976.

<sup>149</sup> Marjorie Arons, “Petition Urges urban-suburb school mix,” *Newton Times*, April 14, 1976.

<sup>150</sup> “A Public Message to the Newton School Committee,” 1976, CPPAX.

the outstanding public school systems in the United States is in danger of alarming retrogression.”<sup>151</sup>

The situation received considerable outside attention precisely because it forced liberal residents in Newton and elsewhere to confront these issues. Few observers failed to invoke Newton’s progressive reputation in interpreting the implications of the decision, using such descriptors as “a bastion for liberal thinking, whether in politics or education.”<sup>152</sup> The *Boston Globe* dubbed it “ironic” that this rejection “should happen in Newton, which has always had a reputation for its progressivism.”<sup>153</sup> Fearing what this vote indicated about the community’s stance on METCO, the *Globe* editorial staff suggested, “If such efforts on a voluntary basis are rejected, one wonders what solutions to the programs of racial separation are left.”<sup>154</sup> The increasing uncertainty over the METCO budget brought these observations about the limits of suburban liberalism in Newton and metropolitan Boston as a whole into sharp relief.

### **The Budget Crisis**

The fiscal crisis in Massachusetts worsened by the month during the mid-1970s.<sup>155</sup> Despite the earlier standoff, Governor Dukakis continued to see METCO as one place he could impose budgetary restraint. In the winter of 1976, Dukakis proposed to the legislature a \$5.48 million budget for METCO’s operation in the upcoming school year, which was more than \$1.5 million less than the Department of Education had

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<sup>151</sup> Manuel Beckwith to the Editor, *Newton Times*, March 24, 1976.

<sup>152</sup> Taylor, “School Struggle.”

<sup>153</sup> Taylor, “School Struggle”; “Saying No in Newton,” *Boston Globe*, March 11, 1976; Many *Globe* reporters and staff including Carole Surkin and Muriel Cohen who covered the Boston school desegregation resided in Newton, which partially explains why the Metropairways situation received so much attention.

<sup>154</sup> “Saying No in Newton.”

<sup>155</sup> Chapter 10 discusses the state’s budget crisis in much greater detail.

recommended. He also announced a stricter set of guidelines for participating suburbs to ensure that no community either made a profit on the program or allocated the state funds toward reducing local taxes. Dukakis stated he understood “well the pressures that local supporters are under, and at the same time, I would hope that suburbanites will recognize the severe fiscal constraints under which we have been operating for the past sixteen months.”<sup>156</sup> Most suburban communities were once again not as sympathetic as Dukakis had hoped. Following the announcement, headlines began to appear on the front pages of area newspapers with such warnings as “Suburbs Cooling to Metco as Funds Fade,” “METCO, Money and Race” and “Is METCO effort dying in the suburbs?”<sup>157</sup> The persistent turmoil in Boston and the fears of metropolitanization it had spawned undoubtedly had contributed to this “cooling.” The budget situation, nevertheless, played a more pivotal role in shifting the discussion away from whether METCO could provide the infrastructure for a metropolitan remedy to whether the program could survive at all.

Many supporters of metropolitan integration stressed that suburban residents used fiscal anxieties to cover for larger racial hostilities about two-way and even one-way integration.<sup>158</sup> A school board member in the nearly all-white, exclusive suburb of Cohasset asserted, “People aren’t going to say: ‘Get the God damned niggers out of there. But they feel that way.’”<sup>159</sup> For most suburban residents, however, race and economics failed to operate in such neatly contained categories and the ambivalence about METCO reflected the way these anxieties had converged in a discourse of suburban entitlements

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<sup>156</sup> Michael S. Dukakis to Marilyn E. Barbour, May 19, 1976, Box 43, METCO; John Fuerbringer and Muriel Cohen, “Anrig says Metco budget \$500,000 short of need,” *Boston Globe*, March 31, 1976.

<sup>157</sup> Katz, “Suburbs Cooling to Metco as Funds Fade”; “METCO, Money and Race,” *Boston Globe*, April 16, 1976; Ian Menzies, “Is METCO effort dying in the suburbs?” *Boston Globe*, September 27, 1976.

<sup>158</sup> “METCO, Money and Race.”

<sup>159</sup> Katz, “Suburbs Cooling to Metco as Funds Fade.”

and taxpayer rights. Lee Berube of Beverly explicitly stated that she opposed METCO for economic, not racial, reasons. She explained that she was “against it only because of the economic conditions of today. Things are bad enough. Why make them worse?”<sup>160</sup> If the state permanently reneged on its funding commitment because of the “present financial crunch,” Berube feared that the suburbs would have to pick up the funding of the program. “I don’t mind helping people if I felt I was financially able to do it,” Berube stated, “but if I can’t help my own, how can I possibly help anyone else?” Demonstrating the power of these fiscal arguments in driving resistance to METCO, by 1976 SUN had shifted its attack on the program from a race-conscious resistance to integration to a race-neutral defense of taxpayers’ rights and priorities. SUN President Clara Hewis of Winchester declared that it was an “asinine, waste of money to use tax revenues for METCO especially when the governor is dropping people off general relief.”<sup>161</sup>

Some commentators interpreted this fiscally moderate reaction to METCO as a signal of a larger suburban political realignment. “Increasing financial difficulties and growing suburban conservatism,” the *Boston Globe* editorialized, “may be just the one two punch necessary to knock METCO out of the suburbs in the next decade.”<sup>162</sup> Those who construed the hostility to METCO as sign of increased suburban conservatism failed to acknowledge that these sentiments constituted not a break, but, rather, a continuation in suburban attitudes about the program. Since its inception, support for the initiative by residents from across the suburban political spectrum had rested on the fact that METCO participation did not require the outlay of local tax dollars. The boundaries of this commitment had not before been tested since the state had always provided adequate

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<sup>160</sup> Peggy Brown, “Group Organizes to Oppose METCO,” *Beverly Times*, March 17, 1975.

<sup>161</sup> Marjorie Arons, “Suburbs United Votes No,” *Newton Times*, March 10, 1976.

<sup>162</sup> Katz, “Suburbs Cooling to Metco as Funds Fade.”

funding and most suburban communities had operated in the black throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Lincoln, which had the largest percentage of METCO students, a reputation for liberal politics, and one of highest per-capita incomes in the state and country, offered a clear example of the dilemma. David Livingston, a local school official, aptly summarized the situation. “So far it’s been a simple issue: Do you believe in integrated education?” Livingston explained. “But if the commonwealth reduces the level of funds so I have to say: Do you believe in integrated education enough to invest local funds to continue the program. That’s a very different story.”<sup>163</sup> Lincoln residents made clear on which side they stood. Following Dukakis’s announcement, the community voted to accept fewer students and reduce support services. In response to the decision in Lincoln and elsewhere Dr. William Herbert of the Massachusetts Teachers Association astutely remarked, “In good times it is easy to be liberal. Prejudices are overcome to a certain extent, but when money is tight, people become frightened.”<sup>164</sup>

Several surrounding communities decided to make similar reductions. In Framingham, the fiscally moderate school committee voted in the spring of 1976 to cut its METCO support staff from ten to six, and to refuse to pay its fee to METCO, Inc. for its services. The superintendent tried to tell the committee and its supporters that it was not METCO that created financial problems for the community stating, “If we eliminated the program tomorrow, we wouldn’t buy one less pencil, one less ream of paper, use any

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<sup>163</sup> Katz, “Suburbs Cooling to Metco as Funds Fade.”

<sup>164</sup> Dr. William H. Herbert, “Suburban Schools retreating from cooperation with cities,” *Allston-Brighton Citizen*, April 15, 1976.

less electricity. In elementary schools there are not more than one or two Metco kids.”<sup>165</sup> Though his comment illustrates the limited impact the program had in Framingham, it did little to assuage the conviction of the school committee. ‘I don’t think I should vote to carry the inner city load,’ explained the School Committee chairman about his attitude toward metropolitan integration. “I’m sorry their system isn’t as good as ours, but there’s nothing I can do about it.”<sup>166</sup>

METCO leaders publicly placed the blame for the fiscal problems directly on the steps of the State House rather than on suburbs like Lincoln and Framingham.<sup>167</sup> These officials saw the Governor’s sharp budget reduction as a ploy to transfer the tax burden for the program from the state to the local level. In response, the politically savvy METCO leadership appealed directly to suburban residents’ racial and economic concerns in order to convince them to pressure the state to increase the allocation. In a “question and answer format” leaflet circulated in the suburbs in the spring of 1976, METCO promised the program was not “the first step toward metropolitanism” but was “one-way,” “urban-to-suburban,” and “voluntary.”<sup>168</sup> Additionally, the strategically-worded document attempted to assuage taxpayer concerns by emphasizing that its cost placed no “financial drain on local real estate tax base,” and, in fact, took many steps to ensure that it was “one of the most cost effective programs in the public sector” and “one of the best bargains in education.”<sup>169</sup> Along with these appeals, METCO dispatched its urban and suburban participants and sympathizers to encourage Governor Dukakis,

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<sup>165</sup> Joan Behrmann, “Metco gets caught in town-state budget-cutting tug-of-war,” *Boston Sunday Herald Advertiser*, June 20, 1976.

<sup>166</sup> Barnicle, “A Short Ride, a big distance.”

<sup>167</sup> “They are clearly feeling the financial pinch,” Stephen Shaw asserted, “to expect them to find dollars for Metco that no else can find is too much to expect,” see Katz, “Suburbs Cooling to Metco as Funds Fade.”

<sup>168</sup> METCO, Untitled Flyer, May 11, 1976, Box 2, Folder 78, METCO.

<sup>169</sup> METCO, Untitled Flyer, May 11, 1976

Education Commissioner Paul Parks, and members of the state legislature to increase the budget allocation.<sup>170</sup>

Dukakis and his administration did not heed the pleas to alter the proposed budget and instead further intensified their critique of the suburbs. Paul Parks supported his boss's stance, arguing that the decision of many suburban districts to scale back their commitment to "equal educational opportunity" was in "no way related to fiscal or funding problems," but, rather, "a practice of social retrenchment." He cited the Metropairways vote in Newton as the clearest example to support this argument.<sup>171</sup>

Dukakis went even further in his criticism. He publicly declared that in most towns METCO students merely filled empty seats, thus making it unfair and selfish for officials to request full tuition. He provocatively told a group of Dorchester residents that these demands for full-funding represented another way the suburbs were "failing the core city."<sup>172</sup> "Brookline, Newton, and Weston won't get full funding," he announced in the spring of 1976. "It's not costing those communities \$1,400 or \$1,500 to put a child in an empty seat."<sup>173</sup> The choice of towns that Dukakis used to create a cognitive cartography of suburban privilege was not random. The three communities he selected, including his hometown of Brookline, all had reputations for liberal politics, good schools, and large upper-middle-class populations, and thereby the list appeared an effort to build support among urban-based voters.

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<sup>170</sup> See for example, Essie M. Jones to Paul Parks, May 12, 1976; Box 37, Folder 21, METCO; Shirley and Ray Greenberg to Paul Parks, May 3, 1976, Box 37, Folder 21, METCO; METCO, METCO Board of Directors and METCO Parents Council Meeting Minutes, March 18, 1976, Box 6, Folder 58, METCO; METCO, Press Release, April 8, 1976, , Box 45, Folder 23, METCO.

<sup>171</sup> Paul Parks to the Editor, *Boston Globe*, April 18, 1976.

<sup>172</sup> "Suburbs Hit on METCO," *Boston Herald*, March 30, 1976.

<sup>173</sup> "Weston Given \$1,350 per pupil for METCO plus Busing Costs," *Waltham News-Tribune*, April 22, 1976.

## **No Ordinary Suburb?**

Dukakis's accusations pushed the already volatile Newton School Committee over the edge. Upon hearing of the Governor's remarks, Newton School Committee Chairman Alvin Mandell issued a public letter to Dukakis. He pointedly disagreed with the Governor's claim that adding a few METCO pupils to a class would come at no cost to towns like Newton. Relying on a paternalistic and euphemistic view of the aptitude of inner-city youth, Mandell contended that these "underachieving" students required more tutoring, in-class teachers and "more of the assets of the system than the resident students."<sup>174</sup> He thereby inverted Dukakis's accusation to suggest Newton actually lost money by participating in the program. Mandell also countered the claim that the suburbs must increase their responsibility to the city, declaring that places like Brookline, Weston and Newton actually paid far more in taxes to the state and federal governments than they received back in services. Mandell concluded the message by asking the Governor: "Under these circumstances do you expect the METCO program to survive your projected funding?" Mandell's own answer to this seeming rhetorical question was, it seemed, no.

Newton school officials calculated that Dukakis's proposed \$5.9 million METCO budget would provide the suburb \$256,000 but would still leave it \$82,000 short of its requested reimbursement. The Newton School Committee thus realized that it could either scale back the budget or take the required \$80,000 from the city's general tax fund. The prospect that local taxes would supplement METCO's funding outraged many local residents and their fiscally moderate elected officials. On June 28, 1976, the committee

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<sup>174</sup> Alvin Mandell to Michael Dukakis published in *Newton Graphic*, May 12, 1976; "Dukakis challenged on METCO," *Waltham News-Tribune*, May 5, 1976.

staged a contentious seven-hour meeting on the issue that at one point involved police intervention to remove frustrated spectators from the room. At the end of the lengthy session, the committee voted 5-4 to cut the METCO budget by \$82,000. METCO officials stressed that they would not send students into the community without the support services that the cut eliminated. Superintendent Fink, therefore, dubbed the action “tantamount to killing the program.”<sup>175</sup>

The Newton School Committee’s vote revealed the widening fault lines over METCO and the larger political, racial and economic issues it embodied. The program’s supporters immediately challenged the committee’s action. Some defenders of the program supplemented well-worn arguments about METCO’s dual benefits for both black and white children. Others opted to appropriate the language and logic of fiscal moderation of their opponents. These advocates argued that by removing the 350 METCO students Newton would lose the \$256,000 in state funding that supplemented both the program and other educational services in the suburb. Hubie Jones, a member of Black Citizens of Newton, declared that METCO was “definitely an economic benefit to Newton—without it the tax rates would go up.”<sup>176</sup> Reinforcing that the city’s tax rate concerned residents on both sides of the city’s political divide, an editorial in the liberal citizen-run *Newton Times* declared, “Taxes in Newton are high and no one wants them higher. However, dropping Metco is not the way to save money.”<sup>177</sup> Even members of Newton’s now vocal politically moderate wing agreed. In an anonymous letter to the *Newton Times*, one resident relied on a shorthand imagery of suburban progressive

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<sup>175</sup> “Disorderly Meeting in Newton struggles over cuts in METCO,” *Waltham News-Tribune*, June 29, 1976.

<sup>176</sup>H. Darfour Anderson, “Action on METCO condemned in Newton,” *Bay State Banner*, July 15, 1976.

<sup>177</sup> “METCO is less costly than No Metco at all,” *Newton Times*, July 28, 1976.

politics to prove that she was “not a liberal.”<sup>178</sup> “I never voted for George McGovern or Father Drinan,” she said, and she had even agreed with School Committee’s stance on the Metropairways program. The METCO vote, nevertheless, appalled her because “Metco kids are part of our school. They are my daughter’s friends. Good lord, there are only about a dozen of them at the Burr School.” The Committee’s actions had led to her rethink her basic political values. She suddenly felt guilt for “being white,” “being from Newton,” and having voted for a “group of dangerous buffoons who are using my children as political pawns.”<sup>179</sup> “That’s the most upsetting thing,” she decried. “This school committee is turning me into a liberal!”

With the city’s political culture in a state of disorientation, Mayor Theodore Mann called a special School Committee meeting on July 7 in order to reopen the issue and urge the members reconsider their vote. Five of the nine School Committee members deliberately missed the session, explaining that the blame for the cuts lay with the state’s failure to fully fund METCO. Mayor Mann interpreted their refusal to attend as a form of “boycotting.” The session did draw 250 Newton residents and representatives from many Newton grassroots liberal organizations. Members of the League of Women Voters, Newton Coalition for New Politics, Black Citizens of Newton, and Newton Teachers Association read statements defending the program and denouncing the committee’s action.<sup>180</sup> METCO officials, parents and Newton committee members also testified. Director Jean McGuire adopted a commonly invoked imagery of spatial

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<sup>178</sup> Name Withheld to *Newton Times*, July 28, 1976.

<sup>179</sup> Name Withheld to *Newton Times*.

<sup>180</sup> Carole Fischberg “SchoolCom boycotts Metco meeting,” *Newton Times*, July 14, 1976.

isolation, warning the suburban community, “If you build walls, remember: they keep you in, as well as keeping us out.”<sup>181</sup>

The special meeting illustrated that the concern over the vote’s impact had reverberated into the chambers of federal and state government. At the session, Mann read a letter from Senator Edward Brooke and Congressmen Robert Drinan and Michael Harrington urging reconsideration of the issue, dubbing the vote “the darkening of the one of few bright spots in Boston’s recent educational history.” Placing the decision in terms of a somewhat mythological past, they declared that Newton had “a history of generosity and recognition of social responsibility and to retreat now would now only serve to enhance the isolation of and despair of those in Boston’s inner city communities.”<sup>182</sup> A group of state officials and politicians appeared in person at the meeting and also put the negative impact of the vote within a wider political and social context. Invoking the community’s exceptionalist identity, Commissioner Paul Parks declared, “It was Newton citizens who took to the front lines in carrying METCO to a reality.” Parks thus warned, “If this city turns its back, you have contributed to the destruction of the whole Metco program. Town after town will step forward and do the same thing.”<sup>183</sup> State Senator Jack Backman agreed, stating, “My colleagues will look to Newton for leadership (and may take more drastic action). I assure you that the ramifications will go far beyond \$80,000.”<sup>184</sup> These officials clearly found invoking the exceptionalism of Newton a convenient trope through which to express outrage at the

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<sup>181</sup> “SchoolCom boycotts Metco meeting.”

<sup>182</sup> Sen Edward W. Brooke, Rep. Robert F. Drinan, Rep. Michael J. Harrington to Newton School Committee, *Newton Graphic*, July 15, 1976.

<sup>183</sup> Fischberg, “SchoolCom boycotts Metco meeting.”

<sup>184</sup> Fischberg, “SchoolCom boycotts Metco meeting.”

decision and its broader implications about the future of both voluntary integration and suburban liberalism.

In his own remarks, Mayor Mann also expressed consternation about the damage to the city's progressive image. He declared, "What bothers me is that others perceive the city of Newton as racist, when the majority of people here are all for METCO."<sup>185</sup> The Mayor perhaps failed to recognize that such Newtonites' support for METCO came with a fiscally conservative disclaimer. Voicing the sentiment of many of her neighbors, Joyce Morrissey Beatty dubbed METCO "a very valid program" but also applauded the School Committee's cuts.<sup>186</sup> Beatty believed "taxpayers' dollars" sat at the heart of the issue and therefore contended that to have "Newton supplement the program is not very realistic and pedantic to say the least," especially "when people are already overburdened." George Poirer used a similar argument of fiscal conservatism and taxpayer rights to voice his support of the School Committee's stance. "As a parent, taxpayer, and lifelong resident of Newton who is faced with a tax bill of \$2,000 on my modest six-room home," he declared, "I vigorously protest the attempt to use my tax dollar to make up for the state-created deficit in the METCO program."<sup>187</sup> The school committee for its part continued to invoke Beatty and Poirer and other members of Newton's so-called Silent Majority in explaining the committee members' position. Chairman Mandell publicly contended, "I am sincerely and honestly trying to protect the Newton taxpayer." Mandell feared that if the suburb replaced the shortfall it would set a dangerous precedent and "Newton will be asked to pick up more and more of what should be the state's

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<sup>185</sup> Anderson, "Action on METCO Condemned in Newton," *Bay State Banner*, July 15, 1976.

<sup>186</sup> Joyce Morrissey Beatty to Editor, *Newton Times*, July 7, 1976.

<sup>187</sup> George Poirer to the Editor, *Waltham News-Tribune*, July 22, 1976.

responsibility.”<sup>188</sup> He urged for the state to restore the funding so that “Newton may continue its’ service to the 350 youngsters in the largest Metco program in the State.”<sup>189</sup>

The controversy inescapably placed the 350 METCO students in the middle of the crossfire. Many of these children had been students in the Newton schools since kindergarten and feared that the decision compromised their short- and long-term educational opportunities. Liza Paige, a METCO student stated, “If they shut down the program, I think that would upset me more than anything.” While the School Committee’s decision “shocked and upset” her, Paige was not completely surprised since “the whole busing situation has definitely hardened attitudes against Metco.”<sup>190</sup> Another Boston student, Linda Silva, who worried the vote placed her plans to attend Dartmouth and then medical school in jeopardy, believed it was “purely money” that influenced the decision. Ellen Woodward, a recent black graduate scheduled to enroll at Wellesley College, in the fall disagreed, denouncing the vote as “racism, pure and simple.” Many white students also voiced concerns about the future of the program. White junior Ellen Sasahara noted that despite the fact she never got to know any METCO students personally, she would “really miss not seeing them around” if the program was dismantled. “There were two in my art class and they had a very happy go-lucky attitude,” she observed.<sup>191</sup> Sasahara’s comments inadvertently made the committee’s stance appear that much more extreme by underlining METCO’s limited impact on the Newton schools.

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<sup>188</sup> Carole Fischberg “Newton May Lose Metco over \$37,000 deadlock,” *Newton Times*, August 4, 1976.

<sup>189</sup> Alvin Mandell to Karl R. Fuller, July 22, 1976, Backman.

<sup>190</sup> Adrian Birkett, “Black, white pupils evaluate Newton METCO,” *Boston Evening Globe*, July 12, 1976.

<sup>191</sup> Birkett, “Black, white pupils evaluate Newton METCO.”

## Compromise

With the 1976-1977 school year about to start, METCO staffers and supporters felt increasing despair about the program's future in Newton and the broader metropolitan region.<sup>192</sup> Finally, Dukakis made a slight concession. He announced he would raise his request for METCO funding from \$5.4 million to \$5.9 million. The state Ways and Means Committee made a counter-offer of \$5.75 million, which still left the program with \$150,000 less than the previous year and did not cover the money needed to ensure that the Newton programs remained in operation. With the deadline fast approaching, Dukakis finally capitulated and announced that he would transfer \$150,000 from his \$4 million "unforeseen emergency" fund to the METCO account.<sup>193</sup> The Governor gave the Department of Education instructions to distribute the last-minute windfall to all towns with more than a hundred students in their systems. Newton, however, received by far the largest allocation since it was the only community where the continuation of the program depended on the additional money.<sup>194</sup> The additional \$47,000 in state funding did not completely compensate for the community's \$82,000 budget shortfall, but it did allow for the restoration of its necessary operational services. The school committee unanimously approved a revised budget for METCO just before the first day of school.

While many Newton residents and officials let out a sigh of relief at the end of this game of brinkmanship, others continued to worry about the impact of the situation on

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<sup>192</sup> Newton's legislative delegation, led by Representative Jack Backman met individually with all factions of the dispute, corresponded extensively with Dukakis, and staged a series of negotiations with state and Newton officials, see Jack H. Backman to Michael S. Dukakis, July 29, 1976, Box 20, Folder 20, Backman.

<sup>193</sup> Lois Pines, Press Release: "Governor Announces Restoration of State METCO Funds at Pines Fundraiser," August 30, 1976, Box 22 Press Releases Lois G. Pines Papers, addenda, Special Collections, State Library of Massachusetts.

<sup>194</sup> "Dukakis Shifting \$150,000 to Keep Newton in METCO," *Patriot Ledger*, August 28, 1976.

both the METCO students and the community's progressive standing. Evelyn Kaye worried, "You can't wash away the impression that's been given that METCO wasn't wanted in Newton" and "that no one really cares about the black children unless there's money to pay for them."<sup>195</sup> When a national civic organization named Newton an "All-American City" in the fall, at least one resident felt some unease. A citizen noted in a local paper, "It seems ironic that a well-earned honor comes in a year when Newton's liberal and fraternal reputation has been blemished, when some of its people seem to be building bridges not walls."<sup>196</sup> Invoking the community's "liberal tradition," the author hoped that the "flush of pride from this new honor will remind them that Newton has more than enough resources to share." In the aftermath of the controversy, many local residents worked hard to erase the tarnish to Newton's enlightened reputation and its limited participation in METCO remains a key component of that effort.

## **Conclusion**

In September 1976, Ian Menzies, who covered the suburbs for the *Globe*, like many others interpreted the controversy in Newton as a sign that the future of METCO stood at a crossroads. "Times have changed," he conceded. "These are not the mid-60s, the years of the inter-racial freedom marches and the Great Society, when suburbia was gung-ho for liberal causes."<sup>197</sup> Menzies believed that the program's future was uncertain, but not doomed. "What suburbia really has to decide," Menzies insisted, "is whether the rationale that first made it support the program still exists---that white students benefit from METCO integration as much as black. If the answer to this question is as it should

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<sup>195</sup> Evelyn Kaye, "METCO in Newton...a Family's Views," *Boston Globe*, August 30, 1976.

<sup>196</sup> "If All America Were Like Newton," October 17, 1976, Box 57, Folder 11, METCO.

<sup>197</sup> Menzies, "Is METCO effort dying in the suburbs?"

be.... then suburbia has to fight for growth funding for METCO.”<sup>198</sup> In the three decades since Menzies posed this question, suburban residents have repeatedly responded both yes and no. Members of participating communities have consistently reaffirmed their shared commitment to voluntary integration in the aftermath of the funding controversy. These suburbanites have also continued to voice a firm belief that they should not have to expend any tax dollars for it, which has prevented the growth of the program beyond its size in 1976. The funding fights of the 1970s ultimately enabled suburban communities to set the parameters of the program’s limited operation.

The Newton METCO program remains the largest in metropolitan Boston although it has not grown substantially since 1976 and remains fully subsidized by the state. In 2008, the community received \$2.83 million in state funds for 415 students, by far the most of any participating community. Newton and other municipalities use roughly the same language to endorse the value of the program as they have since the 1960s. Newton school superintendent Jeffrey Young asserted in 2007, “Metco helps the Newton schools look and feel more like the diverse society that our kids are going to have to function in as citizens and leaders...It's about enriching our lives.”<sup>199</sup> This response reveals that individualist ideals of suburban liberalism continue to provide both a very powerful and very limited justification for the program.

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<sup>198</sup> Menzies, “Is METCO effort dying in the suburbs?”

<sup>199</sup> Jan, “METCO Fears for its Future.”

## **Chapter 9: Make Policy Not Coffee**

### **Introduction**

In April 1975, fifty white working-class women from the urban anti-busing group Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR) disrupted a rally in support of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) at Boston's historic Faneuil Hall. Sponsored by several area feminist organizations, the gathering was part of a longer struggle to attach an amendment to the state constitution articulating the broad and largely symbolic notion of equal rights for women. The sponsors had assumed this event would be a relatively staid affair made up only of members of their organizations and supporters of the ideals of the amendment. The protesters interrupted these plans. The members of ROAR represented a broader coalition of antibusers and pro-lifers who saw the ERA, like mandatory integration and legalization of abortion, as a direct threat to their religious, political and social beliefs. Carrying signs declaring, "Feminists Do Not Represent the American Majority," and "ERA will destroy the family" and chanting "Stop ERA," the protestors ensured that the event's program did not proceed. Even the intervention of the Boston police failed to quell the crowd. A custodian at Faneuil Hall, which had served as a space for free speech since before the American Revolution, remarked, "We never had anything like this before."<sup>1</sup> To see the ROAR members at a feminist-sponsored rally proved equally unprecedented.

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Dietz, "Equal Rights Rally Disrupted by Busing Foes," *Boston Globe*, April 10, 1975.

In response to the anti-ERA movement, the members of the Boston area chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW) and its allies formulated an aggressive strategy for passage of the amendment. Building directly upon the suburban networks and tactics established by both mainstream feminism and suburban liberalism, they created an extremely well organized grassroots-focused movement that involved over 5,000 volunteers in almost a hundred cities and towns throughout the state. These efforts convinced Massachusetts voters to endorse the state ERA by an overwhelming majority in the 1976 election. The vote served as the highpoint of suburban-centered feminism in Massachusetts. In contrast to the difficult and ongoing battle over the federal ERA at the national level, the successful campaign solidified Massachusetts's position as a leader on the issue of equal rights for women. It also helped restore its reputation as the most liberal state in the nation, a title that the busing crisis had undoubtedly tarnished. The battle for female equality, nevertheless, remained far from over. Just three years later, a newly elected conservative governor, Edward King, signed into law the most restrictive antiabortion statute in the country and put the state's progressive image in crisis once again.

Feminism's legal victories and setbacks prove an invaluable way of examining the continuity and changes in both suburban liberalism and Massachusetts politics during the 1970s. The evolution of mainstream feminism in Massachusetts disrupts the popular and scholarly assumption that the 1970s represented the nadir of liberal politics in Boston or the United States and instead exposes the vitality of the movement. During this decade, second-wave feminism achieved arguably its greatest triumphs and broadest constituency, winning a series of legal, social and cultural advancements for women.

Political historians have tended to bracket these accomplishments into an aside and focus instead on the decline of the liberal coalition and the economic problems and racial backlash that accompanied it.<sup>2</sup> This chapter challenges the artificial divisions that this declension framework has created between liberalism and feminism and material and cultural issues. By treating liberalism and feminism not as separate, but rather mutually constitutive, it reveals how this overlap not only contributed to the success of both movements, but also exacerbated class, racial and spatial inequalities in the physical and political landscape of metropolitan Boston and the nation.

Exploring the influence of suburban liberalism on the mainstream feminist movement in Massachusetts also recasts the standard version of postwar white female activism. Many of the white suburban women active in fair housing, peace and other liberal causes played an important role in shaping the contours of mainstream feminism. The journeys of these women between various forms of activism reveals the continuities between grassroots suburban liberal activism and the emergence of mainstream feminism that earlier narratives of second-wave feminism have overlooked.<sup>3</sup> It also shows that suburban spaces served as an important incubator for female activism. By 1971, even

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<sup>2</sup> Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds *The Rise and Fall of the New Order, 1930-1980*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989) offers an example of this tendency. The collection focuses overwhelmingly on liberal decline and mentions feminism only once and in relation to radical politics. For new scholarship that provides a more complex view of the political landscape in the 1970s see Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, eds. *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). Although the collection focuses primarily on conservatism, it does acknowledge and demonstrate the persistent influence of liberalism and feminism both socially and politically.

<sup>3</sup>The first generations of scholarship on this issue have tended to focus primarily on the literal and figurative journey of young white middle-class college students whose participation in the Civil Rights and New Left movements provided an avenue through which to reject traditional gender, class and racial norms and served as the ideological foundations of the feminist movement. Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979); Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking, 2000). See also Susan M. Hartmann, *From Margin to Mainstream: American Women and Politics Since 1960* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989); Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

Betty Friedan suggested that suburban female political activism could transform the dimensions of politics and society. Friedan concluded that “the suburban population is becoming the decisive one in the United States” and thus female activism was “surely the key to the new politics of suburbia.”<sup>4</sup>

The women who became involved in Boston NOW and related groups injected the feminist movement with the suburban liberal political strategy and ideology rooted in ideas of middle-class respectability and privilege. The women upheld the grassroots liberal commitment to working within the formal channels of government and mobilizing widespread support among middle-class suburban residents in order to advance their cause. The suburban liberal fair housing and civil rights movement directly influenced mainstream feminism’s commitment to ideals of equality of opportunity, freedom of choice, and interpretation of discrimination in terms of personal prejudice rather than structural inequality.<sup>5</sup> The struggles for the ERA and the right to abortion, therefore, exposed the ways in which the Massachusetts feminist movement reinvigorated the forms of class entitlement at the heart of the suburban liberal interpretation of equality and freedom of choice. These suburban-centered campaigns adopted a language and ideology of class-blindness that strengthened the forms of economic discrimination entrenched in both the feminist movement and the social landscape of Massachusetts.

The debate surrounding the legalization of abortion brings into clearest focus suburban liberalism and feminism’s circumscribed ability to address the problems of

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<sup>4</sup> Betty Friedan, “The Next Step: Women’s Participation—Human Liberation,” Opening Remarks to the Organizing Conference of the National Women’s Political Caucus, Washington, DC, July 10, 1971, Box 6, Folder 202, Boston N.O.W. Records, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University (hereafter: “NOW-Boston”).

<sup>5</sup> In *Motherhood in Black and White* Ruth Feldstein argues a dialectical relationship between racial progressivism and gender conservatism animated postwar liberalism. I argue that suburban-oriented feminists in Massachusetts in the 1970s, inverted that paradigm by adopting ideology and political strategy of “gender liberalism” that resulted in heightened forms of racial and class inequality.

structural inequality. The legalization of abortion has often symbolized one of the greatest accomplishments of second-wave feminism. In the late 1970s, abortion rights activists, nevertheless, confronted a state and national effort to circumscribe the availability of abortion to low-income women that proved its limits. This use of public funds to pay for the abortions of welfare recipients attracted the state's most socially conservative politicians and their constituencies. Many of these grassroots Catholic conservatives had first become politically awakened during opposition to the mandatory desegregation of the Boston public schools. This controversy illustrates the fusion of cultural and material concerns and the more complicated context and legacy of the Boston busing crisis. These debates over women's rights in the 1970s also exposed the role that religion, particularly Catholicism, played in making liberalism an unstable category of political belief and identity in Massachusetts during the 1970s.

Feminist activists, led by NOW and another suburban-centered organization, Massachusetts Organization for Repeal of Abortion Laws (MORAL), engaged in a lengthy and emotional battle to oppose the circumscription on abortion rights, which they eventually lost. After this failed attempt to challenge the race and class discrimination embedded in these new state and federal abortion laws, Massachusetts feminists adopted a successful strategy in the late 1970 that focused on mobilizing white middle-class citizens into a single-issue constituency. In order to appeal to this suburban liberal base, these activists formulated a class-blind language of choice that presented abortion as a form of middle-class privilege not as a fundamental right to all women.<sup>6</sup> The positive response to this mobilization convinced both the national abortion rights movement and

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<sup>6</sup> This point builds upon the argument in Rickie Solinger, *Beggars and Choosers: How the Politics of Choice Shapes the Politics of Abortion, Welfare in the United States* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).

the Democratic Party to adopt similar tactics. This Massachusetts-based model has subsequently enabled middle-class liberals and their state and national elected representatives to embrace the symbolic ideals of the pro-choice movement without having to commit to economic and social policies that ensure equal reproductive rights.

### **No One Home to Answer the Phone**

Throughout the postwar period the suburbs of Boston contained a vibrant network of grassroots liberal organizations devoted to issues such as civil rights, peace and environmentalism, and women stood at the forefront of this movement. The white middle-class suburban women who led these groups strategically deployed gender norms, social structures, and strong political and social associations of motherhood to advance liberal causes. Bonnie Jones of Lexington, who in the 1960s was a leader in the local chapters of the both the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and the antiwar group Citizens for Participation Politics (CPP), later observed that though the groups included a lot of men, “women did most of the work” and “the real energy and enthusiasm for a lot of this stuff came from women.”<sup>7</sup> She recalled that during the sixties, she and the other “women in town were, by and large, not working.” Jones and other Lexington women “were home with their kids putting a lot of energy into political activity. Probably because it interested them and probably because they had the time available.”<sup>8</sup> In the early 1970s, Jones, nevertheless, returned to school to pursue her masters degree in social work, started a consciousness raising group, and become president of the local chapter of the NOW, which afforded her less time to devote to these civil rights and antiwar causes.

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<sup>7</sup> Jones Interview.

<sup>8</sup> Jones Interview.

Jones's career represented a broader trend of suburban liberal female activists who opted to enter the workforce, return to school, or join the nascent feminist movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The thousands of individual decisions of these women had a powerful collective consequence for the effectiveness of suburban liberal organizations in metropolitan Boston. "Voluntarism wasn't enough for most of us," observed Anita Greenbaum, a longtime member of the peace group Voice of Women (VOW) and several other liberal political causes. She asked, however, "But if everyone is doing paid work, who will do the volunteer work?" Fellow VOW member Sue Berkeley observed that while the suburban-based peace and civil rights movements had depended on "housewives in the suburbs" to gain support by the mid-1970s, "You don't find women at home to answer the phone anymore."<sup>9</sup> The shift of female members away from volunteering and into the paid workforce served as a key factor in the eventual disbanding of both VOW and the Fair Housing Federation.

Many of these suburban women saw their careers as a continuation of their social activism. Drawing a comparison between VOW and her job as a social worker, Joan Kunitz declared, "I'm still doing essentially the same thing, using my energy to better the human condition."<sup>10</sup> Several members of the peace movement shared Kunitz's perspective, launching or reviving careers as social workers or teachers. Many other female activists pursued careers in local or state government in order to further cultivate their interest in working within the political system to create change. Lexington resident Nancy Earsy recalled that when she first came to the town in the early 1960s, the League of Women Voters, the Fair Housing Federation, and CPP provided "intellectual

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<sup>9</sup> Lucy Caldwell-Stair, "Peace Workers active 15 years later," *Newton Times*, December 15, 1976.

<sup>10</sup> Susan Auerbach, "Peace Warriors Break Rank," *Newton Times*, July 30, 1975.

satisfaction and a kind of career” she had missed out on by choosing to stay home with her children. By the late 1960s, with their kids grown and left home, gave these women the time and flexibility to revive dormant career plans. These volunteer activities sparked her interest in policymaking, and she enrolled in Northeastern Law School in order to launch a career in state government.<sup>11</sup> So many of her fellow citizens followed Earsy’s path that Lexington’s weekly newspaper launched a bi-monthly column with profiles of women, many of whom had experiences in the League and other liberal groups, who had decided in their thirties and forties to return to school or work.<sup>12</sup> In Lexington alone, by 1973, 36.6 percent of married women and 41.1 percent of all women had joined the labor force, up from 22.1 percent in 1960.<sup>13</sup> Several other Route 128 suburbs experienced a similar percentage increase of women going to work.

Personal fulfillment alone did not lead these women into the paid workforce. By the early 1970s, the combination of economic recession and inflation meant families, even upper middle-class ones, could no longer survive on a single salary.<sup>14</sup> Former VOW President Rhona Shoul, who became a social worker at a Newton junior high, explained that in the “affluent sixties” women could afford to volunteer whereas factors like the recession in the 1970s and the cost of college tuition forced many women into the labor market for “practical reasons.”<sup>15</sup> A significant number of women in Boston’s liberal suburbs, in line with the national trend, got divorced during this period, which also

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<sup>11</sup> “Women’s World at WORC,” *Minute-Man Supplement*, November 15, 1973.

<sup>12</sup> See Women’s World at WORC in *Minute-Man Supplement* beginning September 29, 1972. Barbara Smith Silvers, “Lexington Woman Shows She Can Get Education While Raising Family,” *Minute-Man Supplement*, February 1, 1973; “Lexington Woman on School Com. Balances Many Responsibilities,” *Minute-Man Supplement*, October 11, 1973; “Woman’s World at WORC,” *Minute-Man Supplement*, November 11, 1973; Anne Arsenault, “Women’s World at WORC,” *Minute-Man Supplement*, November 29, 1973.

