
Pat Brown: The Making of a Reformer

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Few figures have played a more important role in the political and governmental history of modern California than that of Edmund G. "Pat" Brown. Elected district attorney of San Francisco in 1943, Brown began a productive and distinguished career in local law enforcement. He instituted a systematic reform program, cracked down on commercial vice, and reshaped much of the city's legal system. Brown's reputation soared along with his reforms. He won election to the office of state attorney general in 1950, adopted a tough approach to his responsibilities, and worked to root out official corruption and organized crime. By 1958 he had become the most popular figure in the California Democratic organization. Elected the same year to the governor's office on a platform strongly committed to humane and responsive government, Brown set in a motion a chain of political and social reforms. The result was a large number of very innovative programs in such areas as race relations, higher education, and water resources. Brown also encountered an enormous amount of social protest and civil disorder. These forces undermined popular support for liberal reform, left many Democratic voters disenchanted with the Brown administration, and contributed heavily to the emergence of a new Republican conservatism.

The sources of Pat Brown's political consciousness extend back to his youth. He was born in San Francisco in 1905. His mother influenced him considerably. Extremely intelligent and well read in the classics, she instilled in her son a serious interest in intellectual and public affairs. She brought him to political rallies and lectures by prominent writers and took him to polling booths on election day. His father, Edmund Joseph, also shaped his contact with the outside world. He owned a few businesses in the downtown area. In 1912 one business collapsed and left the family in near poverty conditions. Falling deeper into debt, he put Edmund Junior into the workforce. The youngster delivered the *Call* and the *Chronicle*, worked as an usher in a local theater, and waited on customers in his father's novelty store. ¹

Determined to avoid his father's misfortune, Brown studied hard in school and earned above average grades. He also participated in extracurricular activities. Student politics was of particular interest to him. He gave a rousing speech in sup-

port of World War I liberty bonds in the seventh grade, ending with Patrick Henry's resolve of "Give me liberty or give me death." His classmates dubbed him "Pat" and the nickname stayed with him the rest of his life. In high school, he served as president of the debating society, helped establish a fraternity devoted to religious tolerance, and starred on the school's basketball team.²

After graduation, Brown went to work in his father's cigar store. One of his chores was to usher people into Edmund Senior's nightly card games. Disenchanted with the gambling world and anxious to find something to challenge his keen intellect, he enrolled in the San Francisco College of Law. He worked fifteen hours a day and attended classes at night. His sister recalled years later that Brown "worked, came home, ate, went to law school." He even managed to find time to read books by noted philosophers.³ Despite this grueling schedule, he graduated in the top of his class in 1927 and passed the California state bar examination in the same year. Brown found employment as an assistant to Milton Schmitt, a blind attorney in San Francisco and former member of the State Assembly. He helped him choose juries and frequently read from cases during Schmitt's arguments. Schmitt died in 1928. Brown took over the practice and invited his brother and two other partners to help him reorganize the firm. They did pro bono criminal defense litigation and handled civil cases ranging from divorces to bankruptcy petitions.⁴

Brown was not completely satisfied with legal work. He saw public office as a way to make full use of his talents. In 1928 he decided to run for a seat in the State Assembly on the Republican ticket. Tom Finn, leader of the local Republican machine, endorsed Brown's opponent. Brown suffered a humiliating defeat receiving only 500 votes. The following year he married Bernice Layne, the daughter of a San Francisco police captain. Brown soon returned to his expanding law practice.⁵

Politics continued to be the young lawyer's greatest passion, however. Brown attended meetings of local civic organizations and participated in Republican campaign rallies. He also gave speeches in support of Herbert Hoover in the 1932 presidential contest.⁶ The coming of the Great Depression forced him to reevaluate his loyalty to the Republican party. Matthew Dobriner, a close friend and prominent labor lawyer, abandoned the GOP and went over to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal. Roosevelt's election, Dobriner believed, represented the beginning of a new era in American politics. He gave Brown copies of the liberal *New Republic* and quoted the respected journalist Walter Lippman on the need to reform the national economy. In 1934, with 25 percent of the workforce unemployed, Brown changed his party affiliation to Democratic and won election to the San Francisco Democratic party's central committee. He delivered speeches in sup-

port of Upton Sinclair, a noted socialist who was running that year as the Democratic candidate for governor on a platform to End Poverty in California (EPIC).⁷ Republican Governor Frank Merriam conducted an effective campaign in which he attacked Sinclair's EPIC as dangerous radicalism and promised to secure federal assistance for unemployed workers. Merriam defeated Sinclair by nearly 260,00 votes.⁸

