Chapter 20

The Religious Right: Conservatism also drew people who feared American society had lost touch with its traditional values. Many Americans of deep religious faith were shocked by the events in the 1960's and 1970's. The Supreme Court decision in Roe vs. Wade, which established abortion as a constitutional right, greatly concerned them. The Supreme Court's decision that limited prayer in public schools also drew criticism. The feminist movement and the Equal Rights Amendment was opposed by conservatives because it went against traditional family values.

Moral Majority: The televangelist, Jerry Falwell used a television show, The Old-Time Gospel Hour, to found a movement called Moral Majority. It built a network of ministers to register new voters who backed conservative candidates and issues.

“Televangelist”: Television in particular allowed evangelical ministers to reach a nationwide audience. They founded the Christian Broadcasting Network.

Reaganomics: Reaganomics, also known as Trickle-Down Economics. This policy combined raising interest rates and supply-side economics, which meant cutting taxes. Critics believed Reagan’s policy would help corporations and wealthy Americans while only a little of the wealth would actually trickle down to working class Americans.

Supply-Side Economics: Economists who supported supply-side economics argued that the economy was too weak because taxes were too high. They believed that high taxes took away too much money from investors. Businesses and investors could use their extra capital to make new investments and businesses could expand and create more jobs.

Deregulation: Reagan believed that government regulations were another cause of the economy’s problems by increasing costs to industries. His first act as President was to sign an Executive Order eliminating price controls on oil and gasoline. This caused prices to fall. The falling energy prices freed up money for businesses and consumers to spend elsewhere, helping the economy recover. The National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration reduced its demand for airbags and higher fuel efficiency for cars. The Federal Communications Commission abandoned efforts to regulate the new cable television industry.

Budget Deficit: The amount by which expenditures exceeded income. By cutting tax rates the government would receive less money, so to keep the deficit under control Reagan proposed cuts to social programs. Programs such as welfare benefits, the food stamp program, the school lunch program, medicare payments, unemployment compensation and student loans were reduced.

Sandra Day O’Connor: Nominated by Reagan, she was the first woman on the Supreme Court. She was praised for her legal judgement and conservative approach to the law. She quickly became and important swing vote.

William Rehnquist: In 1986, when the Chief Justice retired, Reagan choose the most conservative Associate Justice, William Rehnquist, to succeed him.