<sup>13</sup> “More Working Wives in Lexington,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, August 22, 1973.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew D. Lassiter, “Inventing Family Values” in *Rightward Bound*, 14-15.

<sup>15</sup> Auerbach, “Peace Warriors Break Rank.”

contributed to the rise of suburban women entering the workforce. These new responsibilities meant that many of these women had less time to perform grassroots volunteering duties.<sup>16</sup>

The rise of the female liberation movement in the late 1960s also encouraged many women not only to go to work but also to join feminist organizations. The personal friendships forged in the planning meetings and envelope-licking sessions of groups like VOW and the Fair Housing Federation served as the foundations of feminist activism in the suburbs.<sup>17</sup> In turning toward feminism, veterans of the fair housing, civil rights, and antiwar movement extended suburban liberalism's ideology of equal opportunity and individual rights. Many of these upper-middle-class women saw a direct correlation between the sense of inequality they had aimed to combat through the fair housing and civil rights and the issues of sex discrimination. Yet while the white suburban women often voiced an abstract outrage at the injustice of racial segregation, they usually had more personal experience with gender-based discrimination in school and the workplace. Thus, they turned to feminism as means to bring full equality of opportunity for themselves and their daughters.<sup>18</sup> Commenting on the influence of the suburban activism of the 1960s on the rise of feminism, Bonnie Jones later observed, "It was no accident that the Women's movement came out of that same period."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> To commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> Reunion of Voice of Women-New England, a group of members sent out questionnaires entitled "30 years later: Voice of Women Reunion" to members of the organization, many of the women describe how they divorced in the early 1970s and then pursued employment, Box 1, Folder 51, VOW. For instance Hilda Schwartz stated that after her divorce and re-entry into the workforce, she continued to give moral and financial support to liberal causes and candidates, she no longer had the time to perform everyday volunteer activities.

<sup>17</sup> Auerbach, "Peace Warriors Break Rank."

<sup>18</sup> See the Boston NOW, Membership Applications c. 1970-1972, Box 5, Folder 167, Box 5, Folder 169, NOW-Boston.

<sup>19</sup> Jones Interview.

In 1973, Bonnie Jones, by then writing master's thesis in social work, co-authored an analysis of the demographics of female liberation participation using the members of the Lexington chapter of NOW as the sample.<sup>20</sup> The results revealed how and why these mainstream feminism flourished in Route 128 suburbs like Lexington that had an existing commitment to liberal activism. The study found that the women in the group were almost uniformly upper-income, highly educated, married to engineers or other professionals and politically liberal. In response to questions intended to determine the respondent's "degree of liberalism," the members showed unanimous support for ecology and civil rights issues, strong endorsement of the Black Power movement and amnesty for draft resisters, and less enthusiasm for the construction low-income housing in the suburbs and busing for integration.<sup>21</sup> These women voiced overwhelming support for working within the political system as a means to create change especially on issues of sexual discrimination, which underscores why so many suburban liberals opted to join NOW.<sup>22</sup>

### **Changing Lives By Changing Laws**

The existing national group NOW provided a fitting outlet for the continuation of grassroots suburban liberal grassroots activism. NOW's promotion of legal and individualist solutions to the structural problem of gender inequality dovetailed the core beliefs of suburban liberalism. A group of prominent women led by Betty Friedan had first begun NOW in 1966 with the goal of creating a "feminist civil rights

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<sup>20</sup> Jane Hilburt Davis, Margaret Dickerman, Bonnie Jones, Patience Sampson, "A Study of Women's Liberation in a Suburban Community: Distinguishing Characteristics of Joiners of the Women's Liberation Movement" (Master's Thesis, Boston University, 1974).

<sup>21</sup> Davis, et al. "A Study of Women's Liberation in a Suburban Community."

<sup>22</sup> Davis, et al. "A Study of Women's Liberation in a Suburban Community."

organization.”<sup>23</sup> NOW quickly gained a reputation as the feminist organization most committed to working through the established channels of political power to create female equality. Yet, it remained primarily focused on the federal government. A group of “ professional women and well-meaning liberals” in Boston began a chapter in 1969 to pursue this mission at the local level. Similar to the stance of the Fair Housing Federation, Political Action for Peace, and Citizens for Participation Politics, NOW articulated a belief “that gradual, rational change within the system is the only sane way of bringing about our goals and democratizing our country even further.”<sup>24</sup> This platform attracted women like longtime liberal activist Emily Frankovich, who saw NOW as a way to create political and economic equality through public policy.<sup>25</sup>

By building its membership base from the well-established network of grassroots liberal activists concentrated in the Route 128 suburbs, NOW fast emerged as the largest and most politically visible feminist group in the Boston area.<sup>26</sup> In just two years, the group also became the second largest and most politically active chapter of NOW in the country. The national headquarters dubbed it both the “Boston Brain Trust,” because of the intellectual resources of the membership, and the “cyclone chapter,” because of its rapid growth from 100 to 500 and eventually 800 members in a matter of months.<sup>27</sup> From the outset, the founders of NOW understood that its success depended upon presenting itself as a counterpart to existing Boston-based female liberation organizations like Bread and Roses and Female Liberation, which had younger and more radical membership

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<sup>23</sup> For more on the founding of NOW see, Rosen, *A World Split Open*, 74-93.

<sup>24</sup> Jane [Pollack] to Betsy [Elizabeth Hogan], August 7, 1970, Box 1, Folder 15, NOW-Boston.

<sup>25</sup> Boston NOW, Membership Applications c. 1970-1972.

<sup>26</sup> Barbara Burgess, “Women’s Liberation Movement in Boston,” October 1970, Box 2, Folder 62, NOW-Boston.

<sup>27</sup> Eastern Massachusetts NOW Newsletter, January 1971, Box 11, National Organization for Women Chapter Newsletter Collection (hereafter “NOW-Newsletters”).

bases.<sup>28</sup> Those groups had made previous attempts to cultivate the feminist impulses of suburban women by encouraging housewives to reject their lifestyles. “We must reach housewives because they are the most oppressed members of society,” one Female Liberation member explained.<sup>29</sup> Some of the early members of NOW had first attended meetings of groups Bread and Roses, but became alienated by its radical approach.<sup>30</sup> These suburban women preferred NOW to Bread and Roses because of its “civil rights” philosophy and commitment “to achieving its goals within the existing system.”<sup>31</sup>

NOW’s agenda and activities embodied the middle-class and suburban-centered subjectivity of its members. Like the fair housing movement, NOW’s activities and mission concentrated on a class-blind ideal of equal opportunity and individual rights offering primarily individualist and symbolic solutions to the structural problem of the social and economic disadvantages of women. Its practices, therefore, disproportionately benefited white middle-class married women and often focused on helping a handful of people rather than attempting large-scale structural interventions. Among its early notable achievements, the chapter organized “Project Harvard” to challenge sex discrimination in the hiring and treatment of faculty at the university. In addition, NOW published a booklet on “liberated housework” that featured ways for married couples to free themselves from the assumption that housekeeping remained the sole domain of women. The booklet stressed, “Housekeeping chores have no sex,” and offered suggestions on

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<sup>28</sup> Diane White, “Liberation movement seeks to build self-respect,” *Boston Globe*, February 23, 1970; Barbara Burgess, “Women’s Liberation Movement in Boston,” October 1970, Box 2, Folder 62, NOW-Boston.

<sup>29</sup> White, “Liberation Movement Building in Strength.”

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth W. Hogan to Jane Pollack, Nancy Valliant, Barbara Zilber, August 5, 1970, Box 1, Folder 15, NOW-Boston.

<sup>31</sup> NOW North Shore Unit Minutes, May 26, 1970, Box 19, Folder 683, NOW-Boston.

alternative ways of arranging daily tasks such as shoe-shining, bed making, and ironing.<sup>32</sup>

This pamphlet underscored the ways in which liberal feminists interpreted transforming the dynamics of individual relationships as an important way of creating gender equality.

NOW, however, focused primarily on securing the passage of state laws, upholding the organization's central belief that working within political structures provided the most effective means to gain equality for women. In order to learn how "to use the political machinery to promote the interests of women" and "evolve into a politically effective entity," NOW turned to contacts in local liberal organizations. A lobbyist from the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute sponsored "practical aspects of getting bills passed." CPP also became "very enthusiastic" about NOW's interest in lobbying and gave the group advice about tactics. The Massachusetts legislative session in 1971 alone brought the passage of laws banning discrimination in public accommodations, housing, credit and public education due directly to the work of NOW. The same year Jane Pollack observed, "we have made a difference in this state because we've put several hundred letters on desks of senators and in addition they have a large volume of phone calls, telegrams and messages."<sup>33</sup> The responsiveness of politicians to NOW's large and politically active membership dispersed throughout a variety of communities confirmed the success of suburban-based organizations at working within the political system. Former president Carol Kountz later summarized the group's philosophy and plan of action: "We can make a difference in women's lives by changing laws."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> NOW, "Liberated Housekeeping Questionnaire To Help Other Couples," No Date, Box 13, Folder 449, NOW-Boston.

<sup>33</sup> Maloney "The Who Who's of Women's Liberation."

<sup>34</sup> Eastern Massachusetts NOW Chapter, Newsletter, June 1972, Box 11, NOW-Newsletters.

NOW also believed that its image of middle-class respectability provided an effective lobbying tool. State representative Ann Gannett applauded the techniques of NOW, noting that the women were “well informed, well-dressed and they weren’t aggressive or annoying.”<sup>35</sup> Like the fair housing and antiwar activists, NOW leaders viewed their suburban middle class foundations as an important way to make feminism appear less threatening and more acceptable to the mainstream public. “We were a very feisty group,” Roberta Benjamin later explained, “but we had to make women’s issues look legitimate and respectable.”<sup>36</sup> In speeches and interviews, therefore, the leaders of NOW established the images of “bra-burning warrior woman” and “man-hating lesbian” as foils from which they repeatedly set themselves apart. Dispelling the assumption that most feminists eschewed domesticity and family for a career, the leaders never failed to mention that NOW counted many housewives among its ranks. These spokespeople also countered the assumption that NOW sought to eradicate traditional gender roles and instead stressed its desire to make the nuclear family healthier and more equitable.<sup>37</sup>

The leaders believed these deployments of suburban privilege and political moderation would provide improved opportunities for women of every race, class, sexual orientation and political persuasion. Roberta Benjamin defended NOW’s moderate image, declaring that its ambitious aims meant “we have to play it safe.”<sup>38</sup> Boston NOW president Pat Caplan stated her belief in 1971 that the organization’s wider contribution “may well be our so-called elitist middle-class orientation. We are educated, resourceful;

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<sup>35</sup> Eastern Massachusetts NOW Chapter, Newsletter, September 1972, Box 11, NOW-Newsletters.

<sup>36</sup> Boston NOW News April 1975, Box 11, NOW-Newsletters.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, in speech to the mostly male Lawrence Chamber of Commerce Jane Pollack subverted the postwar psychological theory of “mother blaming” to suggest to that if men assumed more parental responsibility it would produce more mentally healthy children (Mary Beth Connolly, “Lib’s Obstacle: Women,” *Lawrence Eagle-Tribune*, May 25, 1971).

<sup>38</sup> NOW Quits the N.E. Lib coalition,” *Boston Globe*, April 13, 1971; Boston NOW News, April 1975.

some of us even have money. Many of us have had the time to learn a lot and to get to know the people who run things.” She suggested that the organization could use its connections with the “establishment” on behalf of less powerful groups such as “women on welfare,” “black women,” “gay women” and “women in prison.”<sup>39</sup> Although Caplan stressed that “these women” needed “to know that our resources are at their disposal,” this approach served to further alienate the organization from ideologically, economically and racially diverse groups. The image of suburban middle-class respectability drew criticism from other NOW members who believed that it hurt more than helped both its internal workings and larger mission. Founding member Pat Gold sent an internal letter chiding “the middle-class, academic, overeducated women in their safe suburbs” who “don’t give a damn about the feelings, thoughts, life styles, etc. of other women in the organization” and remained committing to protecting the image of NOW “at all costs.”<sup>40</sup>

A 1972 *Boston Globe* article about then president Pat Caplan and her family brought these tensions into sharpest focus. The *Globe*’s controversial article called “The Unmarrying of Pat and Alan” used the deterioration of the Caplans’ marriage as a model of the ways feminism had led many couples to separate and develop unconventional custody arrangements.<sup>41</sup> The political awakening of Caplan followed the basic narrative of the *Feminine Mystique*. “The trees and grass and clean air are great for the kids, but I was bored,” Caplan recalled about her move to Wellesley from Cambridge and life as a housewife. “I would drive around town in my station wagon and see all these other women driving around in their station wagons.” She contemplated that she had always been a “private feminist” and found NOW to be the “logical outlet” for her nascent

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<sup>39</sup> Eastern Massachusetts NOW Chapter, Newsletters, January 1972, Box 11, NOW-Newsletters.

<sup>40</sup> Patricia Gold to Roberta Benjamin, March 7, 1971, Box 2, Folder 59, NOW-Boston.

<sup>41</sup> Ellen Goodman, “The Unmarrying of Pat and Alan,” *Boston Globe*, February 27, 1972.

commitment to women's rights and frustration with suburban life.<sup>42</sup> Caplan rose in the ranks of NOW, serving first as the editor of its monthly newspaper and then president in 1971. The experience led Caplan to reevaluate her life, her relationship to husband Alan, and her earlier articulation of the importance of NOW's middle-class norms.

Just a year after the Wellesley paper had featured Caplan with long hair, wearing a skirt and blouse and smiling with her small children against a wallpapered backdrop, the *Globe* offered a different image. The controversial article accompanied a picture of the former debutante with short hair and dressed in pants and a turtleneck lying on a mattress of the floor of the Cambridge apartment she shared with the bearded proprietor of a nearby hammock store. Caplan had relinquished primary custody of her four children to Alan who had gone through his own transformation as a result of the separation. He decided to resign from his job at his family business to work as a lawyer at a community action agency and moved with his children from Wellesley to a single family-house in Cambridge.

The suburban country-club members' metamorphosis into self-realized hippies in a matter of months offered an extreme model of the ways the therapeutic messages of second-wave feminism had helped many white middle-class couples reassess marriage and gender roles. In the article both Pat and Alan Caplan spoke candidly about their separation and the role of Pat's activism and self-realization in the decision. "I credit the women's movement with the whole thing," Pat declared. "I might have been like so many other people who are dragging around hating their husband."<sup>43</sup> Alan shared this view voicing support for Caplan's activities and emphasizing that the couple was closer

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<sup>42</sup> Robert M. Blade, "Don't Call her Mrs—More to a Women Than a Man," *The Patriot Ledger*, March 6, 1971.

<sup>43</sup> Goodman, "The Unmarrying of Pat and Alan."

and more honest after their separation. The Caplans' candid assessment of their marriage and re-assigning responsibility appeared to fulfill the urging of NOW to produce more equitable familial relationships.

The majority of NOW's executive board, nevertheless, believed the article threatened the organization's focus on middle-class respectability. Several board members feared the article implied that NOW encouraged women to abscond parental duties. They feared this assumption would hurt the image of suburban normalcy that the organization had worked tirelessly to develop. Many members of the board did not want Caplan to continue to speak for the organization and successfully pressured her to relinquish the post as president. In her formal letter of resignation, Caplan called into question "NOW's middle-class values" and voiced her hope that the incident would encourage a "careful re-examination of NOW's purpose."<sup>44</sup> The Board ultimately decided not to take up Caplan's call for rethinking the implications of its strategy but instead to enhance its suburban-centered and middle-class dimensions.

In the early 1970s, NOW leaders decided to expand physically and ideologically the suburban dimensions of the organization.<sup>45</sup> The members of the Boston chapter established a number of affiliates in their own suburban towns, including Action, Lexington, Newton, and several North and South Shore suburbs, in order to meet the demands of women who could not travel into the city for weekly meetings.<sup>46</sup> The suburban chapters made it easier for white middle-class women to participate in NOW, but at the same time this reorientation made the organization even more homogenous and

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<sup>44</sup> Eastern Massachusetts NOW, Chapter Newsletter, April 14, 1972, Box 11, NOW-Newsletters; "Pat Caplan resigns as head of local NOW," *Boston Globe*, March 30, 1972.

<sup>45</sup> NOW, Concord Unit, July 1, 1970, Box 1, Folder 14, NOW-Boston.

<sup>46</sup> Naomi Gernes et al to the Editor, *Lexington Minute-man*, March 4, 1971.

inaccessible to less affluent women who lived in the city. The suburban expansion further normalized an upper-middle-class worldview into NOW's membership, outlook and agenda that would have both expansive and limiting consequences.

### **Women Make Policy Not Coffee**

By the early 1970s NOW and the mainstream feminist movement had also gained increased access to traditional political power lines. Governor Francis Sargent's decision to create a Governor's Commission on the Status of Women (GCSW) in 1971 illustrated one important example of the effectiveness of NOW's campaign to work within the formal channels for legal equality. Sargent intended for the GCSW to make recommendations to the Governor to ensure "women actually obtain the equal rights they deserve."<sup>47</sup> The 35-member GCSW included several members of NOW and other suburban-centered organizations, underscoring its grassroots liberal underpinnings. The Commission ultimately achieved more success in its symbolic commitment to equality of opportunity than in creating material improvements in the lives of the majority of Bay State women. Member Betty Taymor, nevertheless, remained supportive of the broader purpose of the commission and the ways in which it validated the importance of working within the system. "The fact that there was a governmental body whose exclusive purpose was to serve women," Taymor later observed, "legitimized the goals and demands of the movement."<sup>48</sup> The creation of the Massachusetts Women's Political

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<sup>47</sup> Governor's Commission on the Status Women leaflet, No Date, , Box 14, Folder 495, NOW-Boston.

<sup>48</sup> Betty Taymor, *Running Against the Wind: The Struggle of Women in Massachusetts Politics* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 120.

Caucus (MWPC) in 1971 further formalized the feminist movement's political agenda.<sup>49</sup> Its slogan, "Women make policy not coffee," succinctly captured its goals.<sup>50</sup> In addition, the creation of both the GCSW and MWPC helped to set the stage for the campaign surrounding the Equal Rights Amendment, which would mark the climax of this political recognition of women's rights.

The five-year campaign for the state Equal Rights Amendment served as the highpoint of the Massachusetts movement, building directly on the political gains, middle-class membership, and individualist ideology of mainstream feminism. The idea of a federal ERA dated to the immediate aftermath of suffrage, but the U.S. Congress had consistently defeated it.<sup>51</sup> Labor feminists and working-class women had also objected to the law because they worried it would destroy the privileges of protective legislative and it provoked long lasting tensions within the movement.<sup>52</sup> Upon its formation, the national NOW had made passage of the amendment a top priority. Although the federal government had by that time enacted a series of laws to promote sex equality, including Title VII, NOW and its allies believed the ERA contained both additional protection and important symbolism. The mainstream movement, now with the support of labor women,

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<sup>49</sup> The organization was a direct out-growth of the National Women's Political Caucus organized by Betty Freidan, Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug and Shirley Chisholm that brought 300 women from 26 states to Washington in July 1971 to discuss ways of increasing women's participation in the political process. A group of Massachusetts residents active in the Democratic Party, grassroots liberal causes and the feminist movement took up the conference's call to arms and initiated plans for a state caucus. Over 400 women of relatively diverse social, economic, racial, political and geographic backgrounds attended the inaugural event staged at Boston College during two days in December 1971 (Marge Schiller, "Development of the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, November 19-20, 1971," c. 1971, Box 6, Folder 202, NOW-Boston).

<sup>50</sup> Schiller, Development of the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus; Jean Dietz, "State's first women's caucus calls for an end to 'sexism,'" *Boston Globe*, November 21, 1971; Christina Robb, "Women's Political Caucus starts from scratch," *Boston Globe*, November 21, 1971.

<sup>51</sup> For more on the history of the ERA see Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). For more on the Federal ERA see Jane J. Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

<sup>52</sup> See Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

started the process for passage of the amendment and received a more promising response from politicians. In 1972, Congress finally passed the Equal Rights Amendment. Just a few months later, by a vote of 205-7, Massachusetts became the 20<sup>th</sup> state to ratify the ERA. The quick change of attitude by local and national politicians demonstrated the legislature's growing acceptance of women's equality and recognition that the amendment would not make radical changes to law or society. The national momentum for passage, nevertheless, halted in the remaining states needed for ratification and a lengthy and heated struggle ensued.<sup>53</sup>

With the future of the federal amendment in doubt, Boston NOW decided to submit a virtually identical Equal Rights Amendment to the state constitution. The group had first aimed to convince Massachusetts to adopt an ERA in 1971, but when the national movement made rapid progress, Boston NOW had abandoned the issue and turned to the federal battle.<sup>54</sup> In 1973, NOW revived the quest to insert the sentence "Equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of sex, race, color, creed or national origin" into Article I of the state constitution and change the clause "all men are born free and equal" to "all persons are born free and equal."<sup>55</sup> NOW activists believed that whether or not the federal amendment passed, the state statute would at least serve as "a symbolic gesture" and at most provide women "with a legal handle" to

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<sup>53</sup> For more on this battle see Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA*; Donald G. Matthews and Jane S. De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA: A State and the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>54</sup> Roberta Benjamin testified before Judiciary Committee had stressed that women were 40 years behind other minority groups in terms of civil rights protection and rather than "hodge-podge" of state laws needed a singular legal tool like the ERA and Pat Caplan urged that the constitutional guarantee would mean that the women would not have to repeat the same political battles every year (Eastern Massachusetts NOW Chapter, Newsletter, March 1972, Box 11, NOW-Newsletter).

<sup>55</sup> Several states had taken similar action. Illinois and Virginia had such laws for several years and around the same time Pennsylvania, Texas and Maryland had approved a state ERA.

challenge discriminatory laws and practices.<sup>56</sup> It was, however, a bureaucratically tedious task to change the state constitution. Massachusetts law stipulated an amendment had to pass two separately elected bodies by a majority vote and then be placed on the ballot for ratification. The amendment easily cleared the first hurdle as the state legislative bill passed almost unanimously and with little debate in August 1973. After this painless victory, NOW and its allies in the MWPC and GCSW remained confident that the ERA would sail through and put the issue on the back burner for the two years between the first and second constitutional conventions.

The rally at Faneuil Hall represented one of the few lobbying activities that pro-ERA forces planned in preparation for the second constitutional convention vote slated for May 1975. The relatively tame program of speeches and inspirational music never began because of urban women of ROAR's disruption. ROAR aimed its opposition less at the ERA itself than at the GCSW, which had repeatedly refused to acknowledge mandatory busing as a women's issue. A few months earlier, eighty members of ROAR disrupted the proceedings of a GCSW meeting by breaking into song. Chairmen Ann Blackham had tried to restore order. "The commission has no mandate to get involved in busing," she chided. "Now please you are our guests here and if you don't behave, I will have to ask you to leave." The reprimand inflamed leader Pixie Palladino's antipathy for suburban liberal elites. Gesturing toward the commission, whose members came mostly from the affluent suburbs of Belmont, Newton Wellesley and Winchester, she had quickly shot back, "You're *our* guests. This is *our* City Hall. No bunch of ladies from the suburbs is going to kick the women of Boston out of their own City Hall."<sup>57</sup> Most of the

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<sup>56</sup> Governors Commission on the Status Women, Newsletter, Vol I, Number 2 (April 1975), SLM.

<sup>57</sup>Lukas, *Common Ground*, 269-271.

anti-busing groups had shown almost an indifference to women's issues prior to this conflict. However, the dismissive treatment by the members of the GCSW had awakened a sense that feminists were just another example of middle-class liberals using the government to encroach on the Boston residents' way of life.

The mainstream feminists demonstrated a more ambivalent relationship to the women of the anti-busing movement. While serving in the U.S. Congress, Louise Day Hicks had sought membership in the Boston NOW. The leaders of the NOW had met with Hicks, where she called herself a feminist and pointed out that she had voted in favor of the federal ERA.<sup>58</sup> However, the group refused to let her join because of her history of racism and her anti-abortion position. Some NOW members did express sympathy with the antibusers. The GCSW's refusal to acknowledge busing as a women's issues highlighted the largely suburban liberal members' dismissal of ROAR's claims to the same maternalist strategy and symbolism that many of them had used to campaign for civil rights, peace, and female equality. After the confrontation at the GCSW meeting, NOW member Jennifer Davis interpreted the event as a sign that "the busing issues has succeeded, where feminist groups have consistently failed, in politicizing the lower-income, less-educated women." She urged NOW to think about changing its priorities. "Only by becoming involved in those issues like busing, battered women or welfare, which have meaning to more than an elite minority," Davis asserted, "will NOW become truly an organization for all women."<sup>59</sup> The leaders of NOW continued to ignore such recommendations and made no plans to make the organization or its ERA campaign extend beyond its white middle-class liberal base.

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<sup>58</sup> Memorandum from Pat Caplan to Julia Wan, Subject: Louise Day Hicks March 26, 1972, Box 2, Folder 74, NOW-Boston; Louise Day Hicks to Laura Rasmussen, June 2, 1971, Box 2, Folder 63, NOW-Boston.

<sup>59</sup> Boston NOW, Chapter NOW News, February 1, 1975, Box 11, NOW-Newsletters.

ROAR discovered a different set of allies among the state's growing grassroots pro-life movement. These activists believed the ERA would both increase the accessibility of abortion and destroy traditional family norms. Maxine Tremaine of Newton, a leader of the anti-abortion group Massachusetts Citizens for Life (MCFL), had formed an organization with the broad name Women for Constitutional Government and the specific purpose of opposing the amendment. Tremaine and her followers appeared at the Faneuil Hall event wielding signs stating the "ERA will destroy the home" and "feminists do not represent the American majority," next to placards reading "Busing Stinks." Further demonstrating the conflation of the anti-abortion and anti-busing campaigns inside the Hall the chants of "Stop ERA" had quickly morphed into the song "Southie is My Home Town."<sup>60</sup> This strong showing by the opposition caught the pro-ERA forces off guard and revealed that NOW and the GSCW had drastically underestimated the political strength of the anti-busers and their anti-ERA allies.

This power became even clearer in the developments at the State House. The Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Rep. Michael Flaherty, was one of the few state politicians who had voted against both the state and federal ERAs. The grassroots opposition reinvigorated his own campaign against the amendment. He called a private meeting of the Judiciary Committee in mid-April, where they voted to give the ERA an unfavorable report. Representative Barney Frank warned NOW leaders that the consensus view among the legislature was that the ERA "had no chance of winning in the second constitutional convention."<sup>61</sup> In response to this dire prediction, Benjamin convinced NOW to stage an emergency meeting of Boston area women's and liberal

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<sup>60</sup> Dietz, "Equal Rights Rally Disrupted by Busing Foes,"

<sup>61</sup> Taymor, *Running Against the Wind*, 125.

groups including the League of Women Voters, the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, Citizens for Participation in Political Action and Americans for Democratic Action. These supporters of the amendment decided to form a group called the Massachusetts Equal Rights Amendment Coalition to launch an intensive three-week lobbying effort to ensure that the measure passed the constitutional convention. The groups applied both the tactics and suburban network they had cultivated in countless other grassroots lobbying campaigns, issuing an urgent call to their members to phone, write and visit state representatives and send letters to local newspapers endorsing the ERA.<sup>62</sup>

The coalition hoped to simultaneously use the grassroots lobbying campaign to "combat" rumors and misinformation rapidly circulated by the opposition. Representatives of the group emphasized the state ERA would not affect abortion, the school busing issue, maternity leave policies, or bathrooms. The campaign also clarified that the state amendment would impact neither social security benefits nor the military draft, both of which were federal issues. Instead supporters placed the ERA in non-threatening and liberal individualist terms, stressing it would provide women with the right to "choose how she lives her life," be it as "homemaker, teacher, businesswomen, construction worker," and would insure "their rights and the freedom to live as they wish."<sup>63</sup> In an effort to further defuse the inflammatory claims of the opposition, the coalition emphasized the symbolic importance of the amendment not just for women, but

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<sup>62</sup> Massachusetts Coalition to Ratify the State Equal Rights Amendment, Flyer, Spring 1975, Box 1, Folder 1, Committee to Ratify the Massachusetts State Equal Rights Amendment Records, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University (hereafter: "CRMERA")

<sup>63</sup> Massachusetts Coalition to Ratify the State Equal Rights Amendment Press Release, 1975, Box 1, Folder 11, CRMERA.

for all Bay State residents declaring that supporting it would help citizens “live up to the state’s ideals of freedom and equality.”

The coalition also made the potential dangers of the opposition, particularly its ties to the national Stop ERA movement, a key component of the emergency campaign. When conservative firebrand Phyllis Schlafly flew into Boston a week before the vote, it legitimated these warnings. Through her relentless campaign against the ERA, the Illinois activist had become a household name by the mid-1970s. In Boston, she staged a press conference, appeared on TV, and delivered a speech to the members of Women for Constitutional Government. Schlafly deemed the ERA “the opening wedge to the destruction of the American family” and issued a sweeping warning that it would force the courts to validate homosexual marriages, strip churches of tax exemptions if they refused to ordain women, and stop states from regulating abortion.<sup>64</sup> ERA supporters like Ann Lewis of the MWPC sought to diffuse these charges by asking the legislators, “Whose constituent is Phyllis Schlafly?”<sup>65</sup>

The state legislators received hundreds of letters and cards from their actual constituents during the three-week blitz urging support for the ERA. The Coalition leaders relied on the relationships they had established working on other liberal and feminist causes to conduct personal lobbying. When meeting with legislators, the Coalition members clarified that the politicians’ decision only covered whether or not the Amendment should reach their constituents and was not the final word on the ERA.<sup>66</sup> The female members of the legislature assisted in this lobbying drive. On the day of the vote,

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<sup>64</sup> William A. Henry, 3<sup>rd</sup>, “Foe sees ERA hurting family life,” *Boston Globe*, May 7, 1975.

<sup>65</sup> Ellen Goodman, “Danger: Men at Work,” *Boston Globe*, May 16, 1975.

<sup>66</sup> To Lobbyists, ERA coalition, re: Background, Strategy and Impact of the Proposed State Equal Rights Amendment with respect to the provisions regarding sex” Spring 1975, Box 1, Folder 1, CRMERA.

the female members of the legislature arrived at the State House armed with carnations that they pinned to the lapels of their male colleagues in an effort to make the issue appear even more “non-threatening.”<sup>67</sup> The debate on the floor quickly became less about the merits of ERA and more about the issues of the opposition movement, particularly busing and abortion. One observer half-kidded that the discussion made the ERA appear as a law to create “forced busing across school boundaries to have abortions.”<sup>68</sup> These arguments failed to persuade the majority of the representatives and the ERA passed the constitutional convention by a wide margin, transforming it into Question 1 on the 1976 election ballot. Roberta Benjamin emphasized the symbolic meaning of the vote as much as the practical concerns, candidly observing, “if we lost as basic a fight as this, the credibility of the whole women’s movement would be lost.”<sup>69</sup>

### **Eyeshadow and the ERA**

In the aftermath of the Convention, Roberta Benjamin, Ann Kendall (a member of the GSCW) and Carolyn Schneider of NOW sought to continue momentum they had cultivated in the emergency campaign for the passage of the referendum in November 1976. These women and their allies established a more formal organization called the Committee to Ratify the Massachusetts State Equal Rights Amendment, with Kendall as the chair. The main decision-makers for the Committee consisted largely of women like Benjamin and Schneider who had organized the Boston Chapter of NOW in the early

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<sup>67</sup> Goodman, “Danger: Men at Work.”

<sup>68</sup> Goodman, “Danger: Men at Work.”

<sup>69</sup> Karen Lindsey, “Mass. ERA: A Lesson as Well as a Victory,” *Boston Phoenix*, May 20, 1975.

seventies and continued to play a leading role in the organization.<sup>70</sup> The combination of the controversy and the defeat of the state ERA initiatives in New Jersey and New York led them to brace for a difficult fight. The organizers recognized that complacency and overconfidence had played a central role in New Jersey and New York and decided to avoid that fate by preparing one of the most highly organized grassroots campaigns for a referendum in Massachusetts political history. The group decided to model the effort on an electoral campaign, but supporting an issue rather than a candidate. The leaders even hired local political operative Rosemary Sansone as the campaign manager who to oversee task forces on education, outreach, organization, fundraising, and media relations.

The Committee to Ratify's emphasis on grassroots organizing especially among middle-class residents demonstrated the persistent vibrancy of activism for liberal causes in the suburbs. During the first six months of 1976, the campaign enlisted 26 coordinators who oversaw the formation of committees in 100 towns across the state with the largest concentration in the Route 128 suburbs near Boston. The recruiting and fundraising activities of the local committees underscored the campaign's heavy reliance on suburban-based sensibilities and social networks. The grassroots volunteers sponsored sales of household items and t-shirts with the Amendment written on the front, wine and cheese parties, sock hops, and clambakes. One town provided the answer to the question "Can one support the ERA and still wear eyeshadow?" by holding a series of makeup

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<sup>70</sup> Carol Mueller and Thomas Dimieri, "The Structure of Belief Systems among Contending ERA Activists," *Social Forces*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Mar., 1982), 667-667. 11 of the main leaders were part of NOW and three of the remaining six had affiliations to other feminist groups.

parties to raise funds for the campaign.<sup>71</sup> A group of housewives launched a project called “Dial a Day for the ERA,” where supporters pledged to call one friend every day to help sway the vote. Through these efforts, the ERA campaign raised \$50,000 and recruited over 5,000 volunteers and many more non-active supporters.

The Committee to Ratify took other steps to emulate a political campaign. The coordinators ran all-day training sessions that roughly half of these 5,000 volunteers attended, where they learned about the legal implications of the law.<sup>72</sup> Roberta Benjamin, then a law student at Harvard, obtained the six-inch printout copy of all the Massachusetts statutes affecting women. She distilled the information into a 39-page booklet that she handed out at the training sessions.<sup>73</sup> These efforts ensured that the grassroots volunteers remained both well organized and well informed. In the place of a campaign bus or “whistle-stop tour” the Committee to Ratify sent an “ERA Truthmobile” around the state to shopping plazas and parking lots where volunteers aboard answered questions and passed out information emblazoned with the campaign slogan “The ERA sounds simple and it is.”<sup>74</sup> In one of its most effective moves, the organizers replaced the candidate stump speech with a bureau of speakers trained by the Committee to deliver a prepared set of talking points. Throughout the year, more than seventy-five speakers drove across the state presenting the necessity of the ERA to local groups such as women’s clubs, religious congregations, and political organizations.

In these forums, the speakers aimed to make the ERA appear as moderate and non-elitist as possible. In addition to dressing conservatively in skirts and jewelry as

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<sup>71</sup> Committee to Ratify, *The Massachusetts Equal Rights Amendment News*, Number 2, July 1976, Box 1, Folder 30, CRMERA.

<sup>72</sup> Peter Cowen, “ERA Proponents Fear Indifference,” *Boston Globe*, October 17, 1976.

<sup>73</sup> Pat Caplan, “Final Push Begins for State ERA Vote,” *Monitor* (July 1976), Box 1, Folder 28, CRMERA.

<sup>74</sup> Committee to Ratify, *ERA Truthmobile*, c. 1976, Box 2, Folder 78, CRMERA.

mandated by the campaign, the spokespeople highlighted more the abstract rather than actual effects of the ERA. Jacqueline Basha, the press secretary for the Committee, called the measure “primarily a symbolic gesture toward women that reflects the way we live today.”<sup>75</sup> These speakers also presented the ERA not as the demand of a specific set of rights, but a means to increase the choices for women. These statements emphasized the class-blind ideal that the amendment would not force women into careers but rather increase their “choice” and “opportunity.” Ann Kendall emphasized this argument rooted in class and racial privilege, stating, “It’s a matter of simple justice that both men and women should have choices and, in fact, can have choices.”<sup>76</sup> Lisa Noble of the GCSW publicly defined the ERA’s most important outcome as the fact that “women will have a choice they can decide themselves what they want to be and do in their own lives...and find fulfillment.”<sup>77</sup> In addition to building a broad base of support, this language laid the discursive groundwork for later arguments about the necessity of keeping abortion legal and built on civil rights freedom of choice rhetoric.

The Committee to Ratify, like NOW, recognized the benefits of presenting the issue and its supporters through signifiers of middle-class respectability. Sansone and her staff therefore made a “strenuous effort” to involve married suburban parents, especially men, in the campaign as a way deflect the charges that radical lesbian feminists controlled the effort.<sup>78</sup> In reality, a spectrum of experience and viewpoints propelled Massachusetts residents to join the cause. Several of the volunteers became interested through their affiliations with local chapters of the NOW and the LWV, both of which

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<sup>75</sup> Peter Cowen, “ERA: The Views are far, far apart,” *Boston Globe*, October 31, 1976.

<sup>76</sup> Cowen, “ERA: The views are far, far apart.”

<sup>77</sup> Lisa E. Noble to the Editor, *Boston Globe*, June 29, 1975.

<sup>78</sup> Caplan, “Final Push Begins for State ERA Vote”; Committee to Ratify, “Suggestions for Mass. ERA Workers, 1976, Box 1, Folder 17, CRMERA.

made the passage of the ERA a top priority. Others had no previous political experience but shared a broad notion of rights and equality rooted in the basic ideology of suburban liberalism. Many of the volunteers, experienced and novice alike, approached the issue through a lens of familial and parental concern. Several supporters articulated a fear that the absence of the ERA would put their own daughters at a disadvantage. For instance, suburban mother Judy Meredith saw the ERA as a way to enhance the enforcement of laws to combat sex discrimination in the public schools.<sup>79</sup> One suburban man became involved for the less policy-minded worry that his two college-aged daughters faced unfair handicaps despite his financial and emotional commitment to their education. Lexington couple Hilary and Stan Harris adopted a therapeutic language of sensitive child-rearing and gender liberalism declaring that the ERA might not “be of immediate benefit” to most adults because “established attitudes “change slowly” and “the posture of prejudice ha [d] an awesome inertia.” However, for their children it would help “create an atmosphere of equality of opportunity on the outside,” which parents like the Harrises had “already created on the inside.”<sup>80</sup>

The campaign’s explicit downplaying of the feminist roots of the amendment also attracted the support of many moderate Massachusetts residents. The lessons of the earlier ERA fights in Massachusetts and other states showed that the viability of the cause depended on people who did not necessarily support feminism or legalized abortion, but did endorse the broad ideas of civil rights and individual liberties. A poll conducted by the *Boston Herald* in March 1976 confirmed this hunch. The poll showed that while more than 80 percent of women strongly rejected the feminist label roughly the same fraction

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<sup>79</sup> Alan Lupo, Untitled Column, *Boston Evening Globe*, March 25, 1976.