Sinclair's defeat left Brown disenchanted with state politics. He turned his attention to municipal affairs. San Francisco's government, under the control of old-time machine politicians, tolerated an enormous amount of civic corruption. Prostitution houses flourished, illegal gambling dens covered the downtown area, and police officers often accepted bribes from criminal defense lawyers. Revolted by these conditions, Brown, after reading several articles about an organization in Seattle called the New Order of Cincinnatus, a nonpartisan group promoting honest city government, established a Cincinnatus chapter in San Francisco in 1935. Composed of young men determined to eliminate corruption, the Order launched a campaign against incumbents on the Board of Supervisors, backed a rival slate of candidates, and ousted four members of the board.⁹

The next target of the reformers was District Attorney Matthew Brady. Brady often ignored commercial vice and tolerated police graft. Backed by the Order, Brown entered the race for district attorney in 1939. He campaigned everywhere in San Francisco and promised to rid the city of crime. Brady reminded voters of his long service to the community and won the election easily.¹⁰ Brown challenged Brady again in 1943. Two local newspapers endorsed Brown. Heartened by this support, he gave speeches nearly every night and shook the hands of some 100,000 voters. He campaigned under the banner "Crack Down on Crime. Pick Brown this Time" and informed the electorate that the police department directed and protected commercial vice. Brown scolded Brady for being a lazy law enforcement official who did nothing about police corruption. Shortly before the election, Brady charged that underworld elements were contributing money to Brown's campaign. Brown dismissed the charge, told voters that Brady had failed to close illegal gambling parlors, and accused him of having close ties with local bookies. Brown won by a wide margin.¹¹

Brown entered an office in awful shape. Thomas Lynch, a former federal prosecutor who became Brown's top assistant, recalled that the district attorney's office was "the most colossal disaster" he ever encountered. Deputy district attorneys worked only part-time and conducted practices away from their offices, desk drawers overflowed with various materials, and two secretaries recorded legal

briefs and other judicial documents in longhand. The criminal justice system was more disgraceful. Police and not prosecutors decided which charges to levy against criminals, deputy district attorneys usually handled bail funds, and defense lawyers routinely bribed police officers to keep criminal suspects out of jail.¹² Determined to eliminate these sordid conditions, Brown carefully studied the reform record of Alameda County District Attorney Earl Warren. During the late 1920s and early 1930s Warren had reshaped his office along the lines of nonpartisanship and professionalism, rooted out organized vice and official corruption, and suppressed police graft.¹³ Brown pursued a similar reform program. He hired honest attorneys as his top aides, installed a new records system, and ended the practice of police indictments of criminals. He also closed down abortionists, brothels and poker parlors.¹⁴

Brown was equally concerned with civil liberties. Following the outbreak of war between the United States and Japan in 1941, leftist radicals encountered considerable hostility from governmental authorities. The federal government sought to deport longshoremen union leader Harry Bridges because of his alleged Communist associations. Brown sent a letter in support of Bridges to President Roosevelt and reminded him of the important contributions Bridges and his union were making to the war effort.¹⁵ Brown also cared about the plight of the Japanese population. Public authorities in California and federal defense officials worried about possible sabotage and sought the removal of the Japanese population from the West Coast. President Roosevelt in 1942 ordered the evacuation of 112,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans to remote detention camps.¹⁶ Rightfully seeing this action as a gross violation of civil liberties, Brown strongly opposed the evacuation. He also established special measures to protect Japanese citizens from racist attacks as they returned to San Francisco following the war.¹⁷

Brown was not totally satisfied with local law enforcement. In 1946 he decided to run for state attorney general; his opponent was Los Angeles District Attorney Fred Howser. Brown presented himself as an aggressive crimefighter. Howser ran on the strength of his record in Los Angeles and won easily. Brown challenged him again in 1950. He provided syndicated columnist Drew Pearson with information linking Howser to a bribery scandal. Further damage to Howser's reputation came from Edward Shattuck, former deputy city attorney of Los Angeles. Shattuck entered the Republican primary with the backing of many party officials and charged that two deputies in the attorney general's office had close ties with major underworld figures.¹⁸ He won the Republican nomination with ease. He reminded voters of Brown's opposition to the attempted deportation of Harry Bridges and accused him of being supportive of left-wing causes. Brown ignored the charge and promised that he

would crack down on criminals and domestic subversives. He stumped everywhere in the state, met with top police officials, and won the endorsement of law-and-order advocates and union leaders, many of whom had supported him in past campaigns. He defeated Shattuck by 225,000 votes.¹⁹

