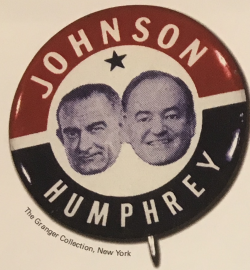


Old Text,49.2



This 1964 campaign button shows President Johnson with his vice presidential running mate, Hubert Humphrey. Notice the nearly equal size of the two heads. That fall, the president's campaign issued a similar button in which Humphrey's head appeared to be larger than Johnson's. Johnson had a fit. Campaign officials replaced the offending button with one that showed Johnson larger than his running mate.

President Johnson once said he wanted to be president so he could "give things to people—all sorts of things to all sorts of people, especially the poor and the blacks." His vision of the Great Society reflected that desire.

49.2 The 1964 Election: Debating the Role of Government

Lyndon Johnson was a man of enormous energy and big ideas. As president, he wanted to do far more than simply enact Kennedy's programs. Soon after taking office, he began developing an ambitious vision for his own presidency, should he win reelection the following year.

The Liberal View: Expanding Government to Promote Well-Being Johnson unveiled his vision in a commencement speech at the University of Michigan. "In your time," he told the graduating class, "we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the **Great Society.**" The president explained further.

The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice . . . But that is just the beginning.

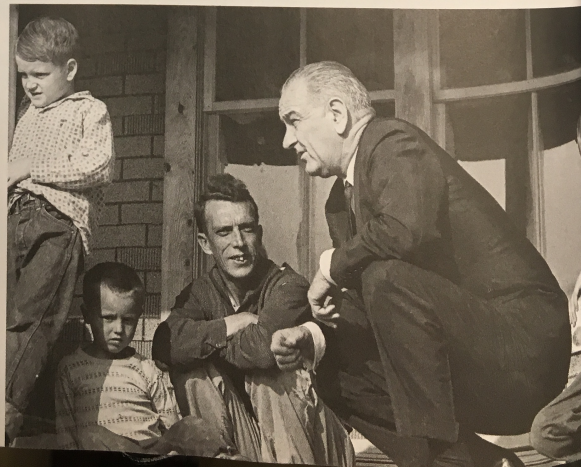
The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city . . . serves not only . . . the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community.

It is a place where man can renew contact with nature . . . a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods.

But most of all, the Great Society is not . . . a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor.

—Lyndon B. Johnson, May 22, 1964

As the election campaign continued, Democrats adopted the goals of the Great Society as their party platform. In their eyes, Johnson's vision continued a tradition of liberal reform that stretched back to Franklin Roosevelt and, before him, to the Progressive Era. Like Progressives, these liberal Democrats believed the power of government should be expanded to promote social well-being.



The Conservative View: Limiting Government to Preserve Liberty

Barry Goldwater of Arizona, the Republican candidate for president, held a very different view on government. An outspoken conservative, he had rejected Eisenhower's modern Republicanism as "a dime-store New Deal"—that is, a cheap version of the Democrats' famous domestic program.

Goldwater believed that government's most important role was to "preserve and extend freedom." Regulating every aspect of people's lives was to "preserve proper role. Yet, he observed, that was exactly what it had done since the time of the New Deal. "Our defenses against the accumulation of power in Washington are in poorer shape," he warned, "than our defenses against the aggressive designs of Moscow." Like many conservatives, Goldwater longed for a presidential candidate who had the courage to say what he had said himself:

I have little interest in streamlining government or in making it more efficient, for I mean to reduce its size. I do not undertake to promote welfare, for I propose to extend freedom. My aim is not to pass laws, but to repeal them. It is not to inaugurate new programs, but to cancel old ones that do violence to the Constitution, or that have failed in their purpose, or that impose on the people an unwarranted financial burden. I will not attempt to discover whether legislation is "needed" before I have first determined whether it is constitutionally permissible. And if I should later be attacked for neglecting my constituents' "interests," I shall reply that I was informed their main interest is liberty and that in that cause I am doing the very best I can.

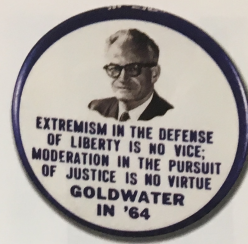
—Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, 1960

In 1964, Goldwater got his chance to be that candidate. When more moderate Republicans warned that voters would reject Goldwater's views as **extremism**, or radicalism, he answered, "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And . . . moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."

Johnson Wins by a Landslide The campaign quickly turned nasty. Opponents portrayed Goldwater as a reckless extremist who, if elected, would abolish Social Security and take his anticommunist aggression toward the Soviet Union so far as starting World War III. On September 7, the Johnson campaign aired "Daisy," a television advertisement that quickly became famous. It showed a young girl counting the petals of a daisy. Suddenly her voice was drowned out first by a nuclear countdown and then by a mushroom cloud. The ad announced, "Vote for President Johnson on November 3. The stakes are too high for you to stay home." "Daisy" ran only once, but that was enough to scare voters.

Johnson beat Goldwater in a landslide, winning 44 states to Goldwater's six. Johnson won 61 percent of the popular vote, the greatest margin received by any president to that point. Democrats also gained a large majority in Congress.

However, the election gave rise to two developments that would eventually challenge the Democrats' hold on power. One was the modern conservative movement, which grew out of Goldwater's ideas. The other was the political transformation of the South. In 1964, for the first time since Reconstruction, five southern states voted Republican. This shift marked the beginning of the transformation of the South from solidly Democratic to reliably Republican.



Barry Goldwater lost his bid for the presidency in 1964. But his book, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, sold 3.5 million copies and helped inspire a new generation of conservatives. Some observers consider Goldwater to be the most influential losing candidate in the nation's history.