<sup>80</sup> Hilary and Stan Harris to the Editor, *Lexington Minute-Man*, October 10, 1976.

supported the ERA and many of the other basic goals of the feminist movement.<sup>81</sup> Nancy Adler, the Committee's Lexington coordinator, further encapsulated this view. She declared she would have doubted the prophecy if someone told her she would be leading the charge for the ERA. Adler explained that she "never identified herself as a 'women's libber' or 'feminist'" and still had a problem with those terms. Yet, she believed the ERA "was not an issue for feminists alone—it is one of great importance to all women, men and children." She explained her leadership role in the campaign emerged from her strong belief "in justice and equality," and her sense that the law fulfilled the basic ideals and values of the nation.<sup>82</sup>

These statements reflected the movement's conscious decision to place the ERA in the less threatening language of individual civil rights rather than the potentially more polarizing framework of feminism.<sup>83</sup> ERA supporters also emphasize its universal entitlements and aimed to avoid the language of special privileges and identity politics that made the issues of the affirmative action and busing so controversial. Upholding this idea, one local coordinator declared, "The ERA isn't just for feminists. Citizens of all sexes and colors will benefit from it."<sup>84</sup> Painting the issue in even broader strokes, Marline Hirsch, a suburban housewife from Longmeadow who had never before been politically active, declared, "I just couldn't believe that anybody could oppose equality."<sup>85</sup> This language of individual rights and morality appealed to the same type of suburban moderate who had embraced the class-blind and individualist arguments of the fair housing movement a decade earlier. In fact, a probable beneficiary of that movement,

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<sup>81</sup> May Ellen Corbett, "Feminist Q&A," *Boston Herald Advertiser*, April 4, 1976.

<sup>82</sup> Nancy Adler to the Editor, *Lexington Minute-Man*, October 28, 1976.

<sup>83</sup> Minutes of Post-Victory Meeting, May 22, 1975, Box 1, Folder 4, CMRERA.

<sup>84</sup> Betsy Showstack, "Committees Organizing Behind State ERA," *Patriot Ledger*, July 7, 1976.

<sup>85</sup> Caplan, "Final Push Begins for State ERA Vote."

Bill Ramsey, an African-American MIT educated engineer, became a tireless supporter of the amendment. He spent his weekends going door-to-door through his Newton neighborhood passing out literature and speaking to his predominantly white neighbors. Ramsey interpreted the ERA as “more than a ‘women’s law’ but “a commitment, a statement by the Commonwealth that it will protect all our rights.”<sup>86</sup> The African-American suburbanite proved an ideal poster child for the Committee to Ratify’s persistent message of the ERA’s civil rights ideals. Ramsey, nevertheless, was also one of the few people of color to take up the issue. Despite the fact that the language of the proposed amendment did officially include the category of race, the largely white middle-class Committee to Ratify made no attempt to build an alliance with local black community activists, feminists of color, or welfare rights groups. This decision underscored its selective embrace of the civil rights cause.

### **Stop ERA**

As the Committee to Ratify spread its message throughout the state, the opposition mobilized a less organized, but more rhetorically polarizing campaign against the amendment. This grassroots effort received a great deal of support from the leaders of the national Stop ERA committee, who recognized the symbolic importance of defeating the amendment in the purportedly most liberal state in the nation. Phyllis Schlafly staged frequent appearances in Boston where she continued to intentionally confuse the federal and state versions of the ERA. The Massachusetts chapter simultaneously aimed to anchor the issue in other local concerns particularly busing and abortion. Agnes Smith, co-chair of the local Stop ERA Committee, was also a member of ROAR, the John Birch

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<sup>86</sup> Ruth Kramer Baden, “What a man stumping for ERA?” *Boston Herald American*, October 13, 1976.

Society, and George Wallace's American Party. The combined platform of these organizations provided the ideological underpinnings of Smith's argument that ERA would destroy the traditional family, would take away the right of a woman to be supported by her husband, and constituted a clear example of a "governmental intrusion" on individual rights.<sup>87</sup>

The Stop ERA forces aimed to conflate the amendment and feminism with a much broader set of fears about liberalism and its promotion of both mandatory integration and the legalization of abortion. In order to tap into the existing antipathy of its base, these leaders depicted the supporters of the ERA, in the words of Alan Lupo, "as suburban middle-class liberals with little to lose."<sup>88</sup> As the confrontations with the Governor's Commission at City Hall and Fanueil Hall previewed, ROAR's largely working-class and female base already felt victimized by high taxes, the economic recession, and the poor education of their children. They perceived feminism and the ERA not as the opportunity to gain new entitlements, but, rather, as an attack on their right to a traditional nuclear family. Tapping into these existing fears, the Stop ERA campaign produced literature presenting the Amendment as a "lawyer's dream" that would create a "gender-free society" where women were to be "liberated" from "responsibilities of their homes and families."<sup>89</sup>

The members of ROAR, however, were not the only Bay State residents to experience anxieties that liberalism, feminism, and the ERA represented an attack on the nuclear family. The movement also grew in clusters of suburbs on both the North and South Shore, attracting residents through existing affiliations to anti-abortion groups and

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<sup>87</sup> Lupo, Untitled Column.

<sup>88</sup> Lupo, Untitled Column.

<sup>89</sup> Stop ERA, "Beware of the Equal Rights Amendment" Flyer, Box 1, Folder 6, CRMERA.

other politically conservative organizations including the John Birch Society and Eagle Forum.<sup>90</sup> Several of the key leaders of the Stop ERA campaign emerged from coffee klatches on quiet tree-lined suburban streets, not from the working-class protests outside South Boston High School. These activists provoked larger questions about the definition of women's rights activism and suburban liberalism. For instance, Stop ERA leader Ann Connors of Hingham had a resume that read more like a leader of the pro-ERA movement than that of Agnes Smith and her supporters. A former member of the LWV and the GCSW, the suburbanite herself admitted, "I'm really considered very liberal by most of my friends." She had begun to lose that status when her opposition to the LWV's support of "liberalized abortion laws" had led her to resign from organization and join Massachusetts Citizens for Life. She opposed the ERA on the grounds that it would encourage abortion and take away the "'ideology' that 'protects' women as wives and mothers."<sup>91</sup>

Margaret Mahoney, another leader of Stop-ERA, also claimed the title of suburban liberal. A 43-year old lawyer from Winchester, Mahoney resented that people thought she was affiliated with ROAR or the John Birch Society. Unlike these "right-wing conservatives," Mahoney defined herself as liberal on most causes. She had voted for George McGovern, supported gun control and civil rights, and opposed exclusionary zoning laws that excluded low income and minority families from moving to places like Winchester. She did, however, fiercely object to claims of gender inequality.<sup>92</sup> "It is utterly ludicrous to believe that women are a minority like blacks. Women are 51 percent

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<sup>90</sup> Mueller and Dimieri, "Structure of Belief Systems," 667.

<sup>91</sup> Judy Foreman, "To her, gaining rights isn't worth losing advantages," *Boston Globe*, March 24, 1976.

<sup>92</sup> Manli Ho, "Atty. Mahoney's breathless race against the ERA," *Boston Globe*, October 10, 1976.

of the population,” she told a cheering crowd at an anti-ERA luncheon.<sup>93</sup> She relied on her professional expertise to fortify her case and attack the legal arguments presented by her feminist opponents. Mahoney suggested that the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and other anti-discrimination laws gave women all the protection they needed in the labor market without threatening the traditional family structure.<sup>94</sup> In a clear example of meritocratic individualism, Mahoney also pointed to her own professional success as evidence for lack of necessity for the ERA.

Although Mahoney and Connor came from different class and geographic vantages as Smith and the majority of ROAR members, the Stop ERA almost unanimously shared religious ties to the Catholic Church. The leaders and the rank of file of the opposition movement all had affiliations to organized religion and emphasized the importance of religion in their lives. Religious affiliation and faith was a common characteristic among ERA opponents nationally. However, the predominance of Catholics differentiated the movement in Massachusetts from its counterparts in the South and Midwest, who were primarily conservative Protestants.<sup>95</sup> Clearly not all of the state’s 40 percent Roman Catholic population shared this view of the ERA. Anne Arsnault a Concord resident and member of the GSCW stated her Catholic upbringing had instilled in her a commitment to equality and rejected any links between the ERA and abortion.<sup>96</sup> Likewise, Medfield resident Anne Kraus declared that she supported the MCFL’s stance on abortion, but strongly disagreed with its position on the ERA. These opponents to the ERA, nevertheless, highlighted the ways in which religion, particularly

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<sup>93</sup> Ho, “Atty. Mahoney’s breathless race.”

<sup>94</sup> Susan Barron, “Women do better without equal rights,” *Newton Times*, January 14, 1976.

<sup>95</sup> Mueller and Dimieri, “Structure of Belief Systems,” 665.

<sup>96</sup> Anne Arsenault to the Editor, *Concord Journal*, October 7, 1976.

Catholicism, made liberalism an unstable category of political belief and identity in Massachusetts during these debates over women's rights in the 1970s.

The arguments of the Stop ERA forces failed to thwart the well-organized momentum of the proponents. By the fall, the appearance of the pro-ERA slogan on bumper stickers, T-shirts, and bracelets on children and adults throughout the state revealed the pervasive support for the amendment. In a more scientific gauge of public sentiment, a *Boston Globe* readers poll revealed a 9-1 margin in favor of the referendum, and another opinion survey showed that 75 percent of Bay State planned to vote yes on Question 1.<sup>97</sup> The state ERA also maintained widespread bipartisan political support with endorsements from Governor Dukakis, Senators Brooke and Kennedy and presidential candidates Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford. Despite this clear support, the Committee to Ratify did not ease up, recognizing that both complacency and a late surge from the opposition could tip the vote in the other direction. The leaders looked to the lesson of the New York ERA drive where a poll released one week before the election predicted 80 percent of the state would support the referendum, but the opposition had staged a last minute attack that successfully defeated the adoption of the amendment. Throughout the fall, the Committee kept its organizational engine at full steam, calling on grassroots volunteers to host coffees and teas, speak to supermarket shoppers, address envelopes and make phone calls every day.<sup>98</sup> The national importance of a potential loss further motivated the campaign to press on. "The lines are draw here." Kendall asserted. "If the Massachusetts amendment goes down we can kiss the federal ERA goodbye. They know

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<sup>97</sup> "Survey Finds Bay State Voters Heavily Favor..." *Boston Evening Globe*, October 7, 1976.

<sup>98</sup> The Massachusetts Equal Rights Amendment News, Number 2, July 1976.

it and we know it.”<sup>99</sup> The Committee to Ratify emphasized the national symbolism particularly in light of the results of 1972 presidential election. Kendall declared, “We are now the bellwether state. We may not think of ourselves as liberal, but that is how we are seen.”<sup>100</sup>

Massachusetts resoundingly bucked New York and New Jersey’s precedent of last minute ERA defeat . In the election, 61 percent of the voters endorsed the amendment and it won by almost 2-1 in Route 128 suburbs like Lexington that had large chapters of the Committee to Ratify. The referendum helped Massachusetts “buck” the national trend of low turnout in the 1976 presidential election. In fact, most liberal political activists during the fall had opted to focus their energy on the referendum campaign rather than Jimmy Carter’s presidential bid.<sup>101</sup> Several observers immediately interpreted the support for the ERA as a sign of the intrinsic liberalism of the Massachusetts electorate. This exceptionalist explanation overlooked two important factors. First, the Massachusetts voters in 1976 did not support liberal issues or candidates across the board. Progressive-leaning referenda related to handgun use, flat electric rates and a graduated income tax all lost heavily. Though Carter won overwhelmingly most pundits believed this outcome offered confirmation of the state’s persistent loyalty to the Democratic Party more than an embodiment of its liberalism. Second, it obscures the importance of the Committee to Ratify’s well-organized grassroots campaign in gaining the passage of the ERA.<sup>102</sup>

Campaign manager Rosemary Sansone credited volunteers with the victory, declaring

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<sup>99</sup> Samuel Maddox, “Mass. Vote on ERA May affect the nation,” *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, September 30, 1976.

<sup>100</sup> “November Ballot Question of the Week: One—The ERA,” *Real Paper*, September 20, 1976.

<sup>101</sup> “Referenda choices spur hottest ballot debates,” *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, October 28, 1976.

<sup>102</sup> “Opponents believe ERA...” *Boston Herald*, November 4, 1976, Box 3, Folder 107, CRMERA.

that they had made “the theory and concept of grass roots campaigning work like I’ve never seen it work before.”<sup>103</sup>

The campaign provided yet another example of suburban liberals ability to achieve success by working directly within the political system. This approach, nevertheless, also revealed certain organizational and ideological drawbacks. By opting to construct a broad-based campaign rooted in the ideology of suburban liberalism, the movement had focused more on the symbolic and individualist meanings rather than material and collective purposes of the amendment. This tactic clearly had many pragmatic benefits. Yet, by downplaying the law as merely symbolic, and enabling volunteers and voters to support the ERA without endorsing the broader feminist movement, the Committee leaders failed to instill in many of its supporters a permanent support for feminist issues and causes. In the immediate aftermath of the win, Sansone and the other Committee members tried to transform the 5,000 volunteers “bitten by the political bug” into a long-term organization committed to grassroots activism and political lobbying.<sup>104</sup> A few stalwarts did remain involved in order to ensure proper implementation of the law, but the committee failed to maintain the strength and momentum of the ERA drive and eventually disbanded after a few years. In some ways, this effort made the mainstream feminist movement weaker rather than stronger, despite the referendum’s victory. The year and a half campaign demanded a great deal of resources and energy and made the movement less able to address other important issues and concerns, such as publicly subsidized childcare, welfare, and access to abortion. Moreover, the campaign’s discourse of equality of opportunity shifted the strategy and

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<sup>103</sup> Rosmarie Sansone to All Area Coordinators, November 9, 1976, Box 2, Folder 75, CRMER; Ann Kendall to ERA Supporter, c. 1976, Box 2, Folder 75, CRMERA.

<sup>104</sup> Sansone to All Area Coordinators.

ideology of suburban feminism even further away from rights-based claims and toward a focus on choice that increased middle-class privilege and entitlements. The ERA, therefore, failed to produce meaningful material changes for the lives of many women and in some ways exacerbated racial and economic inequality in metropolitan Boston, as the abortion debate shows.

### **Abortion Politics**

The battle to keep abortion legal illuminated that the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision had not just failed to end the national controversy about abortion, but, in fact, made it more contested than ever. The issue of abortion further exposed both the socially conservative dimensions of Bay State politics and mainstream feminism and suburban liberals limited ability to achieve meaningful gender, economic, or racial equality. The issues of birth control and abortion had remained a top priority for Boston NOW's lobbyists during the organization's early years. Despite the state's liberal reputation, the combination of its' Puritan legacy and large Catholic population had produced a longstanding collection of restrictions on birth control and abortion.<sup>105</sup>

Although nearby states such as New York had legalized abortion, Massachusetts remained firmly committed to upholding its ban. In the early 1970s, NOW collaborated closely with another suburban-based group called Massachusetts Organization for Repeal of Abortion Laws (MORAL) in order to counter the lack of legislative action on the issue

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<sup>105</sup> Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Massachusetts had extremely restrictive birth control laws. Only with *Griswold v. Connecticut* had the state in 1966 allowed physicians to provide birth control information and then only to married couples. New York activists came to Boston in 1967 to test the boundaries of state's restriction on birth advice from non-medical professional to unmarried people. At a rally at Boston University, police arrested Baird for handing a tube of contraceptive foam to a single co-ed. Baird's case made it to the Supreme Court became an important precedent in the series of rulings that paved the way for *Roe v. Wade*. Abortion proved an even more contentious problem in Bay State.

and to educate the public about the need to lift the ban on the procedure. The Supreme Court's legalization of abortion in 1973 thwarted this drive, but the activities laid an important foundation for later reproductive rights campaigns.

In the aftermath of the *Roe* decision, activism surrounding reproductive rights had remained limited as most women relished the security that they now could attain a legal and inexpensive abortion. NOW had shifted its lobbying attention to other issues such as education, employment discrimination and the state ERA. MORAL had decided to focus largely at the federal level, launching the Constitutional Defense Project. The organization's work with the Massachusetts congressional delegation earned the commendation of the president of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) who praised MORAL as a "model for other groups around the country" and "one of the strongest arms in the movement" surmising "If we had a 'MORAL' in every state, victory in this battle would be assured."<sup>106</sup> While MORAL basked in this praise, at the state level a powerful grassroots pro-life movement took shape with significant political support that put in serious jeopardy the right to an abortion in the Bay State.

The ERA battle offered a glimpse of the power of the pro-life movement in Massachusetts, which had gathered strength following the *Roe v. Wade* decision and gradually transformed the state into a national epicenter of anti-abortion sentiment. Newton, which had long maintained a reputation as the area's most liberal suburb, served as the location for the headquarters of Massachusetts Citizens for Life, the largest and most powerful anti-abortion organization. The base of this group came largely from the

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<sup>106</sup> Beatrice Blair to Pamela Lowy and Carolyn Schneider, June 18, 1974, Box 3, "MA Jan-July 1974" Folder, National Abortion Rights Action League Records, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University (hereafter: "NARAL").

middle and upper-income suburbs on or near Route 12, such as Newton, Hingham, Needham and Wayland, that had also served as strongholds of support the ERA and other progressive causes.<sup>107</sup> The MCFL, like their liberal opponents adopted a strategy of mobilizing pro-life supporters at the grassroots to work directly within the formal channels to make abortion illegal. The group sponsored rallies, printed lobbying material, and worked for state legislation to prohibit abortion. By 1977 MCFL boasted 100 chapters, a mailing list of 90,000, a full-time lobbyist, and a 24-hour hot line that reached over 18,000 callers to inform members of legislation pending on Beacon Hill.<sup>108</sup> Borrowing a tactic implemented by the pro-ERA movement, the MCFL trained members to become “well-informed and articulate” speakers to spread the “prolife message” to church groups, civic organizations, and schools across the state.<sup>109</sup> During the 1977 legislative session alone, the group filed six bills and testified seventeen times at public hearings opposing abortion.

The success of the MCFL’s political efforts and ability to mobilize a large grassroots constituency drew comparisons to the suburban-centered peace movement, which during the 1960s had transformed state and national politics. One reporter declared, “The anti-abortion lobby in this state is a vast persistent grassroots network, a one-issue constituency that will vote for or against a political candidate solely for his or her stand on abortion.”<sup>110</sup> As part of this one-issue crusade, in the late 1970s, the MCFL turned its attention to the issue of publicly funded abortion and led a campaign

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<sup>107</sup>Carole Fischberg, “Newton Nurtures Both Sides of the Abortion Question,” *Newton Times*, May 22, 1974. For a list of the board and their hometowns see Marriane Rea to Members of Houses of Representatives, August 3, 1977, AAC, Box 1, Folder 24, Records of Abortion Action Coalition Archives and Special Collections Department, Northeastern University (hereafter: “AAC”).

<sup>108</sup> Katherine P. Healy, “Massachusetts Citizens for Life Has During 1977...” c. 1977, Box 8, Folder 208, NOW-Boston.

<sup>109</sup> Healy, “Massachusetts Citizens for Life Has During 1977.”

<sup>110</sup> Christopher Lydon, “Abortion Foe Has Solid Core of Support,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1976.

throughout the metropolitan region that exacerbated racial and economic discrimination, political polarization, and ideas about suburban taxpayer privilege.

### **Life Isn't Fair**

The case of Kenneth Edelin first set the terms for the controversy surrounding publicly-financed abortion by exposing the racial, economic and political undertones of the issue and the pro-life movement's power in Massachusetts. In 1974, Edelin, the first African-American chief resident in obstetrics at Boston City Hospital (BCH), was charged with manslaughter for allegedly causing the death of a 24-week-old black male fetus during a legal abortion. The issue went far beyond Edelin or the operation and directly into the racial and spatial dynamics of metropolitan Boston. BCH, the city's primary public hospital, sat on the border of the South End and Roxbury, two of the neighborhoods in the city with the highest percentage of low-income and minority residents. For decades, Boston's nationally recognized medical schools had used the BCH as a laboratory for teaching and research. In the summer of 1973, the *New England Journal of Medicine* published an article that gave details of a fetal research project carried out by two doctors at BCH on 33 pregnant women who had abortions between 1971 and 1972. In the aftermath of the *Roe* decision, the MCFL along with the area's leading conservative Catholic politicians had explored a variety of ways to limit and prohibit abortion procedures and the article gave them the ammunition they needed. Rep. Ray Flynn, a Democratic Catholic outspoken opponent to mandatory busing and the ERA, led this mission. Flynn convinced his anti-busing ally Albert "Dapper" O'Neil a member of the City Council and chair of its Committee on Health and Hospitals to hold

public hearings on abortion and research practices at city-financed hospitals.<sup>111</sup> The one-sided roster of speakers at the hearings included representatives of MCFL and the Catholic Church. Flynn also testified to the council members “the people of the City of Boston do not want their tax dollars used for abortions and inhumane fetus experiments” and warning that city had gone from a center of advanced medicine to the “abortion capital of the nation.”<sup>112</sup>

Following the hearings, the Council called on the District Attorney to launch a criminal investigation of practices at BCH.<sup>113</sup> This extensive inquiry revealed two fetuses at the city morgue including the one from the hysterotomy Edelin had performed on a 17-year-old 20-24 week pregnant African-American woman when a saline abortion had failed. After conducting an autopsy, city officials contended that the fetus could have lived and called Edelin before a grand jury. Edelin, a Columbia-trained doctor who had committed his life to serving under-resourced communities, maintained that he had performed standard medical procedure and insisted that the fetus was dead on delivery. The grand jury, nevertheless, indicted him for manslaughter.<sup>114</sup>

As Edelin headed to trial, his case became national news and stirred immediate outrage, exposing the multifaceted dimensions of the controversy. Members of the local and national medical communities voiced strong public opposition to Edelin’s indictment, interpreting the legal action as a violation of a physician’s right to practice

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<sup>111</sup> Kenneth C. Edelin, *Broken Justice: A True Story of Race Sex and Revenge in a Boston Courtroom* (Martha’s Vineyard: Pondview Press, 2007), 67.

<sup>112</sup> Excerpts of the 253-page transcripts of the hearing appear in William A. Nolen, *The Baby in the Bottle: An Investigative Review of the Edelin Case and Its Larger Meanings for the Controversy over Abortion Reform* (New York : Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1978), 33-54; Ray Flynn, Press Release, c. 1974, Box 8, Folder 269, NOW-Boston.

<sup>113</sup> “New Attack on Abortion,” *Time* (May 27, 1974).

<sup>114</sup> The grand jury also indicted four doctors who had performed an experiments on unborn fetuses for research about antibiotics for violating an obscure grave robbing statute from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Robert Reinhold, “Boston vs. The Doctors: Strange Case,” *New York Times*, April 21, 1974).

sound judgment. A group of local doctors launched the Edelin Defense Fund hosting meetings and cocktail parties throughout the Route 128 suburbs that provided the gynecologist a chance to tell his side of the story and raise funds for his legal fees.<sup>115</sup> These appearances helped to stimulate discussion among liberally inclined suburban residents about the impending trial specifically and abortion rights more generally. The case also drew the attention of feminists groups from across the ideological, economic, and geographic spectrum. NOW issued a statement sympathizing with Edelin and declaring that the case had implications for all women as it “jeopardize[d] their precarious freedom to determine the course of their own lives, without state interference.”<sup>116</sup> More radical organizations including the national black feminist group the Combahee River Collective emphasized the clear class and racial dimensions of the case and its potential consequences. One left-leaning feminist organization in Cambridge drew a direct line between the Edelin and the “school busing issue” as attempts by city and state politicians “to keep people’s minds off the real issues, of the morality of the eight percent unemployment rate, the unequal distribution of wealth in this country, lack of decent health care for all” and the “countless instances of discrimination against women and minorities in this land of opportunity.”<sup>117</sup>

The case coincided directly with the mandatory desegregation of the Boston Public Schools, which punctuated the racial undertones of the indictment. For the members of the black community, it seemed more than a coincidence that the city had pursued charges against a black doctor at a public hospital rather than at one of Boston’s many private institutions that served wealthier white women. The attack on Edelin

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<sup>115</sup> “Edelin states views at Temple Isaiah Talk,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, January 16, 1975.

<sup>116</sup> NOW, “Statement on the Case of Dr. Kenneth Edelin,” Box 6, Folder 223, NOW-Boston.

<sup>117</sup> The Cambridge Women’s Center, Press Release, February 10, 1975, Box 2, Folder 122, AAC.

specifically and patients at BCH more generally offered another clear example of Boston officials' history of discrimination against African-Americans. The sense of inequity and racism became even further pronounced when in response to the pressure of the case, BCH decided to forbid abortions except in medical or psychiatric emergencies. Since BCH was one of the only places in Boston where those who could not afford to pay a fee could legally end unwanted pregnancies, the policy added another burden onto the lives of poor women in the city.

The trial itself embodied the basic racial inequities of the city's political system. Edelin confronted an all white, mostly male, Catholic jury, an Irish Catholic judge, and a prosecutor who was vocally anti-abortion.<sup>118</sup> Prosecutor Newman Flanagan called as his first expert witness Dr. Mildred Jefferson, an African-American general surgeon who was a leading pro-life activist and would later serve as the president of the National Committee for Life.<sup>119</sup> Her credibility as a medical expert in this particularly case was questionable since she was not trained as a gynecologist, had never performed an abortion, and had made it her life's work to protect unborn fetuses. Yet her racial and gender identity provided a strategic way for the prosecution to diffuse charges of sexism and racism. Jefferson led off a string of white male pro-life medical experts. In his own testimony, Edelin established his medical expertise as an obstetrician, not abortionist. He explained that he disliked performing abortions but believed them necessary in certain circumstances.<sup>120</sup>

Although the trial aimed to address the issue left open and unresolved by *Roe v. Wade* of when life began left, it was ultimately a manslaughter case, not one testing the

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<sup>118</sup> Gary Griffith, "Witnesses for the Prosecution," *The Real Paper*, January 22, 1975.

<sup>119</sup> Nils J. Bruzelius "Edelin Trial Semantics Crucial," *Boston Globe*, January 12, 1975.

<sup>120</sup> Evelyn Mareth, "Womanslaughter," March 1975, Folder 8, Folder 269, NOW-Boston.

constitutionality of abortion. The crux of the six-week trial, therefore, focused on the question of whether or not the fetus had emerged from the womb dead or alive.<sup>121</sup> The prosecution and defense gave conflicting narratives on both the facts and the question of when a fetus becomes a human life. Their choice of language underlined their implicit stances on these issues. The prosecution used more humanizing words like “baby” and “child,” while the defense elected the medically based term “fetus.” Despite the fact that the prosecution presented no witness able to establish that the aborted fetus was viable or born alive, the jury found Edelin guilty of manslaughter, and he received a sentence of one-year probation, which the judge stayed pending the defense’s immediate appeal to the Supreme Judicial Court.<sup>122</sup>

The conviction of an African-American by an all-white jury shared the front page with stories about the continued resistance to the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools and solidified the city’s reputation as one of the racist places in the country. The verdict also received national attention as a “setback for abortion,” as one headline in *Time* succinctly stated.<sup>123</sup> The outcome of the trial stirred outrage as local abortion rights supporters saw Edelin as “one of Boston’s first victims of an organized, powerful, massively funded campaign against a women’s right to choose abortion.”<sup>124</sup> In a series of rallies in the months following the verdict, the community came together to prove the strength and breadth of support for Edelin, embracing the theme: “Defend Dr. Edelin,

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<sup>121</sup> Robert Reinhold, “Abortion Trial’s Crucial Issue: When Does Life Begin?” *New York Times*, January 12, 1975.

<sup>122</sup> *Commonwealth v. Edelin* 371 Mass. 497 (1976).

<sup>123</sup> “Setback for Abortion” *Time* (February 24, 1975).

<sup>124</sup> Coalition to Defend Abortion Rights, “Fact Sheet: Defend Dr. Edelin—Defend Abortion Rights,” Box 8, Folder 276, NOW-Boston.

Defend Abortion Rights.”<sup>125</sup> The Supreme Judicial Court unanimously overturned the conviction the following year, and Edelin went on to have a distinguished career as chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Boston University and the national president of Planned Parenthood.<sup>126</sup> The case, nevertheless, had much broader and long-lasting repercussions. The conviction led several cities including Detroit, Pittsburgh, Nashville, and New York to place strict restrictions on the availability of second trimester abortions.<sup>127</sup> Many experts warned that these decisions had the harshest impact on poor teenagers, like the woman at the center of the Edelin case, who tended to delay abortions the longest.<sup>128</sup> The situation also created further polarization and antagonism between racial groups in the city and its pro-life and pro-choice communities.

The facts surrounding the Edelin case embodied a broader national effort to transform abortion from a universal right into a consumer privilege for those middle-class women who could afford it by essentially restricting the procedure for poor women who could not. During the mid-1970s, members of the U.S. Congress had repeatedly introduced legislation to restrict public funding for abortion thereby essentially cutting off the service for welfare recipients.<sup>129</sup> The effort finally succeeded in 1976 with the passage of the Hyde Amendment, named for its author Illinois Republican Henry Hyde, which prohibited the use of federal money to pay for or encourage abortions.<sup>130</sup> Abortion

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<sup>125</sup> Coalition to Defend Abortion Rights Letter, March 20, 1975, Box 8, Folder 276, NOW-Boston; Gloria Steinam, et al, Open Letter, March 20, 1975, Box 8, Folder 276, NOW-Boston; Coalition to Defend Abortion Rights, “March & Rally Sat. May 3,” Flyer, c. 1975, Box 8, Folder 276, NOW-Boston; Coalition to Defend Abortion Rights, Fact Sheet, c. 1975, Box 8, Folder 276, NOW-Boston.

<sup>126</sup> “Abortion Conviction of Boston Doctor Upset,” *New York Times*, December 18, 1976.

<sup>127</sup> “Abortion: The Edelin Shock Wave,” *Time* (March 3, 1975).

<sup>128</sup> “Abortion: The Edelin Shock Wave.”

<sup>129</sup> For more on this campaign see Solinger, *Beggars and Choosers*, 8-20.

<sup>130</sup> Outlining his position, Hyde declared “I would certainly like to prevent, if I legally could, anybody having an abortion, a rich woman, a middle-class woman, or a poor woman. Unfortunately, the only vehicle available is the HEW Medicaid Bill.” See, Solinger, *Beggars and Choosers*, 14-15.

rights champions did manage to slightly soften the effect of the amendment through a rewording offered by Massachusetts Senator Edward Brooke that excluded instances of rape, incest and medical necessity. Just a month after the compromise bill passed, the Secretary of Health Education and Welfare announced the end of Medicaid funds for “unnecessary” abortions. Adding insult to injury, when asked to comment on the fact that these measures appeared a clear instance of economic inequity, President Jimmy Carter stated “there are many things in life that are not fair, that wealthy people can afford and poor people can’t.”<sup>131</sup> The Supreme Court codified this consumer-based attitude into law with a set of rulings announced in June 1977 determining that states had no constitutional obligation to provide public funding for action.<sup>132</sup> In sharply worded dissents, Harry Blackmun compared the Court’s decision to Marie Antoinette’s decree “let them eat cake,” and Thurgood Marshall predicted it would “relegate millions of people to poverty and despair.”<sup>133</sup>

The Supreme Court rulings opened an important door for politicians throughout the country to increase the attack on reproductive rights and implement Hyde Amendment-style policy at the state level. The day after the Supreme Court announced its decision, pro-life advocates Reps. Ray Flynn and Charles Doyle submitted a bill to prohibit Massachusetts from spending any state funds on abortions for Medicaid recipients.<sup>134</sup> In the Bay State, welfare recipients had the opportunity to receive state funding, albeit heavily federally subsidized, for both “elective” and “therapeutic”

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<sup>131</sup> MORAL, “Background Information on the Supreme Court and Legislative Action,” Box 6, Folder: “ODU,” Mass Choice Records, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University (hereafter: “MORAL”).

<sup>132</sup> See *Maher v. Roe*, 432 U.S. 464 (1977); *Beal v. Doe*, 423 U.S. 438 (1977); *Poelker v. Doe* 432 U.S. 519 (1977).

<sup>133</sup> *Beal v. Doe*, 462.

<sup>134</sup> “Bill would forbid state to pay for abortion,” *Boston Globe*, June 22, 1977.

abortions. The proposed statute limiting the right to an abortion raised immediate opposition from several state officials including State Welfare Commissioner Alexander Sharp. Governor Michael Dukakis, a vocal abortion rights supporter, also denounced the bill and promised to veto it or any other attempt to limit publicly funded procedure.<sup>135</sup> He pledged that the state would pick up the costs incurred as the federal government withdrew financial support for the procedures.

The Doyle-Flynn bill also stirred a strong reaction from abortion rights and feminist activists who viewed the legislation as a threat to all women, not just to welfare recipients. MORAL and NOW decided the bill's opponents needed "a grassroots network as dedicated, effective and well-funded as the anti-abortion network."<sup>136</sup> The organizations, therefore, created a coalition called Mass. Citizens for Choice of female activist and civil liberties organizations such as CPPAX, LWV, Planned Parenthood, and the ACLU with the immediate goal of killing the bill. The coalition developed a strategy that that used a combination of newspapers articles, word-of-mouth, and the existing membership networks of the affiliated groups to match the lobbying capabilities of the pro-life movement.<sup>137</sup> The Boston Chapter of NOW became particularly active in this effort, recognizing that its large pro-abortion rights membership dispersed throughout the region would be an invaluable important asset in placing constituent pressure onto state politicians.<sup>138</sup>

The campaign marked one of the first times that mainstream feminists had addressed head-on an issue of class and racial inequality. However, the leaders of the

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<sup>135</sup> "Bill would forbid state to pay for abortion."

<sup>136</sup> Boston NOW, NOW Newsletter, August 1977, Box 11, NOW-Newsletters.

<sup>137</sup> Maria Karaganis, "Abortion issue flares in Massachusetts" No Date *Boston Globe*, in Boston NOW, Flyer: "The Right to Choose is Under Drastic Attack," July 1977, Box 8, Folder 273, NOW-Boston.

<sup>138</sup> Boston NOW, NOW Newsletter September 1977, Box 11, NOW-Newsletters.

campaign opted to address the issues through a language and imagery that set the members of the coalition apart from the low-income population primarily affected by these discriminatory policies. Pulling on the sympathies of potential white middle-class supporters, NOW depicted the victims of the law in drastic terms, predicting that the bill would force 12,000 welfare abortion recipients either to receive unsafe, non-medical abortions or “to bear unwanted children into a world of poverty and rejection.” The coalition’s spokesperson declared “we will not allow poor women, the most vulnerable link in our society, to bear the brunt of discrimination.”<sup>139</sup> In the same pieces of literature and press conferences, the leaders also aimed to obscure the issue of class discrimination by couching the issue in a consumer-laden vocabulary of choice that directly appealed to the interests of its white middle-class constituency. NOW sent out a flyer alerting members “DON’T BE COMPLACENT! WE COULD EASILY LOOSE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE.”<sup>140</sup> These warnings demonstrated the acknowledgement by the campaign leaders that they would have more success galvanizing white middle-class women to take action addressing the universal components rather than race and class specific dimensions of the legislation.

The Doyle-Flynn bill led another group of Boston-area women to organize an ad hoc organization called the Abortion Action Coalition (AAC). Led by activist Leslie Cagan, the more left-leaning organization included several women with experience in the medical and human service professions and made an effort to recruit welfare recipients as well. The AAC focused primarily on race and class inequality embedded in the issue of publicly financed abortion, dubbing the bill as well as the Hyde Amendment and the

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<sup>139</sup> Boston NOW, Press Release, June 24, 1977, Box 6, Folder 225, NOW-Boston.

<sup>140</sup> Boston NOW, Flyer: “The Right to Choose is Under Drastic Attack.”

Supreme Court decisions as “nothing but sexist and racist attacks on poor people.”<sup>141</sup> The AAC viewed these attempts as part of a broader effort to thwart the gains of the social revolutions of the 1960s led by “the same people” who “just change their hats and their names.” They included in this category “the anti-ERA Phyllis Schlafleys, the anti-busing ROAR Louise Day Hickes, the anti-gay Anita Bryants.”<sup>142</sup> Interpreting Doyle-Flynn as an attempt to divide women and the feminist cause along race and class lines, the AAC aimed to develop “a unified struggle” to combat the anti-abortion forces and defend the right to control reproductive choices.<sup>143</sup> In order to do, the group organized a series of rallies outside the State House to demonstrate the strong opposition to the bill.<sup>144</sup>

The Ways and Means Committee hearings on the Doyle-Flynn bill, held in late July 1977, demonstrated the speed with which both proponents and opponents had mobilized support and arguments to enhance their respective positions. The hearing room and halls of the State House overflowed, and large rallies staged by both sides filled the streets outside the building. The testimony itself focused primarily on the class and racial dimensions of the proposed law. Ray Flynn sought to deflect charges that the legislation discriminated against the poor. The day before the hearing, Flynn had announced that the bill would include all publicly funded abortions, including the thousands of state employees covered by Massachusetts group insurance plans.<sup>145</sup> The announcement drew immediate outrage from the employees as a violation of their union contracts. At the hearing, however, Flynn spoke in vaguer terms, discussing the need to eliminate “the root

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<sup>141</sup> Abortion Action Coalition, “Abortion: Our Right to Choose,” No Date, Box 1, Folder 63, AAC.

<sup>142</sup> Abortion Action Coalition, “Abortion: Our Right to Choose.”

<sup>143</sup> Abortion Action Coalition, “Abortion is Our Right,” August 1977, Box 1, Folder: Abortion-General, Lois G. Pines Papers, Special Collections, State Library of Massachusetts (hereafter “Pines”).

<sup>144</sup> Abortion Action Coalition, Press Release, July 27, 1977, AAC.

<sup>145</sup> Norman Lockman, “State Workers stand to lose paid abortions” *Boston Globe* (July 26, 1977).

causes of poverty” rather than “the innocent victims of abortion.”<sup>146</sup> In addition to dubbing abortion “the most horrible holocaust in the history of the world,” Charles Doyle appropriated a quote from “the great civil rights leader” Jesse Jackson calling government-sponsored procedures “genocide against black people.”<sup>147</sup>

The opponents to the bill countered these claims. Several of the speakers reiterated an earlier statement by liberal Sen. Jack Backman, who had dubbed the bill “one more step by the government in a war against the poor.” He had noted that middle and upper-income women with insurance coverage and the ability to pay received 88 percent of the abortions in the state, and that it cost Massachusetts less than \$20 per Medicaid-funded procedure.<sup>148</sup> Sen. Bill Owens highlighted the contradictions in the fact that anti-abortion figures like Flynn and Doyle fiercely opposed supplying contraceptive information and welfare payments to the same women seeking abortions.<sup>149</sup> The biggest coup occurred with the testimony of exonerated physician Kenneth Edelin who received enthusiastic cheers from the crowd outside as he entered the building. He ignored Doyle and Flynn’s promises of class fairness and stated the legislation’s impact would fall overwhelmingly on poor black women. Relying on his medical experience, he predicted the bill’s passage would lead to a flooding of hospitals with victims of botched or self-induced abortions.<sup>150</sup> The emotionally charged testimony helped to set the terms of the debate and motivated both proponents and opponents to intensify their respective lobbying efforts.