Brown inherited a formidable legal team. Utilizing the skills of 115 lawyers, Brown transformed the office from a largely unreliable organization into a national model of responsible and aggressive law enforcement. He worked to eliminate corruption in state offices and came down hard on illegal gambling and narcotics trafficking. Reelected in 1954, Brown continued his assault on major abuses in public and private affairs. He convicted assemblymen for illegal resale of liquor licenses, exposed the mistreatment of patients in state mental hospitals, and sued magazines for publishing pornographic materials.²⁰

This reform program left Brown as the most respected and popular figure in the California Democratic organization. He was also the only Democrat holding statewide office. Many members of the party saw him as their best opportunity to end a nearly two-decade Republican hammerlock on the governorship. Brown, however, felt that he could not defeat popular Republican Governor Goodwin Knight. The entry of right-wing California Republican Senator William F. Knowland into the governor's contest in 1958 gave Brown and his party a golden opportunity to capture the statehouse. Knowland believed that state leadership would do more to improve his presidential prospects than a senatorial seat. Telling Knight that he would cut off his financial support if he ran for reelection, he pressured the incumbent out of the race and succeeded in winning his party's nomination. Brown decided to become a candidate for governor and emerged victorious in the Democratic primary. Knowland accused him of being sympathetic to Communism. Castigating Knowland as "reactionary who views the state's highest office only as a pawn in presidential power politics," Brown promised, among other things, to make government more efficient, abolish racial discrimination in private employment, provide government assistance to small companies, and implement a state water plan. He also opposed a right-to-work ballot proposal prohibiting union shop contracts and attracted enormous support from union members and their relatives. Brown won the election by a million votes and carried 54 of the state's 58 counties. The Democrats swept into every other state office except secretary of state and gained control of the both houses of the legislature for the first time since 1878.²¹

Liberal reform entered a new era with the Democratic landslide. On January 5, 1959, Brown delivered an eloquent inaugural address to the legislature in which he articu-

lated his vision of where he would take the state and what he considered the proper role of government. "Offered government by the radical right, the voters emphatically declined," Brown declared. "Offered government by retreat, the people preferred progress. Clearly then, our duty is to bring to California the forward force of responsible liberalism." Such a program, he asserted, would not pamper its citizens or jeopardize solvency. He described liberal government as one in which "people come first and special privilege is scorned." He invoked Hiram Johnson, Earl Warren and other outstanding American reform governors of the twentieth century and promised to match the achievements of their administrations.²²

The rapid growth of California's population posed an enormous challenge for the new governor. Attracted by high-paying jobs in electronics, aerospace, and other defense-related industries, thousands of middle and upper-class whites had migrated to the California in the 1950s. Many racial minorities also settled in cities to take advantage of opportunities in industrial employment. California's population rose from 10 million in 1950 to almost 16 million in 1960, an increase of 60 percent.²³ Republican governors Earl Warren and Goodwin Knight in the 1950s had increased spending on various social services and introduced new programs in public health and child care. Brown built upon these accomplishments and greatly expanded social spending to meet the needs of newcomers. He secured funding for new hospitals and mental health facilities, won substantial increases in workers' compensation and unemployment insurance, and secured funds for the construction of highways, bridges, and rail systems. Much of the revenue for these services and projects came from new taxes on banks, insurance companies, and other businesses. Brown also established an office of consumers' counsel to protect consumers from false labeling and deceptive charges on installment credit purchases.²⁴

Equally important were striking innovations in race relations. In 1955 Democratic African American Assemblyman William Byron Rumford had promoted a bill prohibiting employment discrimination and met firm opposition from Republicans and conservative Democrats. Four years later Rumford won much support for his measure from Governor Brown and other newly elected liberal Democrats and secured the enactment of a Fair Employment Practices Act. It forbade discriminatory practices in the workplace and established the Fair Employment Practices Agency (FEPC) to guard against such behavior. Democratic Assemblyman Jesse Unruh also pushed through in 1959 a Civil Rights Act that prohibited discrimination in public accommodations and in business transactions, including real estate dealings. Anyone who experienced such discrimination could recover damages in the courts. These laws placed California in the front ranks of a revolution in civil rights taking place throughout the nation.²⁵

Brown also devoted much attention to education. In 1959 he backed the Fisher Act, requiring potential public school teachers to major in academic subjects, instead of education courses, to qualify for state teaching credentials. He also increased spending on public schools at all levels. His greatest achievement in educational reform involved the structure of public higher education. He won passage of the Donahoe Higher Education Act in 1960. The law resolved conflict between the University of California and the State Colleges (now called the California State University system) by differentiating the functions of the three main segments higher education. It designated the University of California system as the state's primary research and training institution, organized the state colleges into one system with a governing board of trustees similar to the UC Board of Regents, and assigned responsibility for vocational education to the two-year junior colleges (now designated community colleges).²⁶