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<sup>146</sup> Dave O’Brian “Pro-life, pro-choice and déjà vu,” *Boston Phoenix*, No Date, Box 1, Abortion-General Folder, Pines.

<sup>147</sup> Norman Lockman, “Edelin attacks antiabortion bill,” *Boston Evening Globe*, July 27, 1977.

<sup>148</sup> Jack H. Backman, Statement on Abortion Bill, July 25, 1977, Box 37, Folder 1328, Jack Backman Papers, Special Collections, State Library of Massachusetts (hereafter “Backman”).

<sup>149</sup> Clipping of Article by Janet Horowitz, *Real Paper*, August 6, 1977, Box 1, Folder: Abortion-General, Pines.

<sup>150</sup> Lockman, “Edelin attacks antiabortion bill,”

The anti-abortion activists, who had come out in full force at the hearing complete with plastic dolls and chants, recognized the bill as an important foot in the door for their broader campaign to make abortion illegal. Outlining a supposedly equal opportunity strategy, MCFL chairman John McNulty declared, “the pro-lifers don’t want to lose momentum. Our objective is to deny everyone, rich or poor.”<sup>151</sup> The group relied on contacts within the state’s large Catholic community in order to maintain this energy. The state’s Catholic newspapers all offered editorials in favor of Doyle-Flynn, and the Diocese urged parish priests to devote homilies to the theme “Respect Life” emphasizing the necessity of the legislation.<sup>152</sup> Catholic leaders throughout the state distributed literature and delivered sermons aimed to encourage grassroots lobbying and helped develop arguments that would appeal to the predominantly Catholic legislature.

The proponents also appropriated the taxpayers concerns of middle-class suburbanites in order to further solidify support for the bill. The MCFL adopted a multifaceted argument that simultaneously raised “objections to the use of tax funds to destroy unborn children” and stressed that “human life should not have a price tag.”<sup>153</sup> The letters pro-life supporters sent to the State House as part of the lobbying effort underscore this fusion of moral opposition with taxpayer victimization. In letters to Sen. Jack Backman, constituents like Katherine Keefe of Newton stressed that it “was wrong to give tax dollars to the poor so they can kill their unwanted babies,” Stella Demmons declared “it is outrageous that taxpayer money should pay the bill for abortions,” and Josephine Di Gregorio stated the unfairness to “tax people who are struggling to support their own families” and “impose upon them the further burden which may have

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<sup>151</sup> O’Brian “Pro-life, pro-choice and déjà vu.”

<sup>152</sup> “Abortion lobbyists jockey for votes,” *Boston Globe*, September 19, 1977.

<sup>153</sup> Massachusetts Citizens for Life, Arguments in Support of H6327, 1977, Box 1, Folder 24, AAC.

psychological effects of helping them to pay for something which their conscience violently opposes.”<sup>154</sup> One Medfield resident’s objection to the use of tax dollars to fund abortion rested on a “moral objection to the destruction of innocent life,” which he maintained differed in no way from his feeling “about the use of my money to subsidize the massacre of innocent Vietnamese at My Lai.”<sup>155</sup> Embracing a discourse of compassionate conservatism, Newton resident Jane Crimlisk declared she would “rather see my tax dollars being spent to help poor people get jobs and get ahead rather than having tax dollars spent on eliminating from society.” Yet belying this sense of concern, she offered a clear moral condemnation of the poor women at the center of the debate, declaring, “it would be far more effective if individuals began taking personal responsibility for their actions—maybe this would eliminate unwanted pregnancy.”<sup>156</sup> These letters punctuate the inextricable links in the minds of many suburban residents between concerns about taxes, homeownership, and abortion.

Recognizing the power of white middle-class voters to persuade legislators, Mass. Choice also placed middle-class residents and concerns at the center of its campaign. These forces took up the call of Rep. Lois Pines of Newton at the Ways and Means hearing, who stated that the Flynn-Doyle bill was “but an opening skirmish in the battle by anti-abortionists to deny *all* women the right to freedom of choice.”<sup>157</sup> The organizers understood that the majority of people who received abortions were not welfare recipients but middle and upper income women. They sought, therefore, to make the campaign

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<sup>154</sup> Josephine Di Gregorio to Legislator, August 8, 1977, Box 37, Folder 1328, Backman; Katherine Keefe to Senator Backman, August 4, 1977; Box 37, Folder 1328, Backman; Stella Demmons to Jack Backman, August 2, 1977, Box 37, Folder 1328, Backman.

<sup>155</sup> R. Neary to the Editor, *Boston Globe*, August 12, 1977.

<sup>156</sup> Jane Crimlisk to Jack Backman, August 6, 1977, Box 37, Folder 1328, Backman.

<sup>157</sup> Marjorie Arons, “Abortion Factions Pin Hopes on Senate Vote,” *Newton Times*, Box 38, Folder “Women’s Issues, Press Releases,” Pines; Horowitz, Real Paper, August 6, 1977.

appeal to this constituency through a broad language of individual rights that submerged the race and class differences. “Every women in this commonwealth, whether she be rich poor, or middle-class,” Pines warned her constituents, “stands to lose her constitutional right to an abortion if this insidious legislation should pass.”<sup>158</sup> Reinforcing the consumerist logic of these choice-based arguments, Massachusetts Consumer Affairs director Christine Sullivan called the campaign “what all of us are saying is that a woman should have a choice.”<sup>159</sup>

The coalition appropriated an economically conscious argument of fiscal conservatism in order to strengthen support among white middle-class suburban homeowners. This approach provided suburban residents with a way to oppose the bill without having to take a stance on the broader ethical questions surrounding abortion. Mass. Choice circulated a series of Department of Welfare statistics to suggest that in the long run social service costs would be significantly higher if poor women lost access to publicly funded abortions. In 1976, the state had subsidized 3,862 procedures, which amounted to about 14 percent of all the abortions performed in Massachusetts and cost about \$750,000, roughly 90 percent of which the federal government paid before the Hyde Amendment. During the same year, the state had spent \$4.6 million on maternity costs and \$15.4 million in AFDC payments.<sup>160</sup> Abortion-rights proponents calculated, therefore, that the maternity costs of the women who had Medicaid-funded abortions would increase the cost of welfare by \$2.2 million per year. These statistics appealed directly to the anxieties of suburban taxpayers. Lexington physician Harris Funkenstein

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<sup>158</sup> Arons “Abortion factions pin hope on senate vote.”

<sup>159</sup> Arons, “Abortion faction pins hope on senate vote.”

<sup>160</sup> NOW Boston, “Medicaid and Abortions Costs—A Fact Sheet” c. 1977, Box 8, Folder 273, NOW-Boston.

stated he opposed the bill on the grounds that financing abortions would “ultimately save the state an enormous amount of money.”<sup>161</sup> Fellow Lexington resident Harris Kodis declared, “I think the state would have a bigger burden to pay...in terms of unhappy people it would have to support, people with a lot of problems. Economically it doesn’t make sense.” Offering a counterpart to President Carter’s notion of the obligations of citizenship, James Morrison observed, “There are a great many things that we as taxpayers don’t want our money used for, but it is a democracy and if people want abortions they should have them.”<sup>162</sup>

The days of debate on Doyle-Flynn that ensued inside the state legislative chambers further illuminated these economic, racial and spatial issues. Evoking the arguments of metropolitan fairness that had dominated the body’s earlier discussion of busing and affordable housing, Rep. David Swartz of Haverhill placed his view of the bill in the cognitive cartography of residential privilege. “How can we tell a wealthy woman from Wellesley that she can have an abortion because she doesn’t want to defer her European trip for a year,” he asked his colleagues, “while we tell the poor women who knows she and her fetus are affected by rubella that she can’t have an abortion?”<sup>163</sup> Rep. Mel King from Roxbury deemed the bill “as racist a piece of legislation as has ever been before us.” Rep. Peter McCarthy voiced opposition to “abortions on demand” but made an argument for class fairness. “There is not a person in this chamber who wouldn’t make sure that a mother, daughter or sister who had been raped was taken to the proper medical authorities, McCarthy declared, “yet we would sit here and say that poor women would

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<sup>161</sup> “Should tax money fund Abortions?” *Lexington Minute-Man*, August 11, 1977.

<sup>162</sup> “Should tax money fund Abortions?”

<sup>163</sup> Norman Lockman, “House votes fund cutoff for Medicaid abortions,” *Boston Globe*, August 10, 1977.

not have the same right.”<sup>164</sup> Many legislators shared McCarthy’s discomfort with the fact that the bill did not make exceptions in cases of rape, incest or medical emergency. House Speaker Thomas McGee refused to allow discussion of any amendments to exclude these instances, though he did reject Flynn’s claim that the bill intent’s extended to state employees and limited its consideration only to Medicaid recipients.<sup>165</sup> Despite the lack of exceptions, the House still passed the bill by a wide majority.

As the bill moved the Senate, Mass. Choice increased its lobbying efforts recognizing that the traditionally more liberal body might be less receptive to the restrictive legislation. This campaign targeted moderate senators who opposed abortion on philosophical and religious grounds but disliked the fact that Doyle-Flynn discriminated against the poor and contained no exceptions for drastic cases.<sup>166</sup> The effort built directly upon the organizational infrastructure developed during the fight for the state ERA. Coalition chairman Connie Williams later stated, “With just a few calls across the state, we were able to get the chains of phone calls and letters coming into the vulnerable senator.”<sup>167</sup> This present effort achieved the greatest success in the affluent suburban communities with past experience lobbying for liberal and feminist causes. The constituents of Wellesley Senator David Locke, one of the state’s more outspoken conservatives, used an onslaught of grassroots pressure to successfully persuade him to vote against the bill. Williams explained, “We had his constituents visiting him at home every night” and then “we had them report to back to us how he reacted. We knew

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<sup>164</sup> Lockman, “House votes fund cutoff for Medicaid abortions.”

<sup>165</sup> Lockman, “House votes fund cutoff for Medicaid abortions.”

<sup>166</sup> Allen Rossiter, “Most legislators against abortion, but favor funding for the poor,” *Lexington Minute-Man Supplement*, August 18, 1977.

<sup>167</sup> “Abortion lobbyists jockey for votes.”

exactly when he started to waver.”<sup>168</sup> Mass Choice representatives also persuaded Samuel Rotundi of Winchester to vote against the bill even though he was personally opposed to abortion. Explaining his logic, he announced, “abortion is not the issue, it is economic discrimination” because Doyle-Flynn effectively stated, “abortions are available—but they are available only to those who can afford it.”<sup>169</sup> The drawn out battle persisted and on September 13, 1977, Dukakis announced his anticipated veto to the Doyle-Flynn bill. He declared that the bill did not address the legality of abortions and instead aimed to set up a two-class system that gave affluent women the ability to exercise their constitutional rights while denying it to poor women.<sup>170</sup> The House voted to override, but the opponents to the bill eventually won this scramble, the Senate sustained Dukakis veto and welfare recipients retained the right to a state funded abortion for the time being.<sup>171</sup> Doyle and Flynn along with the Catholic Church, nevertheless, pledged to continue their quest to end state-funded procedures.

In the 1978 legislative session, Doyle and Flynn presented a new version of their bill through a different strategy. The legislature borrowed a tactic of conservative politicians at the national level by attaching antiabortion riders to bills that did not explicitly deal with the procedure. Flynn and Doyle added codicils to several portions of the Medicaid and state workers insurance appropriations forbidding the use of state funds for abortion unless necessary to prevent the death of the mother. By excluding cases of rape, incest and medical necessity, the proposal proved even more stringent than either the earlier version or the Hyde Amendment. Flynn and Doyle also made state workers a

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<sup>168</sup> “Abortion lobbyists jockey for votes.”

<sup>169</sup> Robert L. Turner, “Biggest abortion-bill ‘if’ is Senate vote on a veto,” *Boston Globe*, August 15, 1977; “Rotundi explains opposition to bill,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, September 9, 1977.

<sup>170</sup> Lockman, “Abortion cutoff veto is upheld.”

<sup>171</sup> Lockman, “Abortion cutoff veto is upheld.”

central part of the plan in order to prove they aimed to stop any public expenditure on abortion. The stealth strategy received far less publicity than the drawn out battle the previous fall, but the potential impact was even more severe.<sup>172</sup>

Abortion rights activists renewed the campaign to defeat these restrictions. The organizers in this round largely focused on mobilizing previously politically uninvolved local residents to lobby legislators, because they recognized that since it was an election year, politicians would be particularly sensitive to constituent pressure.<sup>173</sup> These organizations believed they could win by focusing on the majority of Medicaid recipients who were not women with unwanted pregnancies, and thus they tried to recruit state employees and the elderly to join in this campaign.<sup>174</sup> In public statements and lobbying, the abortion rights community presented the potential victims of the legislation not as women of color trying to end pregnancies, but, rather, the poor children and elderly whose Medicaid payments the controversy put at risk. This strategy demonstrates the activists attempt to circumvent the economically and racially polarizing issues underpinning the legislation. Despite these lobbying efforts the bill still passed in the House.<sup>175</sup> In an encore of the battle the year before, Dukakis once again issued a veto, which the House overrode.

By the time of the veto, MORAL decided to shift its strategy and to turn to the federal courts to seek an injunction against Medicaid restrictions. Thus, they encouraged

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<sup>172</sup> Abortion Action Coalition, Fact Sheet: Abortion Legislation in Massachusetts, May 1978, Box 1, Folder 64, AAC.

<sup>173</sup> Borrowing the telephone strategy of MCFL, Now created an alert network that would enable the organization to quickly mobilize emergency lobbying and increase its effectiveness in influencing legislation (NOW News, September 1977).

<sup>174</sup> Boston NOW, NOW Newsletter, April 1978, Box 11, NOW-Newsletters.

<sup>175</sup> Lawrence Coluns, "Seantors reject antiabortion riders," *Boston Globe*, May 31, 1978. The pro-life forces did face one significant setback when the Senate passed an amendment removing the anti-abortion rider from the appropriation to the state employee budget.

even sympathetic legislators to override the veto, a decision that confounded many other progressive observers.<sup>176</sup> The shift in strategy, nevertheless, indicated the coalition's understanding that it could not mobilize enough constituent pressure from its largely white middle-class female base, whose own right to an abortion remained secure.<sup>177</sup> This constituency remained consistently less willing to spend the time to take up an issue that did not directly affect them. The 1979 state budget passed with the riders attached making Massachusetts the 36<sup>th</sup> state to cut off Medicaid funding for abortion. The outcome of this two-year drive sent a clear lesson to mainstream feminists about the limits of its ability to address issues of racial and class inequality, which would have long-term consequences on both the movement's strategy and the availability of abortions in the Bay State.

The defeat of Michael Dukakis by the socially conservative candidate Edward King in the 1978 Governor race further indicated the abortion-rights activists' inability to create significant political change.<sup>178</sup> The staunchly pro-life King had made a pledge to seek limits on public assistance for abortions one the central planks of his campaign. This promise earned him the support of the well-organized grassroots anti-abortion movement. The MCFL distributed a pamphlet entitled "Everything you Need to Know to Vote Pro-Life" with a drawing of a fetus cradling a placard. The piece of literature suggested that voting for King and other anti-abortion candidates offered "the best protection the unborn have to enjoy what we already have."<sup>179</sup> Providing its own visual testimony of the

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<sup>176</sup> *The Beacon Hill Update: Monitoring State House Activities Affecting Low Income People*, Volume 3, Number 22 (June 25, 1979), Box 1, Folder 21, AAC.

<sup>177</sup> *The Beacon Hill Update*, June 25, 1979.

<sup>178</sup> See Chapter 10 for a lengthier discussion of the 1978 election.

<sup>179</sup> Massachusetts Citizens for Life, "Everything You Need to Know to Vote Pro-Life," 1978, Box 6, Folder: Lawsuit Mass for Life, Mass. Choice.

implications of the election results, MORAL circulated a cartoon with the Massachusetts legislature presented as a carpenter hammering away at “abortion rights” and nearby another figure representing Edward King holding a bomb.<sup>180</sup>

The King administration ushered in the greatest victories for the Massachusetts anti-abortion movement since the *Roe* ruling. In 1979, the state legislature passed an updated statute prohibiting publicly financed abortions that unlike earlier versions included public employees and made no exceptions for cases of rape or incest. At the crowded signing ceremony, King received applause and cheers of “Hurray for the governor” and “Hurray for the unborn.”<sup>181</sup> Dr. Mildred Jefferson declared: “It’s a glorious day, a great, great day for the people of Massachusetts, especially the poor.”<sup>182</sup> Abortion rights proponents disagreed as the law meant that Massachusetts now had on its books the most restrictive abortion law in the nation and one that effectively cutoff the right of many poor women to obtain a legal procedure. The legislature added to this distinction the same year when it passed an informed consent law that required all women seeking an abortion to sign a detailed form outlining the development of a fetus, the procedure to be used, and the risks involved. In addition, the law stipulated that a teenage girl needed the approval of her parents or a superior court judge to deem her “mature” or the procedure in her “best interest.” Abortion rights activists did receive some success circumscribing the effects of these laws through the state and federal courts.<sup>183</sup> Although the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Hyde Amendment in 1980, the

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<sup>180</sup> MORAL Newsletter, January 22, 1979, Massachusetts-MORAL Folder, National Abortion Rights Action League, State Affiliates Newsletter Collection, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University (hereafter “NARAL-Newsletters”).

<sup>181</sup> Maria Karagianis, “Abortion Law Signed by King,” *Boston Globe*, June 13, 1979.

<sup>182</sup> Karagianis, “Abortion Law Signed by King.”

<sup>183</sup> The Supreme Court heard cases related to the Massachusetts consent law twice during the 1970s, see *Bellotti v. Baird*, 428 U.S. 132 (1976); *Bellotti v. Baird*, 443 U.S. 622 (1979).

Massachusetts Supreme Court in 1981 eased the limits on the public financing of abortion instructing the state to pay for all “medically necessary” procedures even when a life was not in danger.<sup>184</sup> Likewise, a federal court of appeals upheld the consent law, but struck down the stipulations requiring pregnant women to read the form outlining fetus gestation.<sup>185</sup> While this set of rulings did offer activists some solace, it still did not provide unfettered access to abortions for all women.

### **As American As Apple Pie**

In the aftermath of the Doyle-Flynn Bill and the 1978 election, the abortion rights movement led by MORAL made a change in focus that further reflected its suburban liberal underpinnings. Led by newly appointed executive director Jean Weinberg, a community organizer who had worked with NOW, the group acknowledged that its lobbying and educational campaigns had failed to produce a strong grassroots network despite most Massachusetts citizens support for the right to abortio. The results of an opinion poll released in the July before the 1978 election by Clark University exposed this problem. The pollsters found that 83 percent of Massachusetts residents upheld the basic pro-choice philosophy that the decision to have an abortion should be between a women and her doctor, 77 percent believed the choice should be made by an individual without state intervention, and 53 percent supported government funding of the procedure for those who could not afford to pay.<sup>186</sup> The survey also showed that religion played a larger factor among state representatives than their constituents, as 80 percent of

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<sup>184</sup> Michael Knight, “U.S Court Suspends Massachusetts Abortion Law,” *New York Times*, September 14, 1980.

<sup>185</sup> Walter Isaacson, “The Battle Over Abortion,” *Time* (April 6, 1981).

<sup>186</sup> Clark University News, “Large Majority Feels Abortion is a Private Matter,” July 1978, Box 2, Folder 130, AAC.

Catholics polled deemed abortion a private decision.<sup>187</sup> Despite the abortion rights community's clear numerical majority in the 1978 election, anti-abortion supporters had outnumbered them in terms of political involvement by a margin of 10-1, which tipped the balance toward candidates like King. These statistics convinced the MORAL leadership that in order to preserve and expand reproductive rights it had to "*mobilize this majority*" not by changing views, but rather, channeling existing sentiment into "effective political action."<sup>188</sup> MORAL, therefore, decided to organize the members of the public already sympathetic to their cause to demonstrate there was an abortion rights constituency that matched the singularly focused pro-life vote.<sup>189</sup>

The group adopted a set of grassroots-based tactics in order to achieve its goal of taking "members of the silent pro-choice majority and turn[ing] them into political activists."<sup>190</sup> Borrowing directly from both the pro-life movement and the state ERA drive, MORAL used the traditional techniques of a political campaign in order to galvanize moderate middle-class support.<sup>191</sup> Like many previous liberal initiatives, this strategy of grassroots organizing targeted the effectiveness of suburban middle-class voters to work within the political channels and persuade politicians to uphold and expand abortion rights. MORAL implemented a plan to develop local committees in each of the state's 40 senate districts by appealing directly to a suburban and middle-class sensibility. Adhering to the plan, the local committees staged house parties "identical to

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<sup>187</sup> Clark University News, "Large Majority Feels Abortion is a Private Matter."

<sup>188</sup> MORAL, *Your Choice*, Spring 1979, Box 1, Folder: MORAL, NARAL-Newsletters.

<sup>189</sup> Suzanne Staggenborg, *The Pro-Choice Movement: Organization and Activism in the Abortion Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 94-95.

<sup>190</sup> Judy McDermott, "Pro-abortion activist hopes tactic will arouse 'silent majority,'" *The Oregonian*, September 29, 1979, Box 2, Folder 166, AAC.

<sup>191</sup> "MORAL Goes Door-to-Door In Campaign for Abortion Rights," No Date, Box 2, Folder 166, AAC.

Tupperware parties” to sell not plastic but its reproductive politics.<sup>192</sup> Similar to a pyramid scheme, MORAL’s recruitment strategy encouraged the 50 to 100 people in attendance to invite friends and neighbors over for coffee to tell them about specific ways to get involved. By expanding the network, more local residents learned about the political process, became involved in lobbying efforts, and set up registration drives to increase the pro-choice vote.<sup>193</sup> This movement to “politically activate pro-choice people” was most effective in traditionally liberal communities like Newton and the suburbs of the South Shore that had an existing base of support from the ERA campaign. The effort also received a significant rise in membership as residents across the state as residents grew frustrated with Governor King and his extremely restrictive abortion policies. By 1979, MORAL had set up committees in 21 districts and by 1981 had staged 400 meetings and reached 4,000 Massachusetts residents. In just two years, MORAL expanded its membership from 300 to 1,800 and budget from \$3,000 to \$45,000.<sup>194</sup>

The rapid success of MORAL’s recruiting campaign inspired the national abortion rights movement to take similar action.<sup>195</sup> Expanding the “Massachusetts model” to a national scale, NARAL changed its direction and in 1979 launched a program entitled “Impact ’80: Protecting the Right to Choose” with the hope of mobilizing a “politically astute pro-choice constituency” that would lay the foundation “for a major pro-choice victory in 1980.”<sup>196</sup> Jean Weinberg described the process as “bringing inactive pro-choice supporters into one end of a funnel and sending campaign workers out the

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<sup>192</sup> MORAL, “MORAL: An Overview of Our Growth,” Box 7, Folder: Board and Budget,” MORAL.

<sup>193</sup> MORAL, *Your Choice*, Spring 1979.

<sup>194</sup> MORAL “An Overview of Our Growth.”

<sup>195</sup> MORAL, “MORAL Plays a Key Role in the Pro-Choice Community,” December 1978 Box 6, Folder: Press Releases, MORAL; Staggenborg, *The Pro-Choice Movement*, 95.

<sup>196</sup> MORAL, *Your Choice*, Spring 1979, NARAL-Newsletters.

other end.”<sup>197</sup> NARAL, like its Bay State chapter, predicated the project on tenets of community organizing, particularly the idea that “people will stick with an issue in which they have a personal stake, if they perceive they as, individuals, can make a difference in the outcome.”<sup>198</sup> Thus, MORAL representatives began traveling around the country providing training and materials to activists in other states about how to recruit workers to volunteers and get voters to the polls by promoting the issues of freedom of choice rather than class fairness and racial discrimination.<sup>199</sup>

This shift in strategy toward grassroots organization and a single-issue pro-choice agenda had clear-trade offs for the movement locally and nationally. In the short run, “Impact ‘80” failed to mobilize enough opposition to stop the victories of Ronald Reagan and other politically conservative politicians.<sup>200</sup> In the long term, this effort did succeed in developing an electoral constituency, but one that was overwhelmingly middle-class, white, and ascribed to a narrow view of the abortion debate. In particular, the campaign’s decision to replace the language of “rights” with “choice” constricted its scope of vision and effectiveness. Examining this strategy, historian Rickie Solinger has argued that abortion rights activists believed it would be less threatening to promote the concept of “choice,” which was laden with an ideology of consumer privilege. Elaborating on the motivation behind this strategy, she stated, “in a country weary of rights claims, choice became *the* way liberal and mainstream feminists could talk about abortion.”<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> McDermott, “Pro-abortion activist hopes tactic will arouse ‘silent majority.’”

<sup>198</sup> MORAL, *Your Choice*, Spring 1979.

<sup>199</sup> MORAL, *Your Choice*, November 1979, Box 1, Folder: MORAL, NARAL-Newsletters.

<sup>200</sup> Memorandum from Jean Weinberg to 1981 Board of Directors, RE: MORAL—Past, Present and Future, 1981, Box 7, Folder: Board and Budget, MORAL.

<sup>201</sup> Solinger, *Beggars and Choosers*, 5.

The rhetoric of choice aligned with and built upon the longstanding suburban-centered strategy of mainstream feminists in Massachusetts. It followed in close step with NOW and the ERA campaign's efforts to couch both feminism and the amendment not as a demand for particular rights for women but a quest for class and race neutral ideals of "choice" and "opportunity." By embracing this terminology, abortion rights activists further naturalized a middle-class suburban liberal perspective to stand in for the entire issue of reproductive politics. MORAL's slogan "As American as Apple Pie-A Women's Right to Choose" brings the organization's increasingly white middle-class ideology and agenda into the clearest focus.<sup>202</sup> This slogan mirrored NOW's longstanding effort to present feminism through a non-threatening discourse of middle-class respectability and traditional gender norms. However, this strategy helped codify abortion as a class privilege rather than a fundamental right just as the fair housing movement made suburban housing available to only those minorities who could afford it. The goal of enhancing "choice" obscured the fact that the laws like Doyle-Flynn, the Hyde Amendment, and the informed consent requirements prevented a large portion of the majority from electing the option of abortion.

The embrace tactics like Tupperware parties, phone banks, and bake sales made it even more difficult for mainstream feminists to create coalitions with poor and minority women in order to preserve abortion rights. The focus on choice and electoral mobilization also made the mainstream movement less able to address the variety of economic and social conditions that led most women to claim reproductive rights in the first place. In spite of the issues exposed by the fight over the Doyle-Flynn bill, MORAL, NOW and other mainstream groups also opted not to make welfare rights and poverty

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<sup>202</sup> MORAL, Your Choice, Summer 1978, Box 1, Folder: MORAL, NARAL-Newsletters.

central components of their campaign. Thus, these efforts failed numerically or ideologically to include the constituency most affected by the new limits on abortion.

This single-issue strategy also prevented MORAL from addressing the other feminist issues inextricably linked to abortion such as health care, rape, domestic violence, and employment equality, which created tensions with other women's and abortion rights activists. Organizations such as the Abortion Action Coalitio, which had worked closely with MORAL on the Doyle-Flynn bill, experienced a sense of alienation from the focus "on abortion as a single-issue struggle." The members of AAC grew increasingly frustrated by the "liberal pro-choice perspective" of MORAL and NOW and "their strategic commitment to purely legislative and judicial work." In addition, the AAC criticized MORAL's "formulation of this struggle as essentially a question of choice" arguing that "by pushing the choice position the liberals ignore the fact that the availability (and for that matter the non-availability) of abortion services changes the meaning of all the options."<sup>203</sup>

On the surface, the class-blind language of choice brought abortion rights and feminism in closer harmony with mainstream liberalism. However, the single-issue strategy actually worked to set abortion from both other liberal campaigns and the Democratic Party. A pro-choice position has increasingly become a prerequisite for candidates seeking to gain the votes of middle-class liberals, particularly those in the suburbs. The single-issue strategy, nevertheless, also made it easier for politicians to marginalize the issue as a means to avoid political controversy. Thus, the shift in strategy

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<sup>203</sup> Leslie Cagan and Marla Erlie to Reproductive Rights National Network and Friends, January 30, 1980, Box 1, Folder 8, AAC. The white middle-class members of AAC experienced consistent difficulty making its messages often steeped in Marxist-influenced theory accessible and appealing to the welfare recipients they aimed to help. This inability to create a broader movement, coupled with internal disagreements, led the AAC to disband in 1980.

enabled politicians and the Democratic Party since the late 1970s to embrace the symbolic ideals of the pro-choice movement without having to commit to economic or social policies that ensured actual equality in reproductive rights.<sup>204</sup>

The campaign for abortion rights ultimately exemplifies the success and limits of both mainstream feminism and suburban liberalism in the 1970s. The efforts demonstrate the continued vibrancy of activism in support of liberal causes in Massachusetts, particularly the Route 128 suburbs. However, by embracing the individualist ideals of equality of opportunity and freedom of choice, this movement disproportionately appealed to and benefited white suburbanites and intensified class and racial inequality in the Bay State. Moreover, these controversies exposed and exacerbated larger tensions in the political landscape that the parallel battles over taxation and welfare in the 1970s brought to a climax.

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<sup>204</sup> For more on the relationship between the pro-choice movement and politicians in the 1980s see William Saletan, "Electoral Politics and Abortion: Narrowing the Political Message" in *Abortion Wars: A Half Century of Struggle*, Rickie Solinger, ed (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 111-123.

## **Chapter 10: From “Taxachusetts” to the “Massachusetts Miracle”**

### **Introduction**

Between 1972 and 1990, Massachusetts’s identity, political ideology and economy remained in flux. The state gradually relinquished its hold on the claim of the most liberal place in America that it earned following its singular support of George McGovern 1972 election. Following that image-making election the state endured the busing crisis, a deep economic recession, and soaring unemployment and residents, frustrated with high tax rates disparagingly dubbed “Taxachusetts.” In 1978, voters replaced Governor Michael Dukakis with the pro-business and socially conservative Edward King, who would proudly embrace the label “Reagan’s favorite Democrat.” These developments revealed the growing conservatism of the state and led to the invariable conclusion on the eve of the 1980 election that eight years later a candidate like McGovern would be “clobbered” not celebrated in Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> The outcome of the election reinforced this conviction. Voters widely approved one of the nation’s most severe tax limitation measures, known as Proposition 2 1/2, and made Ronald Reagan the first Republican presidential candidate to win Massachusetts since Dwight Eisenhower.

The obituaries of Massachusetts liberalism proved premature. Just two years later, Dukakis rebounded and defeated King in the 1982 governor’s race. Dukakis’s comeback in 1982 demonstrates the importance of suburban liberal and moderate voters in transforming the base and priorities of the Democratic Party and the politics of the Bay

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Turner, “Massachusetts in ’80,” *Boston Globe*, February 10, 1980.

State. During his second term, Dukakis rode the cresting wave of the high-tech industry to oversee the economic turnaround later coined the “Massachusetts Miracle.” The resurgence of the state’s economy and his career convinced Dukakis to run for the presidency based on a platform of refashioned liberalism that promoted fiscal restraint, social moderation, and technocratic management of high-tech corporate development. Dukakis also aimed to reinvent many of principles that had dominated liberalism and the Democratic Party since the New Deal. As governor, he rejected the notions of generous government assistance and instead promoted a policy of personal responsibility and work-requirements. The vision of social welfare that Dukakis aimed to implement in the Bay State did not just change the political dynamics of the state, but also directly influenced the policies of Democratic Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton and the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC).

Dukakis’s 1988 Republican opponent George H.W. Bush, nevertheless, defused his moderate image through a strategy that rested on latent national resentments of Massachusetts and East Coast liberalism.<sup>2</sup> The success of this tactic and the overwhelming defeat of Dukakis permanently crystallized an inextricable association between Massachusetts and the decline of the Democratic Party. The constructions of liberalism and Massachusetts attached to Dukakis, nevertheless, draw a direct link between the 1972 and 1988 presidential contests and obscure a more complicated narrative about the continuities, changes and challenges to the ideology and politics of postwar liberalism during the period those two elections bookend. These dynamics became most pronounced in the discussion of welfare and taxation, which defined the

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<sup>2</sup> Walter V. Robinson, “Bush’s Jabs on Defense Taking Toll on Dukakis,” *Boston Globe*, September 9, 1988.

political economy and electoral politics of the period. Tracing the state's transformation from Taxachusetts into the Massachusetts Miracle, as well as the career of Michael Dukakis from his election as Governor in 1974 to his run for the presidency in 1988, challenges assumptions about political realignment, liberalism, and economic restructuring in both Massachusetts and the nation after 1972. Doing so demonstrates the vitality of, and changes to, the Democratic Party and liberal politics before and after Reagan took office.

The debates that occurred within the realm of electoral politics in Massachusetts also provide new insight into the tax revolts that took place across the nation during the late 1970s. Recent historians of postwar politics have emphasized the important implications of the tax revolts of the late 1970s as symbolic of the end of New Deal liberalism and the beginning of the free-market conservatism that came to define the so-called the "Age of Reagan."<sup>3</sup> These accounts often treat passage of Proposition 13 in California in 1978 and Reagan's victory in the presidential election two years later as twin examples of the nation's rejection of liberalism. However, the causes, consequences, and implications of the tax limitation measures exceed this simplified this California-centric explanation and overlook other places where the issue operated in a different political, ideological and spatial context.<sup>4</sup> Unlike California, Massachusetts did not have a large budget surplus and both the campaign surrounding Proposition 2 1/2 and the confusion that its passage engendered ignited fierce battles about preserving basic

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the tax revolts, see Robert Kuttner, *Revolt of the Haves: Tax Revolt and Hard Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980); David O. Sears and Jack Citrin, *Tax Revolt: Something for Nothing in California* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 205-217.

<sup>4</sup> In his analysis of the California's trendsetting initiative, Robert Self situates the revolt within a broader and more complex history of postwar metropolitan development and the process of racial and spatial segregation, See, Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: University Press, 2003) especially 317-327.

social services that exposed differing notions about the responsibilities and entitlements of American citizenship and suburban residency. These debates illuminate a bipartisan refusal of many individual white suburban homeowners to assume responsibility for the costs of metropolitan fragmentation and deindustrialization.<sup>5</sup> The passage of Proposition 2 1/2 also reinforced the key role of both the high-tech industry and suburban taxpayers in shaping the political culture of Massachusetts and the national Democratic Party.

The tax revolt and these electoral transformations did not go unchallenged by grassroots activists concentrated in the Route 128 suburbs. Their response to these developments provides important insights into both the persistence of and boundaries of liberalism in the 1970s and 1980s. Members of this constituency fought hard against Proposition 2 1/2, forming a coalition that stressed the spatial, economic and racial inequalities such a measure would encourage. Even though they lost this battle, the campaign raised important questions about the definitions and obligations and privileges of suburban residency. Some white middle-class liberals also articulated clear disillusionment with the social welfare policies of Dukakis in the mid-1970s and opted to protest by refusing to support his re-election. This decision directly contributed to Dukakis' defeat by King in 1978. This outcome taught suburban liberal activists an important lesson about the dangerous consequences of breaking with the party or challenging the mainstream. The decision of these activists to endorse Dukakis in the 1982 election and beyond, therefore, highlights the limits of grassroots liberals to remake the political landscape of Massachusetts or to force the Democratic Party to fully incorporate its vision of economic and social equity.

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<sup>5</sup> Self, *American Babylon*, especially chapters 7 and 8.

## **Appalachia of the North**

In the early 1970s, economic restructuring, unemployment, inflation, and high taxes in Massachusetts set the terms of political debate for the subsequent decade. Existing instability in the state's economy turned the national recession in 1973-1974 into a full-scale local depression.<sup>6</sup> Mill-based textile, leather and food processing companies had served as the backbone of the Massachusetts economy since before the Civil War. These manufacturing industries had begun a steady downward spiral during the Depression but reached the lowest point in the late 1960s with the loss of 61,000 jobs. The rise of the high technology industry around the Route 128 highway after World War II had offset the destabilizing effects of this decline in manufacturing. Most of these new firms operated through federal government defense contracts. In the early 1970s, however, the winding down of the Vietnam War coupled with the Nixon Administration's stricter wage and price controls severely shrank the number of contracts awarded to Massachusetts corporations by the Defense Department and NASA.<sup>7</sup> For instance, Raytheon, the largest Bay State beneficiary of Defense dollars, sharply reduced its missile production and staff.<sup>8</sup> In 1970, Sylvania Electronics Company shut down its manufacturing plants in Burlington, Woburn, and Waltham.<sup>9</sup>

This decline in industry initiated a chain reaction creating high rates of unemployment. This problem became particularly pronounced within blue-collar

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Kenney and Robert L. Turner, *Dukakis: An American Odyssey* (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1988), 87.

<sup>7</sup> Berkeley Rice, "Down and Out Along Route 128," *New York Times*, November 1, 1970; Gene Smith, "Slowdown on Route 128," *New York Times*, October 11, 1970.

<sup>8</sup> Rice, "Down and Out Along Route 128."

<sup>9</sup> Smith, "Slowdown on Route 128."

communities where most residents lacked the education, skills or opportunities to seek alternative forms of employment. The closing of defense-related businesses, however, also affected the affluent suburbs along Route 128. By 1969, nearly 50,000 engineers and scientists worked in companies on Route 128, but in the following year alone 10,000 were laid off and many others faced sharp salary reductions.<sup>10</sup> The wife of one Lexington engineer candidly admitted, “We just live day to day.” Another Lexington engineer let go from his \$23,000 per year job at ITEK became a handyman averaging about \$200 a week for doing yard work, painting, and carpentry.<sup>11</sup>

Many of these white collar workers eventually discovered opportunities to apply their expertise at new electrical machinery and computer-based companies that had begun to take over the office space in Route 128 industrial parks left vacant by the closing or relocation of research and development firms.<sup>12</sup> These industries, however, had only provided 11,000 new jobs by 1974, most of which required specialized skills, and thereby offered little help for the thousands of blue-collar workers concentrated in sections of Boston and industrial cities such as Lawrence, Lowell, and Springfield.<sup>13</sup> By 1974, the unemployment rate had reached 11.2 percent and one in six residents received some sort of government assistance, leading Massachusetts to gain the reputation as the “Appalachia of the North.”<sup>14</sup>

The problems of unemployment coupled with the national inflation created a severe decline in state revenue and thus a corresponding increase in taxes. Like

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<sup>10</sup> Rice, “Down and Out Along Route 128.”