Governor Brown also suffered a personal setback in his second year in office. A Los Angeles jury in 1948 had convicted Caryl Chessman of seventeen counts of robbery, kidnapping, and attempted rape. Chessman fought off several execution dates by various legal maneuvers, wrote two books describing his plight on death row, and won support from criminologists, professional writers, politicians, and religious groups for his cause.²⁷ Brown strongly objected to the death penalty on moral grounds and believed that nothing was gained by executing a person. He had no sympathy for Chessman, however. In 1959 he met with Chessman's lawyers in a clemency hearing. They argued that their client had been rehabilitated and thus deserved clemency. Brown did not agree. Declaring that Chessman's attitude was "one of steadfast arrogance and contempt for society and its laws," he refused to intervene in the case.²⁸ His decision aroused considerable dismay among death penalty foes. One of them was Brown's son, Jerry, a student at the University of California at Berkeley. Twelve hours before the scheduled execution, he urged his father to grant Chessman a stay and request that the legislature enact a two-year moratorium on the death penalty. Brown granted a reprieve and called a special legislative session to draft a bill abolishing capital punishment. The Senate Judiciary Committee defeated the death penalty moratorium by a vote of eight to seven in March, 1960. One month later the California Supreme Court refused to overturn Chessman's conviction and Brown was left with no choice but to let the execution take place. Brown had satisfied nobody in the affair and left the impression that he was indecisive.²⁹

The Governor's handling of water supply problems restored much of his reputation as a person of conviction and strength. Most of California's water lay in the

northern half of the state, while the greatest need for water existed in the southern part. During Earl Warren's governorship the legislature had conducted studies on different water projects and compiled a statewide plan to carry water from the San Joaquin Valley to the Southland. Convinced that the plan was crucial to the state's future economic growth, Brown put all of his political muscle behind the project. He pressured the legislature into passing the Burns-Porter Act in 1959. It authorized the submission to the voters of a \$1.75 million bond issue. Much of the revenue would be spent on the Feather River Project, the initial phase of a far bigger long-range program.³⁰ Brown campaigned throughout the state in support of the measure and encountered fierce resistance from taxpayer organizations and northern Californians. Despite this opposition, the bond issue carried by a comfortable margin in late 1960.³¹

Far less controversial but equally serious was severe fragmentation of the state bureaucracy. Brown inherited an administrative organization consisting of some 360 boards, commissions, and agencies. He informed the legislature in early 1961 that the state's "governmental structure has developed haphazardly in a piecemeal response to the pressure of . . . growth. We must act now to straighten lines of responsibility and create order from the near chaos of patchwork agencies."³² He consulted some other state governors and a few political scientists who specialized in governmental organization. Drawing upon their recommendations, Brown submitted a sweeping reorganization plan to the legislature. It proceeded to consolidate dozens of boards and agencies into four large agencies. They included health and welfare, youth and adult corrections, natural resources, and highway transportation. Brown himself established four additional superagencies comprised of revenue and management, business and commerce, employment relations, and public safety.³³

Such reform was additional evidence of Brown's strong commitment to responsible and effective government. He entered the governor's race in 1962 with an extremely impressive record of achievement. Running against him was former Republican Vice-President Richard Nixon. Nixon campaigned partly as a law-and-order advocate and made repeated references to Brown's intervention in the Caryl Chessman case. He also attacked him as being "soft on Communism" and ineffective in preventing radicalism in the state. This charge, however, carried little weight among the voters. Nixon appeared to them as a strident figure obsessed with the communist issue. Brown reminded the voters of his achievements in the area of "human rights" and presented himself as a forward-looking liberal who would, among other things, increase spending for mental health facilities, provide medical care to the elderly, enact new safeguards against racial discrimination, and build more edu-

cational facilities. Brown defeated Nixon by nearly 300,000 votes. The Democrats also retained control of the legislature.³⁴

Brown entered his second term with great optimism. He expected to take the state government farther down the road of liberal reform. "The last four years have demonstrated that we have resolve and resources in abundance," he declared in his inaugural address to the legislature. "Under the banner of responsible liberalism, we have moved strongly and confidently."³⁵ The needs of disadvantaged groups were of special concern to him. Brown secured a considerable increase in spending for social welfare. Expenditures on welfare programs rose from \$647 million in 1962 to \$752 million in 1964. They included aid for families with dependent children, old-age security, aid to disabled individuals, and medical assistance for the elderly. Brown also established an extensive antipoverty program for racial minorities. He brought more minority citizens into the state government, promoted a youth corps, and created a community work program to provide welfare recipients training in the development of new skills.³⁶

Brown devoted equal attention to public higher education. He gained funds for the construction of six state colleges and the establishment of new UC campuses at Santa Cruz, Irvine, and San Diego.³⁷ He also greatly increased spending on transportation facilities. The United States Congress in 1956 had enacted the Interstate Highway Act, which authorized the expenditure of \$15 billion in grants to the states over the next twenty years for the building of a 41,000-mile national highway system. Three years later the legislature approved a statewide freeway plan and appropriated \$10 billion for a ten-year program. The Division of Highways added a large number of draftsmen and engineers to its workforce and built some 1,500 miles of freeways over the next five years.³⁸

Race relations was another area of great importance to the Brown administration. The Commission on Race and Housing and the United States Commission on Civil Rights had investigated the housing industry in California and other states and documented a number of discriminatory practices on the part of white suburban realtors and apartment owners. They included denying membership to African Americans on realty boards, the use of restrictive covenants, and refusing to advertise homes and rental units to nonwhite people.³⁹ Armed with this information, Brown called for the passage of a far-reaching measure to abolish housing discrimination. Assemblyman William Rumford proceeded to draft a bill prohibiting such behavior. The legislature passed the Rumford Fair Housing Act in December, 1963. It prohibited discrimination in the sale or rental of all private housing and assigned extensive enforcement power to the FEPC.⁴⁰

The Rumford Act involved the Brown administration in considerable controversy. Strongly opposed to governmental regulation of the state's housing industry, the California Real Estate Association drafted an initiative to repeal the new law. It gave property owners the right to refuse to rent or sell property to anyone and prohibited the state legislature and local governments from enacting measures related to fair housing. The initiative reached the ballot as Proposition 14 in the fall of 1964. Civil rights groups and religious organizations strongly opposed the initiative. Governor Brown and the Democratic party provided additional opposition. They portrayed the initiative as an ugly expression of racial bigotry and campaigned aggressively against it throughout the state. The measure, however, attracted enormous support from white middle-and working-class homeowners in suburban communities. They saw the Rumford Act as an inexcusable infringement on individual property rights and feared that it would bring about a radical alteration in the nature of home ownership. Proposition 14 passed by a two to one margin and received majority support in all but one 1 of the state's 58 counties.⁴¹

Governor Brown suffered additional embarrassment over student protest on the UC campus at Berkeley. During the summer of 1964 thirty to sixty students from the university participated in civil rights activity in Mississippi. They returned to the campus in the fall and organized demonstrations to protest against racial discrimination by many businesses in the Bay Area. UC officials announced that a sidewalk at the southern entrance to the school was part of university property and ordered civil rights activists and other student groups to cease using the area for organizing off-campus political events. When the university disciplined several persons for violating its decree, students organized the Free Speech Movement (FSM). Led by charismatic Mario Savio, FSM held daily rallies and occupied Sproul Hall, the campus administration building. UC authorities and Alameda County law enforcement officials reported to Governor Brown that some of the students were very disorderly and told him that UC and local police could not handle the protest by themselves. Brown, as shown by his backing of laws which forbade discrimination in employment and housing, shared the strong commitment of the students to civil rights. He also felt that the protesters had used unacceptable tactics that were very harmful to the university administration. On December 3, he ordered the state and local police to intervene and restore order. More than 700 youths, mostly students, were arrested and 578 were found guilty of trespassing, resisting arrest, or both. The incident left a blemish on the Brown administration and gave the impression that student disorder was linked to liberal reform.⁴²

Far more challenging to Governor Brown was increasing rancor in California's

urban ghettos. Especially angry was the African American population of Los Angeles. The number of African Americans in the city rose from 171,000 in 1950 to 335,000 in 1960, and many of them were crowded into the Watts district. Unemployment in Watts was a chronic condition; forty percent of those between eighteen and twenty-five years of age could not find jobs. Urban renewal projects had destroyed several neighborhoods and relocated their residents to other heavily congested areas. Banks refused to provide mortgage loans to families wanting to live outside of the district. The police harassed black residents on a regular basis and randomly beat those suspected of crimes. Police shootings also increased dramatically in the ghetto. Twenty-five unarmed African Americans were killed by officers from 1963 to 1965.⁴³ These miserable conditions contributed to an outbreak of rioting in Watts on August 11, 1965, following the arrest of a young black man for drunken driving. More rioting, accompanied by looting and arson, took place the following day. Los Angeles Police Chief William Parker concluded that his officers could not restore order by themselves and called for state assistance. Governor Brown was vacationing in Greece. Lieutenant Governor Glenn Anderson ordered in the California National Guard. They moved through Watts like a tidal wave and started clearing the streets of looters and rioters. By August 17 the disturbance was over. It had caused thirty-four deaths (mostly African Americans), injury to 1,000 persons, and damage to over 600 buildings.⁴⁴