<sup>11</sup> Berkeley Rice, “Down and Out Along Route 128.”

<sup>12</sup> Richard Stengel, “A Tale of Two States,” *Time* (May 26, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> Bennett Harrison, “The Economic Development of Massachusetts,” Massachusetts Institute of Technology, November 1974 in David Lampe, ed, *The Massachusetts Miracle: High Technology and Economic Revitalization* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 77.

<sup>14</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 83.

unemployment, the issue of high taxes was already in motion by the time of the national recession. Between 1963 and 1973, state and local taxes increased from 9.6 to 14.8 percent of personal income, earning Massachusetts the famous nickname of “Taxachusetts.” The increase derived from the fact that, unlike the federal government and most other states, Massachusetts did not tax residents on a progressive scale. Instead, Massachusetts used a flat rate, which limited the amount of revenue the state government could generate and thereby the amount of aid and services it could provide. In the absence of significant state aid, municipalities relied heavily on local property taxes to pay for public services such as education, public works, recreation, and medical aid. Reformers had long advocated that introducing a more equitable system based on the taxpayer’s “ability to pay” would enable the state legislature to fund more local services and reduce the heavy reliance on property taxes. Between 1929 and 1967, the legislature had considered at least sixty-seven proposals to shift to a Graduated Income Tax (GIT) in line with the federal system.<sup>15</sup> However, the business community opposed the idea, claiming the shift would force even more industry out of the state and succeeded in repeatedly killing these proposals.<sup>16</sup> Progressive groups had not given up on this quest, but by 1974 Massachusetts had one the highest property tax rates in the nation.<sup>17</sup> This combination of high income and property taxes sent thousands of individuals to follow

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<sup>15</sup> The League of Women Voters also succeeded several times in placing several initiatives on the electoral ballot. Mass PAX, “For Tax Reform: Vote Yes on Question 2,” 1968, Box 5 Folder V.23, CPPAX. This proposal had received the support of Governor Francis Sargent that the GIT provide a way to reform the state tax structure and countered “excessive” property taxes. Governor’s Press Office, Press Release, May 23, 1972, Box 24, Folder GIT, FWS.

<sup>16</sup> League of Women Voters, The Case for a Graduated Income Tax, September 13, 1972, FWS, Box 24, Folder GIT; David Nyhan and Rachelle Patterson, “Businessmen spend big to kill it,” *Boston Globe*, October 31, 1972.

<sup>17</sup> Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, Inc. March, 1974, “Who Assesses Property in Massachusetts,” Unprocessed Materials, Andrew S. Natsios Papers, Special Collections, State Library of Massachusetts (hereafter: “Natsios”).

the path of companies and move out of the state. For the residents who stayed in Massachusetts, the tax system had produced increasing economic hardship and increasing resentment toward local and state government.

### **1974 Election**

This economic crisis established the backdrop for the 1974 race for governor. The contest signaled an important departure in Massachusetts's politics and its brand of liberalism, as it became Michael Dukakis's first serious attempt to reshape the state's Democratic Party and system of government. A 40-year-old, first generation Greek-American, Dukakis had grown up in the prosperous and traditionally liberal suburb of Brookline. He returned after college and law school and launched his political career as one of Brookline's state representatives. During his tenure at the State House, he had consciously set himself apart from the powerful ethnic Democratic machine that dominated the legislature instead cultivated an image as a technocrat and a frugal reformer who refused to toe the party line. Throughout his career, he lived in a modest duplex house, wore bargain basement suits and rode public transportation every day to work.<sup>18</sup> Dukakis combined an unusual mixture of liberal idealism and pragmatic reform, supporting civil rights, the anti-war movement, the anti-highway campaign, women's equality, and the legalization of abortion. Yet, he experienced his greatest legislative accomplishments through less sensational issues such as insurance reform and changing the structure of government.

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<sup>18</sup> Robert L. Turner, "An Enigmatic Politician—He has a sense of 'mission,'" *Boston Globe*, November 3, 1974; William A. Henry 3d, "Last Day or Not, Dukakis Dines at Home—As Usual," *Boston Globe*, November 5, 1974.

In making a bid for the governorship in 1974 Dukakis challenged the urban-based and socially conservative leadership of the state's powerful Democratic Party. He aimed to widen the wedge first opened during the 1972 presidential primary. During that contest suburban liberal activists had successfully beaten Democratic insiders to become convention delegates and led George McGovern to win the state. Facing the party's choice, Attorney General Robert Quinn, Dukakis developed a strategy that combined an image as a reformer and well-organized grassroots outreach. He depicted Quinn as a symbol of the well-entrenched patronage system that had become "a cancer" on state government and had to be "destroyed."<sup>19</sup> This emphasis earned him the endorsement of both Citizens for Participation in Political Action (CPPAX) and the Massachusetts chapter of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) as well as many other suburban voters. Dukakis beat Quinn by a wide margin, with his greatest support coming from the Route 128 suburbs.<sup>20</sup>

Many observers interpreted the results as a signal of political realignment within the state Democratic Party. The *Boston Globe* announced the "mantle of the Democratic Party" had shifted from the "working class three decker neighborhoods" to "the more affluent and single family homes of suburban Massachusetts." The *Globe* deemed Dukakis's victory as "one of the flagships of this change" and declared, "it is fitting that he is the standard-bearer on the day on which it is obvious to all that the transition of power in the Democratic Party is complete."<sup>21</sup> Fellow former Brookline state representative Martin Linsky later explained the election by declaring: "It was the first

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<sup>19</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 80.

<sup>20</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 80-81.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Richard Gaines and Michael Segal, *Dukakis and the Reform Impulse* (Boston: Quinlan Press, 1987), 99.

time a suburban Democrat beat an urban one. It gave the Democrats a candidate who could win the fastest growing parts of the state, the Route 128 belt around Worcester and Boston.”<sup>22</sup> These results, therefore, would have important long-term implications both in shifting the orientation and emphasis of the party and establishing a permanent base of support for Dukakis. Although Dukakis gained the approval of suburban voters in the primary, he had difficulty maintaining this constituency in the general election against sitting Governor Francis Sargent. During his tenure, Sargent had earned a reputation as one of the most liberal Republican politicians in the country for his pioneering environmental and transportation policies, opposition to the Vietnam War, and support of a generous welfare state. The executive director of CPPAX Richard Couchi suggested that Governor Sargent had been “a more effective spokesperson for a wide variety of new politics issues,” and he and several other staffers refused to endorse Dukakis, whom they believed represented the “all-too-common centrist strategy.”<sup>23</sup>

Dukakis’s platform during the general election confirmed Couchi’s assessment. Dukakis made the economy the centerpiece of his general election campaign. He saw a fiscally conservative agenda as a way to win the support of alienated blue-collar workers hardest hit by the economic downturn. Adopting as his campaign slogan the confident phrase “MIKE DUKAKIS SHOULD BE GOVERNOR,” he presented himself as a pragmatic technocrat who could provide a better economic vision for the state.<sup>24</sup> The campaign led to an unusual dynamic and reversal of assumptions about the respective platforms of the Democratic and Republican parties as Sargent appeared as the

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<sup>22</sup> Peter S. Canellos, “A Look Back at Career,” *Boston Globe*, January 4, 1989.

<sup>23</sup> Memorandum from Richard Couchi to CPPAX Executive Board, re: My redefined job or resignation from the staff, 1974, Box 1, Folder I.2, CPPAX.

<sup>24</sup> The Dukakis Committee, “Mike Dukakis Looks at the Issues,” 1974, Box 35, Folder 1254, Jack Backman Papers, Special Collections, State Library of Massachusetts (hereafter: “Backman”).

compassionate liberal and Dukakis emerged as the economically conservative technocrat.<sup>25</sup> In a speech delivered just weeks before the election, Dukakis promised to cut the budget by \$150 million through the elimination of patronage and better management and gave “a lead pipe guarantee” of no new taxes while he was in office. He followed up with a bold promise to close the deficit, balance the state budget, reduce the unemployment rate to the national average, and deliver better social services at lower costs.<sup>26</sup> This confident promise helped gain him the support of the wide majority of residents feeling the financial pinch. Dukakis eventually defeated Sargent in the November election with his best showing in the cities most affected by inflation and unemployment.<sup>27</sup>

Dukakis owed the victory to voters’ combined exasperation with double-digit inflation, the unemployment rate, Watergate and by extension the Republican Party.<sup>28</sup> Dukakis joined a series of successful Democratic candidates across the country that led the party to experience its greatest midterm triumph in decades.<sup>29</sup> The promises of fiscal moderation, nevertheless, had failed to pique the interest of many of the voters in the affluent and traditionally liberal Route 128 suburbs of Boston that had been crucial for McGovern in 1972.<sup>30</sup> Despite the fact that these communities become overwhelmingly Democratic by 1970, they still supported Sargent by nearly 2-1.<sup>31</sup> This outcome did not

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<sup>25</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 82.

<sup>26</sup> William A. Henry, 3d, “Dukakis seeking voters’ mandate,” *Boston Globe*, November 1, 1974.

<sup>27</sup> Ken Hartnett, “Gov. Sargent Blames ‘Price of Hamburg,’” *Boston Globe*, November 6, 1974; “1974 Massachusetts Election,” *Boston Globe*, November 6, 1974.

<sup>28</sup> “Governors: Routing the Republicans,” *Time* (November 18, 1974).

<sup>29</sup> “Democrats: Now the Morning After,” *Time* (November 18, 1974).

<sup>30</sup> “1974 Massachusetts Election,” *Boston Globe*, November 6, 1974.

<sup>31</sup> Anne R. Scigliano “No Democratic landslide here as voters show Sargent support,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, November 7, 1974.

deter the high hopes of Dukakis, who on election night promised to “give this state the best state government it has ever had.”<sup>32</sup>

### **The Meat Cleaver**

Dukakis’s initial effort to address the state’s economic problems set the tone for his leadership and made the issues of welfare and taxes the focal point of his administration. The rise of unemployment in Massachusetts had led more people to seek state assistance, and the cost of welfare had grown from \$500 million to \$1.4 billion between 1971 and 1974. Advisors warned if the current expenditure rates continued it would lead to a projected budget deficiency of \$321 million in 1975.<sup>33</sup> Dukakis was reluctant to renege on his “lead pipe guarantee” not to raise taxes and thereby realized the solution lay in reducing the welfare program. When a reporter asked Dukakis before he took office if he would take a scalpel to human service programs, he replied, “It might be a meat cleaver.”<sup>34</sup> He subsequently made the image of the “meat cleaver” the organizing symbol of his leadership approach, even placing one on his desk.

This first portent of his “meat cleaving” approach came in February 1975 when he made a controversial announcement recommending no cost-of-living increases for welfare recipients. Two months later he stated that the “cost of public welfare makes Massachusetts a fiscal basket case” and admonished “that no other state in the nation has found itself so incapable of administering a welfare program that helps people genuinely

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<sup>32</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 82-83.

<sup>33</sup> Memorandum from Ed Moscovitch to Governor-Elect, Secretary Designate Buckley Subject: Overview of State Finances, November 11, 1974, Box 36, Folder 1284, Backman.

<sup>34</sup> Kenney and Turner, Dukakis, *Dukakis: An American Odyssey* 90.

in need without virtually bankrupting the public treasury.”<sup>35</sup> He announced plans for a \$311 million cutback in the state’s welfare budget. Dukakis aimed to accomplish those cuts through a combination of management controls, stricter eligibility requirements, eliminating employable persons under forty years old from the general relief category, and reducing medical aid to the elderly. These cuts focused on General Relief program, the part of the welfare system entirely financed by state funds. In order to be eligible for the program, a recipient had to have a family income that fell 20-30 percent below the national poverty line. Welfare rights activists immediately objected to the plan, declaring in exceptionalist terms, “This is Massachusetts, not Alabama, Mr. Dukakis.”<sup>36</sup>

The proposal also stirred intense outrage from the state’s grassroots suburban activists, and their arguments against the proposal illuminates the ways in which Dukakis’s ideas challenged the bedrock principals of modern liberalism. Many liberals interpreted the move as a rejection of the very premise of the welfare system dating back to the New Deal. Critics declared these cutbacks would place undue hardship on those least able to handle it and thereby contradicted the premise that in moments of economic hardship the government had a responsibility to help the poor. Dukakis’s secretary of human services, Lucy Benson, announced her resignation declaring, “The most needy of citizens shouldn’t be required to bear a disproportionate share of the state’s burdens.”<sup>37</sup> Hubie Jones, a longtime activist in the black community with strong ties to the suburban liberal movement, publicly declared that the governor was asking the state to “replace the governmental philosophy which has evolved in this state and country since the Great

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<sup>35</sup> Statement by Governor Michael S. Dukakis, April 15, 1975, Box 3, Folder 24, PMR.

<sup>36</sup> Marjorie Arons, Masses Protest cuts in Welfare, *Newton Times*, October 1, 1975.

<sup>37</sup> John Pierson, “Mike Dukakis, Apostle of Frugality,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 1975.

Depression with a new form of Social Darwinism.”<sup>38</sup> Statistics put the case into even clearer terms. Dukakis seemed to overlook willfully the fact that the rising unemployment and the “structural shift” away from manufacturing-based labor had caused the 80 percent growth in state welfare caseloads in the previous two years.<sup>39</sup> There were slim odds for welfare clients pushed off the rolls to find employment since there were 14,000 vacancies in the state and 320,000 unemployed people, over half of whom had not graduated from high school. Labor economists like Bennett Harrison predicted the proposal would have the greatest impact on young white working class men who lived in places like Worcester, Springfield, Brockton and Lawrence outside of Boston, where in just a year the caseload had increased from 30 percent below to 30 percent above that of the central city.<sup>40</sup>

Despite grassroots suburban liberals’ frequent promotion of individualist rather than structurally based policies, most of them had not rejected the idea that the government had a responsibility to support citizens who could not support themselves. The suburban-centered board of CPPAX staged a meeting to discuss “what to do about Dukakis?” at which they decided to take the lead in defining a “left alternative” to the governor’s proposal.<sup>41</sup> The CPPAX proposed a comprehensive tax reform plan, which it contended would raise \$283 million in additional revenue.<sup>42</sup> The Governor, nevertheless, ignored such suggestions. In August 1975, Dukakis signed into law his cuts that excluded between 15,000 to 18,000 people from General Relief and reduced medical care for

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<sup>38</sup> Kenney and Turner, Dukakis, *An American Odyssey*, 95-96.

<sup>39</sup> Bennett Harrison, “A Critique of the Economic Posture of the Dukakis Administration,” November 19, 1975, Box 2, Folder 26, PMR.

<sup>40</sup> Barry Bluestone, Bennett, Harrison, and Martin Lowenthal, “A Critique of Dukakis’ Proposed Welfare Cuts,” April 24, 1975, Box 2, Folder 26, PMR.

<sup>41</sup> CPPAX Executive Board Meeting Minutes, April 20, 1975, Box 1, Folder 1.3, CPPAX.

<sup>42</sup> CPPAX, “Alternative Tax Package Proposed to Meet State Deficit,” 1975, Box 36, Folder 1284, Backman.

remaining welfare recipients. Many critics echoed the charges that “[this cut] represents a departure from a tradition of assisting all residents of the Commonwealth in need which dates back to colonial times.”<sup>43</sup> Conservative Democrats and Republicans praised the cuts often using a heavily racialized imagery and assumption that the plan would prevent black mothers of eight from “stingier states” from moving to Massachusetts, a purported “Mecca” for welfare recipients.<sup>44</sup>

When he recanted on his pledge of no tax increases in the fall of 1975, Dukakis also alienated this fiscally and socially moderate constituency. Throughout the year, the Dukakis administration had tried every possible alternative to avoid such a step. However, by the fall, Dukakis announced in a televised address that he could not in “in good conscience” make any more cuts to the welfare system and an across the board tax increase was necessary.<sup>45</sup> The Massachusetts legislature reluctantly accepted Dukakis’s warning that “the Commonwealth quite simply has been speeding into bankruptcy and we had to apply the brakes before it was too late,” and after much debate passed the version of the state budget with the increases included.<sup>46</sup> The 1976 state budget issued a major blow to human service agencies and social programs. The controversy surrounding the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) discussed in chapter 8 represented just one by-product of this action and the reaction that it produced. The new budget affected almost every Massachusetts resident including higher taxes, lower welfare payments, decreased school funding and worsened medical care. This

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<sup>43</sup> Jack H. Backman, “Restore our economic base,” *Boston Globe*, No Date, Box 1, Folder 31, Backman.

<sup>44</sup> “Crocodile Tears for Welfare,” *South Middlesex News*, April 21, 1975.

<sup>45</sup> Pierson, “Mike Dukakis, Apostle of Frugality.” Dukakis’s plan called for an increase in the sales tax from three to five percent, adding a 7.5 percent surcharge on income taxes, and imposing a “sin tax” on items such as cigarettes, liquor and gasoline. In addition, he announced plans to further reduce the deficit by borrowing \$450 million in bonds.

<sup>46</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 99; John Kifner, “Massachusetts Raises Taxes Sharply Under Pressure of Banks,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1975.

combination of increased taxes and welfare cuts created disillusionment with Dukakis among people across the political spectrum. Critics on all sides attacked him for not providing clear leadership or tangible goals.<sup>47</sup>

### **“Dump the Duke”**

The welfare cuts produced deep animosity toward Dukakis among many liberal activists particularly those who had long worked for welfare rights and economic justice. Black activist Hubie Jones along with Bill and Phyllis Ryan, who had been leaders in the white suburban fair housing movement, created a campaign in early 1976 to both publicly criticize Dukakis and test the political climate for a progressive candidate to challenge him in 1978.<sup>48</sup> This group believed that Dukakis was even more offensive than a “straightforward conservative” like Ronald Reagan since he “proposes to cut welfare by a bigger percentage than Reagen [sic] ever proposed and then he wants us to call him a liberal.” The organization hoped to mobilize the people in the suburban-based “civil rights-antiwar-new politics movement” to “Dump the Duke.”<sup>49</sup> They decided to call themselves the “Should Dukakis be Governor? Committee,” which was a conscious inversion of his blunt 1974 campaign slogan: “Dukakis Should be Governor.” The group’s primary activity became the dissemination of bumper stickers and literature that raised doubts about the governor, and they intentionally aimed to “damage his political future.”<sup>50</sup> In leaflets, the Committee criticized Dukakis for his business-friendly policies

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Gaines, “The Duke in Dutch Will he Ever Get Out of the Doghouse?” *Boston Phoenix*, November 18, 1975.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Kenney, “Welfare advocates rap Dukakis,” *Boston Globe*, June 9, 1976).

<sup>49</sup> “A Duke Should Not Be Governor,” Box 2, Folder 46, PMR; Phyllis & Bill [Ryan] to Hubie, Larry & Tom, No Date, Box 2, Folder 46, PMR.

<sup>50</sup> “A Duke Should Not Be Governor.”

and called him the “best friend business has had in the State House since Calvin Coolidge went to Washington.”<sup>51</sup> In a pamphlet entitled “A Duke Should Not be Governor,” the Committee rapped Dukakis as the “consummate politician not the liberal savoir” and deemed him “heartless,” “arrogant,” “a liar,” and “a fraud.”<sup>52</sup>

These tactics underscored the campaign’s strong roots in suburban liberal movements that had long recognized the power of its geographically dispersed constituency for working within the state political system.<sup>53</sup> The organizers sent a letter to state legislators defining themselves as “growing issues oriented group of citizens” who came from a diverse range of communities including affluent suburbs such as Concord, Lexington, Newton and Brookline, and blue-collar areas like Chelsea, Charlestown Roxbury and Lynn but who were collectively “profoundly concerned about the state priorities and recent regressive directions in Massachusetts public policy.”<sup>54</sup> The coalition declared that the legislature, which “had a long and proud history of being one of most compassionate in the nation,” had become “the victim of Dukakis’ maladministration and misjudgment.” The group thereby urged legislators to use their power to stop the direction of Dukakis’s fiscal and social welfare policies and salvage the reputation of the state and body as “the traditional protector of the people.”<sup>55</sup>

The bumper sticker drive constituted the most effective component of the campaign. The group strategically distributed stickers asking, “Should Dukakis be Governor?” in downtown Boston, Brookline, Cambridge and Newton in order to

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<sup>51</sup> Should Dukakis be Governor? Committee “Should Dukakis be Governor?” Leaflet Draft, 1976, Box 2, Folder 47, PMR.

<sup>52</sup> Should Dukakis be Governor? Committee “Should Dukakis be Governor?”

<sup>53</sup> Should Dukakis be Governor? Committee “Should Dukakis be Governor?”

<sup>54</sup> Should Dukakis be Governor? Committee to Legislator, No Date, Box 2, Folder 47, PMR.

<sup>55</sup> Should Dukakis be Governor? Committee to Legislator.

simultaneously enrage Dukakis and to galvanize the “issue people” who would be most “sympathetic” to the message and its implications.<sup>56</sup> The group made a concerted effort to disseminate the bumper stickers in Brookline where Dukakis lived and at the subway station by the State House that he used every morning to go to work. At one point, the Governor reportedly saw a “Should Dukakis?” sticker on a car in front of him and pulled out at the first break and angrily roared past it.<sup>57</sup> While this campaign did not lead to Dukakis’s resignation, it did succeed in raising doubts about the governor’s leadership. The effort demonstrated the vitality of grassroots liberal activism in the suburbs and the members’ continued ability to influence public opinion.

## **Workfare**

Dukakis largely ignored this critique of his social service policy and instead advocated a program that further enraged liberal activists. Around the same time as the “Should Dukakis” bumper stickers appeared on cars throughout metropolitan Boston, the governor announced plans to pursue a workfare program as a solution to the state’s soaring unemployment rates and welfare rolls. The concept of workfare had first emerged in the welfare discussion in the late 1960s by both Democratic and Republican parties. As governor of California in 1972, Ronald Reagan had instituted the nation’s largest and most severe version of the program that made the performance of menial tasks

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<sup>56</sup> Should Dukakis be Governor? Committee, Bumper Sticker Distribution, January 29, 1976, Box 2, Folder 47, PMR.

<sup>57</sup> Kenney, “Welfare advocates rap Dukakis.”

a contingency for welfare checks. The California state legislature later abolished the program in response to charges that it constituted a form of “slave labor.”<sup>58</sup>

From the outset, Dukakis recognized workfare as a means to turn the state into a leader in the arena of welfare reform and to salvage his first term. When he first announced plans for his Work Experience Program (WEP), he declared that it provided an important “opportunity for Massachusetts to serve as the model for a national program.”<sup>59</sup> A continuation of the earlier effort to cut off welfare payments to childless adults considered capable of holding jobs, WEP provided the male in a two parent household with work skills and counseling. The relatively small program focused on the 2,000 unemployed fathers on the rolls for two years who lacked the skills and satisfactory work habits to qualify for either private job training or programs sponsored by the federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). Under WEP, as a condition of welfare payment, three days a week these men would perform basic maintenance duties such as painting guard rails, “roadside and brush clearing,” and “litter pick up.”<sup>60</sup> The other days the men received employment and personal counseling and conducted job hunts under the supervision of state monitors.

The program demonstrated Dukakis’s commitment to a political and economic ideology rooted in traditional gender norms, encouraging women to stay at home and men to provide financially for their families. It also reflected Dukakis’s firmly individualist outlook that hard and honest work provided a means of self-sufficiency and

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<sup>58</sup> “Welfare Rights Groups will Air Workfare Rule,” *The Modesto Bee*, April 13, 1972; “Massachusetts: Working on Welfare,” *Time*, June 27, 1977.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Kenney, “Welfare job law pushed,” *Boston Globe*, March 31, 1976.

<sup>60</sup> Some Questions and Answers About the Work Experience Program, Box 13, Folder 466, Boston N.O.W. Records, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University (hereafter: “NOW-Boston”). “Backman: Forced Work Programs...Cruel Hoax,” March 11, 1977, Box 3, Folder 94, Backman.

personal betterment.<sup>61</sup> He declared that his goal was “to get idle men working again and convert their welfare checks into paychecks.”<sup>62</sup> Even members of his staff interpreted the program as the result of Dukakis’s “bootstrapper” worldview.<sup>63</sup> Reflecting his pragmatic and business-minded mentality, Dukakis announced that “there’s something radically wrong with an economic system that can’t transfer these (benefits) payments into paychecks.”<sup>64</sup> Dukakis’s refusal to supplement the program with a guaranteed annual income revealed his belief that the problem of unemployment lay not in broader economic restructuring but in the personal failings of those on welfare.

WEP immediately became controversial and confirmed for many liberal critics that Dukakis’s technocratic tendencies led to a lack of compassion for the poor. Sen. Jack Backman of Brookline became a particularly outspoken opponent. While Backman supported the notion that the government should be the “employer of ‘first resort,’” he believed that menial tasks such as roadside cleanup required by WEP would not provide unemployed men the skills necessary to find well-paying jobs and become financially self-sufficient.<sup>65</sup> He therefore dismissed WEP as a “cruel hoax” and a “form of indentured servitude.” The League of Women Voters agreed that workfare would most likely keep people on the dole and argued Dukakis instead should concentrate his energy on forms of economic development that created more stable and better paying jobs.<sup>66</sup> Other critics accused Dukakis of using the issue to satisfy the same socially and fiscally

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<sup>61</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 103.

<sup>62</sup> Office of Governor Dukakis, Press Release, 1977, Box 13. Folder 466, NOW-Boston.

<sup>63</sup> Gaines and Segal, *Dukakis and the Reform Impulse*, 146.

<sup>64</sup> Kenney, “Welfare job law pushed.”

<sup>65</sup> Jack H. Backman, “Backman Outlines the Need for Welfare Reform & Job Opportunities,” March 18, 1977, Box 3, Folder 94, Backman.

<sup>66</sup> Ellen Laipson, “Against: ‘Savings unlikely,’” *Boston Globe*, June 21, 1977.

conservative constituencies that had helped him win the governorship in 1974.<sup>67</sup> This critique was not entirely unwarranted as the program received praise from moderate and conservative Bay State residents. These proponents underscored how WEP privileged taxpayer rather than citizenship rights. Dorchester resident Frank S. Kawa, for example, relied on a racialized vocabulary of “idleness” to endorse WEP, stating it was time for welfare recipients “to get off their fannies and do something to earn their bread like the rest of the taxpayers who support them.”<sup>68</sup>

In spite of this debate at the state level, Dukakis successfully positioned himself AS a national spokesperson for work requirements. In particular, he tried to make workfare palatable to the Democratic Party in Washington. The campaign was part of Dukakis’s broader attempt to reshape the parameters of liberalism’s image and ideology. Throughout 1976 and 1977, he delivered speeches to the Democratic Platform Committee, the National Governor’s Council, and testified before several federal panels and congressional subcommittees about the possibilities of workfare.<sup>69</sup> These statements gained the attention of Jimmy Carter, who on the campaign trail had promised to overhaul to the nation’s welfare system. In announcing his own plan for reform, Carter acknowledged Dukakis’s leading position in “helping solve the welfare problem.”<sup>70</sup> The President credited the Massachusetts governor with having an a major role in shaping his own policy called the Program for Better Jobs and Income (PBJI), which also aimed to solidify support from white middle-class voters who felt alienated by the purported

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<sup>67</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 103. For instance, at a 1977 hearing, State Sen. Alan Sistisky testified, “workfare appeals to the popular prejudice that most welfare recipients are poor and don’t want to work. It serves not useful purpose other than for his reelection campaign.”

<sup>68</sup> Frank S. Kawa to the Editor, *Boston Globe*, July 12, 1977.

<sup>69</sup> Nick King, “Dukakis to push ‘workfare’ at US hearing on welfare,” *Boston Globe* March 31, 1977; Kirk Scharfenberg, “Lopping ‘workfare’ off welfare,” *Boston Globe*, August 13, 1977.

<sup>70</sup> Scharfenberg, “Lopping ‘workfare’ off welfare.”

excesses of Great Society liberalism and preferred workfare-style solutions.<sup>71</sup> Carter hoped, therefore, that WEP would serve as a pilot project for his own goal of promoting “socially useful” jobs for welfare recipients.<sup>72</sup>

As Dukakis made frequent trips to Washington, opposition to workfare grew in the Massachusetts legislature. Several legislators insisted that WEP was illegal under the stipulations of federal welfare regulations and the Social Security Act and aimed to convince their colleagues not to endorse the idea. Eventually a much more limited version of the proposal passed, which essentially constituted a training program for a small number of welfare fathers that made little impact on the state’s rates of welfare and unemployment. WEP and Dukakis’s advocacy of it, nevertheless, had important long-term consequences for social welfare policy at the state and national levels. Dukakis implanted into the national discussion a new attitude about the best way to help the poor. In doing so, he made it acceptable for Democratic politicians to shift away from the ideals of social welfare at the heart of New Deal liberalism. This new philosophy would later return in the Massachusetts welfare program of the 1980s and would culminate in 1996 when Democratic president Bill Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act based upon on a similar notion that work and individual self-sufficiency offered the best solution to the problem of welfare dependency.

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<sup>71</sup> For more about Program for Better Jobs and Income and Carter’s welfare policy see Mary C. Michelmore, “Welfare State/Taxing State: Politics and Policy in Postwar America” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2006).

<sup>72</sup> Scharfenberg, “Lopping ‘workfare’ off welfare.” Unlike Dukakis, Carter combined the jobs program with a guaranteed annual income and thus stood embodied a more progressive ideology than Dukakis’s project.

The workfare debate in 1976 and 1977, nevertheless, exacerbated the fissures within the Massachusetts Democratic Party and impelled liberal activists to pursue more seriously plans to find a progressive candidate to challenge Dukakis in the 1978 gubernatorial race. Building on the “Should Dukakis?” campaign, a group of liberal activists led by Barney Frank, Citizens for Participation Politics (CPP) founder Alvin Levin, and sociologist Robert Wood searched for someone who had the “guts” to challenge Dukakis.<sup>73</sup> Levin and other participants had played a central role in antiwar politics and Eugene McCarthy’s 1968 campaign and recognized a direct parallel between the earlier effort to “Dump Johnson” and their current project. This group eventually convinced former Cambridge Mayor Barbara Ackermann to serve as its candidate. She was virtually unknown beyond Cambridge, where she had led the fight for city rent control, against highways and served as an early opponent of the Vietnam War, supporter of McCarthy and longtime member of CPP. She firmly believed in increased spending on welfare programs.”<sup>74</sup> Frank defined her candidacy, therefore, as a sign that there was “a price to be paid for hurting poor people.”<sup>75</sup>

Ackermann and her supporters recognized that the CPPAX caucus would serve as the major test of her ability to gain enough liberal support to defeat Dukakis. The forum had previously launched the campaigns of candidates such as Robert Drinan and George McGovern. Dukakis, who had won the CPPAX caucus in 1974, also recognized the endorsement as a means to ensure his reelection. Ackermann and Dukakis, therefore, both appeared at the event held in a suburban church and presented their respective

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<sup>73</sup> Connie Page, “Boomlet on Brattle Street: Ackermann Runs for Governor,” *Real Paper*, April 8, 1978.

<sup>74</sup> Barbara Ackermann for Governor, Ackermann: State is Ready for a Woman Governor,” May 1978, Box 1, Folder 7, PMR.

<sup>75</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 122.

platforms to the 200 participants. The governor sat “impassively” as Ackermann assailed his record and failure to provide adequate human services or “coherent, constructive and responsible management.”<sup>76</sup> The suburban liberal delegates gave a slight edge to Ackermann though she failed to garner the 2/3 majority that the rules mandated to provide her with the organization’s official endorsement as favored Democratic candidate. The outcome exposed the motivation of liberal activists in the suburbs who were willing to challenge the governor. However, since Dukakis had received consistent critiques from this constituency during the previous three years, he interpreted the close results as a signal that he still had substantial liberal support.<sup>77</sup>

Despite this challenge from Ackermann, Dukakis remained confident that he would gain a second term, which opinion polls confirmed. The dire economic and employment crisis had eased by 1978, and Massachusetts had entered a period of relative fiscal stability. Over the course of his first term, the state added over 200,000 jobs.<sup>78</sup> Dukakis had worked aggressively to attract more businesses to Massachusetts, bringing 400 companies to the Bay State during his term. Although property taxes remained high, Dukakis’s policies of fiscal restraint had led to a \$40 million budget surplus in 1978, and the governor had pledged to municipalities to help improve services and provide some tax relief. The state’s response to a large blizzard in February 1978 had also helped improve the governor’s image and approval ratings. A poll in March 1978 found that 56 percent of Massachusetts residents surveyed rated his performance as good or excellent.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Walter V. Robinson, “Liberals back Meade and DiCara,” *Boston Globe*, April 9, 1978.

<sup>77</sup> Robinson, “Liberals back Meade and DiCara.”

<sup>78</sup> Robert Healy, “The Real Dukakis is a Manager,” *Boston Globe*, January 13, 1978; Nick King, “Bay State’s economy recovering—Dukakis,” *Boston Globe*, September 3, 1978.

<sup>79</sup> John K. White, “All in the Family: The 1978 Massachusetts Democratic Gubernatorial Primary,” *Polity*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Summer 1982), 647.

### Proposition 13

California's passage of property-tax limitation measure Proposition 13 in June 1978, however, directly altered the parameters of the Massachusetts gubernatorial race. California represented one of the only states in the nation with an average property tax rate that surpassed Massachusetts.<sup>80</sup> Conservative proponents Howard Jarvis and Paul Gans led a populist campaign that awakened the resentments of middle-class residents struggling to pay their property tax bills. The measure required California municipalities to limit property rates to one percent of the assessed value, restrict future assessment to 2 percent a year, and mandated a two-thirds majority by the legislature to increase state taxes and a similar fraction of voters to approve any new local levies. The initiative passed by a 2-1 margin. The law led to an immediate reduction in revenues by more than \$7 billion, and the state went from being far above to far below the national average of property taxes.

Proposition 13, nevertheless, became important less for its direct effect on the tax revenue in the Golden State than for signifying public resentment against the burden of taxes in California and across the nation.<sup>81</sup> The law produced and reflected a new citizen sentiment that analysts came to identify through such shorthand phrases as the "proposition 13 mentality" or the "post-proposition 13 period," which they defined as not just a protest against the tax burden but against the government itself.<sup>82</sup> Like workfare, it marked, in the words of journalist Tom Wicker, "a massive rejection of liberal

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<sup>80</sup> For more on the roots of Proposition 13 see Self, *American Babylon*, especially chapter eight.

<sup>81</sup> For articles addressing the immediate impact of see "All Aboard the Bandwagon!" *Time* (June 26, 1978); "The Big Tax Revolt," *Newsweek* (June 19, 1978).

<sup>82</sup> John Herbers, "Year After Proposition 13, Governmental Bodies Vie to Trim Taxes and Costs," *New York Times* June 4, 1979.

government as it had developed in the post World War II era.”<sup>83</sup> The amendment marked a new era of political economy and electoral politics leading to a gradual turning against the Keynesian economic system in favor of candidates who supported a more free-market vision of politics and society.

In Massachusetts, passage of Proposition 13 enflamed resentment at the state’s high taxes that had first appeared during the 1974 election and had remained simmering ever since. Immediately following the passage of Proposition 13, Massachusetts residents and politicians anticipated that the state would become one of the key sites for the national debate surrounding taxes. Observers began to wonder if the state would be “swept along with the tide” of this growing national tax revolt or would it resist the trend.<sup>84</sup> Although they shared a sense that Massachusetts needed to reform its tax system, residents and politicians divided neatly along ideological, economic, and spatial lines about how to achieve such changes. Proponents of tax limitation argued that if a measure identical to Proposition 13 passed in the Commonwealth it would look as though “Californians got gypped” as a 1 percent limit would slash property taxes statewide by 77 percent.<sup>85</sup> This type of measure would have the greatest impact on deindustrialized cities where the per capita property values were lower and thereby the tax rates particularly high. Journalists and policymakers predicted that wealthy suburbs like Weston and Wellesley would experience a tax reduction between 67 and 69 percent while in cities like Boston and Chelsea it would reach around 90 percent. State fiscal experts warned that such cuts would lead to a drastic reduction in municipal budgets that could either

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<sup>83</sup> Tom Wicker, “A New Revolution,” *New York Times*, June 9, 1978.

<sup>84</sup> Robert L. Turner, “This could be the start of something big,” *Boston Globe*, June 11, 1978.

<sup>85</sup> Michael Knight, “Tax Revolt Ripple Sway Massachusetts,” *New York Times*, June 27, 1978.

create a loss in basic services or new burdens on the state government.<sup>86</sup> These warnings set the terms of the debate over reform in the Bay State, pitting low taxes and the continuation of municipal services against another. Local officials looked to the fact that California had a large state budget surplus that could cover the loss in local revenue, while Massachusetts still hovered near bankruptcy.<sup>87</sup> Further indicating the divisions over the issue, polls revealed that while three out of four Massachusetts voters supported a 45 percent reduction in property taxes, the respondents differed about which basic municipal services to cut.<sup>88</sup>

The state legislature became the main site for debate over property tax limitation in the weeks following the passage of the California initiative. Legislators and tax reform group rushed to file dozens of bills resembling Proposition 13. The grassroots-based group Citizens for Limited Taxation (CLT), which had become increasingly powerful over the course of the 1970s, led this filing frenzy.<sup>89</sup> In the summer of 1978, the group proposed a piece of legislation that suggested cutting property taxes in half to an average burden of 2.5 percent of fair market value. Proponents argued the move would stimulate the economy and impose restraint on the spending habits of state and local bureaucrats. CLT sought to present the measure, which they called “Proposition 2 ½,” as a more “moderate” and “less severe” version of the California initiative.<sup>90</sup> Liberal legislators like

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<sup>86</sup> Jonathan Feuerbringer, “Proposition 13 in Bay State would cut property taxes 77%,” *Boston Globe*, June 8, 1978.

<sup>87</sup> Edward Quill and Paul Lagner, “Municipal officials feel caught in the middle,” *Boston Globe*, June 11, 1978.

<sup>88</sup> “Voters favor 45% property tax cut,” *Boston Globe*, June 16, 1978.

<sup>89</sup> The previous fall the group had initiated the process of passing a state constitutional amendment, partially designed free-market guru Milton Friedman, that would limit tax increases to personal income growth. Though the amendment had received the signatures of over 90,000 citizens, the legislature had voted it down, see Warren T. Brookes, “It might well bring us an economic revival,” *Boston Herald American*, June 8, 1978.

<sup>90</sup> Donald L. Cassidy to State Legislator, 1978, Box 19, Folder Proposition 2 ½, Natsios.