Returning to California from Europe, Brown was stunned by the carnage in Watts. He sent a few of his aides to get first hand information on conditions in the district. They conducted several public meetings and listened to a litany of economic and social ills. The residents complained about inadequate recreational services, overpriced food, police brutality, and welfare facilities located miles away from the district. Employment discrimination was another grievance. Hugh Taylor, a consultant to the state Department of Industrial Relations, informed William Becker, Assistant to the Governor for Human Rights, that "many of the stores in the area refused to hire minorities, especially Negroes." These stores were owned by people outside the ghetto who "drain the money from the area and put none back in area employment." Considerably distressed with these conditions, aides urged Brown to enact an extensive relief program and warned him that there would be more violence unless government authorities intervened immediately. He proceeded to find jobs for several hundred black youngsters, increased expenditures on social welfare, and asked federal officials to spend more funds on antipoverty projects.⁴⁵

Brown also formed a commission to investigate the rioting and appointed former CIA director John McCone to chair it. The McCone Commission consulted many specialists in the area of race relations and listened to testimony from numerous

witnesses, some of whom were public officials. One of the officials was Governor Brown. He singled out chronic unemployment as a major cause of the riots and told the commission that the “great majority of the people” in Watts wanted decent jobs.⁴⁶ Drawing heavily on Brown’s testimony and that of other government authorities, the commission published a report entitled *Violence in the City-An End or a Beginning?* in December of 1965. The report described major deprivation suffered by ghetto residents in economic and social resources and recommended a huge increase in spending on job training, education, and housing.⁴⁷ The commission gave little support to the disturbance itself, however. It greatly minimized the extent of riot participation in the African American community, labeled the disturbance a mindless uprising, and depicted most of the rioters as members of a criminal population.⁴⁸

The Watts riots met with equal harshness from the Republican organization in California. Since Pat Brown’s reelection in 1962, conservative elements in the party had recruited members of the extremist John Birch Society and other right-wing groups. By 1966 most Republican volunteer clubs were largely controlled by extreme conservatives.⁴⁹ They used the Watts uprising as a means to turn white suburbanites against Brown’s racial reform. They linked urban crime to black rioting, condemned racial protest in any form, and took strong law-and-order stands on issues of social unrest and minority equality.⁵⁰ Historian Lisa McGirr, writing in her insightful study of right-wing Republicanism in Orange County in the 1960s, notes that “Calls for ‘law and order’ and cries against ‘rising criminality’ often served as a coded language that played to white suburban fears of the black masses of the inner cities.”⁵¹ Among the suburbanites were a great number of Democrats, including many labor union members and their families. They represented a growing “white backlash” against racial liberalism. They tended to equate black unrest with all crime, felt that Governor Brown devoted too much attention to racial minorities, and deeply resented the rising cost of welfare services and antipoverty programs.⁵² The Republican organization expected that it would be the prime beneficiary of this backlash at the polls. All the party needed was a forceful standard bearer to unseat Pat Brown.

The Republicans found him in Ronald Reagan. Reagan came to Hollywood in 1937, where he became a popular movie actor. In 1952 he accepted an offer from the General Electric Company to work as a public relations executive. He appeared regularly on television programs the company sponsored and went from plant to plant giving speeches to workers and businessmen about the merits of private enterprise and alleged evils of big government. He became a Democratic supporter of Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s, backed Richard Nixon’s presiden-

tial campaign in 1960, and changed his registration to Republican in 1962. Two years later he delivered an eloquent speech on national television in support of Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. Greatly impressed with the speech, a group of wealthy southern California businessmen met with Reagan in 1965 and asked him to run for governor. After voicing some reluctance about being a candidate, he entered the Republican primary the following year. He won the Republican nomination in a landslide.⁵³

The gubernatorial contest in 1966 revolved partly around social and cultural issues. Reagan devoted much attention to racial unrest. In October rioting broke out in Hunter's Point, a black district in San Francisco, after a patrol officer shot a sixteen-year old boy who allegedly was attempting to steal an automobile. Mayor John Shelley imposed a curfew on the area and Governor Brown sent in the California National Guard. Reagan held Brown partly responsible for the disturbance, reminded voters of the Watts riots, and promised to crack down hard on future racial violence. He was equally critical of dissent at Berkeley. Student activists were conducting large demonstrations against the Vietnam War. There were also reports of sexual immorality on the campus. Reagan depicted these conditions as a breakdown in civil and moral order and pledged to restore peace and "moral decency" to the campus.⁵⁴

Housing discrimination was another major issue in the campaign. Earlier in the year the California Supreme Court had overturned Proposition 14 on the grounds that it violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Reagan strongly opposed the decision. "If an individual wants to discriminate against Negroes or others in selling or renting his house," Reagan declared, "he has a right to do so."⁵⁵ He repeatedly spoke of threats to property and pledged that he would work to repeal the Rumford Fair Housing Act. This position won him support from many white middle-and lower-class Democrats. He also blamed Brown for increased budgets and tax burdens and promised sizeable reductions in taxes and welfare programs. This pledge won Reagan additional defectors from the Democratic party. He defeated Brown by nearly a million votes and carried 55 of the state's 58 counties.⁵⁶

Pat Brown's reforms survived Reagan's victory firmly in place. When he left office in 1967, California was home to one of the most enlightened and responsive state governments in the United States. A few years later Brown wrote that he "struggled. . . to keep pace with the needs of the people for the services of government."⁵⁷ He met this challenge with a remarkable record of innovation and productivity. He secured an enormous expansion of social services, estab-

lished highly creative programs in education and water development, reorganized state administration along the lines of economy and efficiency, and rebuilt much of California's social and physical infrastructure. He also showed a great concern for the injustices and hardships experienced by people of color and enacted permanent safeguards against discriminatory practices in housing and employment. This achievement and other advances in the area of social reform outlasted Reagan's conservative policies and programs. Brown's final legacy was his generous and highly positive view of governmental power. He rightly believed that the state government, under the direction of humane and imaginative leadership, could ameliorate some of the distressing aspects of modern society, provide all Californians with a measure of dignity, and assure for them a decent and durable standard of living.

Endnotes

** This chapter appears in:

Schiesl, Martin, ed., *Responsible Liberalism: Edmund G. "Pat" Brown and Reform Government in California, 1958-1967* (Edmund G. "Pat" Brown Institute of Public Affairs, 2003) 1-21.

1. Roger Rapoport, *California Dreaming: The Political Odyssey of Pat & Jerry Brown* (Berkeley: Nolo Press, 1982), 20-21; Matthew Dallek, *The Right Moment: Ronald Reagan's First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point in American Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2000), 4-5.
2. Dallek, *Right Moment*, 6.
3. Ibid., 7; Constance Brown Carlson, "My Brothers Edmund, Harold, and Frank," *Brown Family Portraits*, oral history conducted in 1981 by Julie Gordon Shearer, Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1982, 11-12.
4. Rapoport, *California Dreaming*, 23, Dallek, *Right Moment*, 7.
5. Edmund G. Brown, Sr., "Years of Growth, 1939-1966: Law Enforcement, Politics, and the Governor's Office," an oral history conducted 1977-1981 by Malca Chall, Amelia R. Fry, Gabrielle Morris, and James Rowland, Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1982, 59; Dallek, *Right Moment*, 7-8.
6. Dallek, *Right Moment*, 8; Brown, "Years of Growth," 62.
7. Dallek, *Right Moment*, 8; Rapoport, *California Dreaming*, 24-25. Recalling his switch to the Democrats, Brown related that "a lot of people thought I had changed because it would do me more good. Well, I had no idea whether it would do me more good or not, whether I went into the Democratic party. It was just that philosophically I felt that the Democratic party was better." Brown, "Years of Growth," 62.
8. Jackson Putnam, *Modern California Politics*, 4th ed. (Sparks, Nevada: MTL, 1996), 22-23; James J. Rawls and Walton Bean, *California: An Interpretive History*, 7th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 326-27.
9. Dallek, *Right Moment*, 8-9; Brown, "Years of Growth," 69-70.
10. Dallek, *Right Moment*, 9-10.
11. Rapoport, *California Dreaming*, 32-33; Dallek, *Right Moment*, 11.