Jack Backman warned that Proposition 2 1/2 would cause “chaos,” citing Dukakis’s 1975 welfare cuts as a sign of the dangers of such an approach.<sup>91</sup> Even the pro-business Massachusetts Taxpayer Foundation, which advocated restricting state and local spending, warned Proposition 2 1/2 could “create economic disaster for the many communities in this state.”<sup>92</sup> The legislature eventually voted down these two proposals, but it by no means ended the discussion of tax limitation legislation, especially Proposition 2 1/2.

### **1978 Election**

The passage of Proposition 13 changed the calculus of the 1978 gubernatorial race by putting the issue of taxes and Edward King’s candidacy into the spotlight. An Irish-American Roman Catholic from the blue-collar town of Winthrop, King had been a football star at Boston College, the Buffalo Bills, and the Baltimore Colts. Upon retiring, he became the executive director of the Massachusetts Port Authority.<sup>93</sup> King had never before pursued elected office, and he cultivated a platform centered on establishing a climate for business growth that initially failed to arouse much attention from the electorate. He seized the opportunity of Proposition 13 to stake out a place in the election, declaring his support for the implementation of a similar type of reform in Massachusetts. He also pledged to reduce property taxes by \$500 million if elected.<sup>94</sup>

This position provided a counterpoint to Dukakis, who said of Proposition 13,

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<sup>91</sup> Sen. Jack H. Backman, “Backman Criticizes ‘Proposition 13’ Hysteria” June 22, 1978, Box 37, Folder 1306, Backman.

<sup>92</sup> Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, Statement by Richard A Manley, President Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation on H. 6025 Before the Legislature’s Taxation Committee, June 29, 1978, Box 20, Folder Prop 2 1/2, Natsios.

<sup>93</sup> Nick King, “Style: plodding...Policy: work—Edward J. King,” *Boston Globe*, September 4, 1978.

<sup>94</sup> Laurence Collins, “Dukakis Challengers want spending controls,” *Boston Globe*, June 11, 1978.

“Massachusetts voters are too smart to fall for such a simplistic proposal.”<sup>95</sup> This comment outraged many Bay State residents, and they agreed with King that it was the classic response of a “limousine liberal.”<sup>96</sup>

Over the course of the summer of 1978, the race increasingly narrowed to Dukakis and King as Barbara Ackermann’s campaign floundered. Many residents and grassroots activists saw the former Cambridge mayor as a politician of the 1960s unable to translate her commitment to the antiwar and anti-highway movements to the realities of the 1970s. Liberal activists privately called her a less than “ideal candidate” since she was “not charismatic and turtlenecked, not slick and glib” and did not have “high recognizability.”<sup>97</sup> Even one of her most ardent advocates, Barney Frank, acknowledged that she was “much too understated and quiet for the short encounters of the campaign trail.” However, Frank continued to insist that a challenge from the left was “the correct thing to do” because it exposed how Dukakis had betrayed liberal causes, ideals, and constituents during his tenure as governor.<sup>98</sup>

King put Dukakis’s chances for reelection in more imminent danger. The former football star organized an extremely well-financed attack, underwritten by support in the business and building industries. King and his advisors recognized economic development and tax resentment constituted too vague an agenda around which to base an entire campaign. In March 1978, his campaign had conducted a poll of self-described Dukakis supporters and found that 42 percent stated they would not support a candidate who opposed minimum jail sentences, 36 percent would not support one who opposed the

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<sup>95</sup> Collins, “Dukakis Challengers want spending controls.” Brookes, “It might well bring us an economic revival.”

<sup>96</sup> Collins, “Dukakis Challengers want spending controls.”

<sup>97</sup> Unauthored, Some Thoughts for Us Before the Meeting, May 22, 1978, Box 1, Folder 7, PMR.

<sup>98</sup> Nick King, “A Politician of the ‘60s stalls in ’78 Campaign,” *Boston Globe*, September 1978.

death penalty and 60 percent would not vote for a someone that favored abortion. King decided to use this poll as a roadmap to define his agenda fusing “gut and pocketbook issues.”<sup>99</sup> In campaign literature, he boiled his platform down to a six-point list that included support for tax relief, capital punishment, mandatory sentences, raising the drinking age to 21, and opposition to publicly funded abortion.<sup>100</sup> Since Dukakis had taken the opposite stance on each of these issues, this list provided a means for King to position himself as the governor’s foil.

The competing philosophies and style of all three candidates for the Democratic nomination came to a head during a televised debate held on August 31. The statements of the candidates exposed the ways in which the campaign embodied the basic tensions within the national Democratic Party. During the exchange, Ackermann presented herself as a “city liberal,” “populist,” and “bread and butter Democrat.”<sup>101</sup> In order to gain the much needed support of urban voters she pejoratively called the governor a “suburban liberal,” evidenced by his cutting services to the neediest while raising taxes. During his responses, Dukakis stressed his role in leading the state’s economic recovery and offered an optimistic appraisal of the state’s current fiscal climate. King used the opportunity to advance his socially conservative agenda, reducing his stance to support for “a proposition 13 for Massachusetts,” “capital punishment,” “mandatory jail sentences for those who break and enter our homes in the nighttime,” and as “unalterably opposed to taxpayer funds” for abortion.<sup>102</sup> These statements demonstrated the clear contrast

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<sup>99</sup> White, “All in the Family,” 648.

<sup>100</sup> White, “All in the Family,” 648

<sup>101</sup> Walter V. Robinson, “It was a debate about Dukakis,” *Boston Globe*, September 1, 1978.

<sup>102</sup> Robinson, “It was a debate about Dukakis”; King Campaign advertisement, *Boston Globe*, September 18, 1978.

between the governor's technocratic efforts to elaborate on nuances of his fiscal policy and King's simple and declarative style.

Two weeks later King defeated Dukakis in one of the biggest upsets in Massachusetts political history. King received 51 percent of the vote, to Dukakis's 42 percent. Ackermann came in third with 7 percent of the vote. The results offered a lesson not just to Dukakis, but also for other Democratic politicians in the Bay State and the nation. The *Boston Globe* stated that the upset should send flare signs to Dukakis's "spiritual cousin" and fellow "no-nonsense manager" Jimmy Carter that his chances for reelection were equally tenuous.<sup>103</sup> Observers saw the primary as both a bellwether and reflection of the national political sentiment. Pollster Patrick Caddell observed that the vote showed "the level of frustration of the electorate" in the "high-tax" Northeast. In Caddell's analysis, support for an anti-tax, anti-government candidates constituted "a safety valve" that allowed them to express frustration about a range of issues.<sup>104</sup> Exit poll interviews supported this interpretation. North End nurse Theresa Flynn spoke for many Massachusetts residents when she said Dukakis "didn't do enough for the little man. I can see why the state is called Taxachusetts."<sup>105</sup> One King aide proudly stated of the campaign's victorious strategy: "we put all the hate groups in one pot and let it boil."<sup>106</sup>

Campaign insiders and observers also ruminated on the broader meanings of the results. At his concession speech, a bewildered Dukakis declared, "political scientists and commentators are going to be spending a lot of time" interpreting the results of the

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<sup>103</sup> "A Message for Jimmy," *Boston Globe*, September 23, 1978.

<sup>104</sup> Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover, "Dukakis victim of national trend...", *Boston Globe*, September 23, 1978.

<sup>105</sup> Jerry Taylor, "Why Some Bostonians voted as they did," *Boston Globe*, September 20, 1978.

<sup>106</sup> Nick King, "King—Simple Issues," *Boston Evening Globe*, September 20, 1978.

race.<sup>107</sup> Political scientist John K. White later adhered to Dukakis's suggestion for a research project on the election. Using polling data, he identified education and class as the defining factor in the election results. White tracked a clear split between the college-educated professionals along Route 128, who supported Dukakis's technocratic management style, and less educated urban blue-collar and downscale suburban residents who voted for King. White also determined that Dukakis voters overwhelmingly opposed expansion of the highway system, the death penalty, and to a slightly lesser degree the adoption of large-scale tax reductions while King's base endorsed Proposition 13 and strongly objected to the use of state funds for abortion.

Overconfidence served as another major factor in determining the outcome of the primary. Many critics assailed Dukakis for not devoting the proper money or energy to the campaign because he was sure he would win. This sense of assurance extended to his base as well. A number of voters had assumed Dukakis was safe and had switched their party affiliation in order to support popular moderate Republican Senator Edward Brooke, who faced a difficult battle against a conservative anti-tax, anti-busing opponent. An estimated 30,000 non-Republicans voted for Brooke, leading him to a comfortable win.<sup>108</sup> Many of the liberals who maintained their support for the Ackermann campaign also operated on the assumption that Dukakis would safely win the primary. These voters had endorsed Ackermann less because they actually thought she could win and more to send a symbolic message to the governor about their frustration with his fiscally conservative and anti-welfare policies.

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<sup>107</sup> Robert L. Turner, "Hatch GOP's Governor's Choice," *Boston Globe*, September 20, 1978.

<sup>108</sup> "Nation: The Duke is Defeated," *Time* (October 2, 1978).

The primary results, therefore, offered a powerful lesson to grassroots liberals as well. Some voters defended their decision to go with Ackermann, saying it derived from Dukakis's failure to present a progressive platform during his first term. Ken Hartnett explained that these voters did not support Ackermann because they wanted to see Dukakis lose but, rather, "just let him know he wasn't being all a liberal governor might be."<sup>109</sup> This strategy revealed the clear imprint of the grassroots peace movement, which had supported long-shot third party candidates as a form of symbolic protest against the nation's foreign policy agenda. Several liberal voters, however, regretted the consequences of the strategy in this particular instance. Barney Frank admitted he was a "little guilty" conceding, "I guess my opposition contributed a little bit to Ed King being nominated. Had I known, I would have voted for him (Dukakis)."<sup>110</sup> The primary results also created fissures among liberals who had supported Dukakis and those who had broken ranks.<sup>111</sup> Alice Piece of Lexington, for example, announced her resignation from CPPAX due to the fact that it had "spent the last three and one half years attacking Gov. Dukakis thus contributing to his defeat."<sup>112</sup> Journalist Alan Lupo explained he could not "Dump the Duke" when he saw King as the alternative. Lupo wrote a column that constituted an open letter to "Jerry Grossman and my fellow liberals" admonishing them for their overconfidence and stating that the primary outcome offered a clear indication that "the state is not as liberal as you think."<sup>113</sup>

The general election further upset the traditional categories and assumptions of Massachusetts politics. King faced Francis W. Hatch, a state senator from the North

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<sup>109</sup> Ken Hartnett, "Liberals Lament," *Boston Globe*, September 23, 1978.

<sup>110</sup> Robert L. Turner, "Liberals defeated by their own," *Boston Globe*, September 24, 1978.

<sup>111</sup> See for example "Letters to the Editor," *Lexington Minute-Man*, September 14, 1978.

<sup>112</sup> Alice Piece Letter, October 17, 1978, Box 1, Folder 1.6, CPPAX.

<sup>113</sup> Alan Lupo, "The Real Man behind the myths," *Boston Globe*, October 2, 1978.

Shore who embodied a similar tradition of liberal Republicanism as Francis Sargent. Suburban liberal groups and individuals set out to prove that King's victory had not signified the demise of their form of grassroots-based political activism. CPPAX led "Democrats for Hatch," deploying the grassroots network it had cultivated working for a series of liberal candidates since the early 1960s. The CPPAX central office produced hundreds of fact sheets and poll cards that its members distributed when they canvassed their local neighborhoods in support of Hatch.<sup>114</sup> Several other liberals and social welfare activists joined in this effort, focusing more on their opposition to King than their support for Hatch. These groups warned if King won, "Massachusetts will move in a very conservative direction and the results will be disastrous for working and poor people."<sup>115</sup>

In the general election, King's focus on tax reform overshadowed his stance to cut social services and undermine other traditional liberal causes.<sup>116</sup> The visit of Howard Jarvis to Massachusetts during the campaign enhanced King's image as a leader of the national tax revolt and helped him solidify the votes of fiscally conservative Republicans, moderate middle-class homeowners, and the blue collar urban dwellers who had supported him in primary. The "father of Proposition 13" threw his support behind King's tax plan in a television advertisement in which he declared, "If Ed King cannot do

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<sup>114</sup> CPPAX, Newsletter, Vol 6. No. 10, November 1978, Box 3. Folder III.6, CPPAX; Alvin Levin to Lincoln Voter, November 1, 1978, CPPAX.

<sup>115</sup> Unauhored form letter to "Friend," October 1978, Box 3, Folder 25, PMR; Paula Georges for the Hatch Committee "Ed King's Program as Governor will hurt poor and working people" leaflet, 1978, Box 3, Folder 25, PMR.

<sup>116</sup> King pledged to "shed Massachusetts of its 'TAXACHUSETTS IMAGE'" releasing a seven-point plan called "Massachusetts 13" that aimed to cut property taxes across state, and spur the growth of the Massachusetts economy through a cap on state spending. He also renewed his earlier promise to roll back property taxes by \$500 million during his first year in office and over 40 percent more in the following three years, see King for Governor, "Ed King Proposes 'Massachusetts 13'," October 6, 1978, Box 36, Folder 1303, Backman.

it in Massachusetts, my name is not Howard Jarvis.”<sup>117</sup> During the fall, Jarvis spoke to a crowd of 700 at Newton North High School where his populist rhetoric further enlivened the resentment of many Bay State homeowners. “I never thought I’d find a state where property taxes are worse than California,” Jarvis told the crowd, “but I have and you are here.”<sup>118</sup> Alluding to the state’s role in the American Revolution, Jarvis said that the refusal of Massachusetts officials to limit government put the state on the road “to slavery and tyranny and a dictatorship.”<sup>119</sup> This endorsement of Jarvis coupled with his enticement of many Republican voters helped King narrowly defeat Hatch by 6 percentage points.

The election results sent conflicting messages about political realignment in Massachusetts and the nation. The election illuminated both the fact that in Massachusetts party affiliation did not adhere to a coherent ideology, and that the two categories of liberalism and conservatism had become increasingly muddled.<sup>120</sup> Many observers insisted King’s success signaled the demise of liberalism and the beginning of a new Democratic coalition in Massachusetts of urban blue-collar voters and the residents of smaller towns in the center of the state who shared a commitment to fiscal restraint and social conservatism.<sup>121</sup> Leading grassroots liberal activist Jerome Grossman repeatedly countered this interpretation, insisting that it was not that the state or Democratic Party had become more conservative but that “the liberals just stayed at home.”<sup>122</sup> His comment reflected an understanding that suburban liberals often remained largely

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<sup>117</sup> Nick King “Jarvis takes to Bay State Television to give King’s candidacy,” *Boston Globe*, November 3, 1978.

<sup>118</sup> Marjorie Arons, “Jarvis brings taxpayer revolt to Newton,” *Newton Times*, October 18, 1978.

<sup>119</sup> Arons, “Jarvis brings taxpayer revolt to Newton.”

<sup>120</sup> Marjorie Arons, ““Liberal Newton defies political stereotype,”” *Newton Times*, November 15, 1978.

<sup>121</sup> Robert Healy, “Conservatives Prevail,” *Boston Globe*, November 8, 1978.

<sup>122</sup> Turner, “This could be the start of something big.”

apathetic without a candidate or issue to get excited about or a powerful grassroots campaign to mobilize them into action.

King's victory more accurately revealed the split between the two sides of the Democratic Party, which one observer reduced to "the older pork-chop, brass-collar" constituency and liberals who were "suburban and privileged, anti-growth pro-abortion, anti-highway and environmentalist."<sup>123</sup> Political columnist David B. Wilson interpreted King's success over Dukakis as the "counter-revolution" of the blue-collar workforce against the "technocratic 'New Class' of which Dukakis, on the state level, is the most conspicuous example."<sup>124</sup> Dukakis himself cautioned against reading the vote through this version of the backlash thesis. Around the time of his defeat, he insisted that although the older industrial workforce had perhaps shaped the outcome of this particular election, the future of the state Democratic Party would be "more of a liberal, New Frontier post-Kennedy generation than they will be out of Ed King's philosophical tree."<sup>125</sup> The 1978 election ultimately did not mark the end of Michael Dukakis's political career, which demonstrates the persistency of his brand of liberalism and this suburban-centered constituency of Democratic voters. However, the 1978 Democratic primary established a template for how to discredit and defeat Dukakis that his Republican opponent George H.W. Bush would borrow in the presidential election ten years later.

## **A New Era**

The 1978 election initiated a struggle over taxes that would have far-reaching consequences both in the Commonwealth and the nation. Edward King's tenure as

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<sup>123</sup> David B. Wilson "He means what he says, says what he means," *Boston Globe*, October 20, 1978.

<sup>124</sup> Wilson, "He means what he says, says what he means."

<sup>125</sup> White, "All in the Family," 653.

governor upheld the nightmarish predictions of liberal activists as he set out to reverse many of the progressive gains of the previous decade. During his four years in office, King implemented the socially conservative, pro-business, low-tax agenda upon which he campaigned. He ushered in the most restrictive abortion laws in the country and ended the tenure of the Dukakis-appointed members of the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, replaced them with appointees who shared his pro-life politics. He embraced Dukakis's idea of workfare but suggested a far harsher and more expansive version that included female welfare recipients as well as men. King also defied transportation and environmental policy that dated back to the Sargent Administration by advocating for increased highway construction.<sup>126</sup>

Reducing the property tax burden, however, emerged as the central focus of the King administration. In his inaugural address, he announced his intention to "take state government out of their lives and burdensome taxes off their backs."<sup>127</sup> He aimed to fulfill his promise of a \$500 million cut with a bill that would impose a freeze on all city and town budgets and keep tax rates at the present levels for two years.<sup>128</sup> This "zero percent tax cap" drew fierce opposition from municipal officials and unions who declared that it would bring a loss of local autonomy and public sector jobs. Opinion polls revealed that a majority of residents supported the caps in theory but not if meant a reduction in local government services they valued such as police and fire protection and quality education.<sup>129</sup> Liberal and progressive organizations like CPPAX and their

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<sup>126</sup> Citizens for Participation in Political Action, Governor Edward J. King Report Card, 1979, CPPAX.

<sup>127</sup> Citizens for Participation in Political Action, Governor Edward J. King Report Card, 1979.

<sup>128</sup> Edward J. King, "The First Step: Property Tax Relief," February 9, 1979, Box 36, Folder 1302, Backman.

<sup>129</sup> "PARC, Tax Caps Supported, But..." March 12, 1979, Box 36, Folder 1302, Backman.

political allies also strongly opposed the tax cap.<sup>130</sup> Instead, CPPAX endorsed the proposal of the progressive organization Massachusetts Fair Share for a “taxbraker” that would cut property taxes up to 20 percent and replace the revenue with new fees on professional transactions such as stock transfers and accounting and legal services that would largely affect affluent citizens.<sup>131</sup>

Despite this vocal dissent, King’s tax cap proposal received significant praise and support from the Massachusetts High Technology Council (MHTC). A consortium of firms largely along Route 128, the Council formed in 1977 in order to increase the industry’s political clout in the state. By 1979, the MHTC included the CEOs of 89 firms that employed over 140,000 people worldwide. The Council argued that high property taxes put Bay State companies at a disadvantage when bidding with out-state-corporations for engineers and other qualified employees. “We offer a guy a job and the first thing you hear is taxes,” bemoaned Herbert Roth, the president of a Waltham-based electronics company.<sup>132</sup> Massachusetts had the nation’s third highest per capita income, but executives alleged that since state and local taxes took an average of 17.8 percent of personal income, it made it much less attractive to white-collar employees than Sunbelt states like North Carolina, which boasted a far lower percentage.<sup>133</sup> One industry expert

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<sup>130</sup> CPPAX publicly denounced King’s proposal as an “outrageous infringement on local municipalities rights of Home Rule” and warned that it would “not save the average taxpayer a single dollar.” See, CPPAX, CPPAX Statement in Response to Governor King’s Tax Cap Proposals, February 9, 1979, Box 36, Folder 1302, Backman.

<sup>131</sup> Massachusetts Fair Share, Press Statement, February 12, 1979, Box 36, Folder 1302, Backman; Campaign for Tax Cuts Jobs and Services, “Questions and Answers About Taxbraker,” Box 36, Folder 1288, Backman.

<sup>132</sup> Michael Knight, “Taxes Hurt Massachusetts Jobs,” *New York Times*, March 29, 1979; See also Herbert Roth to Andrew Natsios, April 19, 1979, Box 19, Folder “Tax Cap,” Natsios.

<sup>133</sup> Knight, “Taxes Hurt Massachusetts Jobs.”

explained, “the electrical engineer is the linchpin of these industries and they have to go where the engineers want to live.”<sup>134</sup>

While MHTC had distrusted Dukakis, it found King to be sympathetic to their concerns.<sup>135</sup> The day before King announced his tax cap proposal he signed a deal with the MHTC called the “Social Contract” establishing that the member firms would help create 150,000 new jobs in Massachusetts in exchange for the Governor’s reduction of property and income taxes.<sup>136</sup> This document articulated the basic notion of supply-side economics circulating widely during the period. Providing a local version of the “Laffer Curve,” the Social Contract contended, “if tax rates are reduced, jobs and hence tax revenues in Massachusetts will over time have greater financial resources to address its social problems and public responsibilities.”<sup>137</sup> With King’s promise secured, the MHTC mobilized to lobby state legislators in support of King’s tax cap, welfare cuts, and in opposition to the taxbraker plan.<sup>138</sup>

The members of the state legislature eventually rejected both King’s plan and Fair Share’s taxbraker and submitted an alternative proposal of a 4 percent ceiling on tax increase.<sup>139</sup> After a drawn-out battle, King gave up an absolute freeze on local property tax increases and agreed to sign the 4 percent version, calling the compromise in a

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<sup>134</sup> Knight, “Taxes Hurt Massachusetts Jobs.”

<sup>135</sup> Gaines and Segal, *Dukakis and the Reform Impulse*, 181.

<sup>136</sup> MHTC, Public Affairs Bulletin, 1979, Box 19, Folder Taxation, 1979, Natsios; See also Massachusetts High Technology Council “A New Social Contract for Massachusetts,” in *Massachusetts Miracle*, 155-168.

<sup>137</sup> James Ring Adams, *Secrets of the Tax Revolt* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1985), 320.

<sup>138</sup> MHTC, Public Affairs Bulletin, 1979, See also, Herbert Roth to Andrew Natsios, April 19, 1979; David Hughey to Andrew Natsios, June 1, 1979, Box 19, Folder “Tax Cap,” Natsios; Karl Swanson to Andrew Natsios, May 26, 1979, Box 19, Folder “Taxation,” Natsios; W.F. Allen to All Employees, Stone and Webster Engineering Corporation, Many 23, 1979, Box 19, Folder “Taxation,” Natsios.

<sup>139</sup> Michael Knight “Massachusetts Governor Weighs his Choices in Tax-Cutting Fight,” *New York Times*, April 29, 1979.

televised address “a giant stride forward in the effort to lower property taxes.”<sup>140</sup>

However, the plan only provided \$166 million in relief, excluded school budgets, allowed for local overrides, and offered no guarantee that money would be used to reduce the property tax bills of individual homeowners. The solution angered organizations like the Citizens for Limited Taxation, which called the plan “a paper tiger” and announced plans to renew the campaign to put “Proposition 2 1/2” on the 1980 ballot.<sup>141</sup>

This debate over fiscal policy coupled with the results of the 1978 governor’s race revealed that the Massachusetts’ electorate political and ideological affiliations remained unsettled. Many political observers believed that in the 1980 election the state’s voting pattern would closely reflect “the nation as a whole,” rather than stand apart from the rest of the country as Massachusetts did in 1972.<sup>142</sup> Thus, the presidential candidates from both parties took the race in Massachusetts seriously. While some assumed the contest would confirm the state’s embrace of conservative politics, many longtime Democratic activists remained more optimistic. Strategist John Mantilla firmly believed that pendulum would swing in the other direction and “liberal momentum will accelerate.” Likewise McGovern campaign veteran Richard Stearns confidently guaranteed, “Massachusetts is still essentially a liberal state.”<sup>143</sup>

### **Proposition 2 1/2**

The debate over property tax reform embodied by the ballot initiative Proposition 2 1/2, however, overshadowed the 1980 presidential race in Massachusetts. The

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<sup>140</sup> Michael Knight, “Massachusetts Governor Backs Plan to Curb Taxes,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1979.

<sup>141</sup> Citizens for Limited Taxation, “Citizens for Limited Taxation calls King’s Plan a Piper Tiger,” February 12, 1979, Box 36, Folder 1302, Backman.

<sup>142</sup> Turner, “Massachusetts in ’80.”

<sup>143</sup> Robert L. Turner, “Massachusetts in ’80.”

controversial measure pitted suburban and urban communities against each other and revealed both continuities and changes in the state's traditional political affiliations. Following the passage of the compromise tax cap, CLT, with financial support from the MHTC, launched an extended campaign to make Proposition 2 1/2 into Question 2 on the 1980 electoral ballot.<sup>144</sup> The proposed measure shared many of Proposition 13's features, but 2 1/2 was in many ways more comprehensive than its predecessor because it reached beyond property taxes. In addition to a 2.5 percent limit on the assessed value of property, it allowed tenants to deduct 50 percent of their rent from their state income tax, and called for a reduction on the automobile excise tax. The complex and multipart measure also differed from the California version by including several provisions to change local budget procedures.<sup>145</sup>

Local officials spoke out forcefully against the measure, reiterating warnings about the devastating effects of such a proposal on the ability to adequately manage municipal government.<sup>146</sup> People on all sides agreed that these cuts would have the greatest impact on populous, low-income urban areas that demanded more municipal services. Robert Coard, executive director of a Boston anti-poverty agency, stated that the bill would have “a catastrophic effect on the budgets of the older, poor cities and towns.” He succinctly predicted, “Wealthy suburban communities will be minimally affected.

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<sup>144</sup> The CLT had first aimed to make Proposition 2 1/2 into a constitutional amendment. The Proposition did not pass the test of the first constitutional convention, and so CLT revised the idea into a ballot initiative, see Report of the Committee on Taxation on the Initiative Petition of Donald Cassidy and Others, Box 29, Folder 1314, Papers of Lawrence R. Alexander, State Library of Massachusetts (hereafter “Alexander”); Committee on Taxation, “Proposition 2 1/2,” Box 30, Folder 1315, Alexander, Robert L. Turner, “Outrageous Proposition,” *Boston Globe*, February 14, 1980.

<sup>145</sup> Sherry Tvedt Davis, “A Brief History of Proposition 2 ½,” in Lawrence E. Susskind, ed *Proposition 2 ½: Its Impact on Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, 1983).

<sup>146</sup> Walter V. Robinson, “Proposition 2 1/2: Budget Trimming or Fiscal Wipe Out?” *Boston Globe*, August 25, 1980. Analysis revealed that in more populous and tax strapped areas like Boston and the working-class town of Chelsea would have to go down by more than 70 percent, while other larger towns and cities would face cuts between 35 and 60 percent.

Urban areas will be devastated.”<sup>147</sup> However, officials from many affluent suburbs provided an alternative prediction, issuing sober assessments about the layoffs of employees and the decline of municipal services. For instance, Newton estimated that in order to comply with the law it would have to let go a large number of firefighters, police officers, teachers, close two schools, and eliminate athletics, music, and art from the school curriculum.<sup>148</sup> State officials and politicians chimed in, calling Proposition 2 1/2 “irresponsible” and potentially “disastrous.”<sup>149</sup> Even Governor King declared he was not in favor of the referendum because he worried the loss of revenue would not be recouped.<sup>150</sup>

These cries and warnings from state and local bureaucrats helped proponents of the measure fashion a populist-laden campaign as the underdogs trying to take on the powerful Massachusetts government. This effort fused the money and clout of the MHTC with the grassroots mobilization skills and energy of the CLT. The high-tech executives affiliated with the MHTC recognized the measure as a means to both attract more highly-skilled workers to the state and reduce corporate property taxes. The consortium, therefore, donated over \$240,000 to finance the CLT’s campaign in favor of the initiative. The organizers recognized that it would have more success by deemphasizing the benefits for business and industry and instead presenting the measure strictly in terms of homeowner and taxpayer relief. In order to further this image and argument, the CLT

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<sup>147</sup> George Briggs, “\$77M at risk in Hub, Prop 2 ½ foes claim,” *Boston Herald American*, October 22, 1980.

<sup>148</sup> Jonathan Robbins, “2 ½: A disaster either way?” *Newton Graphic*, October 23, 1980.

<sup>149</sup> “Does Mass Need Prop 2 1/2 : Q & A with Rep. Cohen, Chairman of the Tax Panel,” *Boston Globe*, July 20, 1980.

<sup>150</sup> Robert L. Turner, “A Taxing Time for the Tax Cutter,” *Boston Globe*, September 14, 1980.

depicted itself as a “low-budget,” “grassroots” organization, which operated out of a small office run by volunteers.<sup>151</sup>

The public face of the campaign became CLT executive director Barbara Anderson, a Marblehead housewife turned anti-tax crusader.<sup>152</sup> While many suburban women became politically active after reading Betty Friedan, Ayn Rand served as the catalyst for Anderson’s awakening.<sup>153</sup> She launched her political career canvassing her suburban neighborhood for Barry Goldwater in 1964. Over the course of the 1970s, Anderson became especially outraged at the proposal for a state graduated income tax, which she believed amounted to the “harder you work, the more they steal from you.” In 1978, she decided to switch her hobby from teaching swimming at a local pool to volunteering at CLT. She had ascended to the post as executive director in 1980 just in time to lead the fight for the ballot initiative and to earn the gendered reputation as the “Mother of Proposition 2 ½.” Anderson’s image as a suburban mom helped her and the anti-tax movement appear more homeowner-driven. “The way I see it, she’s a housewife who raised a family and woke up one morning just fed up with what’s going on,” one erstwhile supporter later declared.<sup>154</sup>

Throughout this campaign, Anderson and the CLT adopted the populist arguments about homeowner and taxpayer rights that Howard Jarvis and his allies had used in California. While tax revolters across the country had appropriated the symbolism of the Boston Tea Party and the American Revolution, this imagery took on particularly

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<sup>151</sup> Walter V. Robinson, “Prop 2 ½,” *Boston Globe*, November 5, 1980.

<sup>152</sup> Anderson has subsequently tried to counter accusations that she is merely a “populist front” for the political agenda of the high-tech industry calling her relationship with MHTC “symbiotic.” See, Renee Loth, “For Tax Opponent, Same War, New Front,” *Boston Globe*, July 23, 1989.

<sup>153</sup> Renee Loth, “For Tax Opponent, Same War, New Front,” *Boston Globe*, July 23, 1989.

<sup>154</sup> Nathan Cobb, “Barbara Anderson’s Time Has Come,” *Boston Globe*, January 14, 1990.

powerful meaning in the so-called “cradle of liberty.” In one flyer, the CLT depicted an illustration of a Minuteman holding a musket in one-hand and in the other a placard declaring, “Vote for Prop 2 ½.”<sup>155</sup> In this literature, the CLT embraced a language of taxpayer victimization, stating that “homeowners need protection,” particularly against the “special interest groups that pressured local official to increase expenditures,” costly school budgets, and the unrealistic mandates of the state legislature. CLT representatives frequently asked citizens at presentations, “Are we so dumb we have to pay more than average states for our government?”<sup>156</sup> In order to deflect the dire prediction of local officials about such a rollback of services, the CLT used the example of California where none of these predictions had occurred. Anderson later explained “the big argument we used was ‘California did it and they didn’t fall into the ocean.’”<sup>157</sup> Yet as opponents repeatedly pointed out, California was able to rely on a \$5 billion surplus in the short term, while Massachusetts sat on the brink of bankruptcy.

Through MHTC-funded media advertisements and aggressive grassroots organizing, the CLT managed to raise widespread support for Proposition 2 1/2 in a matter of months. Mirroring attitudes about the tax caps, polls showed that Bay State residents supported the measure primarily because they believed that taxes were “too high” and not because they wanted fewer services or a smaller state government.<sup>158</sup> Likewise, polls revealed that while the majority of Bay State voters endorsed the proposition they remained confused exactly as to its purpose and consequences.<sup>159</sup> The CLT directly capitalized on this confusion and the general desire for tax reform. The

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<sup>155</sup> Citizens for Limited Taxation, “Vote Yes...On Question 2,” 1980, Box 30, Folder 1315, Alexander.

<sup>156</sup> Jonathan Robbins, “2 ½: A Disaster Either Way?” *Newton Graphic*, October 23, 1980.

<sup>157</sup> Schulman, *Seventies*, 213.

<sup>158</sup> Davis, “A Brief History of Proposition 2 ½.”

<sup>159</sup> “Prop 2 ½ Alluring, Confusing,” *Boston Globe*, October 13, 1980.

organization somewhat deceptively emphasized that Proposition 2 1/2 offered the last chance voters would have to alter the tax system. Sam Robbins warned Newton residents, “If Prop 2 ½ doesn’t pass, you are sending a message to the state legislature to tax and spend us into oblivion.”<sup>160</sup> Many citizens recognized flaws in it, but believed that it would provide a catalyst for tax reform. Newton resident Arthur Adelman deemed the initiative “the lifetime chance for us taxpayers to assert ourselves.”<sup>161</sup> These arguments convinced *Globe* columnist Ian Menzies, who suggested the measure offered a means to initiate much needed tax reform and coaxed, “you can vote for Proposition 2 ½ and still be a liberal.”<sup>162</sup>

Many liberals did not agree with that Menzies’s characterization, and by spring they organized a broad-based coalition the Stop 2 1/2 Committee, to oppose the measure. Its leaders stressed that they supported the necessity for tax reform but not schemes that would reduce essential services, and increase or exacerbate the pervasive problem of metropolitan inequity. The Stop 2 1/2 Committee encompassed constituencies that transcended spatial and social boundaries, including public sector unions, school superintendents, progressive groups like ACORN and Fair Share and liberal suburban-based organizations such as the Massachusetts Council of Churches, the League of Women Voters, CPPAX and the ADA. The League, which had a longstanding commitment to fiscal reform, became a particularly important component of this effort deploying its suburban-based infrastructure, knowledge about taxation, and image of

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<sup>160</sup> Jonathan Robbins, “2 ½: A Disaster Either Way?” *Newton Graphic*, October 23, 1980.

<sup>161</sup> Arnold Adelman to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, October 23, 1980.

<sup>162</sup> Ian Menzies, “Yes, You Can Vote for Proposition 2 ½ and Still Call Yourself a Liberal,” *Boston Globe*, June 30, 1980.

respectability to oppose the ballot question.<sup>163</sup> The members of the League helped establish local Stop 2 1/2 chapters in their own communities comprised of municipal employees, and they educated various constituencies about the measure and urged them to vote against it.

### **Proposition 2 1/2 and the Suburbs**

The Route 128 suburbs served as a major battleground over Proposition 2 1/2. During the lead up to the election, bumper stickers in support of and against the initiative engaged in a symbolic battle throughout metropolitan Boston, illuminating many of the broader tensions encompassed by the issue of tax limitation.<sup>164</sup> The League of Women Voters stood at the forefront of the suburban opposition to the measure, and their efforts highlighted the persistence of progressive ideas circulating within these communities. The League long suggested that the current system of property taxation directly contributed to the problem of exclusionary or “snob zoning” because it provided an incentive for municipalities to encourage policies of high-income and low density housing as a means to provide better services to a smaller population. The League believed that Proposition 2 1/2 would increase this problem by allowing suburban municipalities to use the measure as a justification to avoid building subsidized housing or the construction of a multi-family dwellings on the grounds that it would cause a further burden to local services.<sup>165</sup> The League continued to emphasize that the solution

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<sup>163</sup> Memorandum from Margie Bliss to Local Coordinators for Question 2, re: Campaign Update, September 25, 1980, Box 9, Folder 383, Papers of John W. Olver, Special Collections, State Library of Massachusetts (hereafter: “Olver”); League of Women Voters, “There is No Free Lunch,” c. 1980, Box 30, Folder 1315, Alexander.

<sup>164</sup> Bob Jeltsch, “How Will Lexington Vote on Proposition 2 ½,” *Lexington Minute-man*, October 30, 1980.

<sup>165</sup> Memorandum Margie Bliss, League of Voters of Massachusetts to Question 2, Re: How Will Prop 2 ½ Affect Housing, September 22, 1980, Box 9, Folder 383, Olver.

to these interlaced problems lay in the state government taking more responsibility for social services funding and ensuring the implementation of laws aimed at reducing economic, racial, and spatial inequality.

In contrast to the League of Women Voters, the Lexington Tax Policy Committee best embodied another strand of suburban liberalism rooted in notions of consumer privilege. The committee aimed to engender opposition to 2 1/2 by appealing to the individualist sensibilities of affluent suburban residents. The members warned that because the state lacked the budget surplus of California, Massachusetts would have to levy new taxes, which would have a disproportionate impact on affluent suburbs. Thus, the Committee suggested that voting against the measure provided a means to prevent both higher income taxes and assuming the burden for supporting declining cities.<sup>166</sup> Several opponents of 2 1/2 placed their stance in terms of taxpayer self-interest stating, in the words of one Arlington resident, “I just think if you remove taxes one place you’re going to get them somewhere else.” Wilmington resident Tom Hanley also believed that the proposal would “cost us more money in the long run.”<sup>167</sup>

These opponents demonstrated the centrality of education in shaping both the political culture of the suburbs and individual sensibilities of its residents. The president of the Newton Council of Parent Teacher Associations Bonnie Armor also used consumerist terms to stress that opposing 2 1/2 would “preserve the educational system which has made Newton a desirable place to live.”<sup>168</sup> Lexington Superintendent John Lawson also stirred parental anxiety by warning that 2 1/2 “would create a lower than

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<sup>166</sup> Bob Jeltsch, “...while Tax Policy Committee hones attack,” *Lexington Minute-man*, September 25, 1980.

<sup>167</sup> Jeltsch, “How Will Lexington Vote on Proposition 2 ½.”

<sup>168</sup> Bonnie Armer to the Editor, *Newton Graphic*, October 9, 1980.

average school system for an above average student population,” which he dubbed “a tragedy.”<sup>169</sup> While these efforts clearly persuaded many residents, particularly those with school-aged children, it failed to convince another faction of suburban homeowners who believed the school system exhausted the local budget and that individual parents, not all taxpayers, should finance such “special” services as violin, tennis and extra reading instruction.<sup>170</sup> These 2 1/2 proponents suggested that eliminating the fiscal autonomy of local school committees would not create a decline in the quality of local education but would provide local taxpayers with the ability to exercise more control over this major portion of most town budgets. For instance, John Powell of Lexington stated simply, “I’m for it taxes are too high and I want to reduce taxes.”<sup>171</sup>

The election results ultimately became less close than the debate in the suburbs indicated. Proposition 2 1/2 won by a 59-to 41-percent margin, achieving its greatest success in the state’s middle-class suburban communities and urban districts where homeowners felt most squeezed by property taxes.<sup>172</sup> The margin of victory was far narrower in affluent Route 128 communities like Concord and Sudbury. In Lexington it passed by a margin of fewer than 400 votes.<sup>173</sup> The measure failed to pass by a similarly narrow margin in other suburban liberal strongholds such as Brookline, Lincoln and Newton. These narrow results came in the face of a great deal of outreach in those areas by the League and the Stop 2 1/2 committees and thus underscored the limits of

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<sup>169</sup> Mary Prince, “Panel Pans Prop. 2 ½,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, September 25, 1980.