- 12.. Thomas Lynch, "A Career in Politics and the Attorney General's Office," oral history conducted by Amelia R. Fry in 1978, Regional Oral History Office, University of California Berkeley, 1982, 26-28, 30; Brown, "Years of Growth," 100, 122.
13. Rapoport, *California Dreaming*, 33; Ed Cray, *Chief Justice: A Biography of Earl Warren* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 47-49, 55-58.
14. Brown, "Years of Growth," 101, 126; Lynch, "Career in Politics," 27; Rapoport, *California Dreaming*, 33-34.
15. Brown, "Years of Growth," 143.
16. Rapoport, *California Dreaming*, 40; Rawls and Bean, *California*, 352-53. The literature on the internment of the Japanese and the Japanese American population is substantial. Two excellent studies are Roger Daniels, "The Decisions to Relocate the North American Japanese: Another Look," *Pacific Historical Review* 51 (February 1982): 71-77; and Ward M. McAfee, "America's Two Japanese-American Policies during World War II," *Southern California Quarterly* 69 (Summer 1987): 151-164.
17. Rapoport, *California Dreaming*, 40.
18. Rapoport, *California Dreaming*, 39; "Shattuck on War Path," *Fortnight* 8 (May 26, 1950): 10.
19. Lynch, "Career in Politics," 89, 99; Rapoport, *California Dreaming*, 40-41.
20. Dallek, *Right Moment*, 12; Rapoport, *California Dreaming*, 50.
21. Dallek, *Right Moment*, 14-15; Putnam, *Modern California Politics*, 43-44.
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31. Edmund G. (Pat) Brown, *Reagan and Reality: The Two Californias* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 183; Rawls and Bean, *California*, 370.
32. "Address by the Governor," January 3, 1961, *Journal of the Assembly*, Legislature of

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33. Brown, "Years of Growth," 306-07; Melendy and Gilbert, *Governors of California*, 446-47.
34. Hamm, *Rebel and a Cause*, 144; Rawls and Bean, *California*, 372; Dallek, *Right Moment*, 22-23.
35. "Inaugural Message to the California State Legislature by Edmund G. Brown, Governor," January 7, 1963, *Journal of the Assembly*, Legislature of the State of California, Regular Session, vol. 1, 7 January-21 June 1963, 55.
36. Melendy and Gilbert, *Governors of California*, 453; Dallek, *Right Moment*, 137.
37. Judith Michaelson, "Ex-Governor Brown Led Building Boom," *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 1996.
38. Gerald D. Nash, *The American West in the Twentieth Century: A Short History of an Urban Oasis* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973; reprint, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), 221; David W. Jones, Jr., *California's Freeway Era in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1989), 243-44, 249.
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40. "Statement of Governor Edmund G. Brown on Human Rights," February 14, 1963, *Journal of the Assembly*, Legislature of the State of California, Regular Session, vol. 1, 7 January-21 June, 1963, 625; Rumford, "Legislator for Fair Employment," 114; Thomas W. Casstevens, *Politics, Housing, and Race Relations: California's Rumford Act and Proposition 14* (Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1967), 20, 25-26, 37.
41. Casstevens, *Politics, Housing and Race Relations*, 48, 68-69; Dallek, *Right Moment*, 51-52, 54-55, 59-60.
42. W. J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War: The 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 18-23, 28-33, 42-43; Rawls and Bean, *California*, 414-15. Three months after the arrests and convictions of Berkeley students, the UC Regents hired Jerome C. Byrne, a Los Angeles attorney who specialized in labor-management relations, to investigate the disturbance. Byrne and his staff talked with students, faculty, and administrators and published an extensive report in May of 1965. They found no evidence that FSM was influenced by any outside radical group, held UC authorities primarily responsible for the unrest, and recommended a number of changes such as greater autonomy for individual campuses to deal better with major disturbances. See *Report on the University of California and Recommendations to the Special Committee of the Regents of the University of California*, May 7, 1965, pp. 55-59, 63-64, 74-76; Myrna Oliver, "Jerome Byrne, 76; Gave UC Help on the '60s Unrest," *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 2001.
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46. Robert M. Fogelson, *Violence as Protest: A Study of Riots and Ghettos* (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), 179; "Testimony of Governor Edmund G. Brown," September 16, 1965, Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, *Transcripts of Testimony*, Vol. 4, 1965, 30.
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51. Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 204.
52. Brown, *Reagan and Reality*, 14, 115; Matthew Dallek, "Liberalism Overthrown," *American Heritage* 47 (October 1996), 50, 60.
53. Rawls and Bean, *California*, 442-43.
54. Dallek, *Right Moment*, 188-89; idem, "Liberalism Overthrown," 50, 52; Schuparra, *Triumph of the Right*, 137, 141.
55. Quoted in McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, p. 205.
56. Schuparra, *Triumph of the Right*, 139; Rawls and Bean, *California*, 443; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 201-02, 209.
57. Brown, *Reagan and Reality*, 186.