<sup>170</sup> League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, “Questions-We’ve Been Asked—And Answers,” September 23, 1980, Box 9, Folder 383, Olver.

<sup>171</sup> Jeltsch, “How Will Lexington Vote on Proposition 2 ½.”

<sup>172</sup> Adams, *Secrets of the Tax Revolt*, 328.

<sup>173</sup> Robert L. Turner, “The Haves’ Were Winners,” *Boston Globe*, November 11, 1980; “City/Town Vote for President, Proposition 2 ½,” *Boston Globe*, November 6, 1980.

grassroots liberal activists to challenge the dominant moderate and fiscally conservative sensibility of suburban political culture.

The members of the CLT and MHTC interpreted the election results as the clear demand by the public for both property tax relief and a reduction in the scale of government.<sup>174</sup> Barbara Anderson believed that the dire warnings of opponents to the measure had actually worked against them. “We supporters were pushing the joy of sex. And the opponents were trying to sell the fear of pregnancy. Once the average voter learned about birth control, the election was never in doubt.”<sup>175</sup> Though it usually focused more on tax rates than sex, the populist rhetoric of Anderson and her organization clearly had a major influence on the success of the proposition as well, Virginia Brings, a Marblehead mother of six, who had gone canvassing in support of the referendum in her suburban community, declared, “Finally we’re saying we’ve had enough. The little guy, the housewife...have got to feel tremendous. They’ve gotten their point across.”<sup>176</sup>

Proposition 2 1/2 conflated political and economic concerns, as the corresponding results of the 1980 Presidential election brought into sharp relief. A pollster observed “Proposition 2 1/2 was about politics as much as it was about taxes.” Barbara Anderson agreed. “People didn’t vote for it because of the money,” she stated. “They voted for it because of the attitude.”<sup>177</sup> However, *Globe* political writer Robert Turner had a different assessment, stating, “Massachusetts voted with its pocketbook” on both Question 2 and

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<sup>174</sup> Susskind, *Proposition 2 1/2: Its Impact on Massachusetts*, vii.

<sup>175</sup> Robinson “Prop 2 1/2.”

<sup>176</sup> Peter Mancusi, “The little guys have got their point across,” *Boston Globe*, November 5, 1980.

<sup>177</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 147; Charles Kenney, “Massachusetts Makes a Comeback: What is Responsible for the State’s Amazing Comeback? Would You Believe Proposition 2 1/2?” *Boston Globe*, May 18, 1986.

the presidential race. The narrow success of Ronald Reagan in the state upheld both variations of this argument. Reagan's assurance of reducing federal taxes and the size of the government enticed voters in the same ways they welcomed the cuts in auto excise and property taxes promised by 2 1/2. Reagan achieved his largest victories in the middle-class suburbs of the North and South Shores such as Lynnfield, Medfield and Anderson's hometown of Marblehead, cohering with national voting patterns.<sup>178</sup> Throughout the country Reagan did best among families with an income of \$50,000 or more a year.<sup>179</sup> Moreover, many of the urban precincts in Boston that favored Proposition 2 1/2 did not extend their support to Reagan. Many white working-class urban voters responded to Carter's effort to cultivate this constituency, and he received almost the same number of votes in Boston as had Proposition 2 1/2.<sup>180</sup>

The lack of enthusiasm for Carter from liberal activists did affect the results in the Bay State. John Anderson, who by the fall was running as an Independent, centered his campaign strategy on galvanizing committed liberals to break rank with the Democratic Party. After Edward Kennedy had lost the Democratic nomination to Carter, Anderson set out to convince suburban liberal activists in groups like CPPAX and the ADA to shift their support to him. Anderson did end up winning 15 percent of the Massachusetts electorate, significantly greater than his national showing, but his support came primarily from independent voters in the affluent and traditionally progressive suburbs such as Lexington rather than from committed activists. The lack of defections away from Carter from this constituency stemmed largely from a dislike of Reagan. Jerome Grossman explained, "A vote for Anderson is a vote for Reagan. Make no mistake, the prospect of a

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<sup>178</sup> Turner, "The Haves' Were Winners," *Boston Globe*, November 11, 1980.

<sup>179</sup> Turner, "The Haves' Were Winners."

<sup>180</sup> Al Larkin, "Charlestown: Choices Based on Fear," *Boston Globe*, November 5, 1980.

Reagan presidency is the only reason I'm in the Carter camp."<sup>181</sup> This statement revealed that Grossman and other liberal activists had clearly taken the lessons of the 1978 governor's race to heart and were no longer willing to use elections as means to launch symbolic challenges to Democratic candidates. Grossman and other activists, nevertheless, had refused to actively campaign or raise money for Carter with whose economic and social policies they openly disagreed. Grossman articulated the sentiment of many liberal voters stating, "I'm not going to dance at Jimmy Carter's wedding, but I'll be present. That's all."<sup>182</sup> This lukewarm position clearly contributed to Carter's poor showing in the state.

While many observers used the election results in Massachusetts as another opportunity to determine a time of death for liberalism, these suburban-based activists aimed to find places of optimism. Though clearly disappointed and worried about the success of Reagan and Proposition 2 1/2 in Massachusetts, committed activists warded off the claims that the "New Right" had assumed control of the state. These leaders found hope in the election of Barney Frank to Congress in the district that encompassed Brookline and Newton, the victory of several liberal state legislators, and passage of ballot initiatives approving a moratorium on nuclear power plants and cuts to the military budget. Despite these hints of a progressive resurgence, the presidency of Reagan and implementation of Proposition 2 1/2 continued to spell uncertainty for the future of both liberal activists and the economic and political climate of Massachusetts.

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<sup>181</sup> Anne Beaton, "Liberals Stay on the Sidelines," *Boston Herald American*, September 6, 1980.

<sup>182</sup> Beaton, "Liberals Stay on the Sidelines."

## Implementation

The process of implementing Proposition 2 1/2 proved both difficult and controversial. Coinciding with the beginning of the “Reagan Revolution,” Massachusetts became, in the words of conservative columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “a laboratory of supply-side economic theory.”<sup>183</sup> The national embrace of supply-side economics compounded the anxiety of state and local officials who feared that the projected lack of financial assistance from the Reagan Administration would make the impact of 2 1/2 even more severe. Local officials and state legislators struggled with how to address significant losses of revenue and federal funds.<sup>184</sup> The officials in several suburbs reiterated predictions that implementation would necessitate drastic cuts in municipal services, especially education.<sup>185</sup> These warnings produced panic in cities and suburbs across the state. Many residents began to regret their vote, stating they had supported trimming administrative excess, not necessary services, and they implored the state legislature to compensate the loss in revenue.<sup>186</sup> Even the MHTC suggested the state government should provide aid in order to offset the loss in necessary services.<sup>187</sup> The Massachusetts legislature did approve such a measure, which provided some relief to municipalities, but it did not permanently assuage the anxiety of residents and budget choices of local officials.

The decision of many Massachusetts residents to take their children out of the public school system reveals the unexpected ways Proposition 2 1/2 heightened both

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<sup>183</sup> “Taxachusetts into Battle,” *Boston Globe*, July 21, 1981.

<sup>184</sup> Chris Black, “No Surgery for these towns—But a pain nevertheless,” *Boston Globe*, February 16, 1981.

<sup>185</sup> See for instance Mary Prince, “Town gets set for 2 ½,” *Lexington Minute-Man*, November 13, 1980; Steven Burke, “Mann asks King to act,” *The Newton Graphic*, November 13, 1980.

<sup>186</sup> See for instance Michael E. Cam to Andrew Natsios, May 5, 1981, Box 7, Folder “Proposition 2 ½,” Natsios; Ruth C. Henry to Andrew Natsios, April 13, 1981, Box 7, Folder “Proposition 2 ½,” Natsios.

<sup>187</sup> Massachusetts High Tech Council, “Massachusetts High Tech Council Endorses More Gradual 2 ½ Phase-Down and Increased Local Aid,” April 24, 1981, Box 29, Folder 1311, Alexander.

racial and economic segregation and a sense of middle-class suburban individualism. The passage of the law boosted private school enrollments influenced already by the busing crisis as well as general dissatisfaction with public schools. In the weeks immediately following the 1980 election, Boston area private and parochial schools received a flood of inquiries primarily from upper-middle class parents in places like Boston, Cambridge and the Route 128 suburbs. Bucolic named private schools such as Beaver Country Day School in Chestnut Hill, Shady Hill School in Cambridge, and Derby Academy in Hingham all reported a record number of new applications.<sup>188</sup> Reflecting the attitude of many middle-class residents, Laurence Auros pleaded with his state legislator to pass additional local budget financing, declaring that if such an increase failed he would “be forced to send my child to a private school” which would be a “financial burden” but he could not deprive his daughter “a good sound education.”<sup>189</sup> The Cambridge school superintendent empathized with people like Auros, insisting, “You can’t blame parents for considering the private sector especially when I’m forced to make massive cuts in aesthetic subject areas.”<sup>190</sup>

These individual decisions had startling implications for the racial and class composition of schools throughout metropolitan Boston. Harvard education professor Stephen Bailey surmised that the process promised to “re-establish a blatant class system where the wealthy and the middle class buy their way out and pay just enough taxes to keep squalid schools going in slums” and would ensure that “the kids will no longer have

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<sup>188</sup> Muriel Cohen and Marvin Pave, “2 ½ Feeds Interest in Private Schools,” *Boston Globe*, December 15, 1980. See also Muriel Cohen, “Private Schools: Alluring,” *Boston Globe*, October 23, 1981.

<sup>189</sup> Laurence Eros to Andrew Natsios, February 8, 1981, Box 7, Folder “Proposition 2 ½,” Natsios.

<sup>190</sup> Cohen and Pave, “2 ½ Feeds Interest in Private Schools.”

a sense of community.”<sup>191</sup> The *Boston Globe* called this pattern of departure the “single most chilling result” of Proposition 2 1/2 and warned that this trend would not only remove many of the brightest and most dedicated students, but also their parents who often played a crucial role in lobbying for quality public education. The newspaper suggested that this loss of bright students and motivated parents would cause the most harm to students who did not have the aptitude or resources to enroll in one of the area’s exclusive private schools.<sup>192</sup> Public school enrollment, nevertheless, reflected just one small way that Proposition 2 1/2 exacerbated racial and economic inequality in metropolitan Boston.

The impact of Proposition 2 1/2 magnified the hierarchical geography of socioeconomic privilege in Massachusetts. During its first year of implementation, 2 1/2 led to a \$311 million reduction in property taxes statewide, but the Revenue Department noted it “had “extremely diverse” impact on communities commensurate with existing patterns of wealth and privilege.”<sup>193</sup> Affluent suburbs Lexington, Carlisle, Dover, Weston and Wellesley, therefore, endured hardships such as fewer library hours and book purchases, freezes on street light acquisition, and less frequent trash collection.<sup>194</sup> More solidly middle-class communities did impose some layoffs and fell behind on routine road repair, but also avoided serious and damaging changes. Proposition 2 1/2 had its greatest impact on lower middle-class, working class, and low-income urban areas. In the

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<sup>191</sup> Cohen and Pave, “2 ½ Feeds Interest in Private Schools.”

<sup>192</sup> “Prop 2 1/2 and a Democratic Society,” *Boston Globe*, December 16, 1980.

<sup>193</sup> Lawrence Susskind and Cynthia Horan, “Understanding How and Why the Most Drastic Cuts Were Avoided” in *Proposition 2 ½: Its Impact on Massachusetts*, 276. Many suburbs had routinely not valued property at full market price and decided to change this practice which enabled them to increase the tax base while still adhering to the law. In addition these communities, all managed to avoid massive layoffs and cutoffs by imposing more minor changes and increasing user fees for items water, school lunches, parking fines and recreation services.

<sup>194</sup> Black, “No Surgery for these Towns—but a pain nevertheless”; Andrew Laing “Wayland: Dealing with Uncertainty” in *Proposition 2 ½: Its Impact on Massachusetts*, 253-260,

years after the law first passed, Boston and Somerville made sharp cuts to police and fire service and Cambridge had to dismiss one of four teachers. The city of Quincy laid off 294 teachers, half of them at the high school level, reduced non-academic courses such as shop and gym, and completely eliminated drama.<sup>195</sup> State assistance did not reduce but actually increased this pattern of inequality. For instance even though the state provided Cambridge \$17.2 million in aid and Wayland \$2.7 million, these supplements equaled 117 percent of Wayland's revenue loss and 12 percent that of Cambridge.<sup>196</sup>

The override provision contained in Proposition 2 1/2 also inadvertently contributed to this pattern of spatial inequality. In the weeks after the 1980 election, the town of Brookline led the fight to allow municipalities to avoid full compliance with the measure. Juan Cofield the leader of this campaign stated, "Many people moved to Brookline for its high level of services and want to maintain that standard."<sup>197</sup> This action led to the legislature to modify the law to enable the voters of a city or town to approve an override to Proposition 2 1/2 through an election.<sup>198</sup> Since 1980, only a few communities other than Brookline have implemented general or permanent overrides of Proposition 2 1/2, but many municipalities have used temporary measures to finance the construction of new schools, fire stations, recreation facilities, the purchase of

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<sup>195</sup> Jerome Rubin, "Quincy Schools Take a Big Cut" in *Proposition 2 1/2: Its Impact on Massachusetts*, 209-210.

<sup>196</sup> Susskind and Horan, "Understanding How and Why the Most Drastic Cuts Were Avoided," 268-269; Jerome Rothenberg and Paul Smoke, "The Pattern of Differential Impacts" in *Proposition 2 1/2: Its Impact on Massachusetts*, 494.

<sup>197</sup> Town of Brookline, "Brookline to Debate Proposition 2 1/2 at Town Meeting Wednesday," 1980, Box 3, Folder 102, Backman.

<sup>198</sup> Patricia Nealon, "Attempt to Override Prop 2 1/2 Reach New Heights," *Boston Globe*, April 2, 1989. Anderson and the CLT supported the process because it served "as a constant reminder to people in local government to be very nice to their constituents because they may have to ask them for an override."

conservation land or an increase in education funding. These proposals have created a great deal of controversy and strife in many towns.<sup>199</sup>

The debates often pitted residents along the same class and political lines as the initial proposition with town officials and affluent suburban liberals supporting the overrides and more solidly middle-class homeowners and the elderly opposing them. This override process has also proven an easier device to invoke in smaller communities and virtually impossible in larger municipalities with no budget surplus or few residents willing to spend money on items such as a new school building or conservation land. Thus, the provision has had the unintended consequence of enhancing the difference in municipal services and privileges of smaller suburbs and larger cities. Scholars have concluded that Proposition 2 1/2 had “neither its costs nor its benefits have been as great as predicted.”<sup>200</sup> This assessment suggests the ways in which Bay State residents and officials have learned to adjust to the law and the forms of metropolitan inequity it contains. Learning to deal with Proposition 2 1/2, nevertheless, did not mean that Massachusetts embraced the Reagan’s Revolution’s economic ideals.<sup>201</sup> As the 1982 race for Governor revealed, the state’s political culture remained very much up for grabs.

## **Rematch**

Over the course of his first term, the public had grown increasingly dissatisfied with Ed King. Despite his strong anti-tax stance, King had not managed to use Proposition 2 1/2 to his political advantage, and many residents blamed him for the

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<sup>199</sup> Nealon, “Attempt to Override Prop 2 1/2 Reach New Heights.”

<sup>200</sup> Susskind, *Proposition 2 1/2: Its Impact on Massachusetts*.

<sup>201</sup> For more about the political implications of Proposition 2 1/2 see, Charles Kenney, “Massachusetts Makes a Comeback: What is Responsible for the State’s Amazing Comeback? Would You Believe Proposition 2 1/2?” *Boston Globe*, May 18, 1986.

uncertainty surrounding the implementation of the measure. His positions on welfare and the economy had earned him the reputation as Reagan's "favorite governor" and "favorite Democrat."<sup>202</sup> King had proudly embraced that label disillusioning the state's Democratic loyalists. A series of scandals and charges of corruption involving the members of his administration contributed to this questioning of his leadership. Likewise, the revelation of the hefty personal expenses he charged to the state, particularly his affection for lobster, contradicted his 1978 campaign promises to save taxpayer dollars and damaged his approval ratings further.<sup>203</sup>

With the many negative factors against King mounting, Michael Dukakis realized that he had a chance for a comeback and therefore launched a campaign to retake the governorship. The 1982 Democratic Primary for Massachusetts governor, therefore, consisted of the same main candidates only with the roles of incumbent and challenger reversed. The campaign that Dukakis developed showed that he had taken the lessons of his 1978 defeat to heart. He spent the time out of office teaching at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where he studied his own mistakes and those of King. In direct response to the King's administration's scandals and corruption charges, Dukakis made the suburban good-government issues of competence and integrity the overriding themes of his campaign.<sup>204</sup> He focused on projecting this image without the self-righteousness that had plagued him throughout his first term. Dukakis and his advisors also aimed to avoid the mistake of too much overconfidence and complacency that had contributed to his defeat in 1978. He decided to develop a wide and effective network of grassroots

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<sup>202</sup> Tom Ashbrook, "What Kind of Governor Does One Want?" *Boston Globe*, September 12, 1982.

<sup>203</sup> Dukakis who still had contacts at the state house had actually leaked the lobster story to the *Globe*, see Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 143-144.

<sup>204</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 160.

campaign volunteers with the hopes of gaining the energy and votes of the “suburban liberal wing of the Democratic party.”<sup>205</sup>

Liberal activists had also learned from the lessons of the 1978 election and the subsequent four years. The members of CPPAX and the ADA decided to join together to unite behind a single candidate rather than risk a “divided liberal vote” again in the Democratic primary.<sup>206</sup> The leaders of the groups organized the Cooperative Endorsement Convention for Governor, modeled on the caucus its forerunners had staged at the outset of the 1972 presidential race. Dukakis appeared before the 300-person crowd and spoke with a sense of humility absent during his previous two campaigns. When a member questioned him about the cuts to social services that had alienated him from liberal activists, he called the decision “one of the most agonizing experiences of my life” and admitted, “I probably could have handled some of the problems more sensitively.”<sup>207</sup> The convention voted overwhelmingly to endorse the former governor; a demonstrating that he had regained the trust of the state’s liberal community.<sup>208</sup>

The 1982 primary, like the one four years earlier, highlighted the divisions between the two sides of the Democratic Party, with lower and middle-income white ethnics concentrated in the older cities on one side and suburban liberal professionals employed in the service industry on the other.<sup>209</sup> The King campaign strategy focused on

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<sup>205</sup> Dudley Clendinen, “Close Governor’s Race for 2 in Massachusetts,” *The New York Times*, September 11, 1982; Drinan’s campaign manager John Martilla helped to formulate this strategy (Gaines and Segal, *Dukakis and the Reform Impulse*, 194).

<sup>206</sup> Wayne Woodlief, “Liberals’ unity drive to open,” *Boston Herald American*, November 19, 1981; CPPAX, CPPAX Newsletter, Vol. 9, No.8, October 1981, Box 2, Folder II.32, CPPAX ; ADA, ADA Newsletter, Volume 33, Issue 4, Fall 1981, CPPAX.

<sup>207</sup> Wayne Woodlief, “Dukakis endorsed,” *Boston Herald American*, November 22, 1981.

<sup>208</sup> CPPAX, Results of the CPPAX/ADA Cooperative Endorsement Convention, November 21, 1981, Box 2, Folder II.32, CPPAX.

<sup>209</sup> Norman Lockman, “Campaign ’82: Democrats Engaged in Class Warfare?” *Boston Globe*, August 22, 1982.

intensifying this cleavage in order to appeal to the blue-collar white voters that the press had tagged “Reagan Democrats.”<sup>210</sup> Relying on anti-liberal stereotypes, a King aide called the contest the difference between the “Chablis-and-brie-crowd and Joe Six Pack,” a particularly bold statement given King’s own corporate backers and expensive eating habits.<sup>211</sup> King revived the platform of his first campaign emphasizing the issues of capital punishment, mandatory sentencing, abortion, drunk driving and fear of taxes. He also aimed to discredit Dukakis as the prototypical ineffectual liberal.<sup>212</sup> King spent \$2 million dollars on television, radio and print advertisements that criticized Dukakis both personally and politically as weak and unrepentant. In one TV ad, King invoked the gendered stereotype of the domineering wife, poking fun at Dukakis’s habit of going home every night at six for dinner with his family. In the ad, King rolled his eyes while stating, “and you know what happened when he did not get home on time.”<sup>213</sup>

Dukakis increased his own advertisements and grassroots campaign, yet instead of focusing on urban ethnic voters as he had done during his previous two runs, he directed his message at white middle-class suburbanites whom he had come to recognize constituted both his base and the future of the Democratic Party. In an effort to gain the support of high-tech engineers and professionals, he promised to “spearhead a new era of investment” of state money in smaller and medium size-growth companies.<sup>214</sup> Dukakis also revised his stance on tax limitation, suggesting that whether or not one supported Proposition 2 1/2 had become irrelevant and now the main issue was effectively

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<sup>210</sup> For more on “Reagan Democrats” see Stanley B. Greenberg, *Middle-Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

<sup>211</sup> “Governors: Different Democratic Styles,” *Time* (September 27, 1982).

<sup>212</sup> Dudley Clendinen, “Close Governor’s Race for 2 in Massachusetts,” *New York Times*, September 11, 1982.

<sup>213</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 166-167.

<sup>214</sup> Mike Dukakis for Governor, Dukakis Proposes Action Plan for Jobs” May 18, 1982, Box 35, Folder 1254, Backman.

implementing the measure. He promised to do so by increasing state aid at the local level through “fair distribution formulas that take into account the varying impacts of Proposition 2 1/2 in different cities and towns.”<sup>215</sup> His volunteer network supplemented these messages by telephoning 2.6 million registered Democrats, canvassing over 200,000 voters, and holding placards at busy intersections across the state.

Dukakis’s re-tooled image and strategy worked far better during this bout, and he won by a decisive margin of over 80,000 votes.<sup>216</sup> In his victory speech, he stated that the win gave “him something one rarely gets in American politics—a second chance.”<sup>217</sup> Observers once again interpreted the Massachusetts gubernatorial primary as an important bellwether of national politics. Just as the 1978 defeat of Dukakis was interpreted as a message to Jimmy Carter, observers saw the results as a referendum on the Reagan administration.<sup>218</sup> The vote revealed the limited support of Reagan’s socially and fiscal conservative rhetoric and policies in the industrialized Northeast. The victory also proved the vibrancy of suburban liberal voters. Dukakis experienced the greatest success within the suburbs around Boston, even winning Newton by more than a 6 to 1 margin.<sup>219</sup> CPPAX celebrated the primary results as a sign that “progressive politics is alive and well in the Bay State” and that suburban grassroots activists could overcome \$2 million of campaign ads.<sup>220</sup> This momentum helped Dukakis easily win the general election, marking a resurgence of suburban-based liberalism both locally and nationally.

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<sup>215</sup> Michael S. Dukakis Fundraising Letter, January 1, 1982, CPPAX.

<sup>216</sup> Walter V. Robinson, “Dukakis Ousts Gov. King; Sears is GOP Nominee,” *Boston Globe*, September 15, 1982.

<sup>217</sup> Laurence Collins, “Massachusetts: Dukakis,” *Boston Globe*, September 15, 1982.

<sup>218</sup> David Nyhan, “Bay State Primary A Test for Reaganism,” *Boston Globe*, September 9, 1982.

<sup>219</sup> “Democrat for Governor: The City and Town Primary Votes, Incumbent 1982 1978,” *Boston Globe*, September 16, 1982; Laurence Collins, “The Feeling is For Dukakis in Newton,” *Boston Globe*, September 9, 1982.

<sup>220</sup> CPPAX Newsletter, Vol. 10, No.6, Box 2, Folder III.10, CPPAX.

## Massachusetts Miracle

During his “second chance” as governor Dukakis refashioned a brand of growth liberal politics and Democratic leadership that culminated in his presidential bid in 1988. He made economic development his primary area of focus. Upon taking office, he became “a born-again business booster,” developing close ties with the state’s rebounding high-tech industry.<sup>221</sup> Many experts have discounted Dukakis’s taking singular credit for the state’s high-tech boom in the mid-1980s, later called the “Massachusetts Miracle,” suggesting that its roots came more from the area’s dense concentration of universities and the increased popularity of computer, and the tax cap.<sup>222</sup> His policies, nevertheless, aimed to stimulate rather than thwart that growth using the tax limitation measure and existing infrastructure of high-tech companies, venture capitalist money, academic brainpower, and defense contracts to the state’s advantage. The Dukakis administration worked to broker deals between small high-tech companies and Boston based venture capitalist firms. These partnerships led to the creation of new software, data processing, and computer manufacturing corporations. The administration used tax incentives to direct start-ups like Wang computers to establish corporate headquarters and factories in older deindustrialized mill communities like Lowell, Springfield and Taunton and thereby simultaneously advanced the governor’s urban redevelopment policy. Lowell, which a decade earlier had one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, by 1983 had become “a model of high tech

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<sup>221</sup> Richard Stengel, “A Tale of Two States,” *Time* (May 26, 1986).

<sup>222</sup> See “Introduction: The Making of a Miracle” in *The Massachusetts Miracle*, 1-18; Charles Kenney, “Massachusetts Makes a Comeback: What is Responsible for the State’s Amazing Comeback? Would You Believe Proposition 2 1/2?” *Boston Globe*, May 18, 1986; Warren T. Brookes, “Proposition 2 ½ Is Massachusetts ‘Dirty Little Secret,’ ” *Wall Street Journal*, July 15, 1986.

revitalization.”<sup>223</sup> Enhancing this economic success, Massachusetts companies managed to jockey Reagan’s pro-defense position, gaining a windfall of contracts from the Pentagon to make software and hardware for military weapons. Raytheon resurged through contracts to make the Patriot and Hawk air missiles, receiving \$2.3 billion in government contracts in 1985 alone. Overall, the economic growth generated 50,000 new businesses and 160,000 jobs in two years. By 1985 Massachusetts had the highest percentage of workers in the service sector of anywhere in the country, the lowest unemployment rate of any industrial state, and the greatest average per capita income in the nation.<sup>224</sup>

The reduction of the Massachusetts property tax burden through Proposition 2 1/2 also contributed to the sense of economic optimism. In 1985, Dukakis announced the official retirement of the sobriquet “Taxachusetts” as the state’s tax rate had fallen below the national average. Dukakis accepted the concept of a ceiling, admitting, “there was no doubt that taxes were too high” in Massachusetts during the 1970s.<sup>225</sup> His fiscal policy managed to keep property tax rates low by replacing the revenue through increased state aid to cities and towns, which simultaneously enabled his administration to exert more regulatory control over local spending. He generated the money to administer this program through a crackdown on tax evasion. The Dukakis administration established the Revenue Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) that combined a simplified form, amnesty for delinquent taxpayers, and tough enforcement of penalties. The program proved extremely successful and generated \$900 million dollars in three years, which

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<sup>223</sup> Patricia M. Flynn, “Lowell: A High Tech Success Story,” Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, September 1984 in *The Massachusetts Miracle*, 276.

<sup>224</sup> Richard Stengel, “A Tale of Two States,” *Time* (May 26, 1986).

<sup>225</sup> John Herbers, “New Democratic Governors Seek Blend of Right and Left,” *New York Times*, June 9, 1985.

amounted to a 27 percent increase in tax revenue. The program helped produce a state budget surplus that led Dukakis to administer a \$64 million tax cut in 1986, the largest such reduction in state history in 1986. This action undoubtedly bolstered both his approval ratings and image as an effective reformer.<sup>226</sup>

Dukakis also forged a new approach to social issues that built directly on this economic prosperity. His social service agenda earned national attention for the ways in which it fused the most popular ideas and policies of both liberalism and conservatism. Dukakis's approach represented a new version of growth liberalism predicated on the idea that economic prosperity would lead to the eradication of social ills and poverty even embracing the slogan "Taxachusetts is dead. Caring is not."<sup>227</sup> Dukakis defined himself "as a *full employment* Democrat," stating that "one of the principles goals of economic policy to provide good wages for every adult citizen in this country" and dubbing "full employment" "the most important human services program we have in this country."<sup>228</sup> However, unlike New Deal era policies, Dukakis firmly believed that employment opportunity and stimulus should emerge from the private, not public, sector.

Dukakis's revised workfare program constituted the clearest fulfillment of that goal and signaled the ways in which he aimed to reshape liberal policy. During his time out of office, Dukakis had remained preoccupied with how to move poor people off welfare and into service economy jobs. "The issue of work and welfare has been often called the Middle East of domestic policy," he later explained. "Everybody talks about it;

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<sup>226</sup> Fox Butterfield, "Massachusetts Tax Success Seen as a Boon to Dukakis," *New York Times*, January 19, 1986.

<sup>227</sup> Mike Dukakis for Governor, "We're with the Duke" Booklet, c. 1986, CPPAX.

<sup>228</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 233-234.

nobody wants to change it.”<sup>229</sup> Upon returning to the State House, he sought to transform the highly unpopular workfare program of his first administration into a more effective and sustainable idea. In 1983, Dukakis launched the program Employment and Training (ET) to give recipients a wider choice of training and work opportunities in the private sector. Unlike earlier coercive and punitive workfare attempts, the program was voluntary, and provided transportation, day care, and full welfare payments. Through ET, participants received career counseling, training in areas such as electronics, retail and food services, basic education, and job placement services.<sup>230</sup>

In its first four years of operation, the program placed 38,000 former welfare recipients in entry-level private sector jobs, many of them concentrated in the state’s new high-technology companies and defense companies such as Wang Laboratories and Raytheon. Every ET graduate earned at least \$10,000 per year.<sup>231</sup> ET became popular among participants, and it had a long-waiting list of people wanting to enroll. The program contributed to a 9.4 percent decline in the state welfare rolls between 1983 and 1985, the largest of any industrial state, and also reduced the Massachusetts welfare costs enabling the state to increase individual payments by 47 percent.<sup>232</sup> Dukakis declared in August 1987 that of all his accomplishments as governor he was proudest of ET because it represented “what this state is all about, what our country is or should be all about.”<sup>233</sup>

The program earned a great deal of national attention as an innovative and effective approach to the welfare issue. ABC News made ET and Dukakis the subject of a

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<sup>229</sup> Kenneth J. Cooper, “Dukakis Says Jobs Program Has Cut State’s Welfare Rolls,” *Boston Globe*, October 30, 1985.

<sup>230</sup> “Dukakis Touts ET Program, Says 8,000 Off Welfare,” *Boston Globe*, August 29, 1987.

<sup>231</sup> Cooper, “Dukakis Says Jobs Program Has Cut State’s Welfare Rolls”; “Dukakis Touts ET Program.”

<sup>232</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 190-191.

<sup>233</sup> “Dukakis Touts ET Program, Says 8,000 Off Welfare.”

“special report” on successful welfare programs.<sup>234</sup> In 1987, Ted Kennedy proposed an incentive plan to get other states to adopt a version of the ET program, which the Senate unanimously passed.<sup>235</sup> Liberal writer Robert Kuttner declared, “ET is Dukakis at his best,” observing that “more than program, ET is an attitude” since it combined the “liberal premise” that “most poor people want to better themselves” with the “conservative premise” that “most people ought to be working rather than living on the dole.”<sup>236</sup> Kuttner elaborated that the program further fused these two traditions by demonstrating “the good-government premise then an efficient, well-managed program is good for both recipients and taxpayers.”

By the end of his first term, Dukakis and the state had settled squarely into the national spotlight. “The Massachusetts story has really become the national story,” Wisconsin Governor Anthony Earl declared. “When people talk about low unemployment, they look to Massachusetts. When people talk about education and economic development, they look to Massachusetts. On issue after issue, we look to Massachusetts as a model for the other states.”<sup>237</sup> No issue more clearly solidified this image than the state’s dramatic economic reversal. *Time* published an article in 1986 deeming Massachusetts “the pacesetter for the nation’s transition to a high tech service oriented economy.”<sup>238</sup> *Time* reporter Richard Stengel adopted a revised version of Massachusetts exceptionalism, stressing the inevitability that Massachusetts served as “the very model of the high-tech state.” Drawing a comparison to the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, Stengel remarked that in the 1980s, the state’s

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<sup>234</sup> Gaines and Segal, *Dukakis and the Reform Impulse*, 232.

<sup>235</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 191.

<sup>236</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 191.

<sup>237</sup> Charles Kenney, “Why Not the Duke?” *Boston Globe*, January 4, 1987.

<sup>238</sup> Richard Stengel, “A Tale of Two States,” *Time* (May 26, 1986).

economy appeared once again “ahead of its time.” The very term “Massachusetts Miracle,” coined by members of the Dukakis administration, further fueled a naturalized vision of the state’s prosperity that overemphasized the governor’s singular role in the turnaround. Aiming to further attach himself to the state’s economic success, Dukakis launched a campaign called “Creating the Future” in which he brought national corporate labor, and academic leaders to tour innovative businesses across Massachusetts, which had benefited directly from state investment.<sup>239</sup> The campaign drew further national attention to the state’s economic success and Dukakis, who in 1986 the National Governor’s Association named the “most effective governor in America.” This honor impelled Dukakis to run for president the following year.<sup>240</sup>

### **The 1988 Presidential Race**

Dukakis made his successful turnaround of the state’s economy and political structure the centerpiece of his presidential campaign.<sup>241</sup> During the first year of his campaign, he primarily promoted his record as governor, emphasizing the state’s innovative programs such as ET and REAP and how he hoped to apply a similar style of leadership to the presidency. *Time* noted that he often appeared to be running for “Governor of the United States.”<sup>242</sup> Dukakis’s vision for creating “for good jobs at good wages” piqued the interest of blue-collar voters in the Midwest. At the same time, his commitment to stimulating high-tech growth earned him a following among white-collar

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<sup>239</sup> Kenney and Turner, *An American Odyssey*, 211. For more on Dukakis economic vision see Michael S. Dukakis and Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Creating The Future: The Massachusetts Comeback and Its Promise for America* (New York: Summit Books, 1988).

<sup>240</sup> Matthew Wald, “Dukakis Turns Eye to White House,” *New York Times*, December 28, 1986.

<sup>241</sup> Matthew L. Wald, “Dukakis Opens Presidential Quest,” *New York Times*, April 30, 1987.

<sup>242</sup> Walter Shapiro, The Duke of Economic Uplift, *Time* (July 27, 1987).

professionals in the metropolitan areas of the Sunbelt. In order to soften his image as a technocrat, Dukakis also emphasized his Greek ethnicity and first-generation immigrant narrative of upward mobility.<sup>243</sup> This strategy and message help earn him frontrunner status and the eventual nomination of the Democratic Party by the summer of 1988.

Suburban liberal activists in Massachusetts remained supportive but not ebullient about Dukakis. When deciding whether to run, Dukakis had sought the counsel of Jerome Grossman. While Grossman offered advice to Dukakis, he and his constituency did not show the same level of enthusiasm or activism as they had offered to candidates like Drinan and McGovern. Some members of the state's liberal base expressed more excitement about Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition. During the Massachusetts Democratic Primary, an alliance of union members, gay voters and disillusioned suburban liberals and African-Americans actively campaigned for Jackson.<sup>244</sup> The civil rights leader failed to defeat Dukakis on his home turf, but he came in second with 19 percent of vote. Jackson's success in the suburbs, particularly in the affluent South Shore communities of Cohasset, Duxbury, and Hingham that had virtually no African-American residents, created particular surprise. Experts interpreted these results as an implicit message to Dukakis not to veer too far to the center or right.<sup>245</sup> Many liberals, nevertheless, did not join Jackson's campaign, afraid of repeating the consequences of the 1978 governor's race. CPPAX endorsed Dukakis's candidacy but did not provide him

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<sup>243</sup> For more on Dukakis use of his ethnic identity see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Two: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 324-335. This focus on ethnicity surprised Massachusetts residents since it was one first time during his nearly thirty years in public office that Dukakis had discussed his Greek heritage. Emphasizing his Greek heritage served another practical purpose since Greek Americans were one of the nation's most entrepreneurial communities and they donated millions of dollars to Dukakis making him the best-funded of any Democratic candidate. See Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, 310.

<sup>244</sup> Bella English, "Rainbow in Dukakisland," *Boston Globe*, March 9, 1988.

<sup>245</sup> Larry Tye, "In Cohasset, Black Population, Jackson's Juggernaut Rolls On," *Boston Globe*, March 13, 1988.

the enthusiastic grassroots organizing and energy that had been crucial for earlier state and national candidates.<sup>246</sup>

The tense relationship between Dukakis and the liberal community in the state and the nation nevertheless became conflated and subsumed by the strategy of Republican candidate Vice President George H.W. Bush. The Bush campaign recognized that Dukakis's technocratic message of competence and integrity would make him a formidable candidate, a sentiment reinforced by the fact that he led the vice-president in the polls in the spring of 1988.<sup>247</sup> Bush and his campaign manager Lee Atwater, therefore, used a template established by previous conservative politicians to discredit Democratic candidates. The campaign transformed Dukakis's reputation as a technocrat into a sign of his elitism and depicted him as the quintessential "Massachusetts liberal" who was "out of step with the mainstream America on most social issues." The Bush campaign aimed to revive the rhetoric first formulated by Richard Nixon during the 1972 race even defining Dukakis as a "Massachusetts, McGovern-like liberal."<sup>248</sup> Atwater even called McGovern and Dukakis "two peas in a pod" and "political soul mates."<sup>249</sup> The Bush campaign relied on negative associations of Democratic social and economic policies in order to prove that Dukakis was "tax-and-spend," "an old-styled liberal," "Ted Kennedy liberal," who had never seen a "tax increase he didn't like."<sup>250</sup> It mattered little that these Bush's accusations did not mesh with Dukakis's fiscally conservative record.

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<sup>246</sup> CPPAX News Release, "Mass. Citizen Group Endorses Dukakis and Kennedy," September 22, 1988, CPPAX.

<sup>247</sup> Walter V. Robinson, Bush Sees Close Race Against Dukakis," *Boston Globe*, June 14, 1988.

<sup>248</sup> Walter V. Robinson, "Bush's Jabs on Defense Taking Toll on Dukakis," *Boston Globe*, September 9, 1988. For more on the legacy of Nixon's 1972 campaign tactics on the 1988 campaign see Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*, 244.

<sup>249</sup> Chris Black, "Dukakis' Positions Belie Left-Wing Label" *Boston Globe*, June 18, 1988.

<sup>250</sup> Walter V. Robinson, "Bush Strategy: Bush, Dukakis Aim is Replay of '84," *Boston Globe*, May 6, 1988; Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, 311-312.

The effectiveness of these messages showed the continuing power of the labels “Massachusetts” and “liberalism.”<sup>251</sup>

Conflating elitism with Massachusetts and liberalism also protected the well-heeled and Bay State-born Bush from attacks about his own pedigree. Bush used a series of keywords including “Massachusetts,” “Harvard,” “George McGovern,” “Ted Kennedy,” “Taxachusetts,” eventually simply the abbreviation the “L-word” to evoke the negative associations and resentment about both the Bay State and left-leaning politics and attach them to Dukakis.<sup>252</sup> Like Edward King’s strategy in the 1978 primary, Bush turned to social issues of school prayer, gun control, and the death penalty to turn out voters. Bush, hardly a Bible belt fundamentalist himself, declared there was a “wide chasm” on the “questions of values between me and the liberal governor whom I’m running against.”<sup>253</sup>

Bush’s attack culminated in two infamous campaign advertisements that intermingled the categories of race, gender and sexuality with the power of the Massachusetts liberal image. The first ad provided the visual counterpart to Bush’s accusation that Dukakis would not serve as an effective commander-in-chief. It showed the slightly-built Dukakis in a large military tank wearing an ill-fitting helmet. Similar to King’s slick advertisements, it called into doubt Dukakis’s masculinity and thereby evoked the stereotypes of liberal elites as weak and effeminate.<sup>254</sup> The second and far more damaging TV advertisement used gender and sexuality along with race to prove

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<sup>251</sup> Walter V. Robinson, “Bush Strategy: Bash Dukakis Aim is Replay of ’84,” *Boston Globe* (May 6, 1988).

<sup>252</sup> Thomas Oliphant, “Holding Back the Counterpunch Dukakis Ignores Repeated Bush Attacks—For Now,” *Boston Globe*, June 19, 1988.

<sup>253</sup> Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, 301-302.

<sup>254</sup> For historical context on notions of masculinity and the Democratic Party see K.A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

that Dukakis was incompetent and “soft” on crime. The spot told the story of Willie Horton, an African-American convicted murderer from Massachusetts who raped a white woman during a prison furlough, and concluded by stating “Weekend Prison Passes: Dukakis on Crime.” The ad drew immediate outrage from civil rights and Democratic activists who accused Bush of trying to use racial fears and anxieties of white voters to his advantage.<sup>255</sup> These advertisements showed that despite the state of Massachusetts’ tax revolt, busing crisis, and support of Ronald Reagan in two elections, it could not overcome an assumption that it was a bastion of elite liberalism that remained out of touch with the rest of the nation.

These advertisements served as key turning points in the 1988 presidential race. During the fall, the Dukakis campaign proved unable to muster a meaningful response, and Bush came from behind to lead in nearly every poll.<sup>256</sup> Two weeks before the election, opinion polls revealed that 41 percent of voters believed Dukakis would weaken national security and more than half believed Bush would strengthen it. Sixty-two percent of voters believed Bush was tough on crime, whereas only 37 thought the same of Dukakis.<sup>257</sup> In the weeks before the general election, it looked as though Dukakis might even lose Massachusetts due to both the caricatures of the Bush campaign and news that the state’s fiscal climate had steadily worsened. That prediction did not come true, however; Dukakis did end up winning his home state by only 8 percentage points. Bush won a by 6-5 vote margin overall and swept the Southern states.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> For more about the Willie Horton controversy, see Jacobson, *Roots Two*, 331-334.

<sup>256</sup> Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, 80.

<sup>257</sup> Kenneth S. Baer *Reinventing the Democrats: The Politics of Liberalism from Reagan to Clinton* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 260.

<sup>258</sup> E.J. Dionne, Jr. “Many Split Tickets,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1988.

Dukakis's sound defeat sent a particular disheartening message to Massachusetts residents, particularly liberals, since Bush's success largely lay in mobilizing the nation's resentments specifically against them. William Schneider, a political analyst, declared the election "proved most of the country does not want to be Massachusetts."<sup>259</sup> Unlike the 1972 election when similar interpretations evoked a sense of pride and exceptionalism, in 1988 the results became a point of embarrassment. The election appeared a referendum on the way of life and reputation of the Bay State that relied heavily on stereotypes and obscured a more complex reality. *Globe* Reporter Mark Muro observed, "The Bush style worked powerfully to pique hazy prejudices, to orchestrate old suspicions that Massachusetts and its institutions really are weightless, un-American."<sup>260</sup> The results showed the dangers of Massachusetts politicians trying to succeed at the national level even when they cultivated an image and platform of moderation. In the immediate aftermath of the election, Kevin Phillips warned, "It's an awfully big albatross to come from Massachusetts and expect to be president."<sup>261</sup>

Some progressive observers interpreted the results differently. For instance, economist Jeff Faux argued that Dukakis lost because he was not liberal enough to mobilize an enthusiastic grassroots based of support. The tepid response to Dukakis from the suburban liberal activists in groups like CPPAX upholds this observation. Faux argued that the future of the Democratic Party depended on galvanizing a populist cross-class, cross-race and cross-space coalition.<sup>262</sup> Few members of the Democratic Party, however, paid heed to this suggestion and listened to the advice of Kevin Phillips instead.

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<sup>259</sup> Mark Muro "Knocking Massachusetts Off Its Pedestal The Election Became A Referendum on—and Repudiation of the Bay State" *Boston Globe*, November 13, 1988.

<sup>260</sup> Muro "Knocking Massachusetts Off Its Pedestal."

<sup>261</sup> Muro "Knocking Massachusetts Off Its Pedestal."

<sup>262</sup> Jeff Faux, "The Myth of the New Democrats," *American Prospect* (September 21, 1993).

Following the 1988 election a group of politicians from the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), calling themselves “New Democrats” aimed to shift the party’s symbolic center of gravity away from the Northeast and liberal values and move toward the South and the ideological center. This strategy culminated in the success campaign of Sunbelt populist Bill Clinton in 1992. The name “New Democrat” itself embodied their effort to distance the party from its liberal past.<sup>263</sup>

The DLC’s centrist promoters have provided a distorted reinterpretation of Dukakis’s campaign platform that reified Bush’s attacks on its purported liberalism. The DLC’s efforts to remake the image of the Party have also obscured the clear line between the technocratic policies that Dukakis successfully promoted, the presidency of Jimmy Carter and the agenda of Bill Clinton.<sup>264</sup> As Governor of Arkansas, Clinton had praised Dukakis whose approach to governance had a clear influence on his ideas about effective management and establishing public-private partnerships.<sup>265</sup> During his presidency, Clinton advocated the shift to a high-tech service-based economy and a similar workfare solution to the welfare crisis that Dukakis had tested in the Bay State a decade earlier. These examples reveal the enduring imprint both Dukakis and Massachusetts have left on the national Democratic Party.

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<sup>263</sup> Faux, “The Myth of the New Democrats.”

<sup>264</sup> For a cogent critique of the New Democrats see Faux, “The Myth of the New Democrats.” Faux identifies several ways in which the DLC platform extended rather than broke from the platform of earlier presidential candidates.

<sup>265</sup> In 1987, Clinton had said of Dukakis: “I think he’s terrific.” See, Kenney, “Why Not the Duke?”

## Epilogue

The 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston symbolized the city's effort to overcome its reputation for racism, the state of Massachusetts's effort to confront its image as out of touch with the rest of the country, and the national Democratic Party's efforts to surmount the rumors of its decline. Explaining the motivations for Boston's aggressive campaign to host the event, Mayor Thomas Menino asserted, "For too many people around the country, when they think of Boston the image they remember is of Ted Landsmark getting hit with American flag. I wanted the opportunity to show people we are a much different city now, a city where diversity is welcome."<sup>1</sup> Michael Dukakis called on the convention organizers and Democratic presidential candidate and Bay State Senator John Kerry to fight back against the attacks associated with the label of "Massachusetts Liberal." "There's a lot about this state and this region that people can admire," Dukakis declared, "but you have to put it out there."<sup>2</sup> The Democratic National Committee heeded this advice. "We're going to use Boston to provide context and backdrop for the convention," a spokesperson explained, "Boston stands for so many things that are important in this election—patriotism, health care, education."<sup>3</sup>

A dizzying array of events, tours, and speeches surrounding the Convention, therefore, worked to the dispel the reputation of Boston and Massachusetts as a

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<sup>1</sup> Louis P. Masur, *The Soiling of Old Glory: The Story of a Photograph That Shocked America* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 91.

<sup>2</sup> Rick Klein, "Democrats Kick Off an Image-Enhancing Campaign For Boston," *Boston Globe*, June 18, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Rick Klein, "Image Blitz Planned for the Convention—Organizers Eye Positive Theme to Sell Hub," *Boston Globe*, April 4, 2004.

contradictory cauldron of racial tension, exceptional liberalism, northern elitism and high taxes, created by the Boston busing crisis, the results of the 1972 presidential election and George H.W. Bush's attack on Dukakis in 1988. Instead, the Democratic National Committee showcased Boston's booming high-tech economy, role in cutting-edge medical research, American Revolution landmarks and seeming racial harmony.<sup>4</sup> Inside the convention hall, Kerry sought to overcome the image of Dukakis's doomed tank ride by stressing his military service, support of middle-class tax cuts, and somewhat evasive stance on abortion and gay rights.<sup>5</sup> His opponent George W. Bush once again effectively adopted the image of Massachusetts residents as "out of touch" with "mainstream" values, which not even the balloons, Vietnam veterans, and centrist promises of the Convention could overcome.<sup>6</sup> Kerry's defeat in the 2004 presidential election offered the Democratic Leadership Council yet another Massachusetts-based cautionary tale and further solidified the sense that the state stood apart from the rest of the nation.

Just as Kerry and the Bay State had difficulty shedding the label of "Massachusetts Liberal," so, too, has the city of Boston experienced problems transcending its racially-fraught past. Mayor Menino was correct, however, in suggesting that Boston has become a more racially diverse city since the 1970s. Between 1970 and 1990 the minority of population of Boston doubled from 7 to 14.5 percent.<sup>7</sup> During the 1990s, Boston continued to lose its white residents and by the end of the decade had

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<sup>4</sup> Klein, "Democrats Kick Off an Image-Enhancing Campaign For Boston"; Klein, "Image Blitz Planned"; Michael Slackman, "Democrats Forced to Face Boston's Past," *New York Times*,

<sup>5</sup> Michael Kranish, "In Move to Middle, Campaign Aims to Shed Old Label"; See also, Patrick Healy, "Kerry Looks to Neutralize 'Mass. Liberal' Tag," *Boston Globe*, March 7, 2004; Elaine Kamarck, "Redefining 'Massachusetts Liberal'- Can Outdated Label Still Hurt Kerry?" *Boston Globe*, July 11, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Healy, "Kerry Looks to Neutralize 'Mass. Liberal' Tag"; Rick Klein, "'L-Word' Resurfaces on the Campaign Trail," *Boston Globe*, October 7, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Barry Bluestone and Mary Huff Stevenson, *The Boston Renaissance: Race, Space and Economic Change in American Metropolis* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000), 10.

transformed from “majority white” to a “majority minority” city.<sup>8</sup> In this period, Boston gained many Asian, and Hispanic, and Black residents largely the result of an increase 37,000-person increase in its foreign-born population during the decade.<sup>9</sup>

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Boston boasts one of most diverse immigrant communities of any major U.S. city.<sup>10</sup> While Boston had a small Chinese population since the late nineteenth century concentrated in Chinatown, the end of the Vietnam War and crisis in Cambodia coupled with the steady growth of the knowledge-based economy, has pushed the city’s Asian population beyond the boundaries of Chinatown to other parts of the city. The city’s Asian population grew from 8,442 in 1970 to 30,452 in 1990, and these newcomers represented a range of countries and income levels though refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam have compromised a large component of this growth.<sup>11</sup> During the same period, Boston’s Latino population expanded from 17,940 to 59,558. These migrants have come primarily from Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala, and Brazil.<sup>12</sup> Although Blacks still comprise the largest demographic group in Boston, immigration has also significantly changed its contours. A significant percentage of the city’s black community was born in

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<sup>8</sup> The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, *Boston In Focus: A Profile from Census 2000* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, 2003), 4; Bluestone and Stevenson, *Boston Renaissance*, 11, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Bluestone and Stevenson, *Boston Renaissance*, 11, 24.

<sup>10</sup> Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, *Boston In Focus*, 4. *Boston Renaissance*, 11, 24

<sup>11</sup> Diego Ribadeniera, “Asians Taking Root in the State’s Culture,” *Boston Globe*, June 4, 1995; Bluestone and Stevenson, *Boston Renaissance*, 37-39, see also, Tom L. Chung, “Asian Americans in Enclaves – They Are Not One Community: New Modes of Asian American Settlement,” *Asian American Policy Review*, Vol. V (1995), 78-94. Refugees settled in other Massachusetts areas as well. The city of Lowell became the site for the second greatest migration of Cambodians behind Long Beach, California.

<sup>12</sup> Bluestone and Stevenson, *Boston Renaissance*, 33-37.

Caribbean Basin, especially Haiti and the British Indies.<sup>13</sup> In fact, roughly 80 percent of the city's current black population did not reside in Boston at the time of the busing crisis.<sup>14</sup>

The Metropolitan Council of Educational Opportunity (METCO) provides an important microcosm of the changes in Boston's racial composition. During the 1980s and early 1990s the program began to face criticism that it did not serve the minority population of Boston equally and favored African-Americans. In the early 1990s, 32 percent of the Boston school population was Asian, Latino or another non-black minority, but only 5 percent of the METCO students fell into that category. These statistics led Chinese-American activist and Boston School Committee member Robert Gruen to accuse the program of not sufficiently recruiting Asian and Latino students.<sup>15</sup> This discrepancy derived in part from the program's dual roots in both the Racial Imbalance Act, which defined "non-white" explicitly as African-American, and the black freedom struggle of the 1960s. In 1994 the state heeded the criticisms of Gruen and others and began to issue specific guidelines for METCO recruitment. The stipulations required the program to reflect more accurately the changing demographics of Boston. By the 2007-2008 school year, the 3,274-pupil program included 2,462 African-Americans (75 percent), 552 Latinos (17 percent), and 112 Asians (3 percent).<sup>16</sup>

METCO remains extremely popular among minority parents in Boston. There is currently a 12,000-name waitlist of Boston students seeking acceptance into the program,

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<sup>13</sup> By 2000, the largest percentage (29 percent) of foreign born Bostonian come from Caribbean, see Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, *Boston In Focus*, 4, 28; Bluestone and Stevenson, *Boston Renaissance*, 40-41.

<sup>14</sup> Masur, *Soiling of Old Glory*, 197.

<sup>15</sup> Peter S. Canellos, "Education Chief Vows to Review Recruiting Practices for METCO," *Boston Globe*, June 18, 1993,

<sup>16</sup> [www.doe.mass.edu/metco/faq.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/metco/faq.html) (last accessed March 21, 2010).

which compromises one-fourth of all Boston residents eligible.<sup>17</sup> Many parents sign their children up before their first birthday. These names reveal the continued success of METCO's mission in providing quality education for students of color, which remains the primary reason that most parents aim to enroll their children in the program.<sup>18</sup> In a clear testament to the educational opportunities the program offers, between 2002 and 2004, 87 percent of METCO graduates went to college, more than the state's 77 percent rate for all students, and Boston's 54 percent rate.<sup>19</sup> Although they discuss the hardship that participation entailed, the vast majority of METCO alumni have stated they would participate again or put their children in program if they had the chance.<sup>20</sup> These respondents have consistently stated that the most important thing they gained from METCO was how to operate in a white world. This sentiment brings into sharp relief the ways in which the individualist contours of the program have failed to challenge the structures of metropolitan inequality.

METCO remains fully funded by the Massachusetts government and constitutes one of the few programs of its kind in the nation. METCO has served as an essential component of the state's effort to restore its image of liberalism and sense of tolerance in the aftermath of the Boston busing crisis. The state government takes pride in the program's national acclaim and frequently touts its funding of METCO as a sign of its commitment to racial integration. METCO remains, nevertheless, the only state-funded racial integration program that Massachusetts offers. And, despite their consistent

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<sup>17</sup> Jan, "METCO Fears for its Future," *Boston Globe*, July 26, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Gary Orfield Jennifer Arenson, Tara Jackson, Christine Bohrer, Dawn Gavin, Emily Kalejs, et al. "City-Suburban Desegregation: Parent and Student Perspectives in Metropolitan Boston." (Cambridge: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, September 1997.)

<sup>19</sup> Richard D. Kahlenberg, "How to Save METCO" *Boston Globe*, November 13, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Susan Eaton, *The Other Boston Busing Story: What's Won and Lost Across the Boundary Line* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 3, 197-217.

celebrations of METCO, state politicians never suggest that the program should be expanded or that suburban municipalities should pay a fraction of its \$20 million yearly budget.<sup>21</sup> The program, therefore, has roughly remained the size it was at the time of the busing crisis, even as the waitlist of Boston students hoping to get involved continues to grow. Massachusetts remains a heavily suburbanized state and the unwillingness to expand the program or alter its funding structure illustrates an important way in which state politicians are responsive to the political priorities of white middle class suburbanites, whom they largely represent.

The Supreme Court's decision to strike down the voluntary busing plans of Louisville and Seattle in 2007 has made the legal future of the 44-year-old program uncertain. While no case has yet arisen, many fear the ruling will either bring the end of the program or will force METCO to transport students on the basis of economic class. METCO officials have opposed using income as a substitute for race on the grounds that it would only reinforce stereotypes that the program has worked hard to challenge. "I'm not going to send a bus of poor kids to the suburbs," longtime director Jean McGuire said in the aftermath of the Supreme Court decision, "That's cruel. There are enough people who think that all black kids are poor as it is."<sup>22</sup> McGuire and other METCO officials have also opposed such a move since they worry it will lead suburban communities to withdraw participation. Suburban school officials have confirmed fears by suggesting that using class rather than race as the main admission criteria would reduce the multicultural benefits of the program for their predominately white student populations. Capturing the sentiment of many suburban officials, the METCO coordinator in Lincoln

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<sup>21</sup> James Vaznis, "METCO in a Budget Squeeze," *Boston Globe*, April 27, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Tracy Jan, "METCO Fears for its Future," *Boston Globe*, July 26, 2007.

succinctly declared: “We don’t need more white children.”<sup>23</sup> These reactions illuminate the persistence of class discrimination in shaping both the mission of METCO and the ideology of suburban liberalism.

The depictions of the program in these black and white terms, nevertheless, ignore important changes to the racial demographics within the Boston suburbs since the 1980s. The resurgence of technology companies kindled by the Massachusetts Miracle coupled with the changes in federal immigration policy has led to a surge in the Asian population in the Route 128 suburbs over the last thirty years. In Lexington, the Asian population grew from 3 to 7 percent, Newton from 2 to 4.6 percent and Brookline from 4.8 to 8.4 percent over the course of the 1990s.<sup>24</sup> Unlike the largely low-income refugee populations concentrated in Boston, Chelsea and Lowell, newcomers in Lexington, Newton and Concord consist primarily of either the upwardly mobile children of earlier generations of immigrant families or middle-class immigrants who came to the Boston area to achieve a “high-tech version of the American dream.”<sup>25</sup> “Most are like me,” Lexington resident Sophia Ho observed, “Immigrants who, I don’t want to use the word ‘made it’ but who’ve been successful. They want to raise their children in a town where education is very important.”<sup>26</sup> Describing why their two-year long search led them to the affluent suburb of Weston, Upendra Mishra, a newspaper owner and his wife a software engineer explained, “When we saw that every kid who graduated Weston High School

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<sup>23</sup> Jan, “METCO Fears for its Future.”

<sup>24</sup> Irene Sege, “Moving Out and Moving Up: Asian-Americans Establish Growing Presence in the Suburbs” *Boston Globe*, May 19, 1991, Beginning in the late 1990s, the Boston area experienced a particularly large influx of engineers and other and white-collar professionals from India, see Kimberly Blanton, “Out of India Computer Pioneers from Bombay to Delhi are Flocking to Greater Boston to Pursue a High-Tech Version of the American Dream,” *Boston Globe*, September 30, 2001; Cindy Rodriguez, “A High-Tech Home for Indians,” *Boston Globe*, July 22, 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Blanton, “Out of India.”

<sup>26</sup> Sege, “Moving Out and Moving Up.”

went on to college, without exception, we said, this is perfect. This is where we want to live.”<sup>27</sup> These explanations echo the motivating factors that led many young white families to move to Lexington and its surrounding areas in the 1950s and 1960s and shows the ways in which the high-tech industry continues to remake the social dynamics of the historic communities along Route 128.

The schools have become the most visible indication of the influence of this new population on the Route 128 suburbs. In the 1990s, for instance, about one in four new students in the Newton schools were Asian. The town of Acton drew a particularly high concentration of international residents to work as engineers and computer scientists in nearby high-tech firms.<sup>28</sup> Between 1990 and 2000, the number of residents over age five who spoke Chinese at home rose more than 700 percent from 102 to 773. At one Acton elementary school alone, 93 of the 500 students speak a language other than English at home.<sup>29</sup> Most longtime residents of the Route 128 suburbs have celebrated this rise in new ethnic groups in their communities. Extending the logic that led many residents to support METCO, these white suburbanites interpret foreign-born students as a means to expose their children to cultural diversity.<sup>30</sup> In Acton, for instance, the schools have introduced Asian languages and history into the current curriculum on the grounds that it will benefit white children as well.

White suburban residents’ selective celebrations of multiculturalism, nevertheless, helped to further inscribe class discrimination as a natural feature of the suburban

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<sup>27</sup> Cindy Rodriguez, “An Educated Move—Top School Systems Draw Asians to Wealthy Suburbs,” *Boston Globe*, May 7, 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Douglas Belkin, “Where Brawn Meets Brains,” *Boston Globe*, October 7, 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Sally Heaney, “Good Schools, Affordability Attracting Chinese to Acton,” *Boston Globe*, November 20, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Christine McConville, “Small Town Sees World of Change—Immigrants Bring Greater Diversity to Public Schools,” *Boston Globe*, November 10, 2002.

landscape. Like the fair housing movement and the METCO program, this ideology rooted in suburban liberalism celebrates the meritocratic achievements of middle-class people of color, while perpetuating the discrimination against less privileged minorities. For instance, the Lexington Public School system added 1,800 Asian children but included only 32 more African-American and 37 Latino students in the 1990s.<sup>31</sup> In Needham, the growth of Asian students during the 1990s was nearly triple that of African-Americans and Latinos combined.<sup>32</sup> Thus, while these demographic developments have helped lessen the pronounced black-white binary in the Route 128 suburbs, they have intensified patterns of class and race inequality throughout metropolitan Boston.

While the overall suburban minority population increased during the 1990s, but so too did the segregation of blacks and Latinos from whites and Asians. The 2000 census showed that 43 percent of the state's black population lives in Boston, almost entirely in the Dorchester, Mattapan and Roxbury neighborhoods, which have high levels of poverty, crime and struggling schools. Research has yielded that blacks have the lowest percentage of homeownership and the highest percentage of public housing residency of any racial group in Boston.<sup>33</sup> These patterns have stretched into the neighboring suburbs. African-Americans represent 10 percent of the population of the affluent inner-ring suburb of Milton, which gives it the sixth largest percentage of black residents in the state. Yet nearly all of these black residents are concentrated in a less than 2-square-mile part of the community. Blacks comprise less than 5 percent of Milton's population

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<sup>31</sup> Rodriguez, "An Educated Move."

<sup>32</sup> Rodriguez, "An Educated Move."

<sup>33</sup> Bluestone and Stevenson, *Boston Renaissance*, 126; Guy Stuart, "Segregation in the Boston Metropolitan Area at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century" (Cambridge: Civil Rights Project Harvard University, February 2000).

outside of that area.<sup>34</sup> Similarly the Latino population in Massachusetts has increasingly become concentrated in the struggling cities of Lawrence and Chelsea where they compromise 60 and 48 percent of the population respectively and faced similar hurdles.<sup>35</sup>

The ineffectiveness to challenge the exclusionary zoning practices of suburban municipalities has directly contributed to these patterns of racial, economic and spatial inequality. Surveying the 2000 census, the Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston remarked, “there is a correlation between the strength of a community’s resistance to 40B and the lack of diversity in those communities.”<sup>36</sup> The Route 128 suburbs embody this trend, falling drastically short of the 10 percent guideline outlined in the 1969 Anti Snob Zoning Act (officially known as 40B).<sup>37</sup> In Route 128 communities like Concord and Wellesley, residents have continued to use a combination of 40B delay mechanisms and environmental laws to blunt the mandate of the Anti-Snob Zoning Act and prevented the building of even small scattered site projects.<sup>38</sup> Many of the towns that have fought tooth-and-nail against affordable housing construction continue to participate actively in the METCO program. In fact, residents and officials often deflect charges of racial and economic exclusivity by citing their involvement in METCO as a justification for not building affordable housing. These

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<sup>34</sup> Kimberly Atkins, “Mapping the Quiet Divide,” *Boston Globe*, March 9, 2003.

<sup>35</sup> Atkins, “Mapping the Quiet Divide.”

<sup>36</sup> Atkins, “Mapping the Quiet Divide.”

<sup>37</sup> Rhonda Stewart, “Towns Seek New Housing Strategies—Affordable Rate of 10% Still Far Off,” *Boston Globe*, May 9, 2004; “No Quarter for Snob Zoning,” *Boston Globe*, July 27, 2007.

<sup>38</sup> See for instance, Matt Carroll, “Delayed to Death—Dogged Opposition, Lengthy Appeals and a Changing Market Have Conspired to Kill at Least Half of Proposed 40B Housing Projects South of Boston Since 1999,” *Boston Globe*, June 17, 2007; Michael Blanding, “The War Over Affordable Housing is Being Fought on a New Battleground,” *Boston Magazine*, 2002, [www.bostonmagazine.com](http://www.bostonmagazine.com) (last accessed March 22, 2010); Jennifer B. McKim, Affordable Housing Law Faces New Challenge, *Boston Globe*, August 19, 2009.

blockades underscore the very limited sense of responsibility of most suburban residents for the larger patterns of segregation and poverty in Boston.

During the 1980s and 1990s, changes in the patterns of suburbanization compounded these problems of racial and economic inequality in metropolitan Boston. In the 1980s many high-tech firms began shifting construction of their headquarters and plants to I-495, a semi-circular highway 30 miles from downtown Boston, where land was cheaper and more abundant than the famed Route 128 highway.<sup>39</sup> Population migration quickly followed suit as large shopping centers and subdivisions joined the industrial parks, rapidly transforming the former farming communities along this corridor.<sup>40</sup> I-495 has joined places like Loudon County in Northern Virginia as a national symbol of exurban sprawl.<sup>41</sup> During the 1990s, the resurging economy brought Massachusetts its biggest population boom since the decade after World War II. The area between I-495 and Route 128 gained 124,700 residents accounting for nearly 40 percent of the state's growth.<sup>42</sup> This boom in the I-495 high-tech corridor, nevertheless, exacerbated the population declines in several Route 128 suburbs including Burlington, Belmont, Waltham and Wellesley.<sup>43</sup> Few residents of color have joined in the I-495

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<sup>39</sup> Jerry Ackerman, "The Suburbs Gain the Edge Rapid Job Growth Outside Boston Has Led to a Shift in the Demand for Office Space," *Boston Globe*, July 18, 1993; Susan Diesenhouse, "Cisco Is Building Corporate Campus Outside Boston," *New York Times*, Alan R. Earls, "Route 495 commercial, industrial market picks up," *Boston Globe*, November 25, 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander Reid, "Towns Farther From Boston Growing Faster Census Finds," *Boston Globe* September 9, 2001.

<sup>41</sup> Bruce Katz, "Welcome to Exit Ramp Economy," *Boston Globe*, May 13, 2001.

<sup>42</sup> Cindy Rodriguez, "Along I-495, A Concrete Ribbon of Growth-Once Rural Towns Are Now Suburbs," *Boston Globe*, April 9, 2001.

<sup>43</sup> Cindy Rodriguez, "Suburbs Drawing Boston Blacks," *Boston Globe*, April 4, 2001; Chris Chinlund, "Boston Grows as Some Suburbs Start to Shrink Census Shows Decline Along Route 128 and Growth in Route 495 Communities," *Boston Globe*, August 11, 1985.

migration and thus the area remains about 93 percent white, paralleling national patterns of suburban growth.<sup>44</sup>

These demographic shifts toward I-495 had important political reverberations, making suburban voters ever more central in shaping state and national elections. After Dukakis retired in 1988, the state elected Republican William Weld as its new governor. Weld promoted a form of “Volvo Republicanism,” a term that revealed its popularity among upper-middle-class white moderate suburbanites.<sup>45</sup> This governing philosophy, which another observer deemed “libertarian liberalism,” had much in common with Dukakis’s platform. It combined fiscal restraint and social moderation, advocating that government should limit its bureaucratic reach and stay out of personal decisions like divorce and gay rights.<sup>46</sup> Weld sought to explicitly distance himself from the increased social conservatism of Republicans nationally and revive the party’s libertarian tradition. He ushered in four consecutive Republican Massachusetts governors including Mitt Romney in 2002, who continued Weld’s commitment to fiscal restraint and business development.

The success of these Republicans in the traditionally Democratic state has demonstrated the growing strain of political independents in Massachusetts, especially in high-tech suburbs. “Neither Republicans nor Democrats define the state’s political psyche today,” longtime political reporter Robert L. Turner observed in 1998.

“Independent voters—those who refuse to link themselves with any party have

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<sup>44</sup> Cindy Rodriguez, “Suburbs Drawing Boston Blacks,” *Boston Globe*, April 4, 2001.

<sup>45</sup> David Warsh, “The Road from Taxachusetts,” *Boston Globe*, November 1, 1994.

<sup>46</sup> Robert L. Turner “The State We’re in Massachusetts Still Gets Labeled ‘Liberal’, But the Truth is More Complicated,” *Boston Globe*, October 18, 1998.

determined most of Massachusetts' critical elections in the last 20 years."<sup>47</sup> In 1990, the number of self-defined Independents surpassed the number of registered Democrats, which stagnated during the 1990s, even as Bill Clinton received his largest percentage vote in Massachusetts in 1996.<sup>48</sup> These results show the increasing convergence between the politically moderate messages of Republican governors in Massachusetts and the Democratic candidates running for president.

The results of these gubernatorial races highlight the importance of suburban residents in shaping Bay State politics. As one reporter summarized, "Governors are made in the suburbs, where the voters are socially liberal, cautious on economics and wary of concentrations of power."<sup>49</sup> Romney's promise not to raise taxes led him to win both the affluent Route 128 suburbs such as Wellesley and Marblehead and virtually every community along I-495. Analysts in fact recognized that the "suburban commuter voter," which they defined as affluent and politically independent professionals, made the difference in Romney's decisive victory over his Democratic opponent.<sup>50</sup> Under Romney's tenure, the state continued to embody a political agenda of social liberalism and fiscal moderation, passing two pieces of legislation that came to set the terms of political and social debate across the nation. In 2003, Massachusetts became the first state to legalize gay marriage, which Romney unsuccessfully tried to veto. Two years later, in 2005, it adopted the first state-mandated health care system. At the time, Romney advocated the health-care reform presenting the program in a language of individualism

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<sup>47</sup> Turner "The State We're in Massachusetts Still Gets Labeled 'Liberal.'"

<sup>48</sup> Turner "The State We're in Massachusetts Still Gets Labeled 'Liberal.'"

<sup>49</sup> Joanna Weiss, "Political Clout Moves to Bay State Suburbs," *Boston Globe*, November 16, 2002.

<sup>50</sup> Weiss, "Political Clout Moves to Bay State Suburbs."

and free-market ideology, which appealed directly to the individualist sensibility of white middle-class suburbanites.<sup>51</sup>

Romney's success proved the power of suburban voters in Massachusetts politics to the state Democratic Party. Chairman of the state party Phil Johnston observed that to be successful politicians in Massachusetts must "fashion a message for the suburbs."<sup>52</sup> Fellow leader Glen Godis similarly declared, "If we intend to be competitive, we have to focus on a more moderate agenda."<sup>53</sup> Thus, the state Democratic Party began to search for ways to appeal to the so-called "SUV-driving suburbanites" who seemed to abandon them for Romney.<sup>54</sup> In 2006, Democrat gubernatorial candidate Deval Patrick understood well the power of social liberalism and fiscal moderation among Bay State suburbanites. Patrick, an African-American, had grown up poor on the South Side of Chicago, the product of a METCO-style program that led him to a boarding school in Massachusetts and then Harvard and Harvard Law School. He was the top civil rights official in the Justice Department in the Clinton Administration before leaving to work as lawyer for Texaco and Coca-Cola. His personal narrative potentially offered another marker that Massachusetts had resolved its racial tension. Patrick, nevertheless, explicitly aimed to de-center his race during the campaign and instead, like Romney, presented himself as an outsider and business executive with a strong commitment to fiscal management and transcending partisan division. He promised to bring "accountability"

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<sup>51</sup> Joe Klein, "The Republican Who Thinks Big on Health Care," *Time* (December 4, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> Weiss, "Political Clout Moves to Bay State Suburbs."

<sup>53</sup> Brian C. Mooney, "Party Ponders Direction – Defeat Triggers Debate Among Mass. Democrats," *Boston Globe*, November 25, 2002.

<sup>54</sup> Mooney, "Party Ponders Direction."

and “leadership” and to make the state “stop dwelling on the differences between the right and the left and start focusing on the differences between right and wrong.”<sup>55</sup>

This moderate message helped Patrick become the first African-American governor of Massachusetts and the first Democrat to hold the seat in sixteen years. He achieved a landslide victory across the state, bolstering his largest base of support within the affluent suburbs outside of Boston. In Newton, 70 percent of voters supported Patrick, his largest margin of victory. While his personal narrative and image compelled suburban residents in the Route 128 and 495 communities, it was Patrick’s promises to help local communities resolve their budget deficits and help keep property taxes under control that truly tipped the levers in his favor.<sup>56</sup> A similar political agenda and set of biographical details led Barack Obama to overwhelmingly carry these highway-bound suburbs and the state of Massachusetts as a whole two years later.

In January 2010 Massachusetts catapulted into the national political spotlight when Republican State Senator Scott Brown won the special election to fill the seat vacated by “liberal lion” Edward Kennedy. The first election of a Republican senator since 1972 did not just end the one party rule of the Massachusetts congressional delegation, but more notably, the Democratic Party’s super majority in the Senate. The seemingly improbable victory of Brown sent both the party and the nation reeling. The election result provided further confirmation that despite the Democratic Leadership Council’s effort to reorient the party’s image away from the Bay State, the fates of Massachusetts, the Democrats, and liberalism remain intimately intertwined.

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<sup>55</sup> Katie Zezima, “Easy Victories in Primaries in 2 States,” *New York Times*, September 20, 2006.

<sup>56</sup> John C. Drake, “Patrick Scored Big in Most Western Suburbs,” *Boston Globe*, November 12, 2006; Brian C. Mooney “Patrick sparks a Democratic resurgence in cities across the state,” *Boston Globe*, November 9, 2006. Michael Paulson “Candidate Draws Every Country from the Mountains to the Sea,” *Boston Globe*, September 20, 2006.

The widespread shock that Scott Brown victory's occurred in "the bluest of the blue states" illuminates how that reputation has obscured the fiscally moderate and complex political realities of Massachusetts.<sup>57</sup> The largest support for Brown emerged from the suburbs between the Route 128 and Route 495 rings. These communities are disproportionately populated by employees of the state's high-tech corporations who were also central to the success of Weld, Romney, and Patrick in each of their bids for the governorship.<sup>58</sup> Democratic candidate Martha Coakley did win Lexington and Newton and by a smaller margin Concord, but it was not enough to offset the large turnout for Brown in these booming areas. Brown represented a predominately suburban and exurban state senate district and therefore knew how to appeal to this constituency presenting himself as a reformer and promising effective fiscal management and change.<sup>59</sup> He, therefore, updated a bipartisan and bifurcated tradition of fiscal moderation and social liberalism that directly contributed to the political success of Michael Dukakis in 1974, Edward King in 1978, William Weld in 1990, Mitt Romney in 2002, Deval Patrick in 2006 and even Barack Obama in 2008.

On the surface, Brown's victory served as a litmus test of the public's attitude toward President Obama.<sup>60</sup> Many of the progressives who voted for Obama have joined in these clamors of dissatisfaction.<sup>61</sup> The sense of disillusionment, however, demonstrates

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<sup>57</sup> See for instance Karen Timulty, "Mass Mutiny: How Scott Brown Shook the Political World," *Time* (January 21, 2010); Michael Cooper "G.O.P. Senate Victory Stuns Democrats *New York Times*, January 20, 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Brian C. Mooney, "Suburbs Carried Brown to Victory," *Boston Globe*, January 21, 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Cooper, "In Senate Race, Massachusetts Bucks a Political Stereotype," *New York Times*, January 18, 2010

<sup>60</sup> See for instance, Mark Halperin, "Can Obama Fend Off the 'Failure' Attacks?" *Time*, (February 22, 2010); Eleanor Clift, "What Obama Did Wrong" *Newsweek* (February 12, 2010); Michael Scherer, "Five Ways Obama Went Wrong," *Time* (January 20, 2010); Frank Rich, "After the Massachusetts Massacre," *New York Times*, January 23, 2010.

<sup>61</sup> See for instance, "Massachusetts Meltdown," *The Nation* (February 8, 2010).

a basic misunderstanding of the transformations that have occurred within liberalism and the Democratic Party over the course of the last fifty years. Obama's campaign and policies directly embody the suburbanization and corporatization of liberalism and the Democratic Party. Obama has pursued a set of policies that do not aim to remake the structures of capitalism but, rather, to work largely within them by promoting privatized solutions. The president's treatment of unequal wages of CEOs, managers and other highly-skilled workers as the byproduct of meritocracy rather than government subsidies complements the tenets of market-based individualism and middle-class entitlements at the heart of suburban liberalism.<sup>62</sup> This vision of the knowledge-based "New Economy" directly benefits the white-collar suburbanites in the Route 128 and Route 495 high-tech corridors, who have come to serve as the base of the Democratic Party over the last thirty years. This fiscally moderate and socially liberal agenda played a pivotal part in Obama winning 50 percent of suburban voters across the nation in the 2008 election, including many of the people in Massachusetts who led Brown to the chambers of the U.S. Senate. Obama's and Brown's victories together highlight the importance of the suburbs in shaping the political agenda and priorities of both of the state and the country as a whole. Ultimately, these results reveal that Massachusetts, and its suburban residents, embody the archetype for, not the exception to, understanding the changes in Democratic Party and the nation during the last fifty years.

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<sup>62</sup> For an excellent critique of the "New Economy" see Michael Lind, "The Clintonites Were Wrong" *Salon.com*, January 4, 2010 (last accessed March 21, 2010).

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